



Relationship between Transformational Leadership Style and Leadership Thinking of Provincial Administration Leaders

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Abstract

Objectives: The transformational leadership style is accepted as suitable for leading administrative agencies to achieve outstanding results and help organizations cope with challenges. Besides, leadership thinking is also considered to have a very important role in leadership performance in administrative agencies. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to explore the relationship between transformational leadership style and leader thinking to organization's performance. **Methods:** The article focuses on explaining the views on transformational leadership style, healthy thinking, and the relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, and at the same time points out the current status of transformational leadership style, transformational leadership, leadership thinking as well as this relationship in practice among the leaders of provincial agencies in Vietnam. Descriptive, inductive, deductive, synthetic, and quantitative statistical methods were applied to interpret the results. **Findings:** Research results show that transformational leadership style, leadership thinking in the team of leaders of provincial agencies is quite average, there is a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership style. In contrast to leadership thinking, a more transformative leadership style means that it requires an innovative leadership thinking. **Novelty:** The results achieved when applying a transformational leadership style are quite closely related to the application of leadership thinking to solve leadership challenges.

Keywords:

Leadership Style;
Transformational Leadership Style;
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1- Introduction

Leadership studies have acknowledged that leadership is considered an important parameter in the stability and development of an organization. A leader's job is to lead and motivate employees in the right direction to better respond to challenges and overcome obstacles [1]. However, leadership effectiveness depends a lot on leadership style as well as a leadership thinking. For a long time, leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, and liberal have become well-studied leadership styles, but research and practice have shifted to research and application. Use research on new leadership style to adapt to the rapidly changing leadership landscape [2].

It seems that research on leadership style is getting more and more attention due to the rapid changes of the world context, this is considered as the most appropriate model in explaining many complex aspects of leadership [1]. The higher the leadership challenge, the more it requires collective intelligence and great concentration, so when applying a transformational leadership style, leaders can inspire and motivate employees to give their best effort [3] is of urgent significance that not all leadership style have this advantage.

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In Vietnam, traditional leadership styles were applied effectively in the pre-renovation period in 1986, but after the renovation, these leadership styles proved to be less effective but still used with three styles of democracy, authoritarianism, and liberal leadership style [4], this fact leads to some leaders, including those at the strategic level, who still maintain a bureaucratic leadership style, far from the community, follow individualism, entangle in corruption and lack of role model and prestige [5]. Before this reality, the leadership capacity of the leadership team in Vietnam should be innovated, as well as transforming the traditional leadership style to a modern leadership style is indispensable for the development of the organization, to create a transformation in leadership thinking to adapt to growing leadership challenges [6]. Especially, Vietnam is in the process of revolutionary reform and there have been instructions from the Government to localities to renew their leadership style, leaders need to be closer to the people, with the spirit of leadership as the servant [7]. It is also the general trend of research as well as practice that requires a change in leadership style.

In modern leadership science, the problems that persist and the renewal and development are complex issues [8], along with that, the relationship between innovation, stability, and development has become a motto in Vietnam's development strategy; innovation is the driving force, a stable method, a development condition, and a goal; taking development goals as the basis for orientation to continue innovation and stability [9]. The leaders were well aware of the disadvantages of the organizational methods of the apparatus that are no longer appropriate, the functions, tasks, powers, and relationships of some agencies and organizations are not very clear, overlapping and duplicating... The assignment, devolution, and decentralization of powers between branches, levels, and within each agency and organization are not reasonable, strong, and synchronous, streamlining the organizational apparatus, improving High potency, operational efficiency [10]. To achieve these strategic goals, traditional leadership style have been maintained for a long time in Vietnamese history [11] needs to be changed, the Vietnamese leadership must adapt in applying modern leadership methods, and have leadership thinking as an important parameter of leadership effectiveness.

Only when employing a transformational leadership style, is it possible to identify the new paths needed for new organizations. Along with that, the leader has a leadership thinking, which is seen as the source of organizational changes and they are on the change wave, and based on a transformational leadership style, the leader can build a better and clearer image of the future, effectively explain their insights to subordinates, motivate them, the passion makes them take and overcome challenges with inspiration without any pressure from outside [12].

In Viet Nam, nowadays, the big difficulty is that the administrative reform at the provincial level has not really achieved the goals mentioned by the Government of Vietnam since 2011 [13] including the issue of building and improving the quality of leaders and civil servants in administrative agencies at the provincial level, aiming to build a team of leaders in administrative agencies in Vietnam who are capable of leadership, ability to work in an international environment with high pressure. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the influence and relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking since each activity requires a corresponding thinking. Previous studies have mainly focused on analyzing and evaluating the influence of transformational leadership style on employee performance [14], emphasize organizational performance [15], organization's development strategy [16]. However, some studies reveal conflicting research results, Boerner et al. (2007) [17] shows that applying transformational leadership style to employee performance is not always proportional, while [18] confirms that employee performance is significantly improved when applying transformational leadership style.

Therefore, this study will improve understanding of transformational leadership practices and leadership thinking practices by surveying the opinions of leaders in provincial and public agencies in Vietnam. In part 1, the views on transformational leadership style are presented, part 2 introduces leadership thinking, part 3 shows the relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, part 4 is the research methodology, section 5 outlines the status of transformational leadership style and leadership thinking amongst leaders of provincial public sector agencies in Vietnam and finally draws conclusions for the research problem.

2- Literature Reviews

2-1- Transformational Leadership Style

The transformational leadership style is also known as the holistic leadership style [19] or the multi-factor leadership style [20]. The transformational leadership style was originally developed by Burns [21] who argued that transformational leadership is a process in which leaders need to support employees to move towards a higher level of morale and motivation to work. Transformational leaders can encourage followers to reach their full potential and overcome personal obstacles to strive for the common good of the organization. Bass [22] then developed Burns' view by stating four important characteristics of transformational leadership: 1) engaging transformational leadership, providing vision and a sense of mission, arousing employee pride, respect, and trust; 2) inspirational: Communicate high expectations, use symbols to focus efforts, express important purposes in simple ways; 3) intellectual capacity development: Develop intelligence, ability to analyze, evaluate and give careful problem-solving and 4) consider individuality: treat each employee in a coaching manner to train them to develop their full potential.

Bass and Riggio [23] consider transformational leadership as an activity that stimulates and inspires employees to achieve outstanding results, in which the leader simultaneously develops leadership capacity, religion. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees to work for collective achievement [24]. This is also confirmed by Bono et al [25] who argue that transformational leadership style influence followers to achieve goals, as well as increase confidence, commitment, and job performance. Hannah et al [26] argue that behavioral stability in the transformational leadership style of leaders both contributes to increasing self-worth and increases the value of leadership decisions. In contrast, research by Breevaart and Zacher revealed that when transformational leadership is used in conjunction with a liberal leadership style, its effects are undesired, so that stable behavior in transformational leadership styles are essential for effectively responding to the changing external leadership environment [27].

Some researchers such as Shung [28], Gumusluoglu [29] show that transformational leadership style is closely related to employee creativity. This is because leaders who practice transformational leadership can inspire followers to push their limits to execute leadership tasks better or complete tasks better, and when practicing transformational leadership, leaders can broaden and enhance their employees' goals, giving them the confidence to execute leadership goals with constancy [14]. According to Panahbehagha and Shakib [12], the transformational leadership style is well suited for inspiring organizational members, empathizing with employees, and guiding them in a motivating way to work together towards the common goals of the organization, this can make subordinates behave with very high will and spirit to achieve the overall efforts pursued by the organization.

As mentioned by Bass and Riggio [23], transformational leadership style is quite effective in reducing conflicts in the organization, because the leader is quite sensitive in grasping the needs and thoughts of employees, especially in a personal approach, thereby encouraging employees to respect leadership decisions and accompanying leaders to overcome any rigid framework. Later, the four dimensions of transformational leadership were further developed by Bass and Avolio (1994) [30]. These are aspects (1) idealized influence: making employees have pride, collective responsibility, each person acting typically to enhance the respect of others for themselves, putting the common good first, possibly even sacrificing personal interests for the common good, and shifting from individual interests to higher collective interests [31] (2) inspirational motivation, which characterizes the extent to which the leader shares a vision, inspires employees to work hard to achieve desired goals, (3) intellectual encouragement, the leader rates employees innovation awareness and self-challenge, and (4) individualised consideration, the degree to which the leader takes care of the individual needs of employees Judge and Piccolo [32] when approaching these four aspects in Bass's study [3] agree with these expressions and argue that it is how leaders engage in motivating employees to create Build trust and follow the leader.

Table 1. Dimensions of transformational leadership from the perspective of Bass and Avolio (1994) [30].

Dimensions of transformational leadership style	Indicators
Idealized influence	Instilling a sense of pride and honor to members to connect with others
	Showing a sense of power and competence
	Act in a way to raise other's respect
	Sacrificing personal interest for other's interest
Inspirational motivation	Talking optimistically about the future
	Talking seriously about things that should be done
	Emphasizing on the importance of foresight
	Giving hope to members about achievable goals
Intellectual stimulation	Careful examination of offers to ensure their suitability
	Taking into account different perspectives while solving a problem
	Requesting for examination of problems from different perspectives
	Suggesting new ways of how to do something
Individualised consideration	Allocating time for guidance and training
	Treating with members as a person, not as a member
	Considering people with different needs, abilities, and creativities
	Help others to develop their capabilities

Korejan and Shahbazi [33] listed eight characteristics of the transformational leadership style:

1. Leaders can influence their peers, superiors as well as subordinates.
2. Transformational leadership process is rooted in the leader's personal values and beliefs
3. Leaders draw inspiration from their deepest personal values (such as justice, fairness, honesty, and honor). Burns [21] considers this to be the ultimate value that cannot be bargained or exchanged.

4. Provide ultimate values to create consensus, support from subordinates, and more importantly, create inner changes and personal beliefs of employees in line with the strategic goals of the organization.
5. Transformational leadership is inspired by the heart and mind and constantly strives to realize leadership goals.
6. Leaders have an open attitude, willing to accept differences in the way that employees express themselves beyond what the leader has shaped.
7. Leaders who pay attention to their employees' feelings, moods, what they want and how the leader can help them achieve it, create trust and commitment.
8. Leaders gain great strength through the mobilization of collective intelligence, openness to new ideas, and critical conditions for building learning organizations.

Agarwal and Gupta [34] point out 12 characteristics of transformational leadership style:

1. Leaders have inspirational motivation/charisma
2. Leaders are recognized as change agents
3. Leaders are guided by values
4. Leaders are oriented toward lifelong learning
5. Leaders are visionaries who trust people
6. Leaders motivate followers to improve their performance
7. Leaders can remove any obstacles and resistance toward changes
8. Leaders promote organizational members' participation in collective decisions and activities
9. Leaders promote openness, which enhances the creation of structures and systems at all levels of the organization
10. Leaders can cope with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty
11. Leaders instill a new approach to the culture
12. Leaders create a climate of job satisfaction and commitment to quality service

Later, the characteristics of transformational leadership style were mentioned with more than the four mentioned by Bass and Avolio (1994) [30], but which leadership style to choose has so far been of interest in much research, has become the subject of extensive research, with the consensus being that transformational leadership styles encourage employees to increase their levels of autonomy, confidence, and social cohesion between employees and the organization as well as the alignment of the organization's values with the value of employees [35], encourage employees to build a long-term shared vision, seek change and develop the organization that allows adapting to the changing events of the external environment, creating a healthy working environment. Its effectiveness has been verified in many theoretical and experimental studies. When leaders practice transformational leadership style, there will be a spiritual spread, and the sense of task performance of the members also increases [36-39], enhance communication within the leadership and between leaders and employees [39, 40]. On that basis, as can be seen, transformational leadership style is a set of relatively stable behavior systems of leaders, a positive model in inspiring, encouraging, boosting, and motivating employees, to create meaningful change to optimize work performance to realize goals, mission, and build a common identity of the organization to achieve the stated leadership goals. The leader becomes a role model, an important part of shaping the members' behavior [41].

Leaders are essential agents in public performance improvement and organizational change, in which agents are seen as being able to change the leadership process to make a difference, pointed out by Sun and Henderson, transformational leadership style is the main factor that impacts leadership performance. It was claimed to be the ideal leadership style, there are still studies exploring why transformational leadership is appealing, Hansbrough and Schyns [42] shows that conscientiousness strongly influences the appeal of transformational leadership styles, and the implicit leadership theory makes transformational leadership more persuasive. Up to now, modern theories of leadership have acknowledged that transformational leadership is an effective style and can be applied to all levels of leadership as well as in any organization that can practice transformational leadership style [43]. Leaders become role models, build and shape in employees a strong sense of initiative to overcome challenges in the workplace. Charisma, as an important element of transformational leadership, seems to be especially important in the context of employee creative freedom. According to Mansaray [44], transformational leadership is a leadership model that is becoming popular to change the current situation, especially for organizations in need of reform, organizations, and employees are in turmoil through inspiring, persuading, motivating work, creating excitement to achieve a high level of clarity of vision to achieve common goals. Moreover, leaders trust and empower employees more so that they have more conditions to be creative and find new solutions, employees are also trained for the process of preparing to become leaders in future conversion.

2-2-Leadership Thinking

Leadership thinking is an indispensable part to guide and lead successful leadership activities [45]. Over time, leadership thinking has had certain changes which have a significant impact on the change of the leader's behavioral style, but despite the changing objective context, effective leaders often demonstrate deep leadership thinking in all aspects for effective decision-making [46]. Leadership thinking becomes a concern for leaders in shaping organizational performance.

Leadership thinking is the process of reflecting the objective reality of leadership based on brain activity to perceive the nature and rules of the leadership process, leadership methods, goals, and orientation for leadership activities to achieve set strategic goals [47]. This concept emphasizes that leadership thinking is an expression of cognition, a function of the brain; this assertion is biased towards a natural, gifted explanation, this explanation is not satisfactory because the brain's activity is only a natural basis; to have the leadership thinking must have practical activities, leadership thinking not only has natural qualities and bases but also a synthesis of history society, of leadership practices. Le Chi Mai [48] considers leadership thinking as an expression of the leader's cognitive ability to lead the organization to success in a competitive and changing environment. Leadership thinking is also considered a quality, reflected in the sensitivity and insight in seizing strategic opportunities [49]. These concepts all acknowledge that leadership thinking is an important expression of leadership capacity, leadership thinking orients leadership activities, so decision-making and organizational decision-making are subordinate to leadership depends heavily on leadership thinking. Mumford and Higgs [50] emphasize that leadership thinking both include elements of the leader's personal experience and demonstrates practical cognitive capacity. This explanation is somewhat satisfactory because leadership thinking both reflects historical social factors and reflects the reality of leadership activities in which the individual is the representative of the organization.

According to Duong (2021) [51], a leadership thinking is a thought to solve leadership problems arising from the practice of leadership activities, which is the process of finding the optimal solution to solve problems. The topic of leadership and leadership thinking is a variation of practical thinking because its object arises from leadership practice, from which the author gives the concept: Leadership thinking is a variation of real thought. The process takes place in the thought of the subject to identify, build and select the optimal solution to solve the arising leadership problem that the leader did not know before.

Table 2. Dimensions of leadership thinking [51].

Dimensions of leadership thinking	Indicators
Identify leadership problem	Issues directly related to the function, leadership role, are the most important strategic issues of the organization, the locality, or the country.
	The leadership problem must create in the leader a situation where the problem is half-knowing and half-unknown about itself and the solution.
	Positive correlation between the scope and coverage of the object of leadership mindset with the scope and scope of the solution
Thinking Deep and Wide	Take the big picture and make sharp inferences from the external manifestations of leadership problems.
	Detect cause-and-effect relationships as well as non-causal relationships
	Realize the multi-centered and multi-dimensionality that governs the progression of leadership issues when it is not yet clear
	Analysis of the whole, not focusing on specifics and individual details
Flexibility and creativity	See the relationship between the internal elements as well as the relationship between them and the context
	Adapt flexibly, don't stick to old stereotypes, solve problems of the same kind in the past even if it worked before
Speed of thought	Quickly find new ideas, new ways of acting when solving leadership problems that arise
	Analyze problems, quickly generalize diverse, multidimensional, and complex information into specific, simple, easy-to-understand, and easy-to-implement decisions as well as create excitement in employees.
Specificity	Quickly make decisions
	Capture the problem in detail, fully and clearly about the object in a specific location, context, and time
	The product of the leadership mindset is an action plan that is easy to understand, clear, and easy to follow
Intuition	See-through the nature and rules of the object from chaotic and unsystematic details
	When solving difficult leadership problems, leaders are always in a state of lack of information and do not have time to search but have an intuitive ability to make decisions.
	Predictability or intuition
	Have faith in your choice
	Dare to decide, dare to take responsibility for the consequences

From the above concepts, we believe that *leadership mindset is the process of higher-level awareness of the leader to meet the requirements of the leadership position in formulating and organizing the implementation of the development strategy of the organization to achieve stated leadership goals*. Leadership mindset is always associated with certain subjects and leadership positions, each leadership position requires a corresponding leadership mindset, the higher the position, the more similar the leadership mindset must be. Leadership mindset cannot be separated from the leadership context, political institutions, from the practical conditions of leadership, and according to the requirements of each specific position. Therefore, Thuy (2018) [47] also acknowledges that leadership must be at the leadership level for the leader to perform well in leadership activities, to meet the requirements according to the position. Lacking or not a deep leadership mindset, leadership activities will become deadlocked right from the awareness stage, the organization will fall into crisis.

Mumford and Higgs [50] emphasize that an indispensable ability in leaders is leadership mindset, especially in the challenging context that training and developing leadership mindset has become a current leadership topic. and the future for the 21st century, while leadership mindset is also an important condition to improve the performance of leadership decisions, one of the most important functions of leadership. However, current leadership research has largely focused on leader behaviors and subordinates' reactions to leaders, ignoring the thinking that drives those behaviors. Mumford and Higgs [50] have made important revelations for leaders that are developing higher-order cognitive skills to be able to properly analyze and forecast the organization's development strategy to avoid potential risks, risks in the development strategy of the organization to make leadership decisions creatively.

Leadership mindset is a high-level cognitive activity, including many types such as scientific thinking, scientific reasoning, dialectical thinking, complex mindset, strategic thinking, etc. This kind of thought is not only a unique function of the brain, but leaders have to go through many different activities, in which the practice of leadership is an essential requirement for the leader to acquire, apply and experiment with these types of thinking into leadership practice, which is an important criterion for leaders to constantly strengthen, train and develop leadership thinking to meet the practical requirements of leadership.

2-3-Relationship between Transformational Leadership Style and Leadership Thinking

Transformational leadership has evolved into a hot topic in leadership science research [52] but seems to be relatively independent of leadership thinking research. Burns (1978) [21] initiated the transformational leadership style and was subsequently further developed by Bass [3], but studies have emphasized the results that this leadership style produces on the individual level as well as on the organization level, but recognizes the mobilization of collective intelligence and this requires leaders to have a leadership thinking. Leaders encourage subordinates to achieve higher achievement with intellectual effort and self-esteem by changing the thinking of employees in such a way that they accept the vision of the organization as if it were their vision of the organization. This transformation motivates employees to overcome their interests and strive for collective goals [23], the effective application of transformational leadership style is always associated with leadership thinking, because leadership thinking does not arise only from a problem situation, but it also arises with the activities that the leader is carrying out.

Transformational leadership style is becoming more and more necessary, which also means that leaders need to be creative and flexible in how to inspire employees to give their best, in ways to support employees to develop their intellectual power to an advanced level. Curtis (2020) [53] shown that transformational leadership style and leadership thinking are closely related to leadership performances, especially affecting tactics and conflict-handling styles in leadership activities. Curtis et al. (2017) [54] suggested that leadership performance depends quite closely on the relationship between leadership thinking and transformational leadership style. In the rapidly changing context today, the transformational leadership style is the ideal choice, along with emotional guidance. Supportive leadership thinking to make the leadership style creative and flexible to lead an organization to grow. Leaders with a leadership mindset become leaders of change [55].

Bass (1990) [22] argues that the transformational leadership style is valued and contributes to the development of intellectual capacity in leaders, which is a necessary way for leaders to make statements and share visions and encouragements. Encourage subordinates to improve their intellectual capacity, creativity, and make subordinates' concerns an essential part of the organization's mission. Tracey and Hinkin (1998) [56] suggested that the combination of leadership thinking and transformational leadership style will set a clear vision for the organization. Transformational leadership is described as the ability to promote and encourage intellectual ability through inspiration [14, 57].

The use of transformational leadership style requires leaders to have a leadership thinking, the interaction between transformational leadership and leadership thinking is an important factor for developing organizational performance, motivating and supporting employees to achieve high performance. Many organizations have diverged from the traditional leadership style with the transformational leadership style, which helps the organization adapt to changes in the unstable and harsh working environment [2]. The more severe the leadership context is, the more leaders are forced to show their charm with their intellectual capacity and ability to apply a transformational leadership style, which is an

appropriate means to fulfil the role of leading the organization through challenges safely [58]. For employees to work diligently, it is necessary to have a human development strategy, which is the core of sustainable development, so retaining talents and supporting the development of those talents are important factors that create the organization's sustainability. Transformational leadership is considered a useful tool to achieve the sustainable development of the organization, to retain talented people.

Facing the constantly increasing leadership challenge requires leaders to constantly practice and develop their leadership thinking capacity to map out and realize the mission and vision of the organization. On the other hand, the leadership thinking allows leaders to foresee potential risks and risks to support, gather and lead as well as give more opportunities to subordinates and train and guide them on how to work to achieve higher levels. Based on transformational leadership style combined with leadership thinking is the best way to help leaders identify new paths needed for the organization to achieve common goals. Such leaders are the source of fundamental change and prevail in terms of organizational change and they are in a wave of change, such leaders can provide a better and clearer image in the future, effectively explaining their insights to subordinates, motivating employees to take on challenges and special tasks. Transformational leaders are leaders who inspire employees and can empathize with them, guiding them in a way to deliver the benefits of the organization, which can lead subordinates to behave in a spirit of humanity, act for the common goal of the organization [12].

The relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking can be seen through Van's affirmation [59], that the world changes leadership thinking so it is impossible not to change and if we want to develop, we must change our leadership style. In the current leadership context, the application of a leadership style to transform leaders without micromanaging, trusting that trained employees will decide on their own in the assigned work, means that transformational leadership style and leadership thinking are always mutually supportive.

3- Research Methodology

3-1- Research Questions

This study uses questionnaires and face-to-face interview methods to obtain information to assess the reality of using the transformational leadership style required of modern leaders and the constantly increasing leadership challenges, with four main manifestations based on the view of Bass and Avolio (1994) [30] and the relationship between transformational leadership style and six manifestations of leadership thinking as conceived by Duong (2021) [51]. The survey was conducted from departmental leaders to heads of provincial administrative agencies in Vietnam (Figure 1).

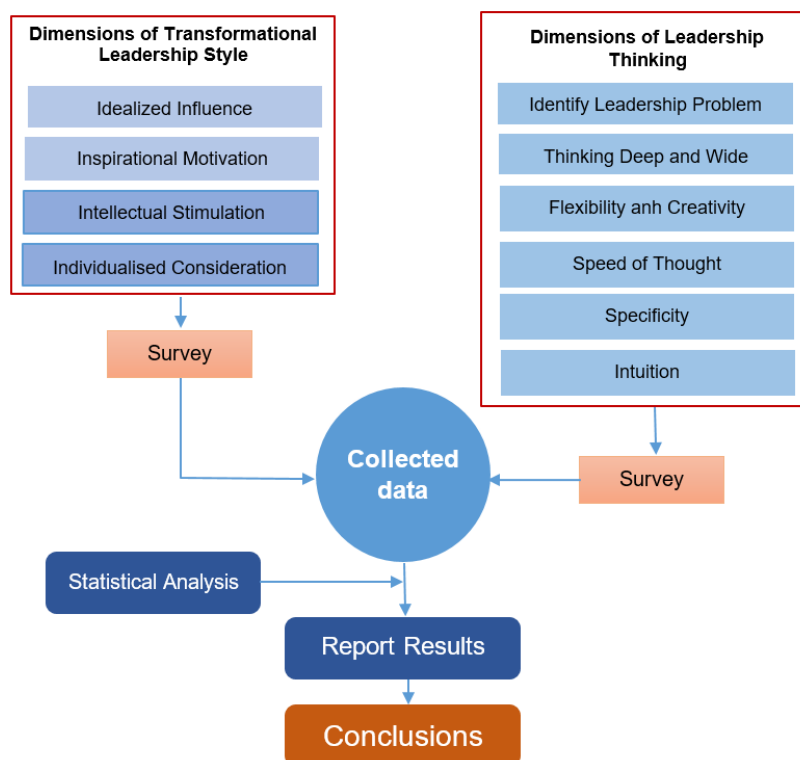


Figure 1. Flowchart of Research Methodology.

Research Question 1: What are the dimensions of transformational leadership style, what is the relationship between these dimensions in leaders of administrative agencies?

Research Question 2: How are the dimensions in leadership thinking and the relationship between the dimensions in the leaders of administrative agencies?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking in leaders of administrative agencies?

3-2-Data Collection Tools

To answer the research questions of this paper, the procedure used for quantitative research was followed, which included searching and using modern literature to define the research questions, collect scientific data through the use of scales containing relevant questions with a defined and measurable scope. Finally, analyze this data using statistical scientific methods [60].

The study aims to objectively explore the relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking of leaders in provincial agencies in Vietnam. Therefore, to collect quantitative data, the expansion of the questionnaire measuring transformational leadership style and the expression level of leadership thinking of provincial-level agency leaders was adopted. The research focuses on finding the perceptions of the surveyed subjects about the transformational leadership style of leaders and the leadership thinking of the heads in provincial agencies. 316 respondents who answered the questionnaire were randomly selected by using a convenience sample and conducting face-to-face interviews with several department heads. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: part A is the demographic profile, part B measures the level of use of the transformational leadership style, including 4 expressions: (1) Idealized influence, (2) Inspirational motivation, (3) Intellectual stimulation, (4) Individualised consideration. The Transformational Leadership Style Questionnaire is based on a questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (2004) [61]. Part C, factors related to awareness level of the leadership thinking, these factors include: (1) Identify leadership problems, (2) Thinking deep and wide, (3) Flexibility and Creativity (4), Speed of thought, (5) Specificity and (6) Intuition.

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to rate the extent to which they demonstrated leadership style and ethical thinking in their work practices. Assessment results according to the level of awareness based on the 5-point scale of Likert proposed from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Almost always). The result of answering the questionnaire for each individual is the average score of the answers each expressed in leadership style as well as in leadership thinking, the average score of an individual can range from 1-5. The higher the score, the stronger the leadership style and leadership thinking in that individual.

The comparison of the demographic descriptive data will be done by descriptive statistical analysis such as frequency distribution, regression analysis, reliability analysis, correlation used to analyze the data and interpret the data result.

3-3-Measures and Data Analysis

Measures

Transformational leadership style. In this study, the respondents to the questionnaire were instructed to evaluate their perception of the results of practicing transformational leadership style at the head of the provincial administrative agency based on Cheung et al. (2001) [62] study, which was used to measure four dimensions of transformational leadership. These four aspects are based on the point of view of Bass and Avolio (1994) [30]. Leadership thinking, the content to build the questionnaire is based on the Duong (2021) [51]. The terms used in the research in the sections have been refined to adapt to the leadership context in the provincial administrations in Vietnam. Respondents were asked to give their opinion on each behavior in the transformational leadership style of leaders. Opinions about the behaviors are described on a 5-point Likert scale. All measures were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample entry for transformational leadership across four dimensions is (1) Idealized influence; (2) Inspirational motivation; (3) Intellectual stimulation; (4) Individualised consideration. A sample item for leadership thinking is shown on six aspects that are: (1) Identify leadership problems; (2) Thinking deep and wide; (3) Flexibility and creativity; (4) Speed of thought; (5) Specificity; (6) Intuition.

Data Analysis

This study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0) for descriptive analyzes of statistical respondents to validate and test the structural model against a data set of 316 leadership positions from deputy to director in provincial administrative agencies. Furthermore, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is performed to determine the reliability of the variables in the research model. In the data analysis phase, the data collected from the questionnaire is pre-processed and coded, and put into the database of the SPSS statistical software. Various statistical analysis methods were used, including tissue, deductive and inductive, which are used for each type of variable.

Descriptive method: Table of frequencies percentage, minimum value, maximum value, mean value, standard deviation, the correlation between two different ordinal variables were investigated using the system. Pearson's linear correlation.

Inductive method: The test is based on Fisher's assessment to determine the relationship between two categorical variables as well as determine the dependence between the variables through simple linear regression.

Testing the reliability of the questions in the questionnaire about transformational leadership style and leadership thinking and leadership results measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency. The value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is only meaningful when $\alpha \geq 0.3$. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for scales using transformational leadership style = 0.837, leadership thinking scale = 0.816. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient is $\alpha = 0.893$, which exceeds the recommendation of $\alpha = 0.70$ proposed by Finch and French [63].

4- Results and Discussions

4-1-Demographic Characteristics

Through descriptive statistics from the demographic table (table 3), we found that in terms of gender, the majority of survey respondents were male with 64.87% (n = 205), the number of women with only 35.13% (n = 111). Regarding the age group, the focus was mainly on the 41-50 age group, with 41.77% (n=132) and the over 50 age group with 35.44% (n=112). There was no clear difference between university education, with 55.06% (n=174), and the leadership group with a university degree with 44.94% (n=142). According to the leadership position, it can be seen that the position of deputy head of the departments accounts for an outstanding number with 40.82% (n=128), the number of leaders in the director position is equivalent to only 10.13% (n=32). The number of years in leadership positions most focus on groups with more than 1 term, 5-10 years with 43.67% (n=138), number of leaders in the first term with 36.08% (n=114), and the number of leaders in the third term with 20.25% (n=64).

According to the field of training, it can be seen that the leaders who study the humanities and social sciences have a significant advantage with 49.37% (n=156) compared to the leaders who have studied the natural and applied sciences, with 27.53 (n=87), the number of respondents studying economics and finance is only 16.77% (n=53) and other majors such as pedagogy and journalism account for a relatively small number, with 6.33% (n= 20). By field of work, the number of leaders surveyed holding positions in administrative agencies accounted for a large number with 61.39% (n=194), followed by leaders in non-business agencies such as universities and colleges, schools, hospitals, art fields,... with 26.9% (n=85) and finally, the number of leaders in some other social organizations was polled with 11.71% (n=37). The full statistical description of the demographics of the sample of the current study can be found in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Demographic characteristics (N=316).

Demographic characteristics	Characteristics Frequency	Number	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	205	64.87
	Female	111	35.13
Age	Under 30	18	5.70
	From 31 to 40	54	17.09
	From 41 to 50	132	41.77
	Over 50	112	35.44
Education	Higher education	174	55.06
	Postgraduate	142	44.94
Leadership position	Deputy	129	40.82
	Deputy Head of Department	102	32.28
	Deputy Director	53	16.77
	Director	32	10.13
Number of years in leadership positions	Under 5	114	36.08
	From 5 to 10	138	43.67
	Over 10	64	20.25
Areas of training	Humanities and Social Sciences	156	49.37
	Natural and applied sciences	87	27.53
	Law, economics, finance	53	16.77
	Other	20	6.33
Areas of work	Party organ	85	26.90
	Administration	194	61.39
	Social organizations	37	11.71

The following illustrative charts will show categorically and vividly the disparity in gender, age, education level, leadership position, number of years in leadership position, areas of training, and areas of work to see the data of the variables presented in Table 3 more clearly.

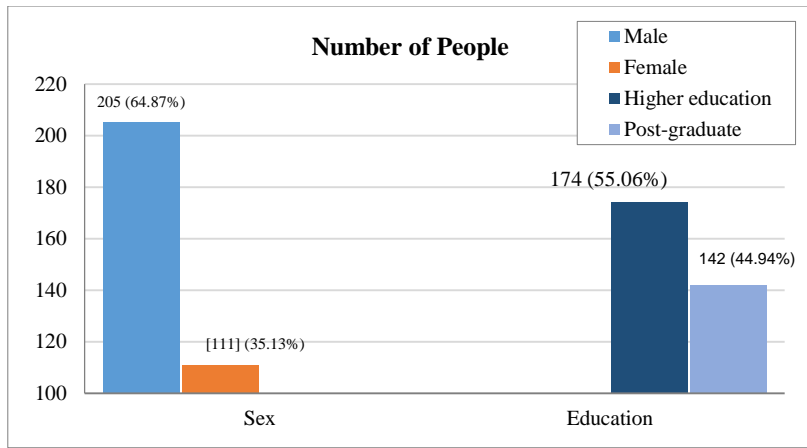


Figure 2. Descriptive statistics of the sample by sex and education level.

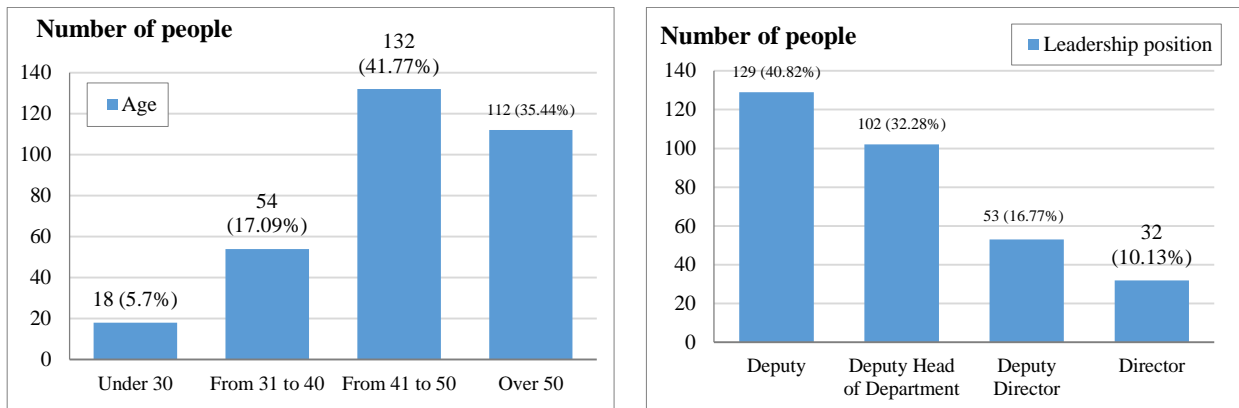


Figure 3. Descriptive statistics of the sample by age and leadership position.

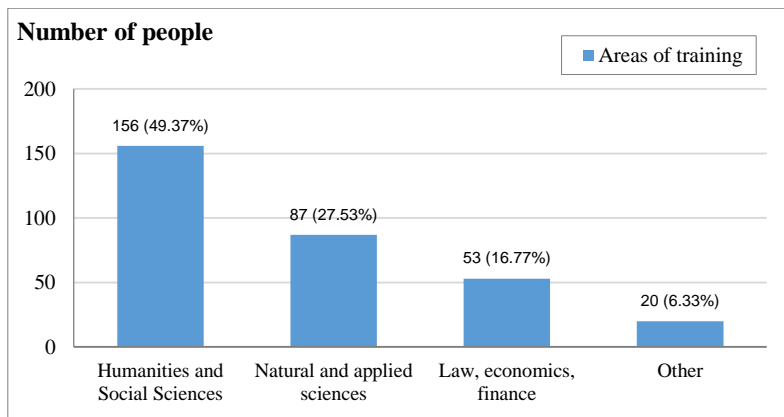


Figure 4. Descriptive statistics of the sample by the areas of training.

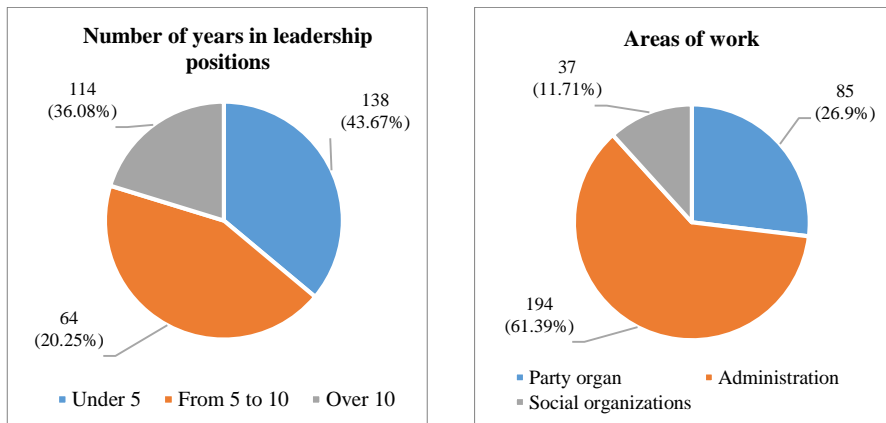


Figure 5. Descriptive statistics of the sample by the number of years in leadership positions and areas of work.

4-2- The Status of Transformational Leadership Style and Leadership Thinking

The reliability of the dimensions of transformational leadership style is satisfactory as Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0.702 in terms of intellectual stimulation to 0.857 in terms of Individualised consideration. The average value of transformational leadership style aspects is shown in Table 4, this measurement result allows to confirm that the leadership subjects are interested in practicing manifestations in transformational leadership style with the average score $M = 2.83$ (Individualised consideration) to $M = 3.32$ (Inspirational motivation). This is quite similar to previous research by Smythe and Norton (2007) [55] that the more profound the leadership thinking, the higher the leadership performance and better response to the changing leadership context. Wang et al. (2013) [64] demonstrated against the background that China is undergoing dramatic changes in all areas of social life, transformational leadership style becomes more and more meaningful, especially in administrative agencies, working performance increases significantly when leaders create motivation to work and inspire and motivate employees

Table 4. The status of transformational leadership style.

Dimensions of transformational leadership style	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Idealized influence	316	2.35	3.56	3.17	0.53	0.803
Inspirational motivation	316	2.48	3.72	3.32	0.31	0.774
Intellectual stimulation	316	2.50	3.41	3.08	0.64	0.702
Individualised consideration	316	2.07	3.46	2.83	0.67	0.857

Thus, in the first question answered, the manifestations in the transformational leadership style are not bold, and in the second aspect of the question: how is the relationship between these manifestations expressed? As shown in Table 5, all variables are positive and mainly at the average level. The more effectively the transformational leadership style is applied, the more consensus is acquired; not only that but also the employee's job satisfaction is brought [4]. In reality, the application of the transformational leadership style is not productive, so the administrative system in Vietnam operates quite slowly, the efficiency is acquired is not commensurate with the actual requirements [6]. In the Publication of Public Administration Reform Index 2020 of ministries, ministerial-level agencies, People's Committees of provinces and centrally-run cities, and the Satisfaction Index of people and organizations with the service of State administrative agencies in 2020 have confirmed that compared to previous years, the administrative reform index and people's satisfaction index have increased but quite slowly, especially in mountainous provinces, the PAR index is lower [65]. In the report on PAR in some provinces in 2019-2020, taking people's satisfaction as the basis for assessing leadership performance shows that PAR indicators are increasing but increasing slowly [66] or Ho Chi Minh City, a large and developed economic center of Vietnam in the areas of leadership, administration, and reform of administrative procedures, is also deducted points [67]. It is clear that the leadership team of the provincial administrative agencies in Vietnam urgently needs to practice more strongly the transformational leadership style, to match the orientation of international integration that Vietnam is initiating.

Table 5. Pearson correlation between dimensions of transformational leadership style.

	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Idealized influence	3.17	0.53	-			
(2) Inspirational motivation	3.32	0.31	0.63**	-		
(3) Intellectual stimulation	3.08	0.64	0.45*	0.46*	-	
(4) Individualised consideration	2.83	0.67	0.38*	0.37*	0.42*	-

Note: Significance at: * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.01$

In general, there is a positive correlation between the variables, but the correlation between idealized influence and inspirational motivation ($r = 0.63$) is the dominant correlation, the remaining correlations are quite faint because the correlations between the variables are in the range $0.3 \leq r \leq 0.5$. This is also confirmed by Panahbehagha & Shakib (2017) [12] which assumes that all four manifestations of transformational leadership style always exist in a certain relationship, the higher the correlation coefficient, the more confirmed value of the transformational leadership style. From that, it can be affirmed that the application of transformational leadership style to leadership activities has limitations, except that the interest between idealized influence and inspirational motivation has a rather close positive correlation.

On the scale of the leadership thinking, the scale's reliability has Cronbach's Alpha coefficient from 0.674 (intuition) to 0.832 (specificity). The lowest mean value is the dimension intuition $M=1.84$ the highest mean value is $M=4.17$ (Leadership problem identification) and $M=4.14$ (specificity). It is clear that all subjects have a leadership thinking that is interested in applying it in practice, but the application of leadership thinking in the intuitive aspect is quite faint ($M=1.84$). Pointing out the limitations in leadership thinking in the leadership team, many leaders can identify the problem they are in charge of, but the solution still shows emotional expressions, not sharp, so solving problems often leave a backlog and prolong time [68].

Table 6. The status of leadership thinking.

Dimensions of leadership thinking	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Identify leadership problems	316	3.46	4.58	4.17	0.33	0.746
Thinking deep and wide	316	3.13	4.41	3.56	0.46	0.693
Flexibility and creativity	316	3.37	4.08	3.72	0.50	0.727
Speed of thought	316	2.92	3.57	3.25	0.42	0.795
Specificity	316	3.37	4.46	4.14	0.37	0.832
Intuition	316	1.36	2.15	1.64	0.52	0.674

The ability of intuition is still limited in leadership thinking in cadres at provincial agencies. However, it is intuition that can make leadership thinking often more careful in every decision, but being too consistent in thinking is a limitation when leadership practices are always changing, the prejudices make the leader lack acumen, easily leads to response to leadership challenges often slow and easy to miss opportunities [69].

The Pearson correlation test between the dimensions of leadership thinking (table 7) shows that the correlations are statistically significant or not. The correlation is stronger in the three correlations in the dimensions of leadership problem identification with specificity ($r=0.64^{**}$), specificity with thinking deep and wide ($r=0.71^{**}$), and thinking deep and wide with the speed of thought ($r=0.68^{**}$). It can be affirmed that in leadership activities, to have a good leadership thinking means that the dimensions need to be bold, but in fact, the survey results show that the leadership thinking is in identifying leadership issues ($M=4.17$) and specificity ($M=4.14$). This result answers research question 2, the level of leadership thinking has been effectively applied. However, the dimension of intuition seems to be outside the ability to participate in leadership thinking quite clearly ($M=1.64$), while studies have revealed the important role of intuition in leadership. This is stated by Malewska and Sajdak (2014) [70] who said that in leadership when there is not enough data to analyze and evaluate the problem for leadership decision making, the leader can rely on the advice of intuition, even intuition in female leadership is quite sensitive in senior female managers [71]. Storsteen (2019) [72] reveals intuition as a key ingredient for innovation, performance, and informed leadership.

Table 7. Pearson correlation between manifestations of leadership thinking.

	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Identify leadership problems	4.17	0.33	-					
(2) Thinking deep and wide	3.56	0.46	0.47*	-				
(3) Flexibility and creativity	3.72	0.50	0.41*	0.45*	-			
(4) Speed of thought	3.25	0.42	0.42*	0.68**	0.45*	-		
(5) Specificity	4.14	0.37	0.64**	0.71**	0.38*	0.35*	-	
(6) Intuition	1.84	0.52	0.13	0.17	0.12	0.24	0.08	-

Note: Significance at: * $p<0.05$ and ** $p<0.01$

When researching the role of intuition in leadership, author Thanh (2017) [73] revealed that the ability to use the intuition of leaders in administrative agencies is quite limited, in most leadership decisions, the appearance of intuition is rather faint. The actual limitation of leadership thinking in the leadership team is also shown in Huan (2015) [74] with 9 manifestations: 1) subjectivity, voluntarism, escapism from reality conditions, regardless of objective laws; 2) expect, depend, stagnate, passive before the situation, do not promote the dynamism of will in leadership and management; 3) one-sidedly recognizing and solving problems in leadership and management; 4) bureaucracy, sloppy, not derived from historical conditions - specifically in perception or in applying theory to practice; 5) see and solve problems in isolation, without placing them in common relationships; 6) consider and solve problems in a "static" state, not in motion and change; 7) dogma, escapism from practice, non-practical reasoning; 8) empiricism, contempt for reasoning; 9) completely negate past legacy and tenure thinking. Therefore, the primary requirement to operate the administrative system effectively is that the leadership team needs to demonstrate significant creativity in leadership thinking. It is obvious that the above correlation results are only average, the sharper thinking requires faster and more accurate thinking operations; this is also the reason why there have been studies showing that the actual requirements of the leadership team in Vietnam need to innovate leadership thinking [48, 68, 69]. Under the impact of the digital transformation context, leaders cannot use the old thinking framework to respond and solve new challenges, and decision-making can only succeed when leaders change leadership thinking.

To have a basis to confirm the correlation between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, the Pearson correlation test is shown in Table 8:

Table 8. Correlation between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking.

	Mean	SD	R ¹
Transformational leadership	3.10	0.54	0.36*
Leadership thinking	3.45	0.43	

¹Coefficient correlation Pearson

*Correlation is statistically significant at level 0.05.

This result answers the third question, the correlation between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking is rather weak ($r=0.36^*$). Thus, the transformational leadership style has not had much impact on leadership thinking, without acumen, leadership decision making will be difficult to seize opportunities, while leadership often requires the acumen to adapt to the ever-changing leadership landscape. This correlation has been confirmed by Chou et al. (2013) [75] with significant statistics on the correlation between transformational leadership style and perception and the higher the correlation, the more effective the use of transformational leadership style is, and at the same time increasing leadership thinking, and leadership performance is also improved. Curtis et al. (2017) [54] shows that there is always a close relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, this relationship is directly proportional to leadership capacity.

5- Conclusion

The dimensions in the transformational leadership style, although not outstanding, have shown that they all participate in leadership activities, these dimensions are positively correlated at moderate and good levels, which means that the transformational leadership style has contributed to the improvement of leadership performance and the development of provincial administrative agencies in Vietnam. The dimensions of leadership thinking are also quite bold, such as leadership problem identification and specificity. However, the expression of intuition in practice is still quite faint, and intuition is not correlated with the remaining variables. Demonstrating intuition is an important component of the leadership thinking, but the reality is still outside the leadership thinking. There is a positive but weak correlation between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, transformational leadership style and leadership thinking have a certain impact, but not a close impact. Leadership thinking has not had much impact on transformational leadership style as well as transformational leadership style has not significantly changed leadership thinking. Previous studies have shown evidence for the role that transformational leadership practices and thinking play in organizational performance, but when there is a combination of transformational leadership style with the leadership thinking, leadership effectiveness can be enhanced by applying only transformational leadership style or separate leadership thinking. Due to the importance of provincial administrative agencies in Vietnam as well as the manipulation of transformational leadership style, leadership thinking is consistent with transformational leadership style, the findings of this study can be helping to provide a broader orientation for fostering and training transformational leadership style as well as develop leadership thinking in the leadership ranks of provincial-level administrative agencies, contribute to overcoming the lack of exemplary behavior in the transformational leadership style, leadership thinking of leaders, and at the same time meeting Vietnam's policy in the process of international integration.

5-1-Future Research

The academic context of leadership science, as well as leading practice in Vietnam, is rapidly changing, leaders are recommended to develop and significantly improve their transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, and at the time, there was a combination of transformational leadership style with leadership thinking, thereby being able to proactively and adapt to the domestic leadership context as well as the world leadership context. Further studies can be carried out in agencies of socio-political organizations, in the private sector, or central state management agencies. Similar studies have also been conducted in Vietnam's non-business units to confirm that today's leaders who actively adopt a transformational leadership style and incorporate leadership thinking will be the successful leadership model for both leaders and organizations.

5-2-Implication

This study contributes to providing some implications for leadership practice for leaders in leadership decision-making. This study has confirmed the transformational leadership style through the main manifestations of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, spiritual encouragement, and individualised consideration and leadership thinking in aspects of identity leadership issues, depth, and breadth, flexibility, and creativity, speed of thinking, specificity, intuition through assessments from those directly involved. These manifestations are not bold in leadership activities. On the other hand, if the leader pays attention to the correlation between the expressions in the transformational leadership style as well as in the leadership thinking, and at the same time pays attention to the application of the transformational leadership style with the leadership thinking, leadership will lead to better performance. Heads in provincial agencies should practice transformational leadership style and leadership thinking, to develop collective effectiveness, promote organizational growth to overcome leadership challenges.

5-3- Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted as a cross-sectional survey with responses collected from respondents at a specific point in time. On the other hand, this study was limited to the provincial administrative agencies in Vietnam and the responses from the respondents were related to the respondents' leadership activities, so this may be related to the meaning of the answer, respondents may be hesitant or reluctant to disclose their own opinions. Furthermore, the subjective factor may not be fully tested because the respondents may have subjective opinions based on leadership capacity and experience on the questions in the questionnaire. Future studies can compare leadership positions, hierarchies in the system of administrative agencies not only at the provincial level but also between local and central government levels. Research can also collect survey opinions from employees, from the people to get multi-dimensional information to get richer and more vivid specific scientific evidence about transformational leadership style and leadership thinking.

6- Declarations

6-1- Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation Thanh Nguyen Hai; writing - original draft preparation, writing - review and editing, visualization Tung Trinh Van; supervision Hien Nguyen Thi. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

6-2- Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

6-3- Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

6-4- Ethical Approval

Participants gave their written consent to use their anonymous data for statistical purposes. All of them were over 18 years old and voluntarily collaborated without receiving any financial compensation.

6-5- Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies have been completely observed by the authors.

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