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Does managers' motivation matter? Exploring the associations between motivation, transformational leadership, and innovation in a religious organization

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Abstract

Religious organizations are social systems operating in a complex and changing environment. By looking to an authority beyond themselves, religious organizations have comparatively little control over defining their own goals. In this juggling between sticking to the ultimate goal of an organization and adapting to complex changing environments, that is, in the juggling between tradition and renewal, transformational leadership seems to play an important role in religious organizations. The extensive body of literature on transformational leadership has focused more on the outcomes of transformational leadership than on its antecedents. We extend the existing literature by linking managers' motivation to their transformational leadership behaviors in a religious organization. More specifically, we examined the associations of intrinsic and prosocial motivation with transformational leadership, and we investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation among 252 managers in the largest nonprofit organization in Norway, the Church of Norway. Analyses in structural equation modeling revealed a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and transformational

leadership, whereas the relationship between prosocial motivation and transformational leadership was not significant. Transformational leadership was positively associated with innovation. Based on the results of the study, we discuss practical implications regarding how to support intrinsic motivation, transformational leadership, and innovation in religious organizations.

KEYWORDS

intrinsic motivation, innovation, prosocial motivation, religious organizations, transformational leadership.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Religious organizations are characterized as social systems operating in a complex and changing environment (Beckford, 1973). Whereas religious organizations such as congregations have religious goals—e.g., gathering for worship—nonreligious organizations exist as a response to perform desired activities in a market context. Furthermore, religious organizations look to an authority beyond themselves and have comparatively little control over defining their own goals. As such, the goals of religious organizations seem to fit in the category described by Scott as "ultimate" (Scott, 1987, p. 47), and such goals cannot be challenged. However, congregations will not survive unless they are able both to be a witness to proclaimed religious goals and to meet the needs of the members who are living in environments that are constantly changing (Harris, 1998).

In this juggling between sticking to the ultimate goal of an organization and adapting to complex changing environments, that is, in the juggling between *tradition* and *renewal*, leadership seems to play an important role in religious organizations, as stated by Beckford (1973, p. 50): "The precise effects of environmental influence are mediated for religious organizations by their leaders." In order to ensure conditions of survival and reproduction of religious organizations, management of human resources is critical (Zaleski & Zech, 1997). Thus, the current study seeks to investigate and understand the processes of leadership in religious organizations.

Transformational leaders develop supportive relationships with employees who build commitment to a common purpose (Riggio, Bass, & M og Orr, 2004), and such leadership behavior seems to be an appropriate approach in religious organizations where meeting the needs of their members is essential. In addition, the changing society in which religious organizations operate requires leaders paying attention to these changes, and transformational leadership behavior is seen as an important component of leading change (Bommer, Rubin, & Baldwin, 2004). Based on the arguments above, we argue that the transformational leadership theory is suitable for guiding leadership efforts in religious organizations.

As pointed out by Avolio and Bass (1995), there is a need to systematically investigate how leadership is embedded in different contexts that might facilitate or hinder transformational leadership behavior. Taking into account that leadership studies are context and culture specific (Askeland, 2016), we explore the link between managers' motivation, their transformational

leadership behavior, and innovation in a religious organization, The Church of Norway. In line with Harris (1995), we conceptualize religious organizations (congregations) as nonprofits, and the empirical setting in this study, the Church of Norway, is considered the largest religious organization and the largest nonprofit organization in Norway, where approximately three quarters of the Norwegian population are members of the Church.

Transformational leadership has been widely studied, and its effects on, for instance, organizational performance and job satisfaction are well documented (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011). In addition, the mechanisms explaining the link between transformational leadership and outcome variables have been explored, such as the mediating role of core job characteristics (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006) and the mediating role of employees' motivation and need fulfillment (Fernet, Trèpanier, Austin, Gagnè, & Forest, 2015; Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, Van Quaquebeke, & Van Dick, 2012). However, to date the extensive body of literature has focused more on the outcomes of transformational leadership than on its antecedents (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Hence, we do not yet know why "some leaders engage in transformational leadership behavior and others do not" (Jin, Seo, & Shapiro, 2016, p. 64).

Previous studies investigating the antecedents of transformational leadership have emphasized trait-like predictors of transformational leadership behavior, such as leaders' extroversion and agreeableness (Judge & Bono, 2000). However, Jin et al. (2016) argue for the importance of investigating contextual variabilities that are likely to explain the variability of transformational leadership. For example, they found that leaders' moods—which are subject to change over time—were associated with transformational leadership behavior. In the context of religious organizations, we contend that managers' motivation might also be an important antecedent of transformational leadership behavior because intrinsically motivated managers inspire their employees and are more likely to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors (Barbuto, 2005).

Furthermore, prosocial motivation might also be important for transformational leadership behavior in religious organizations because prosocially motivated managers are likely to invest time and energy in helping their employees and thus provide transformational leadership. However, little is known about the potential link between managers' motivation and their transformational leadership behavior. We therefore investigated the associations between managers' intrinsic motivation and prosocial motivation and their perceptions of their transformational leadership behavior in the Church of Norway. Efforts to determine antecedents are essential to advance the field of transformational leadership and to enhance our understanding of how and why transformational leadership behavior works.

Religious organizations are challenged to take innovative steps through adaptations to changes in the society in which they operate. The resources of religious organizations are classified under headings such as "ideas" in addition to "people" (Beckford, 1973, p. 51), and innovation seems to be of importance in religious organizations. Innovation is vital to the successful performance of organizations (Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014) and is regarded as "a core function of nonprofit organizations" (Meyer & Leitner, 2018, p. 1), which are created and exist primarily to give expressions to social, religious, and moral values as well as to complete specific tasks (Jeavons, 1992). Transformational leadership behavior might have a great bearing on innovation (McMurray, Islam, Sarros, & Pirola-Merlo, 2013; Mumford & Licuanan, 2004). For example, transformational leaders stimulate their employees to question the common ways of solving problems, which, in turn, might enhance the employees' creativity and innovation. There have been relatively few empirical studies within nonprofit organizations investigating

the link between transformational leadership and innovation (Jaskyte, 2004; McMurray et al., 2013); thus, this study examines the link between transformational leadership behavior and innovation in the Church of Norway.

In sum, this study examined the relationship between managers' motivation, transformational leadership, and innovation in a religious organization in Norway. We specifically address the following two questions: (a) How are managers' intrinsic motivation and prosocial motivation related to transformational leadership behavior in religious organizations? (b) How is transformational leadership behavior related to innovation in religious organizations? In the following, we review the literature guiding our hypotheses about the potential link between managers' motivation and transformational leadership behavior as well as the relationship between transformational leadership behavior and employee innovation, with a specific focus on religious organizations.

2 | CORE CONCEPTS, THEORY, AND PRIOR RESEARCH

2.1 | Religious organizations

Religious organizations have much in common with nonreligious organizations. However, their distinctiveness lies firstly in the notion of religious organizations such as congregations as being gatherings of worship and with no main goal or aim in which other organizations have them (Harris, 1995). Second, the authority structure in religious organizations is "external and theologically defined rather than internal and organizationally defined" (Torry, 2014, p. 39). This means that every congregation looks to an ultimate authority beyond itself, and that authority is God. As such, managing religious organizations means "a very limited range of tools for persuading members to follow their suggestions, and there is little interest in formal procedures" (Billis, 2010, p. 116). These two characteristics of congregations—"the special authority of ministers and the low ceiling of ultimate goals" (Harris, 1998, p. 614)—express the distinctiveness of religious organizations.

2.1.1 | The Church of Norway

Specifically, this study was conducted in the Church of Norway, an Evangelical Lutheran church with close ties to the state and to the people of Norway (Fretheim, 2015). It is the largest and oldest nationwide member organization in Norway and includes 73% of the country's population. Traditionally, from the 16th century until 2012, the church of Norway was a state church. In 2012, the relationship between the church and the state was reconfigured, and the historically national church is now defined as a "folk-church" (Fretheim, 2015, p. 76), with an aim of having more involvement in society by having a "clear and constructive voice in the Norwegian society, in cooperation with authorities, other denominations, cultural life and civil society" (Church of Norway, 2015). Participation of large numbers of volunteers also belongs to the Church of Norway, and volunteers can only to a limited degree be governed (Sirris, 2018). The range of the activities run by the Church of Norway would not be possible without the commitment of these volunteers as well as involvement of the staff. The two groups therefore seem dependent on each other, and cooperation between them is often seen as a key to success in churches and in civil society organizations (Fretheim, 2015).

2.2 | Motivation and transformational leadership

2.2.1 | Motivation

Motivation is important for organizations and refers to the "energetic forces" that "initiate work-related behavior and determine its form, direction, intensity and duration" (Pinder, 2008, p. 11). There are a number of theories that provide different factors that facilitate motivation, for example, need theory (Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1987), equity theory or social comparison theory (Adams, 1965), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980), and self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT is seen as a useful theoretical framework in this study because it examines conditions that elicit and sustain intrinsic motivation.

SDT serves as a broad framework for the study of human behavior in social contexts. Among the six core mini-theories within SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2019), we lean on and focus on the literature on intrinsic motivation. SDT's origins are rooted in the explorations of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and it was developed to account for variations in intrinsic motivation and to characterize factors sustaining intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation herein refers to engaging in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction inherent in the activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to SDT, satisfying three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is essential for individuals' psychological growth and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000), including intrinsic motivation (Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016).

SDT thus posits that social inputs supporting perceived autonomy, competence, and (for many activities) relatedness can enhance intrinsic motivation. Positive feedback may for example increase intrinsic motivation by enhancing feelings of competence. From an SDT perspective, autonomy support thus also fosters intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Many studies have shown that this holds true in organizational contexts (see for example, Gagné, Deci, & Ryan, 2017; Gillet, Gagné, Sauvagère, & Fouquereau, 2013; Jungert, Koestner, Houlfort, & Schattke, 2013), while motivation suffers when workers experience psychological harassment or greater pressure on the job (Fernet, Austin, & Vallerand, 2012; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2013). In addition, intervention studies have shown that support from training managers (Hardré & Reeve, 2009) as well as co-workers (Jungert, Van den Broeck, Osterman, & Schreurs, 2018) results in employees with higher levels of motivation.

Someone who is intrinsically motivated sees the activity itself as its own reward. Tasks are interesting and engaging and afford opportunities for learning and growth (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Thus, it is not surprising that intrinsic motivation has been linked to high energy levels (Ryan & Deci, 2008) and persistence (Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992). Moreover, intrinsic motivation is positively linked to affective commitment (Kuvaas, 2006), high levels of effort (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004), enthusiasm and engagement (Van den Broeck, Lens, De Witte, & Van Coillie, 2013), working attitudes and behaviors (Battistelli, Galletta, Portoghese, & Vandenberghe, 2013), thriving (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005), well-being (Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999), performance (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017), and contextual work performance and creativity (Gagné & Deci, 2005) and is negatively linked to turnover intention (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2010) and burnout (Fernet, Guay, & Senécal, 2004). Furthermore, a meta-analysis has found that intrinsic motivation predicts performance, especially on heuristic tasks, in which the quality of performance is critical (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014). Hence, intrinsic motivation is theorized to

energize employees and help them focus on their work in an integrative way. Managers that are intrinsically motivated are thus more likely be more transformative than less intrinsically motivated managers.

While intrinsic motivation is a classic type of motivation, more attention has recently been given to prosocial motivation. Prosocial motivation refers to the desire to perform an action because it benefits other people (Bolino & Grant, 2016; Grant, 2008). Prosocial motivation can serve multiple goals. For instance, managers might desire to help others because they care about the people, because they feel it is a good thing to do, and/or because they want to feel good about themselves (Grant & Berry, 2011). Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008) suggests that intrinsic motivation and prosocial motivation can be understood as relatively independent, both theoretically and empirically. Intrinsically motivated managers emphasize pleasure and enjoyment, whereas prosocially motivated managers emphasize the desire to benefit others.

There is a substantial body of research on the antecedents of prosocial behaviors at work, as shown in a recent review (Bolino & Grant, 2016). There are also new lines of research investigating what organizations should do to foster more giving (Grant, 2008) or to grow givers at work (Carlsen, Dysvik, Skerlavaj, & Kvalsnes, 2018). When it comes to consequences of prosocial motivation, Grant (2007) distinguishes between behavioral consequences such as effort and persistence and identity consequences such as increased competence and social worth for the individuals. Furthermore, givers at work, either directed inward to one's colleagues or outward to external contacts, are recognized as a source of competitive advantage in the long run (Carlsen et al., 2018).

2.2.2 | Leadership

Transformational leadership has received considerable attention in recent decades. This type of leadership is characterized by four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). *Inspirational motivation* signifies that the leader provides the employees with a clear purpose, vision, or mission. *Idealized influence* implies that the leader serves as a role model for ethical conduct. *Intellectual stimulation* reflects that the leaders motivate the employees to question the traditional and common ways of solving problems and encourage them to question the methods they use to improve them. *Individualized consideration* means that the leader focuses on understanding the needs of each employee and works continuously to develop the employee's full potential. Transformational leadership is contrasted with transactional leadership, which implies exchange processes and consists of contingent rewards. In the following, we develop the hypothesis that intrinsic and prosocial motivation is positively related to transformational leadership.

Managers who are intrinsically motivated are likely to see activities as their own reward and to view tasks as interesting, engaging, and affording opportunities for learning and growth (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Moreover, managers' enjoyment and pleasure in their work are likely to inspire their employees to incorporate pleasure and enjoyment into their own work. This is in line with the rationale of Barbuto (2005), who suggests that leaders who are internally motivated at work (e.g., acting out of a sense of enjoyment) are more likely to act according to transformational leadership behaviors. In the current study, we investigate this in a specific niche, which is an important first step to obtaining more knowledge on the link between managers' intrinsic motivation and their transformational leadership behavior.

Another explanation for why intrinsic motivation among managers might be associated with transformational leadership is rooted in SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which posits that intrinsically motivated individuals have their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy satisfied. The satisfaction of these needs is regarded as essential to optimal functioning. Based on the notion that we can only give away what we have, intrinsically motivated managers can better help their employees develop their potential and optimal functioning, and this is characterized as transformational leadership behavior in terms of individualized consideration. This is in line with previous research from an SDT perspective that linked autonomous motivation to transformational leadership among managers in Canada (Trèpanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2012).

The idea that prosocial motivation enhances transformational leadership is based on the work of Grant (2007), who suggests that the stronger the motivation to make a prosocial difference, the greater the helping behavior. The underlying logic is that when people care about others, they are more likely to help them. Accordingly, people with high prosocial motivation are likely to invest time and energy in helping others without being concerned with the personal costs of these behaviors. Hence, managers with a high degree of prosocial motivation tend to help their employees and, in turn, provide transformational leadership through individualized consideration.

Considering these arguments and findings, we offer the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 *Managers' intrinsic motivation in religious organizations is positively related to their transformational leadership perceptions.*

Hypothesis 2 *Managers' prosocial motivation in religious organizations is positively related to their transformational leadership perceptions.*

2.3 | Transformational leadership and innovation

Innovation processes consist of different stages (George & Zhou, 2001). Creativity, defined as useful and novel ideas (Amabile, 1996), is the starting point for innovation to occur. The next important stages of innovation include the selection and implementation of ideas. Although idea generation and implementation can occur interchangeably, creative idea generation is widely accepted as a necessary condition for innovation implementation at the individual level (Skerlavaj, Cerne, & Dysvik, 2014).

Research on the determinants of innovation and creativity has identified a wide set of factors ranging from the individual level, such as a supervisor's feedback style, to the group level, such as task structure and communication types, to the organizational level, such as strategy, structure, culture, and climate (Damanpour, 1991). Our study focuses on the individual level, exploring the link between transformational leadership behavior and leaders' perceptions of their employees' innovation.

There are different reasons supporting the expectation that transformational leadership increases employee creativity and innovation. First, by providing intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders stimulate their employees to question the common ways of solving problems and to "think outside the box." Second, by providing an idealized influence (role modeling), transformational leaders who stimulate their employees to think in new ways about old problems might serve as role models and thereby encourage their employees to challenge their own

traditions and beliefs (Hater & Bass, 1988). Third, by providing individualized consideration, transformational leaders support the needs of each employee, in line with Hetland, Hetland, Andreassen, Pallesen, and Notelaers (2011). Employees' intrinsic motivation leads to creativity and innovation because intrinsically motivated employees prefer novel approaches to problem solving (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003). Fourth, by providing inspirational motivation, leaders articulate a clear purpose or vision, and employees' identification with the organization's vision or mission has been related to increased motivation and higher levels of performance (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Furthermore, Shin and Choi (2019) found that leadership styles such as "vision setters" played an important role for promoting innovation in nonprofit human service organizations (p. 64).

Another way of explaining the link between transformational leadership and employee innovation is based on the fundamental notion underlying transformational leadership theory, that employees/followers of transformational leaders perceive their work as more meaningful and therefore are more self-engaged (Bono & Judge, 2003). When transformational leaders convey work in terms of values that are endorsed by the employees, the employees tend to perceive their work as more meaningful. These perceptions of meaningful work and self-engagement lead to increased performance, satisfaction, and motivation (Bono & Judge, 2003), and these perceptions are likely to increase innovation among the employees because self-engaged and motivated employees are more likely to be creative (Amabile, 1996).

Thus, we expect that transformational leadership behavior will increase employees' innovation, in line with the study by McMurray et al. (2013) who found that transformational leadership facilitated workplace innovation in a religious-based nonprofit organization in Australia. Because intrinsic and prosocial motivation are related to transformational leadership and because transformational leadership is related to innovation, it is likely that mediation occurs. We therefore hypothesize that transformational leadership mediates the link between managers' motivation and employees' innovation. Based on the described arguments and previous findings, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3 *Transformational leadership behavior is positively related to employee innovation in religious organizations.*

Hypothesis 4 *The association between motivation and innovation is mediated by transformational leadership.*

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Sample

A survey was distributed to all managers in the Church of Norway, including administrative leaders on the municipality level and administrative leaders on the congregational level as well as leaders of the priests/pastors operating on a multi-municipal level. A total of 252 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 35%. Analysis of non-random missing data was performed by comparing the background variables of the respondents with national statistics of the population (church leaders in the Church of Norway). The background data on age, sex, and education level seemed to match the data on national mean values. The mean age in

the sample was 58.0 years compared with 58.3 years for this group in the population. Similarly, the distribution of males and females in the sample did not differ from the gender distribution in the population (60% men and 40% women).

All respondents were employed payroll staff in the Church, as compared with having elected positions or roles. The first two groups, consisting of the administrative leaders on the municipal and congregational levels, are considered lay people, without theological educational backgrounds and with managerial professional careers. In the third group, the leaders of the priests, all respondents hold a higher theological university degree and corresponding professional careers as priests.

3.2 | Measurements

The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (Gagnè et al., 2015) was used to assess *intrinsic motivation*. This scale consists of three items measuring intrinsic motivation (e.g., "Because what I do in my work is exciting") rated on a 7-point scale, and we used the mean scores of the three items. The internal consistency coefficient for intrinsic motivation was satisfactory ($\alpha = .87$).

Prosocial motivation was operationalized using the scale by Rønning, Brochs-Haukedal, Glasø, and Matthiesen (2013). The scale consists of four items that are rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (e.g., "I want to help others through my work"). The alpha coefficient for prosocial motivation was 0.84.

Perceived transformational leadership was measured using a short version of the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The original scale taps into the four subdimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) using 20 items. However, as explained in the following, we reduced the number of items by selecting six items to represent these subdimensions based on the face validity of the items and their relevance for the particular research context. In line with previous research (e.g., Trèpanier et al., 2012), the managers rated their own leadership style (e.g., "I help others to develop their strengths") indicating their responses on a scale from ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (frequently, if not always). The six items showed a satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .77$).

Innovation was measured by the scale used in Rønning et al. (2013), which was adapted from and used by George and Zhou (2001). The Norwegian version (Rønning et al., 2013) displayed satisfying internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$) and was assessed in the current research. The measurement scale, which includes five items, reports managers' perceptions of their employees' idea generation and idea implementation. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, and example items are "Comes up with new and practical ideas to improve performance" and "Develops adequate plans and schedules for the implementation of new ideas." The internal consistency for innovation in this study showed a Cronbach's alpha of .84.

3.3 | Statistical analyses

We used the SPSS-24 program for preliminary data analyses. Descriptive statistics were assessed, and bivariate correlation analysis (Pearson's *r*) was used to examine associations between the variables.

	Original MLQ
Short version of MLQ	0.86*
Idealized influence	0.75*
Inspirational motivation	0.74*
Intellectual stimulation	0.55*
Individualized consideration	0.40*

TABLE 1 Correlations between the full MLQ, the short MLQ, and its factors

Note: *p < .001.
Abbreviation: MLQ, multifactor leadership questionnaire.

For testing the proposed model, we examined the items of the MLQ measuring transformational leadership. First, some of the items in the original scale refer to a North American context, which would not be relevant in the context of Norwegian managers in a religious organization. Our initial process involved eliminating such items, where three of the items were eliminated, such as "Displays a sense of power and confidence." Displaying power is to a low degree part of the Norwegian culture and working environment, which is also shown in the Power Distance Index (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Second, it was important to investigate the meaning, criterion validity, and face validity of each item and to select the items that we deemed had the best face validity. In the next step of the adaptation process, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out using the EQS program (Bentler, 1995) to confirm the selected model. Based on the items' loading (>0.40), 11 items were removed from the model because of low loading and because the Lagrange test indicated that they did not fit well to the model. Finally, six transformational leadership items were kept in the model. Items from each of the four sub-dimensions of the original scale were represented in the model, thus the proposed model was a latent factor representing general transformational leadership.

Table 1 shows the two-tailed Pearson's correlations between the new and the original scale (0.86*) and between the sub-dimensions of the original and the new scale (between 0.40 and 0.75), which all were significant and ranged from moderate to high.

Three statistics of model fit were used when confirming the six-item model, namely the comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.94; Satorra-Bentler Scaled Statistics (S-BSS) divided by the number of degrees of freedom (S-BSS/df) = 29.28/9 = 3.25; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with a 90% confidence interval = 0.08 (CI = 0.06 to 0.13), which indicated a good fit.

We tested the mediating role of transformational leadership with SPSS using the macro of Preacher and Hayes (2008) for testing and comparing indirect effects in two separate multiple-mediator models. Intrinsic motivation in the first model and prosocial motivation in the second model were used as the independent variables, while transformational leadership was modeled as a mediator in both models. Bootstrapping (with the number of samples set at 5,000) was used to calculate 95% confidence intervals for the specific indirect effects. Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommend bootstrapping, especially for testing mediation, because it does not require normality of the sampling distribution. In addition, bootstrapping provides distributions for each statistic, from which confidence intervals can be derived (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). As with simple and multiple regressions, the parameters can be read as regression weights.

This study was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, and the respondents were given information regarding the study's purpose and how anonymity was secured.

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	*SD*	Scale range
Prosocial motivation	4.31	0.64	1–5
Intrinsic motivation	5.41	1.11	1–7
Transformational leadership	2.97	0.54	0–4
Innovation	3.76	0.67	1–5

TABLE 3 Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1						
2. Age	0.20[a]	1					
3. Tenure	−0.07	0.27[a]	1				
4. Prosocial motivation	−0.01	0.05	0.12	1			
5. Intrinsic motivation	0.03	−0.10	0.09	0.41[a]	1		
6. Transformational leadership	0.09	−0.02	0.02	0.15[b]	0.20[a]	1	
7. Innovation	−0.09	−0.08	0.04	0.32[a]	0.15[a]	0.16[a]	1

[a]Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
[b]Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Preliminary analysis

Data screening was done prior to the analysis. Two of the 252 cases were excluded from the analysis due to missing values for almost all the leadership items. To avoid missing sum score numbers, the expectation maximization imputation method was used for replacement of the missing data (for the leadership items). This method is recommended when data are missing not at random or when it is not possible to know if the data are missing at random (e.g., Myers, 2011). The means and standard deviations obtained after the missing values were replaced with the imputed data showed no changes or only minor changes compared to the results before imputation. This is in accordance with previous experiences with expectation maximization imputation in which "some differences can be detected, but no consistent pattern emerges" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 61). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for all the variables in the study, and Table 3 shows the correlation matrix.

4.2 | Testing of the proposed model

The model in Figure 1 provides an adequate fit to the data with the following parameter estimates: CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.07, CI (0.05 to 0.08), chi^2 = 230.15/115 df, $p < .001$. The path coefficient shows a significant positive association between intrinsic motivation and transformational leadership (0.19, $p < .05$). The relationship between prosocial motivation and
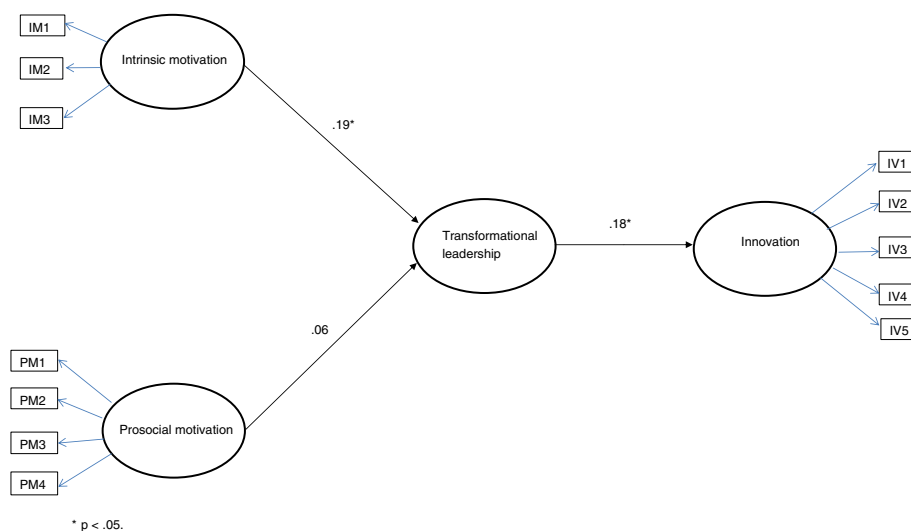
FIGURE 1 The research model with parameter estimates. *$p < .05$

transformational leadership was not significant, while the link between transformational leadership and innovation was positive (0.18, $p < .05$).

An initial multiple mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008) with a bootstrap procedure (5,000 iterations, bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals) was run with intrinsic motivation as the independent variable, innovation as the dependent variable, and transformational leadership as a mediator. In addition, gender, age, and tenure of the leaders were included as covariates in the model. In the second model, prosocial motivation was the independent variable. The results of the mediation analysis did not confirm any mediating role of transformational leadership in the relation between intrinsic motivation and innovation (95% CI = −0.02 to 0.00) or in the relation between prosocial motivation and innovation (95% CI = −0.01 to −0.02). In addition, none of the covariates were significantly associated with the variables in the two models. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

5 | DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the associations between leaders' motivation, transformational leadership, and innovation among managers in the Church of Norway. Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 3, the managers' intrinsic motivation was positively related to transformational leadership, and transformational leadership was positively linked to employees' innovation. Thus, the current study supports the importance of managers being intrinsically motivated. Hypothesis 2, regarding a positive association between prosocial motivation and transformational leadership, was not supported. The correlation matrix (Table 3) shows a significant correlation between prosocial motivation and transformational leadership (0.15*), but the relationship was not significant in the model (Figure 1), thus showing no additive effect of prosocial motivation. Furthermore, Hypothesis 4 regarding the mediating role of transformational leadership was not supported.

The positive association between managers' intrinsic motivation and their transformational leadership behavior in religious organizations (Hypothesis 2) indicates that managers motivated

by interesting and engaging tasks at work are more likely to self-report transformational leadership behavior. Intrinsically motivated managers are theorized to energize their employees and help them to develop their potential. Thus, managers that are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be more transformative, which is also supported by Barbuto (2005) and Trèpanier et al. (2012). The positive correlation between managers' intrinsic motivation and their transformational leadership behavior can also be illustrated by the following Norwegian saying: "The greatest joy one can feel (intrinsic motivation) is by making others happy (individualized consideration)." Thus, when the degree of transformational leadership behavior is high and the managers help their employees, the managers' intrinsic motivation will increase as they experience the "greatest joy one can feel." Moreover, intrinsic motivation will increase the transformational leadership behavior (individualized consideration), for example, by supporting the needs of the employees.

Transformational leadership behavior was correlated with innovation in this study. This finding is in line with previous research in the nonprofit sector indicating that providing individual support as a major facet of transformational leadership correlates with creativity that can lead to workplace innovation (Jaskyte, 2004; McMurray et al., 2013). The finding in this research is also consistent with research showing that motivation of teachers (Pelletier, Sèguin-Lèvesque, & Legault, 2002) and motivation of coaches (Rocchi, Pelletier, & Couture, 2013) provides individual support to students and athletes through fostering autonomy support, and hence a creative climate. Transformative leaders also stimulate their employees to question the common ways of doing things. In the Church, this could for instance involve church leaders stimulating the employees to think in new ways and "outside the box" regarding how to adapt the old traditional rituals in the Church to the changing society. In this regard, managers in the Church who report high levels of transformational leadership appear to support employee innovation.

The context, the nature of the organization, and who works there all influence the findings of a study. To what extent do the findings in a religious organization differ from other organizational contexts within the same country? A study by Haug (2016) reveals that managers in the Church of Norway report a significantly higher degree of transformational leadership behavior compared to a representative sample (n = 2,910) of cross-sectoral managers in Norway (Rønning et al., 2013). In a way, the Church leaders seem to do a little more of everything. Similarly, Haug (2016) revealed that the sub-dimension of individualized considerations is especially prominent among managers in the Church of Norway, followed by intellectual stimulation. The management culture of the Church of Norway has been described with keywords such as "personal care and closeness" (Askeland, 2015b, p. 96). This is in line with a study by Askeland (2015a) about managerial practice in faith-based welfare organizations in Norway, showing that the managers were "mainly oriented toward internal matters and relating to internal actors such as their own subordinates" (p. 48). Personal care and being close to others correspond with one of the two important aspects in order for the congregation to survive, namely to meet the needs of its members (Harris, 1998). Also, congregations by their nature place gatherings in the forefront of their activities, which might also explain why managers in the Church of Norway report a significantly higher degree of transformational leadership behavior compared to a representative sample of managers in Norway (Rønning et al., 2013).

Three different levels of managers within the Church of Norway were included in the sample. Despite these differences in the sample, no significant differences were found in the groups' overall transformational leadership behavior. For the sub-dimensions of individualized consideration and idealized influence, the leaders of the priests reported significantly higher scores when compared with the group of administrative leaders on the municipal level, but not when

compared with the administrative leaders in the congregations. There is some evidence showing that higher educational level and higher organizational position will increase the level of transformational leadership behavior of leaders (Matthiesen, Glasø, & Brochs-Haukedal, 2013, p. 202). This is the case for the leaders of the priests, all of whom have higher university degrees and operate on a multi-municipal basis. Combined with the fact that these leaders have the same educational and professional backgrounds as their subordinates, their knowledge of their profession provides a special opportunity to give and utilize individual consideration and idealized influence.

This study was conducted in a religious organization (congregation) that can be seen as a distinct form or a special case of a nonprofit organization (Billis, 2010; Harris, 1995). Involvement in a congregation is essentially voluntary, and members will leave if their expectations of social needs are not met. Their demands are not directed toward achievement of instrumental goals, but rather directed to social and personal benefits such as friendship and mutual support. As such, management of human resources is of significance, which is also indicated by Meyer and Leitner (2018) showing that human resources slack (including motivation and qualification) rather than financial slack has a positive impact on innovation in nonprofit organizations. Taking good care of human resources has been given increased attention across organizational contexts, and religious organizations have had a long and strong focus and extensive experience in this. As such, religious organizations represent an "extreme" case and thus might be of interest for other types of organizations to look into.

5.1 | Limitations and future research

The contributions of this study must be interpreted in light of its limitations. First, this research was limited by its use of a cross-sectional design. The data were collected at only one point in time, which makes it impossible to draw conclusions regarding the causal ordering among the relationships explored in the study. Accordingly, longitudinal or experimental studies are preferable and might help strengthen the causal inferences in future studies conducting similar research. Another limitation of the study is that the data were gathered using a single organizational informant design. This approach might cause concern about possible mono-method bias. Although it has been argued that the use of a single method does not automatically introduce systematic bias (Spector, 2006), it is recommended that future research collect measures from different data sources for independent and dependent variables (e.g., more objective measures of innovation) in order to minimize the effects of any bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

The reliance on a self-reported questionnaire that collected the leaders' own perceptions of transformational leadership was also a limitation of this study. Specifically, measurement bias might be created when the leaders reported the innovativeness of their own employees as well as their own leadership behavior. In order to reduce contamination of the subjective measures in this study, inter-rater reliability can be assessed in line with Viswesvaran's (2001) suggestions for performance measures. Thus, in our study, employees' evaluations of their leaders' transformational leadership behavior in addition to self-report ratings from the leader would have strengthened the reliability of the transformational leadership measurement. Furthermore, the correlation matrix (Table 3) and the model (Figure 1) show weak relations. Because motivation explains only a small amount of variance in transformational leadership, continued search for other relevant variables is necessary. Finally, the focus of the study and the sample were quite

narrow, and the study was conducted in one single religious organization. In other words, we acknowledge that this is a niche study. For these reasons, we cannot make large claims regarding the study's implications. However, our intention was to study this specific niche as a first step to understanding the relationship between managers' motivation and transformational leadership. Future studies will have to be carried out in order to make greater claims.

Regarding future research, leadership is only one of many conditions for innovation in religious organizations. In a longitudinal study, Osborne, Chew, and McLaughlin (2008) found that the innovative capacity is contingent upon the public policy framework. Hence, structural conditions are important for innovation. Future research could include both individual and structural conditions (such as public policy framework) for innovation in religious organizations. Furthermore, a recent study has investigated the dark side of transformational leader behavior for the leaders themselves, and the role of the followers' attributes were examined as well (Lin, Scott, & Matta, 2019). Similarly, future research exploring the link between managers' motivation and transformational leadership behavior could investigate the role of the employees, and more specifically, to what extent the relationship between managers' motivation and their transformational leadership behavior is dependent upon the attributes of their employees.

Based on the findings from this research indicating that transformational leadership is related to innovation in a religious organization, future research could investigate work, practices, and everyday activities within the four dimensions of transformational leadership. This type of research would exemplify, as well as expand, our understanding of transformational leadership activities, and it would combine positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) with institutional work, which is in line with recent research (Nilsson, 2015). Nilsson (2015) synthesizes the literature on institutional work and positive organizational scholarship and defines positive institutional work as "the creation or maintenance of institutional patterns that express mutually constitutive experiential and social goods" (p. 370). In this respect, a relevant future study would be to identify work and practices representing the sub-dimensions of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, which would be consistent with previous studies combining positive organizational scholarship approaches with practice-based studies (Aarrestad, Brøndbo, & Carlsen, 2015). These combinations of approaches also imply a combination of different methods, supporting the mixed-method paradigm (Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2016), which would provide deeper insight into the antecedents of transformational leadership.

5.2 | Practical implications

Despite the limitations outlined earlier, this study might have some practical implications for leadership in religious organizations. Research supporting the view that transformational leadership can be trained (Arnulf, 2013; Nielsen & Cleal, 2011) indicates that a better understanding of motivational factors could have implications for learning methods and outcomes. For instance, when managers recognize employees' unique perspectives, that is, behaviors consistent with the individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation dimensions of transformational leadership (Bono & Judge, 2003), the employees are more likely to report autonomous/intrinsic motivation, leading to employee innovation. Leadership training programs including a better understanding of and exercises on perspective-taking could enhance transformational leadership behavior. Relying on the principles of an intervention targeting the way in which team members could support each other's autonomous motivation through

perspective-taking, collaboration, and communication (Jungert et al., 2018), top managers could adopt similar approaches to teams of managers in religious organizations.

The empirical results of this study also suggest that leaders' intrinsic motivation is positively related to their transformational leadership behavior in the studied religious organization. Hence, it is important to support managers' intrinsic motivation by satisfying their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Stone, Deci, & Ryan, 2009). At an individual level, top leaders can support managers' autonomy by providing choices, encouraging self-initiation, and acknowledging the managers' perspectives (Stone et al., 2009). Relatedness involves respect and care for each other. The ability to listen, to understand one another, and to develop a sense of connectedness is important to motivate change and development (Eide & Eide, 2007). The competence of managers can be supported through feedback and by providing them with optimally challenging tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

6 | CONCLUSION

Despite the strong empirical foundation of transformational leadership, little is known about the motivational mechanisms related to transformational leadership behavior (Trèpanier et al., 2012). This study shows a positive relationship between managers' intrinsic motivation and their self-reported transformational leadership behavior and a positive association between transformational leadership and innovation in a religious organization. These findings indicate that managers' motivation seems to matter to some extent in the religious organization. Furthermore, the findings suggest that supporting managers' intrinsic motivation might play a role for transformational leadership and innovation in the largest nonprofit organization in Norway, the Church of Norway. This niche study thus takes a small but important first step toward gaining more knowledge about the motivational mechanisms related to transformational leadership in religious organizations.

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