Impact of Transformational Leadership Style: A Review of Global Studies in the Past 5 years

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Abstract: *Studies on leadership has always fascinated businesses and researchers alike as the impact a leader can make to the fate of an organisation is tremendous. In this non-empirical review study, one of the much researched leadership style i.e., transformational leadership style is the focus. The author reviews 25 research studies conducted in 19 different countries in the past 5 years on the impact of transformational leadership style. The objective is to understand the relevance of this style in a cross-cultural setting across diverse industries. It is found that transformational leadership style significantly influences many individual and organisational variables like job satisfaction, organisational commitment, psychological well-being etc., towards positive organisational outcomes irrespective of the location of the study. It implies that leaders in today's organisations have to consider imbibing transformational leadership behaviours in order to become more effective in their trade.*

Keywords: Leadership style, Transformational, Transactional, Organisational commitment, Job satisfaction

1. Introduction

Businesses around the world are constantly in search of the right leader who would take the organization into the next level greatness and profitability. Leadership has a significant role in determining the future and fate of a business. Hence the interest in understanding the nuances of various leadership styles and its impact on organisations has caught the attention of researchers over the past several decades. Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. As seen by the employees, it includes the total pattern of explicit and implicit actions performed by their leader (Newstrom & Davies, 1993) [1]. According to Fertman and Linden (1999), Leadership style refers to the way in which a leader attempts to influence the behavior of subordinates, makes decisions regarding the direction of the group, and keeps a balance between the goal attainment function and maintenance function of the group [2]. The importance and impact of leadership style towards various dimensions of organisational effectiveness has been a key area of research across the globe.

Bass (1998) and Howell and Avolio (1993) advocated that effective managers would use both transformational and transactional leadership styles based on the demands of the situation [3], [4]. Transformational leadership is interested in the effect a leader has on his or her employees and the behaviours the leader needed to exhibit in order to influence and elicit the desired effect (Yukl, 1999) [5]. The subordinates would express trust, admiration, respect and loyalty if a transformational leader is effective in an organisational context. The impact of the transformational leader is in one's ability to motivate the employees, make them take ownership of the consequences of their actions and achieve an alignment between individual and organizational objectives. Transactional leadership focuses more on a give and take norm based on executing leader's requests and respecting organizational regulations.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to understand the relevance of transformational leadership style in present day organisations and management practices. As there are a huge amount of studies available, the author intends to review a few of the major researches across the globe in recent years to analyse whether there is any consistent pattern emerges from these studies. Another objective of the study is to explore the generalizability of this style verifying its impact across various cultural contexts by selectively reviewing studies from different countries in diverse industries.

3. Method

The present study is a non-empirical study based solely on review of literature. The database used is ProQuest Research Library. A search on "impact of transformational leadership style" narrowed to full texts from Scholarly journals between 2010 and 2014 produced 2801 results. There is an increase in the number of research articles on the topic published from 2010 upwards; 2010 produced 523, 2011 produced 589, 2012 produced 716 and 2013 produced 723 articles. In 2014, there are 250 articles published till now. For the current study, 25 articles were chosen published between 2010 and 2014. The selection criteria for the articles on impact of transformational leadership for this review study were priority listing, diversity in terms of country of publication and diversity of industry.

The studies for this review are from 19 different countries representing 5 continents and 14 different industries. The diversity is purposive in order to understand the global impact of transformational leadership across various industries. The details of the studies are briefly present in a table form and then the findings are described. In the discussion stage, an analysis of these studies in terms of the impact of transformational leadership across countries and industries in recent years would be done.

791

Table 1: Studies selected for the Review

	Topic of the study	Industry	Country of study	Finding
1	The impact of transformational, transactional and non-leadership styles on employee job satisfaction in the German hospitality industry	Hospitality	Germany	TFL (Transformational Leadership) positively linked to JS (Job Satisfaction)
2	Impact of the relationship between transformational and traditional leadership styles on job satisfaction	automobile	Iran	TFL positively linked to JS
3	Leadership styles and organisational citizenship behaviour		Malaysia	TFL influences OCB
4	An exploration of perspective taking as an antecedent of transformational behaviour	Healthcare	U S	Positive influence of TFL
5	Leadership and Mobile Working: The impact of distance on the superior-subordinate relationship and the moderating effects of leadership style	IT Consulting	Canada	TFL moderates Psychological distance
6	The impact of transformational leadership style on innovation as perceived by public employees in Jordan	Public firms	Jordan	TFL positively linked to Innovation
7	An examination of the relationship of transformational leadership to organisational culture and innovation	Different businesses	Pakistan	TFL positively linked to innovation
8	Testing Bass & Avolio model of leadership in understanding ERP implementation among Bruneian SMEs	SMEs	Brunei	TFL predictors of ERP implementation
9	Labour flexibility in SMEs: the impact of leadership	SMEs	Netherland	TFL positively linked to temporal flexibility
10	Ideal types of leadership as patterns of affective meaning: a cross cultural and over time perspective	Corporate managers	US & Germany	Cultural expectation
11	Transformational and social processes of leadership as predictors of organisational outcomes	Public sector	Australia	TFL positively related to performance
12	Transformational leadership and organisational performance in the public healthcare sector: The role of organisational learning and intellectual capital	Healthcare	UAE	TFL positively related to performance
13	Transformational leadership and life satisfaction among homestay program: the mediating effect of attitude	NGO	Malaysia	TFL positively influences life satisfaction
14	Emotional intelligence and transformation-centred leadership of the organisation's managers	Bankers	Iran	TFL positive link to Emotional Intelligence
15	Relationship among project manager's leadership style, team interaction and project performance in the Taiwanese server industry	Computer Hardware	Taiwan	TFL positive link to team communication
16	Leadership style and organisational culture in learning organisation	Telecommunication	Nepal & India	TFL positively influence learning organization
17	Impact of transactional and transformational leadership styles on organizational performance	Water Corporation	Nigeria	TFL positively related to performance
18	Leadership style and team processes as predictors of organizational learning	Manufacturing	India	TSL contributed to Organizational learning
19	Impact of Leadership styles on employee organizational commitment	IT	Europe	TFL positively related to OC (Organizational commitment)
20	The effects of core self-evaluations and transformational leadership on organisational commitment	Hi-Tech industry	South Korea	TFL positively related to OC
21	Fairness perceptions and job satisfaction as mediators of the relationship between LS & OC	Different industries	Croatia	TFL positively related to OC
22	Transformational leadership & Organisational commitment	Hospitality	Turkey	TFL positively related to loyalty
23	Impact of transformational leadership style on affective employees' commitment	Banking	Pakistan	TFL positively related to affective commitment
24	Leadership styles and its impact on organisational commitment	Public Sector	India	TFL positively related to OC
25	Exploring the relationship between transformational, transactional leadership style and organisational commitment among Nigerian bank employees	Banking	Nigeria	TFL insignificantly related to OC

4. Review of the studies on transformational leadership

Studies relating transformational leadership and job satisfaction have provided positive relationship between the two. In a study conducted among hotel employees in Germany, it was found that all components of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation) were positively related to employee job satisfaction (Rothfelder, Ottenbacher, & Harrington, 2013) [6]. In a different cultural context of Iran also, a significant positive relationship between supervisor's transformational leadership style as perceived by subordinates and their level of job satisfaction was established through a study conducted in automobile industry (Yaghoubipoor, Tee, & Ahmed, 2013) [7].

The relationship between leadership style and employees organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been of great interest. In a research in Malaysian business context (Lian & Tui, 2012), it was found that leadership style is one of the

strong predictors of subordinate's citizenship behavior [8]. This study revealed that transformational leaders tend to use inspirational appeals and consultation approach to gain positive response towards subordinate's OCB. On the other hand, transactional leader indulge in influence tactics that emphasize on exchange, pressure and legitimizing tactics which elicit a negative response towards OCB by the employees.

A sample consisting of supervisors in US healthcare provided support for the notion that when the leader take the perspective of the employees, the followers tend to view the leader as exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours (Gregory, Moates, & Gregory, 2011) [9]. Transformational leadership style can moderate the psychological distance which may be developed between the managers and employees due to the nature of the work itself. In a study carried out at a large management and information technology firm where a large percentage of employees worked in a mobile mode, it was found that supervisor's leadership style had a moderating effect (Brunelle, 2013) [10]. The level of the supervisor's transformational style moderated the correlation between both physical and psychological distance and superior-subordinate relational quality.

Research carried out among employees working in public organisations in Jordan found that there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership with practicing innovation at the workplace (Nusair, Ababneh, & Bae, 2012) [11]. Each of the four factors of transformational leadership behaviours were positively and significantly correlated with innovative behavior. This result is consistent with the argument that as transformational leadership has impact in the motivation, empowerment and morality of employees, it should in turn encourage innovation (Michaelis, Stegmaier, & Sonntag, 2010) [12]. A similar study on the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation propensity was conducted in Pakistan and produced a similar result that there is significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and both organizational culture and innovation propensity (Tipu, Ryan, & Fantazy, 2012) [13]. Among the CEOs of Brunei SMEs, a study was conducted to find out the impact of leadership style on the adoption of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). The study results have confirmed that two dimensions of transformational leadership – individualized consideration and inspirational motivation – are significant predictors of ERP implementation within the context of Bruneian SMEs (Seyal & Rahman, 2014) [14].

Two dimensions of transformational leadership, visionary leadership and coaching, were found to be positively related to temporal flexibility of employees which refers to their willingness to work overtime and adjust their schedules for the interest of the company, as found in a study conducted among Dutch Small and Medium Enterprises (Mesu, Riemsdijk, & Sanders, 2013) [15]. A cross cultural research related to leadership behavior of US and German managers was done in a simulated environment. The comparison of cultural expectations regarding the behavior of corporate managers showed changes over a period of time. The shift represents changes in the societal expectations from the

managers. In the United States, managers were expected to exhibit transactional behaviours in the 1970s and transformational leadership skills in the beginning of 21st century. In Germany, the cultural expectation was partially transactional and partly coercive in the 1980s and clearly coercive and deviant in the first decade of the new century (Schneider & Schroder, 2012) [16]. These results support the assumption that cultural differences of these countries set unique expectations from their corporate managers.

Transformational-transactional leadership was tested against organizational outcomes of the public sector in Australia (Muchiri, Cooksey, & Walumbwa, 2012) [17]. The findings supported the thesis that active transformational leadership behaviours were positively related to performance outcome whereas passive dimension was negatively related to performance. A study done in a different cultural context in the healthcare sector in UAE also revealed that transformational leadership style can improve the organizational performance focusing on the satisfaction for both employees and patients (Al-Abrrow, 2014) [18].

Transformational leadership is associated with enhanced well-being (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007) [19]. In a research conducted in Malaysia, it was found that all the four dimensions of transformational leadership contribute to improve the life satisfaction of the subordinates. Attitude was found to be influenced by the leadership behavior which in turn influenced positively the life satisfaction of the employees (Amin, Yusnita, Ibrahim, & Muda, 2013) [20]. Among a sample of Iranian Bank employees, the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership was investigated (Nazari & Madani, 2013) [21]. It was found that there exists a significant association between emotional intelligence and the components of transformational leadership which are charisma, inspiration, ideal behaviors, inspirational motivation and individual consideration.

A Research conducted in Taiwan exploring the association between leadership style and team communication and collaboration established that transformational leadership is positively associated with team communication (Yang, Wu, Wang, & Chin, 2012) [22]. A comparative study between Indian and Nepalese organisations in the telecommunication sector supported the premise that transformational leaders have a positive influence in the development of a learning organisation (Rijal, 2010) [23]. Surprisingly, it was found from the sample that though the results from the study underline the positive impact of transformational leadership, managers from both the countries do not demonstrate transformational leadership characteristics.

There is an increasing number of evidences supporting the assumption that transformational leadership behaviours work better and more effective when complimented with transactional contingent reward systems. In a study conducted in Nigeria (Ejere & Abasilim, 2012), it was affirmed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles had significant positive impact on organizational performance [24]. Another study in the Indian context (Pradeep & Prabhu, 2011), examined the relationship between leadership style and employee

performance [25]. This study found out that both transformational as well as transactional leadership behavior were positively linked to the performance of employees in an organisation. The contingent reward of transactional leadership has to be complemented with transformational behavior of the leaders in order to ensure a sustained organizational performance.

In a study done in the Indian manufacturing sector context, it was found that leadership style has significant impact on organizational learning (Bhat, Verma, Rengnekar, & Barua, 2012) [26]. This research concluded that transactional leadership style had greater contribution to organizational learning than transformational leadership style which is contrary to many previously done findings.

In an empirical study done among the two subsidiaries of one multinational IT company in Europe, the impact of leadership style on dimensions of organizational commitment was investigated (Clinebell, Skudiene, Trijonyte, & Reardon, 2013) [27]. The result showed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles have relationship with all three dimensions of organizational commitment at varying degrees. A study in a high-tech industry headquartered in South Korea affirmed that employees showed higher levels of organizational commitment when they found their supervisors exhibiting transformational leadership (Joo, Yoon, & Jeung, 2012) [28].

There are studies which claim leadership style as an antecedent of organizational commitment (Sabir, Sohail, & Asif Khan, 2011) and that there is a strong positive relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment (Ekaterini, 2010) [29], [30]. In a study conducted among 17 Croatian organizations representing a variety of different industries and organizational levels, it is found that active leadership styles are positively linked and have both direct and indirect effects on organizational commitment (Susanj & Jakopec, 2012) [31]. The effect of transformational leadership on the dimensions of commitment was investigated in a research conducted in the hospitality organizations in Turkey (Tuna, Ghazzawi, Tuna, & Catir, 2011) [32]. The study concluded that transformational leadership enhances the commitment of the employees and their loyalty to the organization.

In a research done among the banking employees in Pakistan (Riaz, Akram, & Ijaz, 2011), it was found that there is significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and employees' affective commitment [33]. In the Indian context, it was found that transactional leadership style in terms of pay satisfaction was significantly related to affective commitment and normative commitment (Dhawan & Mulla, 2011) [34]. Research in an Indian public sector organization revealed that most of the respondents participated perceived themselves to be more of a transformational leaders than transactional. The study also showed that transformational leadership style is related to employees' organizational commitment than transactional leadership (Raja & Palanichamy, 2012) [35].

Contrary to the finding of many previous studies, a research conducted among the bank employees in Nigeria found that the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment is very insignificant (Fasola, Adeyemi, & Olowe, 2013) [36]. However, the results from the study showed that the transactional leadership is more effective than transformational in contributing positively to organizational commitment.

5. Discussion

Studies from two different and unique cultures, Germany and Iran, sample drawn from totally different industries, hospitality and automobile shows a positive relationship between transformational leadership style and job satisfaction. This means employees, irrespective of the cultural and industry differences, were more satisfied when their bosses exhibit transformational behaviours - a clear vision, inspire and motivate them, establish a sense of meaning in their routine tasks, become role models by their actions, create trust in the mutual relationships, show understanding and support and considered them as persons with unique needs, talents and dreams.

The study on transformational leaders' ability to elicit citizenship behavior from employees throws light into specific processes – inspirational appeals and consultation tactics - the transformational leader needs to employ in order to influence subordinates for OCB. This suggests that understanding how the employees perceive the world is significant for the manager to have a transformational effect on them. The study in the US firm also reaffirms this fact that as transformational leaders are the ones who influence the perspective of their followers, it is important for them to first understand the perspectives of their followers in order to exert any kind of influence on them.

The finding from the study in the IT firm where employees are constantly mobile suggests that the ill-effects of distance can be at least partially compensated by the leadership style employed by the superior. While selecting managers for mobile workers, in order to enhance the relational quality between them, it is important to choose managers with transformational leadership skills, in other words, people who expresses empathy, shows active listening, communicates clearly the vision, influences others by means of an ideal, and demonstrates the capacity to inspire and provide intellectual stimulation (Bass, Jung, Avolio, & Berson, 2003) [37].

Three studies from different parts of Asia - Jordan, Pakistan and Brunei - show positive impact of transformational leadership on innovation and technology integration. The significance of these results is the applicability of western management concept in a non-western environment. Asian countries, in general, being high in power distance, the transformational leadership was expected to be ineffective, but the findings from the above researches are the contrary. It implies that, though more research needs to be done; transformational leadership may produce many favourable organizational outcomes in the context of many developing non-western countries.

The Brunein study also implies that when the employees are treated as important to the firm, such leadership behavior makes a difference positively in achieving the organizational objectives. Leaders using individual consideration style through encouragement, caring for and coaching are found to be successful in ERP implementation. When leaders provides inspirational motivation referring to setting high standards, communicating ideas and vision clearly and challenging workers to go beyond the routine tasks and personal interests, it results in achieving organizational objectives effectively.

Employees reciprocate positively to the leadership behavior as part of the social exchange relationship. Studies showing positive outcomes like willingness to work extra time (Netherlands) and enhanced organizational performance (Australia & UAE) reinforces this fact. Transformational leaders were also found to be capable of managing their own and others emotions in a positive manner showing higher levels of emotional intelligence. Studies from Iran and Malaysia states that transformational leaders are able to positively influence the wellness of the employees by understanding and relating to them emotionally. According to the Taiwanese study, the emotional connect between leaders and employees improve team communication which in turn contributed towards project performance. The analysis indicates that there is a strong correlation between transformational leadership and team collaboration suggesting that greater collaboration within the team is a result of high levels of transformational leadership behaviours.

Studies discussed so far have been reiterating the positive impact of transformational leadership style towards various aspects of businesses and organisations. Leadership based on contingent reward and punishment makes significant impact in employees' attitude which is argued against by some of the previous researchers (Bass B. M., 2008; Howell & Avolio, 1993) [38], [39]. The study from and Indian manufacturing sector suggested the value of reward based transactional leadership style as more effective than transformational style. The reason for this finding might be the very nature of the manufacturing sector itself with its focus on reward and punishment based leadership. While not under-estimating the importance of transformational leadership style, the need for reinventing new forms of reward strategies to keep employees motivated for learning is revealed henceforth. The Nigerian study also brings out this aspect of importance of transactional leadership. The implication for the leadership is to blend both these styles with due consideration to the situation and nature of the task assigned to the employees. It is important to identify the critical factors from these two styles that work in different cultural contexts and employ them appropriately.

The strong relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment has been revealed by several studies as described in the review section. These results are predicted by earlier researches as well (Buciuniene & Skudiene, 2008; Lo, Ramayah, Min, & Songan, 2010) [40], [41]. Employees develop a stronger emotional connect with the organization led by transformational leaders as they experience participation in decision-making and fairness and

consideration in treatment. The relationship is further explained by the ability of leaders to articulate the vision and inspire employees towards achieving it. Secondly, transformational leaders enhance the commitment of employees by getting them transcending their own self-interest towards the group's goal attainment. Challenging the status quo and providing opportunities for innovative approaches again further the organizational commitment of the staff (Bass B. M., 1985) [42]. Most of the studies points to the enhanced affective commitment due to the transformational behaviours of the leaders.

Study from Europe suggests a strong association between transactional leadership and continuance commitment which expresses the cost benefit approach of leadership and mutual economic exchange. This is consistent with previous researches which assert the positive correlation between transformational and transactional leadership styles with organizational commitment (Ali, Babar, & Bangash, 2011) [43]. Research also confirms job satisfaction to be a mediator between leadership style and organizational commitment (Yang M., 2012) [44].

Among the three types of commitment, affective and normative commitments were found to have high level of relationship with transformational leadership. Additionally, it is observed that greater significance for leadership charisma and individualized consideration corresponds to greater normative commitment. These findings support many of the earlier researches that observed positive relationship between transformational leadership and commitment to organization (Arnold, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995) [45], [46].

The different context of developing countries like India and Pakistan provide a little different outcome. The struggle for livelihood, job security and social mobility for the majority in these countries explains the importance of monetary benefits leading to emotional and moral commitment. While addressing the need for greater commitment, it is important to satisfy the livelihood aspirations of the employees as well especially in the context of developing countries.

6. Implications and Recommendations

This review study clearly establishes a positive and direct link between transformational leadership style and individual and organizational outcomes. A few specific implications for organizational leaders are discussed here.

To enhance the job satisfaction and psychological well-being of employees, the managers need to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours. It refers to articulating an unambiguous and inspiring vision, communicating it to all levels within the organisation, instilling a sense of meaning to routine tasks, leading by example, building a culture of trust, mutual care and understanding and treat employees with dignity.

Citizenship behaviours from employees are the result of how leaders engage in inspirational appeals and consultative tactics, in other words, motivating through right communication strategies. Organisations need to constantly

assess and refine the communication channels and processes within the organisations and empower the managers to use them effectively. Building an emotional rapport with employees is an important transformational behavior to influence their attitudes and behaviours.

Managers have to be trained to show empathy, possess active listening skills and provide intellectual stimulation in order to enhance the relational quality with the employees especially the skilled human resource of the company. Leaders employing individual consideration style through encouragement, participation, delegation, caring for and coaching are found to be more effective.

The study also reinforces the effectiveness of emotional intelligence for managers. Understanding and managing one's own and employees' emotions, managers can significantly influence the subordinates towards positive organizational outcomes. Building emotional connect with the team results in greater project performance through enriched team collaboration.

In the context of developing countries, transformational leadership has to be complemented with transactional leadership behaviours like contingent reward. Revisiting the reward strategies and blending both forms of leadership styles with due consideration to the situation and nature of tasks are important to meet the unique needs of developing countries like Indian, Nepal and Pakistan. At the same time, due to high value in power distance and dictatorial leadership style as part of the national culture, it was seen in these countries that the leaders demanding obedience and compliance rather than empowering the subordinates. Hence the managers of these countries need to be trained and mentored to imbibe more transformational leadership behaviours.

As studies across the globe reiterate the correlation of transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment, it is very significant for organizations to consider this relationship. Challenging the status-quo and creating opportunities for employees to engage in creative endeavours and innovative initiatives are transformational behaviours that influence affective commitment.

7. Conclusion

This review of global studies clearly reveals the relevance and consistent impact of transformational leadership in a cross-cultural context. Barring an insignificant number of studies, which requires complementing transformational leadership behaviours with transactional leadership behaviours, all studies under analysis established a clear and positive link between transformational leadership style and individual and organizational variables. Though limited in its scope and generalizability due to the small number of studies analysed, this paper, reviewing a broad range of countries from 5 different continents and a diverse set of industries, concludes that it is important for leaders of organizations to consider transformational leadership style as an effective leadership style to achieve positive organizational outcomes. The direct implication for organizations is to train their managers in transformational

leadership behaviours in successfully realizing the organizational vision and objectives.

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796

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797

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