Nexus Between Transformational Leadership and Community Development Initiatives in Ghana: Mediating Role of Social Capital

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and community development initiatives in Ghana, with social capital serving as a mediating variable. A quantitative research approach underpinned by a positivist paradigm and explanatory research design was employed. A structured questionnaire was employed to gather data from 384 respondents. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling was implemented to evaluate the structural models and measurements. The findings indicate that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on community development initiatives and social capital. Social capital also has a significant impact on community development initiatives and fully mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and development outcomes. These results indicate that transformational leadership indirectly improves development outcomes by fostering social capital. As a result, to promote sustainable community development, leaders and policymakers should prioritize transformational leadership approaches that foster trust, enhance cooperation, and build a strong sense of shared purpose among community members. It is essential to establish social capital to convert leadership into fruitful development initiatives. Finally, this study makes a valuable contribution to the limited empirical literature on the mediating role of social capital in the leadership-development nexus within the Ghanaian context, providing valuable insights for both theory and practice in community development.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Social Capital, Community Development, Sustainable Development, Community Participation.

1. Introduction

In emerging economies like Ghana, community development initiatives have become indispensable mechanisms for addressing persistent socioeconomic challenges, alleviating poverty, reducing inequality, and enhancing the overall quality of life for citizens (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021; Osei & Zhuang, 2020). To empower marginalized and vulnerable populations, these initiatives are essential for nurturing local ownership, enhancing service delivery, and promoting participatory decision-making processes (Agyei et al., 2024; Puni et al., 2022). In such contexts, community development typically depends on inclusive governance structures, social cohesion, and collective action to mobilize community resources in pursuit of shared developmental goals (Akanpaaba et al., 2022; Amankwaa et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the sustainability and success of these initiatives are significantly impacted by the character and nature of the leadership that coordinates these endeavors. Transformational leadership has been identified as particularly influential among the diverse leadership paradigms that have been acknowledged in development literature (Michael et al., 2021; Asitik, 2023). This is due to its ability to motivate followers to pursue a vision that surpasses individual interests, thereby empowering community members to become proactive agents of change (Abunyewah et al., 2023; Nwaham et al., 2024). Transformational leaders can cultivate innovative problem-solving, nurture intellectual engagement, and establish trust and commitment among community stakeholders (Nwaham et al., 2021). They underscore the importance of moral values, the articulation of an inclusive vision, and the individualization of community members' needs, thereby fostering a sense of shared purpose and collective responsibility that is indispensable for the attainment of sustainable development objectives (Obuobisa-Darko, 2020; Rahman, 2024). The role of transformational leadership is even more relevant in the Ghanaian context, where traditional chieftaincy institutions, communal values, and collective cultural orientations significantly influence social behavior (Tackie et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2024). In these environments, transformational leadership practices are not only consistent with indigenous social structures but also facilitate national development policies that emphasize grassroots empowerment and local capacity development (Hilton et al., 2023). Therefore, it is of both theoretical and practical importance to comprehend the manner in which transformational leadership enhances the efficacy of community development initiatives.

Despite the acknowledged importance of leadership in community development discourse, there remains a discernible gap in the literature regarding the specific pathways through which transformational leadership impacts the success of these initiatives. Social capital is a critical mechanism that has been theoretically proposed but has been underexplored in empirical studies, notably in Sub-Saharan African and Ghanaian contexts (Saif et al., 2024; Boamah et al., 2024). Social capital, which is defined as the networks, norms, trust, and reciprocal relationships that enable collective action for mutual benefit, has been widely acknowledged as a critical factor in the development of sustainable outcomes, participatory communities, and resilience (Reniati et al., 2024; Hilton et al., 2023). Communities are capable of surmounting collective action challenges, organizing resource mobilization, and guaranteeing the sustainability of development initiatives when they possess substantial

amounts of social capital (Hussain et al., 2024; Al-Ghazali et al., 2022). Although previous research has investigated the independent effects of leadership and social capital on development success (Akanpaaba et al., 2022; Amankwaa et al., 2022), there is sparse empirical evidence that demonstrates how transformational leadership can actively cultivate social capital within communities to improve development outcomes. This is a critical deficiency, as transformational leaders are well-positioned to cultivate trust, promote shared norms, and establish interconnected social networks that are essential for social capital (Sharma & Kaur, 2024; Bentoy et al., 2022). In addition, the Ghanaian socio-cultural landscape, which is characterized by its strong traditions of communalism, social interdependence, and chieftaincy-based governance structures, implies that social capital could be a significant pathway through which leadership can influence community development outcomes (Carmen et al., 2022; Alzoraiki et al., 2023). The lack of empirical research that tests this mediating role, despite its theoretical plausibility, has resulted in a substantial gap in the understanding of how leadership dynamics interact with sociocultural resources to influence development trajectories in Ghana. In light of the increasing policy interest in utilizing local leadership and social capital to attain Ghana's medium-term development objectives, it is imperative to address this divide (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021; Osei & Zhuang, 2020). Consequently, it is both urgent and necessary to examine the mediating influence of social capital on the relationship between transformational leadership and community development initiatives to enhance the scholarly discourse and inform effective development practice.

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by addressing the empirical gaps identified in previous research. The study provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending the determinants of community development in Ghana by combining transformational leadership theory with the concept of social capital. The results contribute to the advancement of scholarly discourse regarding the role of leadership in the cultivation of social resources that are essential for the success of development. Additionally, the research is of practical importance to policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders, as it emphasizes leadership strategies that can improve the effectiveness of community development initiatives and increase social capital. In addition to enriching the theoretical foundations of leadership and community development, the study also offers practical insights for enhancing development practice in Ghana and other comparable contexts in sub-Saharan Africa.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section develops the theoretical framework and research hypotheses based on relevant literature. This is followed by a description of the research methodology, including data collection and analysis procedures. The subsequent sections present the empirical findings and discuss their implications for theory and practice. The paper concludes by outlining limitations and suggesting avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical Background of the Study

Transformational Leadership Theory, pioneered by Burns in 1978 and further developed by

Bass and Avolio in 1994, asserts that transformational leaders demonstrate four fundamental behaviors: intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. These behaviors allow leaders to establish a shared sense of purpose, cultivate intellectual engagement, and heed the specific needs of followers, thereby fostering trust, respect, and a clear vision (Tackie et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2024). Transformational leadership is deeply rooted in the Ghanaian context, where it is expected that leaders embody moral authority, guide collective decision-making, and inspire voluntary participation in development programs, as well as with communal values and traditional governance systems like chieftaincy (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021). By means of idealized influence and inspirational motivation, these leaders can foster a strong sense of responsibility and belonging among community members, thereby promoting active engagement in local development initiatives and collective problem-solving (Osei & Zhuang, 2021). Innovative solutions to local development challenges are fostered by intellectual stimulation, while leaders are guaranteed to remain cognizant of the community's diverse interests and capabilities through personalized consideration (Chen et al., 2021). Consequently, transformational leadership offers a critical framework for comprehending the effective leadership and sustainability of community development initiatives in culturally cohesive societies such as Ghana.

This comprehension is enhanced by Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the relational structures that facilitate collective action within communities. Social capital is a critical enabler of community development, particularly in contexts where formal institutional support may be limited, and is defined as the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Information sharing, resource mobilization, and mutual support are all essential for the success of local development initiatives, and they are all promoted by high levels of social capital (Carmen et al., 2022; Alzoraiki et al., 2023). Social capital is essential for the sustainability of development outcomes and the promotion of collective decision-making in the Ghanaian context, where social networks are influenced by traditional leadership structures, religious affiliations, and extended family ties (Asiedu et al., 2023). The trust and reciprocity norms that are inherent in these networks reduce transaction costs and mitigate risks associated with collective action, thereby enhancing the capacity for self-organization and the resilience of the community (Chen et al., 2021; Dadhich et al., 2024). Additionally, social capital is not merely an outcome; it is also a process that is influenced by leadership. Transformational leaders can actively cultivate social capital by fostering the formation of collaborative networks, reinforcing community norms, and building trust (Moghfeli et al., 2023; Obeng et al., 2025). Social capital functions as both a resource and a mechanism by which leadership influences community development.

2.1 Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1.1 Transformational Leadership and Community Development Initiatives

Transformational leadership is widely recognized as an effective leadership approach that inspires, motivates, and empowers followers to transcend their self-interest in pursuit of

collective objectives and social transformation (Agyei et al., 2024). This leadership style is distinguished by four central dimensions thus idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which increase the ability of leaders to effect meaningful change (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021; Osei & Zhuang, 2020). Idealized influence is indicative of the leader's capacity to serve as a role model whose conduct inspires trust, veneration, and respect, thereby promoting the loyalty and commitment of followers (Agyei et al., 2024; Puni et al., 2022). In community contexts where coordinated action is essential for success, inspirational motivation enables leaders to communicate a compelling vision that elevates collective aspirations and inspires shared purpose, which is essential (Dadhich et al., 2024). In Ghana's rural and peri-urban communities, which frequently encounter complex socio-economic issues and resource constraints, intellectual stimulation fosters the development of innovative solutions to developmental challenges, the challenge of established norms, and the cultivation of creative thinking (Obuobisa-Darko, 2020; Rahman, 2024). Individualized consideration entails the recognition of the distinctive strengths and requirements of each community member, thereby fostering empowerment, capacity building, and inclusivity (Osei & Zhuang, 2020). Transformational leadership is essential in Ghana's context, where community development is dependent on participatory governance, mutual trust, and collective efficacy. It is essential for mobilizing voluntary contributions, reinforcing social capital, and sustaining development outcomes (Michael et al., 2021; Asitik, 2023). Empirical studies have demonstrated that transformational leaders cultivate environments of psychological safety, empowerment, and collaboration, which lead to increased levels of community participation, innovation adoption, and project success (Agyei et al., 2024; Puni et al., 2022). Based on this theoretical and empirical grounding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive influence on community development initiatives.
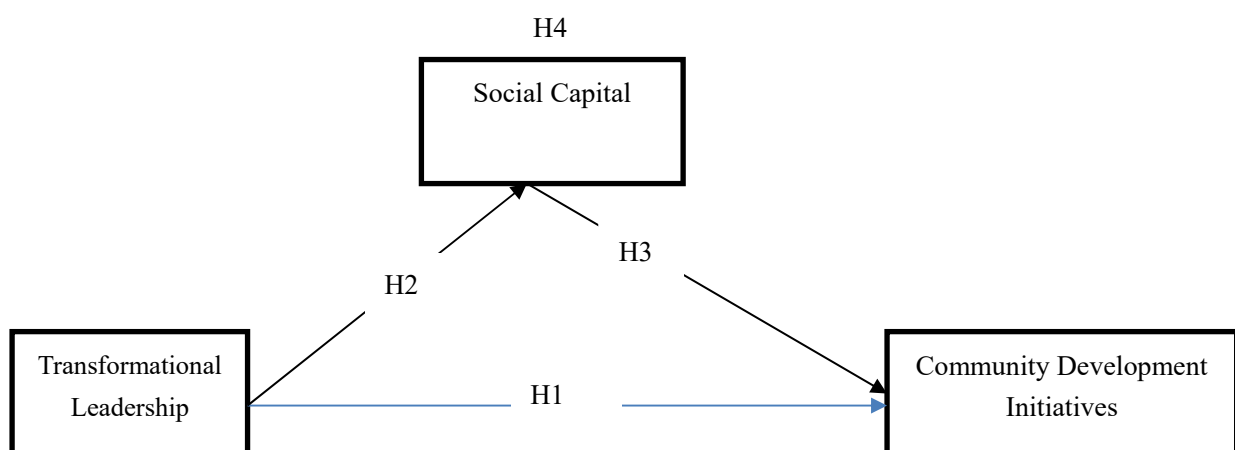

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Author Design, 2025.

2.1.2 Transformational Leadership and Social Capital

Transformational leadership is essential for the development and improvement of social capital by cultivating trust, collaboration, shared norms, and robust social networks within communities. Transformational behaviors, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, are exhibited by leaders who cultivate environments that foster mutual respect, reciprocity, and collective identity (Michael et al., 2021; Asitik, 2023). Inspiring motivation enables leaders to communicate a compelling vision that unites individuals towards common goals and encourages cooperation, while idealized influence enables them to act as credible and trustworthy role models, inspiring confidence among community members (Carmen et al., 2022; Alzoraiki et al., 2023). Leaders are instrumental in the development of innovative solutions to shared community challenges and the reinforcement of interpersonal networks by fostering open dialogue and knowledge exchange through intellectual stimulation (Reniati et al., 2024; Hilton et al., 2023). Akanpaaba et al. (2022) assert that personalized consideration fosters a sense of inclusion and appreciation among community members, thereby fortifying mutual support and social connections. Transformational leadership is especially pertinent in Ghana's socio-cultural context, where community development initiatives are contingent upon interpersonal trust, social cohesion, and collective action (Hilton et al., 2023). By fostering community spirit, encouraging collaborative efforts, and promoting norms of reciprocity and trust that are essential for sustainable development, leaders who engage in these behaviors contribute to the development of social capital (Saif et al., 2024; Boamah et al., 2024). These dynamics demonstrate that transformational leadership not only mobilizes resources and inspires action but also establishes the foundation for enduring social relationships that facilitate collective problem-solving and development success. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive influence on social capital.

2.1.3 Social Capital and Community Development Initiatives

Social capital serves as a critical enabler of successful community development initiatives by fostering trust, strengthening social networks, and promoting shared values that underpin collective action (Osei & Zhuang, 2020). In communities where trust among members is high, individuals are more inclined to collaborate, share resources, and engage in collaborative problem-solving, all of which are crucial for the design and implementation of development initiatives (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021; Osei & Zhuang, 2020). The responsiveness and relevance of development interventions are improved by the effective coordination of responses, the identification of local needs, and the exchange of ideas that is facilitated by strong social networks (Akanpaaba et al., 2022). Active participation and long-term commitment to community development efforts are fostered by shared values and norms of reciprocity, which promote mutual support and collective responsibility (Carmen et al., 2022; Alzoraiki et al., 2023). The presence of resilient social capital is particularly significant in the

Ghanaian context, where communal culture, kinship ties, and social cohesion are firmly embedded. It ensures the local ownership and sustainability of development initiatives by increasing the propensity of community members to invest time, resources, and effort into collective endeavors (Michael et al., 2021; Asitik, 2023). Empirical research has consistently shown that communities with higher levels of social capital tend to experience more successful and enduring development outcomes as a result of enhanced cooperation, trust, and coordinated action (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021; Osei & Zhuang, 2020). Based on the foregoing discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Social capital has a positive influence on community development initiatives.

2.1.4 The Mediating Role of Social Capital

Social capital is a critical mechanism in the relationship between transformational leadership and community development initiatives, as it converts the intangible influence of leadership into sustainable development outcomes and Collective Community Action. The cultivation of trust, shared values, and cooperation among community members, which are the fundamental components of social capital (Amankwaa et al., 2022), is fostered by transformational leaders, who are distinguished by their capacity to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and address the individual needs of their followers (Abunyewah et al., 2023; Nwaham et al., 2024). Such leaders foster a sense of common purpose and confidence by demonstrating idealized influence and inspirational motivation, thereby uniting members around shared community goals. Intellectual stimulation fosters open dialogue, critical reflection, and knowledge exchange, while individualized consideration guarantees inclusivity and personal recognition, thereby strengthening members' dedication to the common good (Nwaham et al., 2021; Akanpaaba et al., 2022). Consequently, social capital is bolstered by reciprocity norms, mutual trust, and strengthened networks, which in turn promote increased community engagement, resource mobilization, and participatory problem-solving, essential factors in the success of community development initiatives (Puni et al., 2022; Hilton et al., 2023). In Ghana, the mediating function of social capital is even more pertinent, as it guarantees that transformational leadership is translated into tangible developmental effects, where communal ties, kinship systems, and collective governance are significant factors in local development (Saif et al., 2024; Boamah et al., 2024). This pathway is also supported by empirical evidence, which suggests that leadership-driven development initiatives are more effective when social capital is considered (Abunyewah et al., 2023; Nwaham et al., 2024). Based on this argument, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Social capital mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and community development initiatives.

3. Methodology

This study employs an explanatory research design and is grounded in a positivist philosophical perspective, which is supported by a quantitative research approach. The positivist paradigm is suitable because it underscores the existence of an objective social reality that can be quantified through observable variables, thereby enabling the researcher to

test hypotheses and draw generalizable conclusions (Hussain et al., 2024). The quantitative approach is consistent with this paradigm in that it allows for the collection of numerical data from a diverse and extensive sample, which in turn enables the application of statistical techniques to investigate the relationships among the study's key variables (Boamah et al., 2024). This method guarantees objectivity, reliability, and replicability in the research process. The study's objective to investigate and elucidate the causal pathways connecting transformational leadership to community development initiatives, with social capital functioning as a potential mediating variable, also justifies the selection of an explanatory research design. This design enables the systematic testing of theoretical hypotheses and assumptions, thereby elucidating the direction and amplitude of the relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, the explanatory design is consistent with the study's overarching objective of establishing evidence-based cause-and-effect relationships that facilitate comprehension of the ways in which leadership practices affect social structures and, as a result, community development outcomes in the Ghanaian context.

3.1 Population and Sample

The research population consists of individuals who are either actively involved in or have a significant understanding of community development initiatives and reside in Ghana. These community leaders include traditional leaders, assembly members, unit committee members, community-based organizations (CBOs) members, and residents who have been directly involved in or are knowledgeable about local development activities. The inclusion criteria necessitated that participants be permanent inhabitants of their respective communities for a minimum of two years, be 18 years of age or older, and demonstrate some degree of awareness or involvement in transformational leadership practices or community development initiatives. To guarantee the relevance and reliability of the data collected, individuals under the age of 18, transitory residents, or those with no prior knowledge of community initiatives were excluded (Rahmawati et al., 2023). To identify respondents who satisfied the inclusion criteria and were regarded as most suitable to contribute information pertinent to the research objectives, purposive sampling was implemented in the investigation. A total of 384 respondents were purposively selected from four meticulously selected regions in Ghana: Greater Accra (Ga West Municipality), Ashanti Region (Ejisu Municipality), Northern Region (Savelugu Municipality), and Volta Region (Ho Municipality). These regions were intentionally selected for their socio-cultural diversity and active participation in community development initiatives, which facilitated a more comprehensive comprehension of social capital and transformational leadership in a variety of contexts. Participants were purposively chosen from these municipalities to guarantee that the sample consisted solely of individuals who possessed the necessary knowledge and experience regarding community development initiatives and leadership practices (Carmen et al., 2022). The final sample size of 384 respondents is consistent with the recommended thresholds for studies that employ Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which necessitates sufficiently robust sample sizes to generate reliable and consistent estimates (Alzoraiki et al., 2023). The study's validity and richness were enhanced by the use of purposive sampling, which targeted participants who were most likely to provide informed and meaningful responses. Furthermore, eligibility was

verified through an exhaustive preliminary screening process prior to questionnaire administration. Bootstrapping procedures were implemented during the analysis to enhance internal validity and minimize estimation error following the most effective methodologies in quantitative research (Saif et al., 2024; Boamah et al., 2024). The credibility, generalizability, and robustness of the study's findings regarding the nexus between transformational leadership, social capital, and community development outcomes in Ghana are enhanced by this approach.

3.2 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

For this study, primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in alignment with the research objectives, philosophical stance, and the quantitative methodological approach. The questionnaire solicited respondents' perspectives, attitudes, and experiences regarding community development initiatives, social capital, and transformational leadership practices. A Five-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), was implemented to assess all constructs. This scale demonstrated superior reliability, discriminant capacity, and sensitivity to response variations when contrasted with a 7-point scale (Akanpaaba et al., 2022; Boamah et al., 2024). To accommodate the community development and leadership context in Ghana, measurement items were modified from previously validated instruments. In particular, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (1995) was used to construct items that evaluated transformational leadership. Meanwhile, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) and Putnam (2000) were used to alter measures of social capital. Based on measures from Christens and Speer (2011) and other community empowerment studies, items evaluating community development initiatives were devised, with modifications to accommodate the local development context of Ghana. The questionnaire underwent expert evaluations and pilot testing before the primary data collection to guarantee content validity, contextual relevance, and clarity, thereby reducing the likelihood of ambiguity and potential biases in responses (Amankwaa et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2024). The final survey instrument was pre-coded to simplify the process of data input and analysis. To guarantee direct interaction with the target population, data collection was exclusively conducted offline. Purposively selected respondents, including community leaders (assembly members, unit committee members, and traditional leaders), members of community-based organizations, and residents actively engaged in development initiatives, were distributed questionnaires in person across four purposively selected regions of Ghana: Greater Accra (Ga West Municipality), Ashanti Region (Ejisu Municipality), Northern Region (Savelugu Municipality), and Volta Region (Ho Municipality). The inclusion criteria guaranteed that the survey was conducted exclusively with individuals who were 18 years of age or older, had been permanent residents of their communities for a minimum of two years and possessed knowledge or experience related to community development and leadership activities. Over two weeks, a total of 384 valid responses were collected. This sample size followed the recommendations for studies that employ Structural Equation Modelling, which requires large samples to guarantee generalizability and robust model estimation (Saif et al., 2024; Akanpaaba et al., 2022). The validity and reliability of the study's findings were enhanced by the researchers' ability to

capture rich, context-specific insights from relevant stakeholders through the offline, purposive approach used.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study adhered to a quantitative analytical approach consistent with its deductive reasoning, explanatory research design, and positivist philosophical stance. During the preliminary data preparation phase, IBM SPSS version 28 was employed to manage missing values, compute descriptive statistics, and identify and address outliers in order to guarantee the quality and completeness of the data. The primary analytical technique employed was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 4.0.8.4, as the conceptual model was complex and consisted of three main constructs: transformational leadership, social capital, and community development initiatives. This study was suitable for PLS-SEM because of its ability to handle complex models with multiple constructs (Boamah et al., 2024; Hair et al., 2019), its minimal demand on data distribution assumptions, and its suitability for theory testing. The data analysis process was divided into two primary phases. The measurement model was evaluated in the initial stage to determine its reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Internal consistency was confirmed by the fact that all values exceeded the permissible thresholds of 0.7 in the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) reliability evaluations. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings analysis were employed to verify discriminant validity, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was employed to ensure that values exceeded the 0.5 benchmark. The hypothesized relationships among transformational leadership, social capital, and community development initiatives were tested in the second stage by evaluating the structural model. Bootstrapping procedures were implemented to ascertain the path coefficients' significance and robustness. Model fit was evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and values that were deemed acceptable suggested that the model was adequately fitted. Furthermore, the research instrument's overall validity and reliability were improved by conducting expert evaluation and pre-testing of the questionnaire before data collection to ensure face and content validity.

4. Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in Table 1 indicate a diverse sample that reflects a variety of socio-demographic contexts that are pertinent to the study's objectives. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were male (54.7%), followed by females (45.3%. The demographic distribution indicates that the majority of participants were between the ages of 26 and 35 (28.6%), with the next largest group being those aged 36–45 (24.7%). Respondents aged 46–55 years comprised 19.5% of the sample, while those aged 18–25 years and 56 years and older comprised 15.6% and 11.5%, respectively. In terms of marital status, over half of the respondents (54.7%) were married, while 33.9% were unmarried. Divorced (6.5%) and bereaved (4.9%) comprised smaller percentages. Educational attainment was evenly distributed: 10.4% possessed no formal education, 22.1% had attained a fundamental education, and 31.3% had completed secondary education. The sample was well-educated, with 26.0% of respondents possessing tertiary-level education and 10.2% possessing

postgraduate qualifications. This suggests that the sample is capable of providing informed responses on leadership and development issues.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	210	54.7
	Female	160	41.7
Age	18–25 years	60	15.6
	26–35 years	110	28.6
	36–45 years	95	24.7
	46–55 years	75	19.5
	56 years and above	44	11.5
Marital Status	Single	130	33.9
	Married	210	54.7
	Divorced	25	6.5
	Widowed	19	4.9
Educational Level	No formal education	40	10.4
	Basic education (Primary/JHS)	85	22.1
	Secondary/SHS	120	31.3
	Tertiary (Diploma, HND, Degree)	100	26.0
	Postgraduate (Master's, PhD)	39	10.2
Occupation	Farmer	60	15.6
	Trader	80	20.8
	Artisan	45	11.7
	Public sector worker	70	18.2
	Private sector worker	60	15.6
	Unemployed	30	7.8
	Student	25	6.5
	Other (Specify)	14	3.6
Length of Residence in Community	Less than 1 year	20	5.2
	1–2 years	45	11.7
	3–5 years	80	20.8
	6–10 years	120	31.3
	More than 10 years	119	31.0
Role in Community Development	Community leader (e.g., chief, assembly member)	30	7.8
	Member of CBO/NGO	60	15.6
	Ordinary resident/volunteer	270	70.3
	Other (Specify)	24	6.3

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Respondents were employed in a variety of occupations, with traders (20.8%) and public sector workers (18.2%) being the most significant categories. Private sector workers (15.6%), farmers (15.6%), artisans (11.7%), and unemployed individuals (7.8%) followed. Students and non-students comprised 6.5% and 3.6%, respectively. Community attachment was indicated by the duration of residence, with the majority of individuals residing in their communities for 6–10 years (31.3%) or over 10 years (31.0%), demonstrating a long-term familiarity with local development activities. 7.8% and 15.6% of respondents identified as community leaders and members of CBOs/NGOs, respectively, while the majority of respondents identified as ordinary residents or volunteers (70.3%). This composition guarantees that perspectives on community development initiatives, social capital, and transformational leadership are firmly rooted in practical community experience.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The findings from Table 2 indicate that the majority of respondents have a favorable opinion of transformational leadership in their communities, as evidenced by the high mean scores across the relevant items. The statement that community leaders lead by example in addressing community issues was documented as the highest mean among the transformational leadership indicators (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.63, t-value = 44.230). This implies that respondents place a high value on visible, action-oriented leadership as a critical factor in the advancement of their communities.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Construct/ Items	t-value	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership			
My community leader articulates a clear and inspiring vision for development	45.321	4.12	0.68
My leader encourages innovation and new ideas for community progress.	42.587	4.05	0.72
I feel motivated by the passion and commitment of my community leader.	40.114	3.98	0.75
My leader shows respect and concern for the well-being of community members.	38.750	4.10	0.66
My leader communicates effectively and keeps us informed about development issues.	41.672	4.08	0.70
My leader leads by example in addressing community needs.	44.230	4.15	0.63
My leader inspires unity and collaboration among community members.	43.017	4.11	0.65
Social Capital			
People in my community trust one another.	39.875	3.89	0.78
There is strong cooperation among different groups in my community.	40.244	3.92	0.74
I can rely on my neighbors when I need help.	37.121	3.95	0.76
Information about community matters is easily shared among residents.	38.980	4.00	0.71
Community members participate actively in joint activities and meetings.	36.789	3.87	0.80
There is a strong sense of belonging in my community.	35.560	3.85	0.82
Leaders and residents work together to solve common problems.	39.213	3.98	0.75
Community Development Initiatives			
There are visible improvements in infrastructure in my community.	42.305	4.00	0.68
Development projects in my community address real local needs.	41.012	4.03	0.66
I am aware of ongoing development initiatives in my area.	40.221	4.05	0.67
Community members are involved in planning and decision-making for projects.	38.450	3.92	0.72
Development efforts in this community are consistent and sustainable.	39.178	3.95	0.71
My community receives support from the government or NGOs for development.	36.654	3.88	0.74
I am satisfied with the progress of development initiatives in my community.	37.845	3.90	0.73

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Conversely, the perception of being motivated by the leader's passion and commitment had the lowest mean (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.75, t-value = 40.114). This suggests that, despite the fact that leaders exhibit effective practical leadership, their capacity to emotionally motivate or energize community members may need to be improved. In general, the results indicate that transformational leadership is effectively demonstrated, particularly through practical engagement and role modelling. The item on the convenience of sharing information about community matters among residents received the highest score in the social capital assessment (Mean = 4.00, SD = 0.71, t-value = 38.980). This suggests that the community benefits from efficient communication channels, which facilitate coordination and collaboration. Nevertheless, the lowest score was linked to the sense of belonging in the community (Mean = 3.85, SD = 0.82, t-value = 35.560), suggesting a potential vulnerability in the affective and identity-related components of social cohesion that could potentially impact long-term collective action. The highest mean for community development initiatives

was associated with respondents' awareness of ongoing development activities (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.67, t-value = 40.221), indicating effective information dissemination regarding local projects. In contrast, the item with the lowest rating expressed apprehensions regarding inadequate assistance from government or NGOs (Mean = 3.88, SD = 0.74, t-value = 36.654). This data indicates that there is a moderate level of satisfaction with the development efforts, but it also suggests that more robust institutional support is necessary to improve the efficacy and sustainability of community initiatives.

4.2 Reliability and Convergent Validity

The reliability and convergent validity results in Table 3 and Figure 2 suggest that all constructs satisfy the recommended thresholds for internal consistency and validity. In particular, the construct reliability of Community Development Initiatives (CA = 0.76, CR = 0.761), Social Capital (CA = 0.799, CR = 0.806), and Transformational Leadership (CA = 0.824, CR = 0.828) is satisfactory, as both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values surpass the minimum threshold of 0.7.

Table 3. Reliability, Convergent Validity

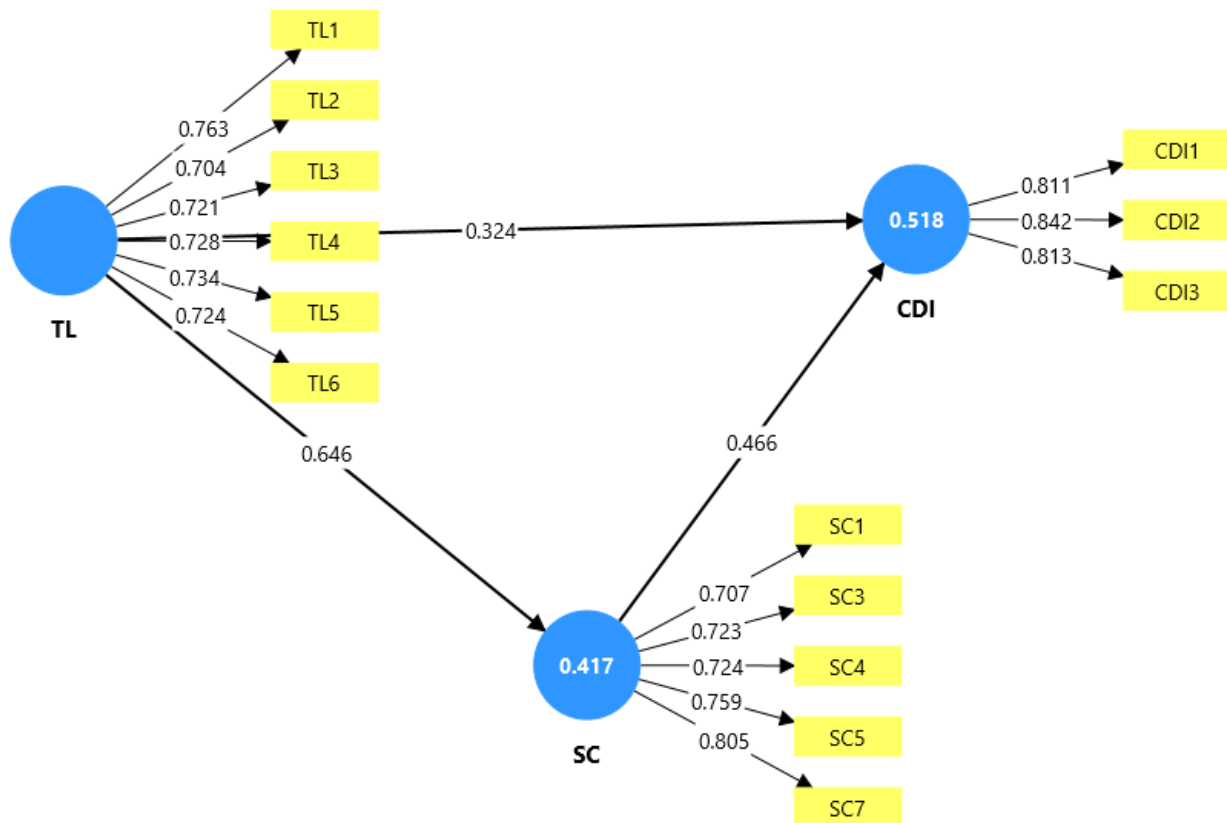| Construct	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
Community Development Initiatives	CDI1	0.811	0.76	0.761	0.676	1.43
	CDI2	0.842				1.72
	CDI3	0.813				1.57
Social Capital	SC1	0.707	0.799	0.806	0.554	1.41
	SC3	0.723				1.56
	SC4	0.724				1.60
	SC5	0.759				1.61
	SC7	0.805				1.70
Transformational Leadership	TL1	0.763	0.824	0.828	0.532	1.67
	TL2	0.704				1.70
	TL3	0.721				1.75
	TL4	0.728				1.58
	TL5	0.734				1.62
	TL6	0.724				1.61

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Figure 2. Measurement Model

Convergent validity is also established for each construct, with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding the recommended 0.5 threshold: Community Development Initiatives (AVE = 0.676), Social Capital (AVE = 0.554), and Transformational Leadership (AVE = 0.532). The items within each construct appear to adequately represent the latent variables, as indicated by these findings. In terms of factor loadings, each item contributes meaningfully to its associated factor, as evidenced by the fact that all individual items load satisfactorily on their respective constructs, with values equal to or exceeding 0.7. Although item SC1 (loading = 0.707) is approaching the lower threshold, it remains within acceptable limits. Lastly, multicollinearity is not a concern, as the Variance Inflation Factor values are within the range of 1.41 to 1.75, which is significantly lower than the critical value of 5. This implies that there is no substantial redundancy among the predictor variables in the model.

4.3 Discriminant Validity and Common Method Bias Test

The assessment of discriminant validity using the HTMT and Fornell and Larcker criterion confirms that the constructs measured in this study are distinct and conceptually separate. From Table 4, the HTMT results indicate that the discriminant validity is acceptable, as all values between constructs are below the recommended threshold of 0.85. In particular, the HTMT values between Community Development Initiatives and Social Capital (0.855), Community Development Initiatives and Transformational Leadership (0.781), and Social Capital and Transformational Leadership (0.777) indicate that the constructs are empirically

distinct and do not exhibit an excessive amount of overlap.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity - Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Criterion

S/N	Construct	1	2	3
1	Community Development Initiatives	1		
2	Social Capital	0.855	1	
3	Transformational Leadership	0.781	0.777	1

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity - Fornell and Larcker Criterion

S/N	Construct	1	2	3
1	Community Development Initiatives	0.822		
2	Social Capital	0.676	0.745	
3	Transformational Leadership	0.625	0.646	0.729

Source: Field Data, 2025.

The Fornell and Larcker criterion results in Table 5 further support this conclusion. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted for each construct, represented by the diagonal elements, exceeds the inter-construct correlations in the corresponding rows and columns. Community Development Initiatives (0.822), Social Capital (0.745), and Transformational Leadership (0.729) all exhibit higher values than their correlations with other constructs. For instance, the correlation between Community Development Initiatives and Social Capital (0.676) and between Community Development Initiatives and Transformational Leadership (0.625) is less than 0.822. These results corroborate that each construct captures a distinctive aspect of the model, thereby guaranteeing the validity of the measurement structure.

Table 6. Common Method Bias Analysis, Using Maker Variable Method

Variables	Coefficient	Standard error	T-stat.	P values
MV-> CDI	0.045	0.037	1.216	0.225
MV-> SC	0.038	0.033	1.152	0.250
MV->TL	0.052	0.036	1.444	0.149

Source: Field Data, 2025.

The results in Table 6 indicate that the marker variable (MV) does not have a significant impact on Community Development Initiatives (B = 0.045, p = 0.225), Social Capital (B = 0.038, p = 0.250), and Transformational Leadership (B = 0.052, p = 0.149) concerning the marker variable method analysis. This suggests that CMB is not a significant concern in this

study. The non-significant p-values, which all exceed the threshold of 0.05, indicate that the variance explained by the marker variable in each of the endogenous constructs is statistically insignificant and negligible. In particular, the marker variable has a negligible impact on CDI, SC, and TL, suggesting that respondents' responses to the primary constructs were not significantly influenced by systematic measurement errors, such as consistency motifs or social desirability. This further confirms that the observed relationships among the fundamental constructs are not unduly inflated by method variance. Consequently, the findings validate the data's integrity and guarantee the structural model estimations' robustness.

4.4 Model Fit

The model fit assessment in Table 7 reveals that the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value for both the saturated and estimated models is 0.077, which is below the acceptable threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data.

Table 7. Model Fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.077	0.077
d_ULS	0.618	0.618
d_G	0.199	0.199
Chi-square	366.708	366.708
NFI	0.80	0.80

Source: Field Data, 2025.

This suggests that the hypothesized model and the observed data are well-matched. The empirical and model-implied covariance matrices exhibit minimal differences, as evidenced by the discrepancy measures d_ULS and d_G, which are 0.618 and 0.199, respectively. Furthermore, the Chi-square value for both models is 366.708, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.80, which is close to the recommended cutoff of 0.90, indicating a satisfactory model fit.

4.5 Structural Model & Hypothesis Testing

The findings in Table 8 and Figure 3 indicate that transformational leadership has a statistically significant and positive direct impact on community development initiatives (B = 0.324, p = 0.000). This suggests that the probability of effectively initiating and implementing development initiatives increases as transformational leadership practices become more prevalent within the community. Transformational leaders, who inspire, motivate, and articulate a clear developmental vision, appear to have a direct impact on the way community members perceive and participate in development initiatives. These leaders cultivate a sense of shared purpose that motivates residents to actively engage in development activities,

express their needs, and support initiatives that are designed to enhance communal well-being. This discovery implies that leadership behaviors, including the ability to articulate a vision that inspires, the demonstration of concern for community members, and the example of leadership, are essential for the advancement of a community. Additionally, transformational leadership exhibits a statistically significant, positive, and robust direct impact on social capital (B = 0.646, p = 0.000). This implies that the levels of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation among community members are substantially increased by leaders who exemplify transformational qualities. Creating an environment in which residents feel connected, willing to collaborate, and anxious to engage in collaborative problem-solving efforts is facilitated by community leaders who promote open communication, respect, and inclusivity. Transformational leadership is a critical factor in the development of a community's social fabric, as the high coefficient suggests that collective action and mutual support may be restricted in their absence. This serves to bolster the idea that leadership styles that prioritize empowerment, mutual respect, and engagement can cultivate a more cohesive and resilient social network.

Table 8. Hypothesis Results

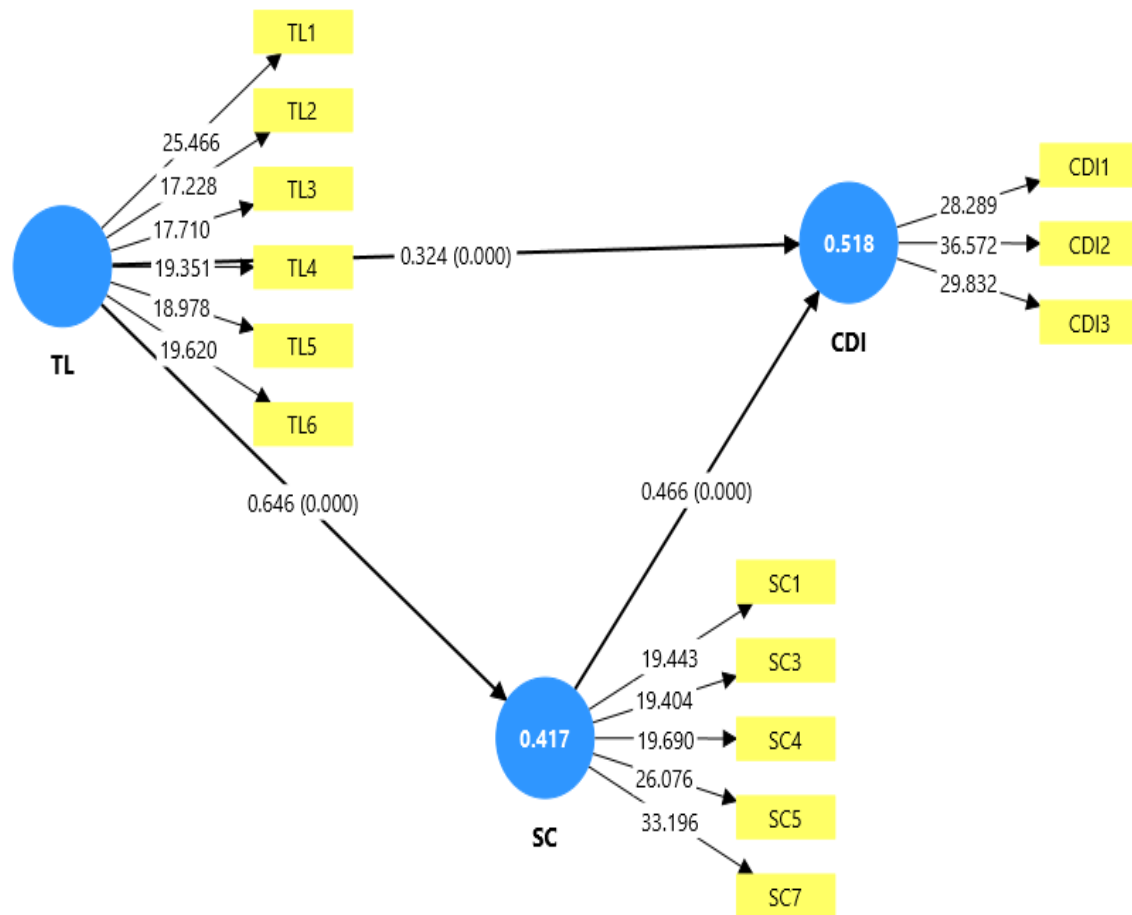| Hypothesis	Effect	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-stat.	P values	Decision
Direct Effect						
H1	TL -> CDI	0.324	0.084	3.838	0.000	Supported
H2	TL -> SC	0.646	0.045	14.441	0.000	Supported
H3	SC -> CDI	0.466	0.078	5.953	0.000	Supported
Indirect Effect						
H4	TL -> SC -> CDI	0.301	0.052	5.743	0.000	Full Mediation

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Figure 3. Path coefficients of the structural model showing P-values

Furthermore, community development initiatives are positively and statistically significantly influenced by social capital (B = 0.466, p = 0.000). This discovery suggests that communities are more capable of designing, implementing, and sustaining development interventions that fulfil local requirements when social capital, defined as trust, cooperation, shared norms, and civic engagement, is high. Social capital is the bedrock of collective action, enabling members to consolidate resources, share knowledge, and coordinate their efforts in pursuit of shared developmental objectives. The overall effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives are enhanced when residents maintain strong interpersonal ties and a sense of belonging, which in turn leads to a greater propensity to contribute to and support them. Finally, the analysis confirms the entire mediating function of social capital in the relationship between community development initiatives and transformational leadership (B = 0.301, p = 0.000). This complete mediation suggests that the impact of transformational leadership on development outcomes is entirely guided by its impact on social capital. In other words, transformational leadership establishes the tone and motivates the community; however, it is the improvement of social capital, as evidenced by trust, cooperation, and collective participation, that ultimately propels successful community development. The direct impact of leadership on development outcomes would be insufficient or less potent without this intervening mechanism of social capital. This outcome emphasizes the

significance of cultivating robust social networks in conjunction with effective leadership to achieve sustainable community development.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The results of this study revealed that community development initiatives are positively impacted by transformational leadership. This implies that leaders who inspire, motivate, and articulate a clear vision are essential in promoting development efforts within their communities. These findings are consistent with the transformational leadership theory, which posits that transformational leaders enhance the motivation of their followers and align their interests with the collective objectives, thereby facilitating group success (Akanpaaba et al., 2022; Amankwaa et al., 2022). The implication is that community leaders who demonstrate transformational qualities can motivate members to participate more actively in development processes, including infrastructure improvements, social services, and economic empowerment activities. This is consistent with the findings of previously conducted research, including that conducted by Nwaham et al. (2021), who contended that transformational leadership promotes innovation and progress by influencing the attitudes of followers towards change and development. Similarly, research conducted by Chen et al. (2021) demonstrated that transformational leadership is essential for the success of both organizations and communities, as it increases the ability of adherents to participate in development activities. Therefore, the results of the current study are consistent with these theoretical and empirical perspectives, thereby further solidifying the notion that transformational leadership catalyzes sustainable development in communal environments. The study also reveals that transformational leadership has a substantial, direct, and positive impact on social capital. This suggests that this type of leadership is essential for the development of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation among community members. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Moghfeli et al. (2023), who contended that leadership influences the cognitive and relational components of social capital, thereby facilitating the exchange of resources, information, and mutual support among members of a community. In addition, this discovery is consistent with the Social Capital Theory, which posits that participatory and inclusive leadership practices can improve social cohesion, trust, and cooperation (Sharma & Kaur, 2024). The present study's results are also consistent with the empirical findings of Bentoy et al. (2022), who found that community development is most successful when leaders cultivate environments of trust and collective action. Similarly, research conducted by Alzoraiki et al. (2023) has underscored the importance of transformational leadership in the establishment of relational bonds that encourage community collaboration. Therefore, the positive correlation between transformational leadership and social capital observed in this study is in accordance with well-established theory and research, indicating that effective leadership is essential for the development of the networks and relationships that are essential for communal resilience and problem-solving.

The findings also indicate that community development initiatives are substantially and positively predicted by social capital. This implies that the success of development is significantly influenced by the trust, cooperation, and active participation of community

members. The results are in strong agreement with Sharma and Kaur's (2024) assertions that high levels of social capital result in superior collective outcomes, such as effective community development initiatives. Similarly, the present findings are consistent with empirical research conducted by Carmen et al. (2022), which demonstrated that communities with robust social connections are more adept at engaging in developmental activities and self-organization. The significance of social capital in this context is consistent with Saif et al.'s (2024) perspective, which posits that social capital is a resource that enables community members to achieve desirable outcomes that would be unattainable in its absence. Additionally, Reniati et al. (2024) underscored that social capital improves the efficacy of development interventions by reducing transaction costs and facilitating coordination among participants. This implies that the community's ability to participate in development initiatives is substantially influenced by the character of social relations, as fostered by transformational leadership. Consequently, the results of the current study are in accordance with the theoretical and empirical assertions in the literature that establish social capital as a critical determinant of community development outcomes. Finally, the analysis demonstrates that the relationship between transformational leadership and community development initiatives is fully mediated by social capital. This implies that transformational leadership predominantly affects development outcomes indirectly through its impact on social capital. This discovery is consistent with the mediating framework proposed by Hussain et al. (2024), who contended that social capital functions as an intervening mechanism through which leadership influences the performance of organizations and communities. The outcome is also consistent with the research conducted by Hilton et al. (2023), who showed that leadership practices enhance performance outcomes by initially establishing social capital, which subsequently enables collective action. This implies that transformational leaders do not directly generate development outcomes in the context of community development; rather, they facilitate the establishment of trusting, cooperative networks that collectively drive progress. This corroborates the contention of Tackie et al. (2022), who contended that social capital is a strategic resource that leadership employs to influence communal objectives. Furthermore, empirical evidence from studies conducted by Rahman (2024) confirms that the social environment, which is influenced by leadership, is the conduit through which development interventions are either successful or unsuccessful. Consequently, the mediation effect observed in this study underscores the necessity of incorporating social capital-building strategies into leadership practices in order to accomplish sustainable community development.

4.7 Theoretical Contribution

The results of this study offer important theoretical contributions to the literature on transformational leadership, social capital, and community development initiatives by empirically validating the mediating role of social capital in the relationship between transformational leadership and community development. The results substantiate and expand the transformational leadership theory by illustrating that transformational leaders not only directly influence development outcomes but also improve social capital, which in turn enables effective community development initiatives. This is consistent with social capital

theory, which underscores the importance of trust, cooperation, and networks in the promotion of community well-being and collective action (Michael et al., 2021; Asitik, 2023). The theoretical gap between leadership behavior and development performance is successfully bridged by the confirmation of social capital as a full mediator. This demonstrates that the impact of leadership is indirect and heavily reliant on the strength of social relationships within the community (Agyei et al., 2024). Additionally, the results broaden the definition of social capital as a strategic resource that translates leadership actions into tangible community outcomes. The study also supports Puni et al.'s (2022) assertion that social capital is a type of social structure that enables coordinated actions for mutual benefit. The study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership and social dynamics jointly shape development processes by integrating these theoretical perspectives.

4.8 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study underscore the critical role of transformational leadership in the cultivation of social capital, which in turn enhances community development. Transformational leadership behaviors, including the ability to articulate a clear vision, foster innovation, demonstrate concern for community welfare, and lead by example, must be acknowledged by community leaders, policymakers, and development practitioners to encourage active community participation in development projects. This implies that the development of transformational leadership competencies among local leaders should be the primary focus of leadership training and capacity-building programs to effect positive change. Additionally, the results underscore the necessity of intentionally enhancing social capital by encouraging active civic engagement, cooperation, and trust within communities. It is imperative that development interventions not only concentrate on material resources and infrastructural initiatives but also establish platforms for collective action, collaborative decision-making, and dialogue among community members. These strategies that enhance social capital can increase the willingness of residents to support and sustain development initiatives, thereby guaranteeing their long-term success. To accomplish more sustainable and effective outcomes, government agencies, NGOs, and CBOs should incorporate leadership development and social capital-building into their community development frameworks. Developing countries such as Ghana, where grassroots development processes are characterized by communal ties and collective efforts, are particularly well-suited to this approach.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

This study offers empirical evidence of the critical role of transformational leadership in the enhancement of community development initiatives, both directly and indirectly through the mediating influence of social capital. The results affirm that the success of development initiatives is positively impacted by transformational leadership behaviors, including inspiring a shared vision, motivating community members, and demonstrating exemplary conduct. In addition, the findings emphasize the importance of social capital as a critical mechanism that translates leadership effectiveness into tangible development outcomes.

Communities that exhibit greater levels of trust, cooperation, and social cohesion are more likely to mobilize resources, engage residents, and maintain development initiatives. Collectively, these findings underscore the necessity of effective leadership and robust social capital in the promotion of sustainable and meaningful community development, particularly in emerging economies such as Ghana.

Although these insights are valuable, this study has certain limitations that guide future research. First, the data's cross-sectional character restricts the capacity to draw causal inferences; longitudinal designs could be implemented in future research to investigate changes over time. Secondly, this study concentrated on a particular cultural and geographic context in Ghana; comparative research conducted in various regions or countries could improve the generalizability of the results. Third, qualitative or mixed-method approaches could be implemented to investigate more profound perceptions of leadership and social capital dynamics. Additionally, future research could explore additional mediating or moderating variables, including technological adoption, government support, or organizational culture, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence community development initiatives.

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