

## **Leadership Style in Nonprofit Organizations, the Mexican Case**

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### **Abstract**

*Nonprofit organizations (NGOs) are created by civil society and rely on volunteers who dedicate their efforts to mitigate social problems caused by poverty. Non-profit leaders play a significant role in the development of the organization, they inspire, motivate, and encourage those who make up the organization, working as drivers of social change. NGO research is a relatively new issue in Latin America, for this reason, information about nonprofits is still limited. This work aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of these organizations. This research presents the results obtained from a study of the transformational leadership of managers of nonprofit organizations that rely on volunteers, and that are registered with the State Committee of Patronage and Volunteers of the Government of the State of Guanajuato (CEPAV). The organizations surveyed work with hospitals run by the State Ministry of Health and offer support for the various issues of patients and/or their relatives. The results of this study were analyzed using structural equations through the method of partial least squares and show that the model of transformational leadership is adequate to explain the leadership behavior of managers of third sector organizations that are based on, as already mentioned, volunteer work.*

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, third sector, volunteering, partial least squares.

### ***1. Introduction***

According to Byman, Lesser, Pirnie, Benard and Waxman (2000), organizations that provide humanitarian assistance can fall into three categories: family-oriented, international, and non-governmental organizations. Family organizations seek to assist families, such as the United Nations program to combat hunger; in the field of international assistance, agencies like the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations seek to fulfill the various needs of the population that governments cannot. In Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, poverty, inequality, and social marginalization are a constant concern for the government and society in general. The government is making efforts to reduce the consequences of this phenomenon through programs that promote education, improve nutrition, health services, and general social welfare.

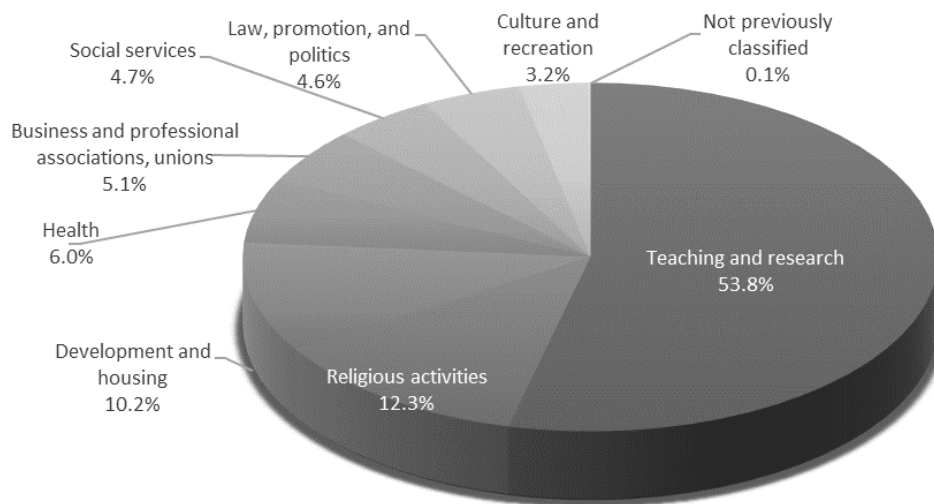
However, government policies are not sufficient to reduce these problems, and this is where the involvement of society becomes crucial, especially nonprofit organizations that are based on a broad spirit of solidarity. These organizations play an important role in reducing social deprivation, improving education, access to food, and security among other issues afflicting sectors of society. Leaders of Nonprofit Organizations generally tend to face a greater need to adapt to changing economic means, and need to encourage team spirit, sense of belonging, inspiration, motivation, and integration of staff (mostly volunteers). In addition, leaders who guide such organizations tend not to have their own fixed income or a salary, and use their own resources to sustain themselves. The operation of the organization depends on contributions or voluntary donations, and the best receive scarce government resources.

## 2. Mexican NPO status

The growth of NPO organizations in countries like Mexico is important and necessary. Therefore national policies begin to move in the promotion and regulation of them. It is important to note that social participation is not a solution to reduce social needs affecting the country, but supports the most vulnerable sectors of our society.

According to Young (2000), non-governmental organizations are seen as ‘partners’ of the government to help carry out the governmental function (including much of the funding), in this sense there is a direct relationship between government spending and the contribution made by these organizations to their users, who generally come from the most vulnerable sectors. The Mexican government, aware of the work of these agencies, has made efforts in recent years to promote, encourage and regulate their activities. Thus, in 2000 the last reform published in the official journal of the Federation (DOF, 25-04-2012) relating to the ‘Federal Law to Promote Activities Undertaken by Organizations of Civil Society’ entered into force (OCS). This law summarizes the actions and obligations of all civil society organizations (including NPOs) and defined its scope in the following paragraph; specifically, Article XIII decrees government actions that can be performed to assist and facilitate the work of CSOs across the three levels of government (Federal, State, and Municipal). Moreover, these organizations have been studied in Mexico through the National Institute of Geography and Informatics (INEGI 2013), in its review of nonprofit institutions, which was reported in 2013, the number of volunteers who participated in Nonprofit Organizations in Mexico, reached 1 million 379 thousand people, of which 89.1% did so in private (non-governmental) organizations. In 2013, Gross (GDP) of the non-profit institution's domestic product was 424 thousand 181 million pesos (including the economic valuation of volunteer work), representing 2.7% of total GDP of the country as shown in Figure 1. The economic value of volunteer work of such private organizations was equivalent to 57.5 billion pesos, of which 47.2% was generated by women and 52.8% of men. In other words, the economic importance of this sector is relevant, considering the GDP generated.

**Fig. 1, GDP of Nonprofit Organizations by activity**



**Source: INEGI (2013).**

Cortes (2011) conducted a comparative study on the impact of civil society organizations in public policies in Latin American countries; the author found that Mexico promotes the fewest public policies for nonprofit groups. The above may be explained by at least two reasons. First, historically in Mexico, Civil Society Organizations involving volunteers are paternalistic, religious, and a little rebellious; and secondly, society discourages engaging in political issues given the low confidence in government institutions.

In the World Register of the United Nations (UN), Mexico ranks second place in Latin America in terms of the number of nonprofit organizations registered, as shown in Table 1. However, Mexico is far behind Brazil, which had 1089 similar organizations according to the UN at the time of the study (UN, 2014), in other words, more than three times the number of nonprofits in Mexico. Importantly, there are countries like the United States and Canada that claim that extreme poverty does not exist, and yet NPOs have a very active participation; this is due to cultural factors driving voluntary work.

That is, in these countries, voluntary or altruistic work is very well seen by society as well as giving financial donations to nonprofit organizations, this is true even when it may be regarded as a cultural activity, it is also part of a public policy of promoting volunteerism and social action. In Mexico, promoting voluntary work and social action has had significant support in the last 15 years. However, efforts are not enough. Further promotion of social action, is required from private sectors such as industry and the public as well as academia. Public policies that support social conformity and volunteer work.

**Table 1, Comparative number of nonprofit organizations registered with the UN and extreme poverty in America.**

Country	Registered non-profit organizations (NGOs) at the UN engaged in development, disability, indigenous people, and poverty reduction issues.	Percentage of population below the national extreme poverty line.	
Latin America	Brazil	1089	9%
	Mexico	355	11.5%
	Argentina	288	Information not available
	Chile	98	14.4%
	Colombia	234	13.7%
North America	USA	4149	Information not available
	Canada	709	Information not available

Own table with data by the UN, CONEVAL, World Bank 2014

### **3. Leadership and management of NPOs**

The importance of NPOs is remarkable because they contribute to compensate the needs of society in different areas such as poverty, health, and human rights, among others. The leadership of those who run an NPO is reflected in its formation, growth, sustainability, and ultimately their permanence, as well as the leader's influence on their subordinates and their environment. Therefore, leadership plays an important role, especially in organizations that rely heavily on volunteer work. Although there are many approaches to leadership, according to Black (2015), these theories have changed from the position of 'command and control' for example, in the nineteenth century where the influence of 'scientific management' was appreciated, towards models such as behavior that emerged in the fifties. Transformational leadership models became the dominant paradigm over the last 20 years (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Recently, Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, and Hu (2014) conducted a study of leadership theories, taking into account the articles published between 2000 and 2010. In the 10 most outstanding journal publications, the authors found that the most cited theories are transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, and transactional leadership. These theories have been widely studied by Avolio and Bass (1995), Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) and by many followers (Avolio & Gardner 2005; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013, among others).

Among the concepts of leadership reviewed, we find Northouse (2013), who explains it as a process where an individual influences a group to attain a common goal. Leadership is also seen as the ability that some people possess to influence others, encourage them, motivate them, or lead them to act in certain ways. For this reason, leaders contribute to achieve the goals within organizations or possibly promote and implement both economic and social actions. In this sense, Kaplan (2001), mentions the need for leaders of organizations who have revised performance measures and explains that donors, foundations, or other actors who provide their support expect transparency in accountability. According to Zahara, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman (2009), and taking Kirsner (1973) into consideration, the leaders of social organizations have the following characteristics. Leaders build and operate alternative structures to provide goods and services that meet the social needs governments, agencies, and businesses fail to meet. The scope of non-profit work can be local or international, and is believed to be institutionalized. Leaders help maintain social harmony and create new social balances, they function as a 'social valve' in preventing social problems that affect government and private organizations, and funding and volunteers are needed to run this type of institution. Therefore, a leader capable of handling and controlling and sustaining such institutions is needed. One approach that covers the characteristics described by Zahara et al. (2009) is proposed by Bass (1977), which is consistent with Avolio and Bass (1995).

The paradigm of 'transformational' and transactional leadership may be used to describe groups of people or organizations. According to the studies presented by Bass (1977), there is a wide range of application of 'transformational' leadership, which can arise in various fields such as the military, society, and politics, not only in the field of business. In 1978, Burns brings into play the idea that the leader, while influencing their followers, perceives approval or disapproval of them while modifying their own behavior, so talk of a transaction between the leader and follower, giving rise to transactional leadership, in which followers are motivated by personal interests rather than being influenced by leaders for the benefit of the organization.

Bass (1997) states that the authority of the transformational leader is spontaneous, provides security, and successfully confronts conflict situations. This is useful in cases of organizational change. It also indicates that this authority can lead to achieving standards of excellence, both individual and collective; through the establishment of a vision and a mission shared with the followers; encouraging individuals to achieve their personal interests through the objectives of the organization. The transformational leader succeeds in changing the motivational basis of the individual from a regular motivation to a commitment. Transformational leader's behaviors often present consideration and concern for the subordinate, seeks innovative ways to solve problems, and also present values of self-transcendence and openness to change (Nader and Castro, 2007). It is said that transformational leaders are charismatic in the eyes of his followers and are a source of inspiration for them, and they may try to meet the needs of each of their subordinates individually (Avolio, Bass, Jung, 1999 and Berson, 2003), while stimulating them intellectually.

The four fundamental factors or components of transformational leadership are: *Charisma*: the behavior of the leaders tends to be imitated by his followers because they are admired, respected, and inspire confidence as they demonstrate high levels of ethical and moral behavior.

**Inspiration**: motivating and inspiring their followers fosters team spirit, generating future expectations, and correlating strongly with the additional effort by followers in most organizations (Bass 1997).

**Intellectual stimulation**: they encourage their followers to generate new ideas to be innovative, to not criticize errors or ideas that differ from their own. The role of the transformational leader is also to raise the motivation of followers, understanding, maturity, and a sense of self-worth (Bass 1997).

**Individualized consideration**: these leaders pay attention to the specific development needs of each of its followers, give personalized monitoring without meaning control, rather fulfill a guiding function (Nader and Castro, 2007).

We found that the subject of leadership, especially transformational leadership has been scarcely researched, especially in nonprofit organizations. This is understandable because, in these organizations, the issue of civil society organizations has not been investigated in depth. In the work of Ortega, Serna, and Atehortua (2015) the issue of leadership is addressed in non-governmental organizations, with the development of a system based on the theories of Bass (1995), Bass & Stogill (1990), Burns (1978), Kouzes & Posner (1997), and Nichols (1998). Describing three dimensions (action, motivation, and power) to test transformational leadership, this study confirms the hypothesis that the followers identify traits of transformational leadership in their leaders. For this work, we applied a qualitative and quantitative survey, which was subjected to validation tests, without prior proof.

In other works, as in the case of Mendoza and Ortiz (2006), transformational leadership was found to have a relationship with the efficacy of enterprises; this paper also identifies some characteristics of transformational leadership. It is important to say that the studies reviewed are related to the topic of transactional leadership. However, we only found one study on transactional leadership in NPOs (or non-governmental organizations). The studies reviewed used various methodologies to investigate transformational leadership, we chose to apply the same method as Ling, Simsek, Lubatkin, and Veiga (2008) '*Promoting Transformational leadership's role in corporate entrepreneurship: Examining the CEO-TMT interface*', which is important given that the questionnaire used by Bass and Avolio that was created in 1995 serves as a reference for research. For this research, we translated and put into context the published survey in an effort to review the theory of transformational leadership among the leaders of nonprofit organizations participating in this study, the viewpoints of the creators of this theory are put into context.

We seek to demonstrate that leaders of nonprofit organizations whose existence is thanks to volunteer work have characteristics of transformational leaders, allowing them to run these organizations towards growth, sustainability, and permanence despite having no fixed, economic, or human resources, their leadership style allows them to influence their subordinates in such a way that they generate a strong commitment to the social purpose of the organization. Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis was generated:

*H1: 'The kind of leadership of the managers of voluntary organizations in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico is transformational'.*

#### **4. Methodology**

With the intention of responding to the hypothesis, the theory of transformational leadership and their applications are reviewed. We subsequently decided to use in this research the questionnaire '*Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*' (MLQ Form 5X-Short) developed by Bass and Avolio in 1995. The questionnaire was translated and adapted into Spanish from its English-language version that appeared in the article Ling, Simsek, Lubatkin, Veiga (2008) titled '*Transformational leadership's role in Promoting corporate entrepreneurship: Examining the CEO-TMT interface*'. The aim was to use a previously tested questionnaire to measure transformational leadership of volunteer administrators of the organizations studied.

The questionnaire was translated into Spanish through a methodologically accepted procedure in terms of translation and re-translation (Guillemin, Bombardier, and Beaton, 1993). The process involved two perfectly bilingual expert translators, of the United States and Mexico and a review committee. Agreement of translated questions with the theory of leadership (Bass, 1990) was reviewed, and we first conducted a pilot study to later apply the questionnaire more extensively. The research subjects were the administrators of registered civil organizations in the registry of the State Committee of Patrons of Volunteer of the Ministry of Health of the State Government of Guanajuato, CEPAV (SSG, 2014), the above from the perspective of subordinates (volunteers who were not in a management position within the organization at the time of the investigation) who responded to the questionnaire and assessed the administrators. The questionnaire was applied to 23 voluntary organizations identified by the CEPAV, located in 21 entities of the State of Guanajuato and supporting user's hospitals in the health department of the same state during 2014.

The total was 158 surveys applied. However, not all questionnaires were valid because the answers were incomplete. Of the questionnaires applied, we discarded in those with 40% or more of the responses unanswered, in total 129 valid questionnaires were obtained. Data collection was performed with the collaboration of the Ministry of Health of the State of Guanajuato, through the State Committee of Patrons and CEPAV volunteers. Questionnaires were applied directly at meetings of the CEPAV during the month of August 2014, all those registered with the agency and who attended the meetings held on the dates indicated took part. The questionnaire used to gather the information, the purpose, as well as the instructions are reflected here. We used a Likert scale of 1 to 5: 1, never; 2, rarely; 3, sometimes 4, often, and 5, always. The questionnaire was self-administered, and then the information was filled into a database.

The results obtained from the analysis of the demographics of the 23 volunteer organizations of the State shows the following: 74.1% were women, 5.4% men, and 20.4% did not answer the form. Of the volunteers who responded to the questionnaire, 39.4% had completed undergraduate or post-graduate studies, and only 9.5% had a basic level of education, which has some impact on the organization such as best practices, planning, and use of resources. A relevant fact is that 41% of survey respondents had a job at the time of the survey and are dedicated part-time to these organizations. However, it is also significant that 56.5% do not have formal employment. The average age of the volunteers in the organization was 7.26 years of collaboration, but it is also important to say that: there are volunteers in the state that have up to 30 years within the organization and that 50% of volunteers also provide their services voluntarily in another civil society organization.

An exploratory factor analysis was performed using SPSS version 19, the data obtained was compared with the factor loadings obtained in the application in the United States (Ling, et al., 2008) as shown in Table 2. This analysis was done with the intention to verify the validity and reliability of the applied instrument. The compared results found very similar data in terms of factorial load. In most cases, the factor loadings are greater than 0.5 which indicates that the item is valid (Field, 2013). Only in questions 13 and 29 the factor loadings of the application in Mexico are below 0.5, so we can consider that in most cases (27 questions) the factor loadings were significant.

As for the analysis of Cronbach's alpha for the scale, we obtained 0.917 in Mexico against the application .90 reported in the United States; with these results we can say that the translated instrument was reliable. The transformational leadership concept (Bass, 1990) is abstract and difficult to observe directly (Palacios and Vargas, 2009). Therefore, we decided to perform a test by latent and manifest variables, using the technique of structural equations through the partial least squares method with the intention of identifying relationships between independent, dependent latent variables, and observed indicators (Wong, 2013).

**Table 2: Comparative Example of factor loadings and Cronbach Alpha<sup>1</sup>**

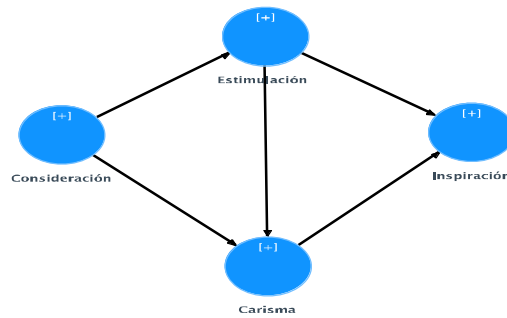
Questionnaire applied in Voluntary Organizations of the State of Guanajuato Mexico.		Corporate Organizations questionnaire applied in the state of Connecticut in the United States.	
Items Transformational Leadership			
Cronbach Alpha	0.917		0.90
1 Habla acerca de .....	0.717	Talks about.....	0.71
2 Me siento orgulloso.....	0.862	Instills pride .....	0.86
3 Resalta la importancia.....	0.565	Specifies the importance .....	0.84
4 Va más allá del auto-interés...	0.803	Goes beyond self-interest .....	0.75
6 Considera.....morales .....	0.794	Considers the moral .....	0.72
7 Da la sensación.....	0.578	Displays a sense.....	0.60
8 Hace hincapié .....misión	0.750	Emphasizes..... mission	0.83
9 Habla.....optimista	0.779	Talks optimistically .....	0.60
10 Habla con entusiasmo.....	0.623	Talks enthusiastically.....	0.79
11 Da una visión.....	0.593	Articulates a compelling vision.....	0.77
12 Expresa confianza .....	0.620	Expresses confidence .....	0.81
13 Vuelve a examinar.....	0.469	Reexamines critical assumptions.....	0.83
19 Considera mis necesidades.....	0.696	Considers my needs.....	0.64
20 Me ayuda a desarrollar.....	0.703	Help my strengths .....	0.76
21 Deja que los demás sepan.....	0.893	Lets each other know .....	0.67
22 Tienen una clara comprensión .....	0.546	Have a clear understanding .....	0.71
23 Discuten sus expectativas.....	0.59	Discuss their expectations.....	0.71
28 Son efectivas en generaciones....	0.664	Are effective in generations .....	0.68
29 Son eficaces en tomar.....	.456	Are effective in making .....	0.53

## 5. Results

The leadership model was revised using a structural equation; the questionnaires were answered by subordinates of managers in the organizations studied. Data collected from 129 questionnaires of the perception of leadership were validated. The items or indicators, reflected by the latent variables in the model as shown in Figure 1 and consider the theory proposed by Bass (1990). Reflective indicators were used as representing the manifestations of the constructs (Vargas, 2013; Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2013). That is, the actions of managers reflect the leadership traits described by the latent variables, in this case, the actions of the leaders of voluntary organizations reflect the features outlined by the theory of transformational leadership. The construction of the model in the 'Smart-PLS' software for Transformational Leadership theory was made from four latent variables, charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. According to Lévy-Mangin Varela and (2006), a greater number of researchers adopted methodologies that use causal or 'Structural Equation' models (*Structural Equations*) to explain the phenomena of the social sciences. The relationship between the latent variables was expressed in an internal model shown in Figure 2.

<sup>1</sup>Examples of questions to respect the confidentiality of the instrument are shown. The original can be achieved through [www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com).

Figure 2: The basic model for transformational leadership of volunteers.

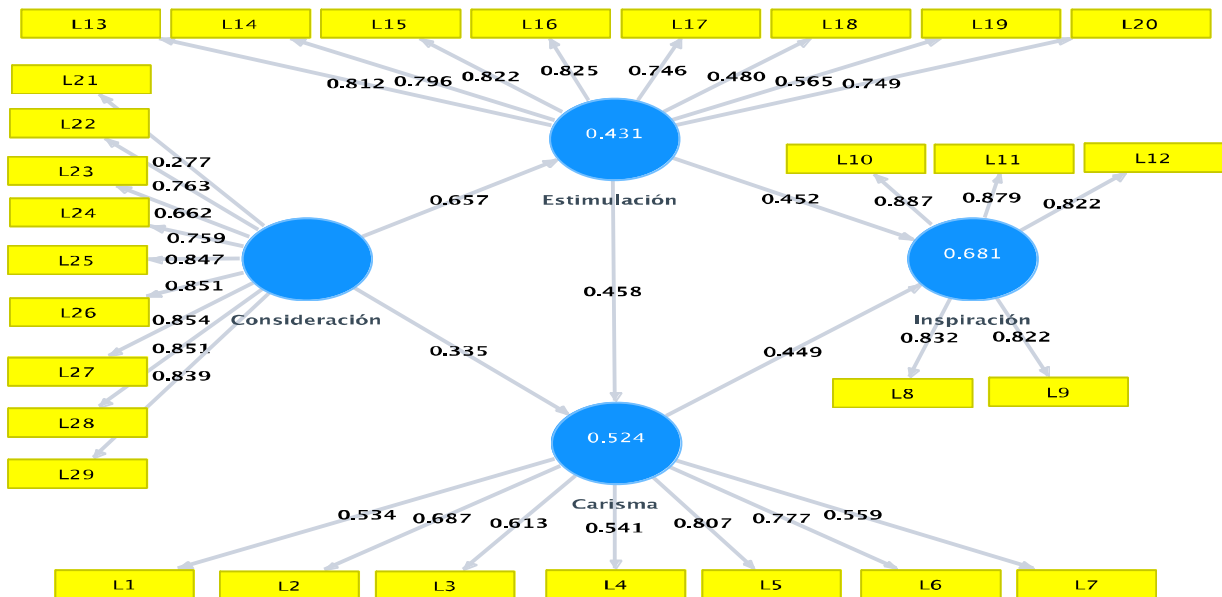


Source: Own elaboration.

Once the concept is formed by a basic structural model (Figure 2), the complete model was developed with indicators, manifest variables and latent variables as shown in Figure. Latent variables are the defined indicators for leadership models: stimulation, individualized consideration, inspiration, and charisma.

Figure 3 shows the training indicators of latent variables that have significant values, indicating a high ratio between them. The influence of *individualized consideration towards stimulation* is high ( $\beta = 0.657$ ), which means that acts such as providing support to complete activities, understanding the problems of others, and searching for new alternatives to problems, significantly influencing the stimulation of followers. In turn, acts of consideration towards followers influences the latent variable *charisma* ( $\beta = 0.335$ ), which alone accounts for 52.4% of the variability of the model, which is also influenced by the latent variable *stimulation* significantly ( $\beta = 0.458$ ) this variable explains 43.1% of the variability of the model. The *latent inspiration* variable explained 68.1% of variability and is influenced significantly by the stimulation that gives the leader to his followers ( $\beta = 0.452$ ) and the perception of *charisma* ( $\beta = 0.449$ )

Figure 3. General model of structural equations of volunteer leadership



Source: own elaboration.

The results of the reliability analysis in the ‘Smart-PLS’ software as a result of the model generated are found in Table 3, in which validity and drivability may be observed. As for the convergent validity, (AVE) values of this indicator are at an acceptable level as the lowest measurement is 0.427 for the latent variable charisma, and others have values greater than 0.5. Cranach’s alpha in all cases is higher than 0.7, which gives reliability to the model.  $R^2$  values are about 0.5 for variables of charisma, stimulation, and consideration. As for the composite reliability, the values are high from 0.836 to 0.923, confirming the model. These criteria are acceptable according to Hair et al. (2013).

**Table 3, Reliability measures**

<b>Latent Variable</b>	<b>Convergent validity(AVE)</b>	<b>Cronbach-<math>\alpha</math></b>	<b><math>R^2(11)</math></b>	<b>Reliability composite (composite reliability)</b>
<b>Charisma</b>	0.427	0.775	0.524	0.836
<b>Inspiration</b>	0.721	0.901		0.928
<b>Stimulation</b>	0.540	0.872	0.431	0.901
<b>Consideration</b>	0.586	0.903	0.681	0.923

**Source: own elaboration**

## 6. Conclusions

The theoretical concepts reviewed on transformational leadership among the leaders of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) served as the basis for the construction of a model, which allowed us to define the relationship between the four elements of the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass in 1990. We found that the transformational leadership model is valid for the managers of the nonprofit organizations studied. The leaders of these organizations show characteristics of the four factors that identify them as transformational leaders: charisma, inspiration, stimulation, and consideration. Also, we found that these transformational leaders influence the life of the organization, promoting voluntary participation, bringing volunteers and organized labor, managing actions for sustainability, continuity, and growth, and generating structures, processes, strategies, and relational networks that benefit the organizations. The leaders of the organizations surveyed have the characteristics described in the model by Bass (1990), they are people who naturally attract followers, and tend to worry about the circumstances of his subordinates, and as seen in the PLS model, the consideration of these leaders towards their subordinate's significantly influences ( $\beta = 0.657$ ) volunteer motivation, thereby influencing permanence, resulting in low turnover of volunteer staff, which on average according to this study was 7.2 years. Moreover, stimulation of followers also generates more creativity and innovation especially in the search for resources and using available ideas. For the latent variables charisma and stimulation, leaders have influence ( $\beta = 0.442$ ) and ( $\beta = 0.449$ ), respectively. Leaders inspire or motivate followers from a regular motivation to make the commitment to the organization.

Following on, we respond to the hypothesis in this research, '*the kind of leadership of administrator's voluntary organizations Guanajuato state is transformational*'. On the way to this conclusion, we confirmed the validity of a questionnaire translated from United States English for transformational leadership. The questionnaire was translated and adapted to the cultural context of Mexico; the survey had not been used before in Spanish-speaking populations. In this regard, a comparison was made of the results of factorial analysis of the original questionnaire and translated. It was found that both applications show very similar data regarding the factor loadings. The analysis of leadership exercised in these organizations is necessary given the situation of the third sector in Mexico, which requires greater impetus and support in its organizational formation leading to permanence. Most of the organizations studied have incipient structures, limiting its growth to the detriment of the vulnerable groups they serve. Training in administration, service, and expertise is essential to ensure the quality of the services provided by non-profit organizations, in particular for those who receive these services. It is urgent to promote volunteering in Mexico, increasing the participation of social sectors with the capacity for assistance to enable the reduction of poverty. There were 1 million 379 thousand volunteers in 2013 (INEGI), which is low compared to the 122 million inhabitants of the country and reveals the lack of public policies to promote volunteer work, allowing the population to mobilize towards one collaborative, supportive, and subsidiary culture. In general, social organizations require a greater role in public policies aimed at combating poverty, and its consequences. The results of this work show that those who manage these organizations are leaders with strong management skills, transformation, and promotion, if the conditions are right they can consolidate and grow these organizations; the benefit will be reflected in increased support to combat social problems facing the country.



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