

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SERVICE SECTOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract *The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between perceived leadership styles and employee engagement in the service sector. The causal research design with cross-sectional nature of data was used for the study. A sample of 450 valid responses was randomly collected from respondents in private service sector in India. The results revealed that perceived leadership style and employee engagement are having a highly significant relationship. Further, the perceived leadership style has a highly significant impact on the employee engagement. Transformational leadership is more imperative than transactional leadership for bringing more prominent employee engagement. The study has implication for organisations to consider leaders with the transformational style of leadership in work task and decision-making for facilitating organisation change. One important implication of the study is for a leader to be able to identify his /her style that works best in a particular situation and the expectations of the employees which would lead them to be engaged employee easily and push them for better performance.*

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, Service Sector*

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, it has become imperative for organisations and leaders to adapt to changes resulting from globalisation, temperamental nature of business markets, and changing client need. In the meantime, individuals are increasingly being achievement oriented. Retaining and engaging employees are turning out to be more troublesome. Employees are turning out to be more diverse. Demographic changes imply that three to four unique generations with different values will essentially stay in the workforce. Organisations require proper methodologies to meet these difficulties in turbulent times. Engaging employees to make them more profitable and have a more grounded plan to stay is one such strategy, which is important for survival & success.

Though when leaders are grasping visionary and organic leadership, employee engagement is viewed as having a positive relationship with the employees' perception. The leadership has not just been perceived as a basic part of the power management of employees (Padmanathan, 2010), however it has likewise been recommended as one of the single greatest components adding to employee recognition in the working environment and workforce engagement (Wang & Walumbwa,

2007; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Stroud, 2009). Specifically, Attridge (2009) attested that leadership style is essential for empowering employee engagement. However, leadership does not exist independently from followers' perceptions (Norman, Avolio, & Luthans, 2010). It's the perceptions of leadership styles which have been measured and studied. Consequently, this study explores the relationship between perceived leadership styles and employee engagement.

A leader develops individual and organisational goals, and sets the tone and culture of the organisation, so that it will easily achieve different business objectives at different point of time. An effective leader can impact his or her followers to achieve the objectives of the organisation. Building the relationship between a leader and his/ her followers requires thankfulness from the leader for the individual estimations of the followers who would give their vitality and abilities to finish shared targets (Bass, 1985). The transactional/transformational school of thought (Bass, 1985) is presently recognised as a predominant approach in the study of leadership (Vera & Crossan, 2004; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). Transformational leaders are socially engaged and utilise idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual

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stimulation and individualised consideration to accomplish predominant results (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999), whereas transactional leadership is viewed as contingent reinforcement. Contingent reward refers to an exchange of rewards between leaders and followers in which exertion is remunerated by giving prizes to great performance or threats and disciplines for poor performance. The concept of laissez-faire given on common ground, that is “abdicates responsibilities and avoiding decisions” (Luthans, 2005). Leaders let group members make all decision (Mondy & Premeaux, 1995).

The Gallup organisation characterises employee engagement as the contribution with an eagerness to work. Gallup compares employee engagement to a positive employees’ enthusiastic connection and employees’ commitment (Dernovsek, 2008). Engaged employee reliably shows three general behaviours which enhance organisational performance: (i) ‘Say’- the employee backers for the organisation to colleagues, and alludes potential workers and clients. (ii) ‘Stay’- the employee wants to be an individual from the organisation regardless of chances to work somewhere else. (iii) ‘Strive’- the employee applies additional time, exertion and activity to add to the achievement of the business (Baumruk & Gorman, 2006). Likewise, engaged employees work with energy and feel a significant association with their organisation. They drive advancement and propel the organisation (Gallup, 2005). Organisations drive engagement by proactively utilising three wellsprings of impact for change: employees, leaders, and organisational systems and strategies. These three drivers work to construct a drawing in the workplace. In spite of the fact that engagement has different drivers, a definitive responsibility is with the individual employee. Organisations planning to drive engagement must take advantage of employees’ energy, commitment, and recognizable proof with the organisation. This is proficient by having the right employees working in the right jobs, which is our first engagement driver.

The present study is focused on Development Dimensions International (2005) states, five measurements of workplace procedure which make employees a profoundly engaged workforce. These are aligning effort & strategy (AES), empowerment (EM), teamwork and collaboration (T&C), growth and development (G&D), support and recognition (S&R) (Wellins, Bernthal & Phelps, 2005). This study, drawing on empirical support and previous literature, argues that transformational leadership has an impact on employee engagement. Leadership styles and employee engagement have implications for many personal and organisational related constructs, but not many Indian studies could be found on this. It further explains that if organisations seriously promote transformational leadership style and employee engagement in the organisations, it would ultimately help the organisational growth and development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The leadership has been an important topic in research fields of management. Its forerunners and results have all the more broadly significant impact on organisational results and performance of the employees. Numerous researchers, similar to Hartog, Muijen, and Koopman (1997), Shuck and Herd (2012), and Bass (1990, 1999), have done additional research in the area of leadership and employee engagement, investigating the union of two structures and suggesting for leadership improvement in human resources development (HRD). The result exhibits that using only either transactional or transformational style does not suit changing worker engagement needs. So, a blend of both the styles will suit particular levels of representation in the cosmopolitan organisations. Metzler (2006) in this study establishes a positive relationship between transformational leadership style and employee engagement. The transactional leadership style identified a negative relationship with employee engagement. Ghafoor, Qureshi, Khan, and Hijazi (2011) reviewed and found out that the association between transformational leadership style and employee engagement. The observational revelations of information, amassed through studies from a test of 270 respondents of telecom industry showed the association between transformational leadership style and employee engagement practices.

Tims, Bakker, and Xanthopoulou (2011) examined how transformational leadership style upgrades subordinates everyday employee engagement. Raja (2012) examined the transformational leadership and employee work engagement in the service sector firms of Pakistan. The results revealed that the transformational leadership factors like idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration and lastly intellectual stimulation likely prompt to higher work engagement. Pillai’s (2013) study on understanding and analysing the factors which lead to a total engagement of the employee found that independent variables like recognition, salary, extent of academic qualifications, age, sex, number of years in full-time employment and socioeconomic status might all contribute towards employee engagement. Holten and Brenner (2015) investigated the direct and indirect relationships between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and followers’ appraisal of change through manager engagement. The results have potential implications for change management, as followers’ change appraisal may be improved by developing managers’ leadership style and engagement. Pham (2016) points out a strong and positive correlation existed between consideration and initiating structure, leadership behaviour, and employee engagement among virtual working employees. Popli and Rizvi (2016) examined the drivers of employee engagement particularly the impact of leadership style. The outcomes from this review uncovered significant relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement. A

moderating impact of age and education was likewise found in the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement. The review highlights the significance and the noteworthy part of employee engagement and the role leadership styles play in building up a culture of engagement. Breevaart and Bakker (2017) investigated the relationship between daily transformational leadership behaviour and employee work engagement. Results showed that teachers' daily challenge demands (workload and cognitive demands) had a positive relationship with work engagement on the day's transformational leadership was high (vs. low). In addition, teachers' daily hindrance demands (role conflict, but not family to work conflict) had a negative relationship with work engagement on the day's transformational leadership was low (vs. high). These findings show that the function of transformational leadership behaviour changes from day to day, and depends on the type of job demand.

The theoretical framework of leadership and engagement highlights a large number of the reviews that focus on the visionary and transformational leadership while examining engagement. As proposed in the theoretical structure given by Shuck and Herd (2012), transactional leadership may likewise add to the expansion of employee engagement next to transformational leadership, however, it has not been researched much. In the Indian setting, there is a reasonable absence of such reviews. This study has been done along these lines for the purpose of investigating the leadership and engagement relationship. The consequence of leadership style on behavioural results like employee engagement can be measured in the present study. The empirical proof of leadership style and employee engagement relationship in the Indian setting is somewhat restricted; the exploration would like to add to this assemblage of research. Based on the above review of literature, following hypotheses have been constructed:

- There is a significant relationship between perceived leadership style and employee engagement.
- Factors explaining perceived leadership styles have a significant impact on employee engagement.

RESEARCH METHODS

The initial phase of the present study was exploratory in nature. This has been done through literature review while developing the conceptual framework of each variable and its interrelationship. Further, the study is on majorly quantitative in nature and cross-sectional in a time frame. For the purpose of this study, the researcher using simple random basis from four industries (financial services, IT, telecom, and hospitality) in the service sector in the National Capital Region of Delhi. Responses from 450 respondents were collected for the purpose of the study. As per Joseph, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), the study maximised

the number of respondents per variable with the desired ratio of 5 respondents per variables. The data were collected through primary as well as secondary sources that generate evidence to supplement the research design. The employees were contacted through the LinkedIn site. Researchers also approached them for confirming their participation in the survey. The link of the questionnaires was sent online that is in the Google-linked form and also hard copies of the questionnaire were given directly as per availability of the respondents of four industries (financial services, IT, telecom, and hospitality) in private sector employees.

INSTRUMENTS

Perceived Leadership Style

Perceived leadership style was matched with the original multi-factor leadership questionnaire (MLQ-5X Short Rater Form) which has 45 questions. Thirty-six statements in MLQ questionnaire had three main factors: transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, & laissez-faire style (Avolio *et al.*, 1999; Avolio & Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1995, 1997, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Popli & Rizvi, 2015). It has been translated into an Indian context due to the difference in culture, belief, language, and lifestyles. To capture the leadership style, a subordinate's perception of his superior's leadership style was collected. Statements measure the nine leadership behaviours, viz. idealised influence (attributed), idealised influence (behavioural), inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, contingent rewards, management by exception (active), management by exception (passive), and laissez-faire. These nine behaviours are measured through specific items and are then grouped together under three leadership styles, namely, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and passive/avoidant leadership. Total reliability of the Cronbach's alpha for this scale was measured to be .894, during the pilot study (n=62) (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2008). The participants responded their choices on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4 (0= not at all and 4= frequently, if not always).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was assessed with an engagement survey questionnaire developed by DDI (Development Dimensions International) (Phelps, 2009). It is a 20-item scale with each statement marked on a standard five-point Likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire has five sub-factors directly related to work environment strategy which creates a highly engaged workforce, such as aligning effort strategy

(AES), empowerment (EM), teamwork & collaboration (T&C), growth and development (G&D), and support and recognition (S&R). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was measured to be 0.901, during the pilot study (n=62).

RESULTS ANALYSIS

The overview of the inter-correlation matrix in Table 1 represents the correlation between perceived leadership style and employee engagement. The majority of the variables are highly significant at 0.01 level and few variables are significant at 0.05 level. Similarly, transactional leadership components (CR =Contingent Reward, MEA= Management by Active, MEP=Management by Expectation-Passive) are highly correlated with employee engagement components but laissez-faire leadership is correlated with only growth & development and support & recognition components of employee engagement. The results (Table 1) reveal that transformational

leadership has more positively significant relationship with employee engagement compared to transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. Therefore the hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between perceived leadership style and employee engagement” is supported by the study. A similar study has been conducted by some of the researchers (Popli & Rizvi, 2015; 2016; Pham, 2016). The leadership style plays very crucial role in the organisation to build various intermediary functions like better policy, culture, and environment whereas the end-result will be the best employee-engagement level. The organisation creates quality, innovation and employee performance for business growth and profit. The four factors of leadership style do not have a relationship with each other as which are IC & MEA (r=0.081, P>0.05), CR & MEA (r=0.009, P>0.05), MEA & MEP (r=0.028, P>0.05), IC & LFL (r=-0.015, P>0.05), but other factors are highly correlated with each other. In employee engagement, all the factors are correlated with each other at 0.01 levels.

Table 1: Intercorrelation Between the Factors of Perceived Leadership Style and Employee Engagement

Factors	IIA	IIB	IM	IS	IC	CR	MEA	MEP	LFL	AES	EM	T&C	G&D	S&R
IIA	1													
IIB	.361**	1												
IM	.313**	.288**	1											
IS	-.290**	.125**	-.251**	1										
IC	.139**	.123**	.231**	-.094*	1									
CR	.274**	.098*	.129**	-.181**	.118*	1								
MEA	.284**	.303**	.386**	-.098*	.081	.009	1							
MEP	.230**	.096*	.078	-.172**	.211**	.266**	.028	1						
LFL	.104*	.354**	.135**	.129**	-.015	-.106*	.104*	.098*	1					
AES	.319**	.052	.095*	-.146**	.049	.303**	.520**	.325**	-.080	1				
EM	.222**	.239**	.027	-.270**	-.155**	.473**	.208**	.242**	.080	.387**	1			
T&C	.338**	.308**	.192**	-.072	-.037	.129**	.260**	.049	.017	.386**	.387**	1		
G&D	.433**	.056	.119*	-.220**	-.321**	.324**	.113*	.054	-.355**	.406**	.436**	.392**	1	
S&R	.038	.006	.375**	-.023	-.110*	.054	.450**	-.144**	.103*	.326**	.157**	.270**	.117*	1

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

IIA = Idealise Influence Attribute, IIB= Idealise Influence Behaviour, IM- Inspirational Motivation, IS= Intellectual Simulation, IC=Individual Consideration, CR =Contingent Reward , MEA- Management by Expectation –Active , MEP=Management by Expectation Passive, LFL-Laissez-Faire Leadership , AES= Align Effort & Strategy , EM= Empowerment , T&C= Team & Collaboration, G&D= Growth & Development, S&R= Support & Recognition

Source: Authors’ compilation

Table 2 describes the regression analysis model of perceived leadership style impacts on employee engagement.

$$EE = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 +$$

$$\beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + e$$

EE = Overall Employee Engagement

X1= Idealised Influence Attribute (IIA)

X2= Idealised Influence Behaviour (IIB),

X3= Inspirational Motivation (IM),

X4= Intellectual Simulation (IS),

X6= Contingent Reward (CR),

X8= Management by Expectation-Passive (MEP),

X5= Individualised Consideration(IC),

X7= Management by Expectation-Active (MEA),

X9= Laissez-Faire Leadership (LFL),

In this model “ α ” is a constant and β s are the coefficients whose worth will be estimated and ‘e’ refers to the error. Here Overall Employee Engagement is the dependent variable, whereas Idealised Influence Attribute (IIA), Idealised Influence Behaviour (IIB), Inspirational Motivation (IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), Individualised Consideration (IC), Contingent Reward (CR), Management by Expectation-Active (MEA), Management by Expectation-Passive (MEP), and Laissez-Faire Leadership (LFL) are independent variables.

The overall predictability of the model is shown in Table 2, where the adjusted R2 value of 0.922 indicates that 92.2% of the factors are responsible for the employee engages in an organisation. From the ANOVA test, it can be predicted that the table sig. value of 0.05 is greater than the calculated sig. value of 0.000. It means that there is a significant correlation between the dependent and independent variables, i.e., employee engagement with respect to different dimensions of leadership style.

The coefficient analysis presented in Table 2 shows the relationship between dependent and independent variables. According to calculated value of p (sig. value), the factors namely Idealised Influence Attribute (IIA), Idealised Influence Behaviour (IIB), Inspirational Motivation(IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), Individualised Consideration (IC), Contingent Reward (CR), Management by Expectation-Active (MEA), and Laissez-Faire Leadership (LFL) have a significant relationship with the employee engagement as the table sig. value of 0.05 is greater than the calculated sig. value. The results showed in Table 2 that the hypothesis “Factors explaining perceived leadership styles have a significant impact on employee engagement” is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. The result is matched with earlier studies by a few researchers (Popli & Rizvi, 2015, 2016; Holten & Brenner, 2015; Perko, Kinnunen, Tolvanen, & Feldt, 2016). Further, it can be said that leadership styles are an important aspect not only for employee engagement, but for entire growth for the organisation.

Table 2: Perceived Leadership Style Impact on Employee Engagement

Predictors	B	Beta	T	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	ANOVA	df	Sig.
Constant	3.604		246.281	.000	.961	.923	.922	586.949	449	.000
IIA	2.671	2.346	14.607	.000						
IIB	-.183	-.159	-5.774	.000						
IM	-.098	-.084	-2.040	.043						
IS	-.336	-.299	-5.685	.000						
IC	-.355	-.319	-10.984	.000						
CR	-.069	-.057	-2.949	.003						
MEA	-1.211	-1.093	-7.866	.000						
MEP	-.002	-.002	-.054	.957						
LFL	-.145	-.131	-2.562	.011						

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Mean of Employee Engagement b. Predictors: (Constant), IIA= Idealise Influence Attribute, IIB= Idealise Influence Behaviour, IM- Inspirational Motivation, IS= Intellectual Simulation, IC=IndividualConsideration, CR =Contingent Reward, MEA- Management Expectation –Active, MEP=Management Expectation Passive, LFL-Laissez-Faire Leadership

Source: Authors’ compilation

The above results mentioned that the components of transformational leadership style are more influential factor to boost employee engagement as compared to components of transactional leadership style and laissez-fair. Further, the results revealed that components of transformational and transactional (except for management by exception -passive) and laissez-fair leadership style have a high impact on employee engagement at 0.05 level.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study is a major implication for individual employee, employers, organisation, management practitioners, policymakers, and government. Supervisors may upgrade their leadership viability and along these line, may increase executions among subordinates by seeing how transformational leaders awaken followers. By upgrading the transformational leadership qualities, the organisation

can win the employees' trust to a more prominent degree. Employees can be engaged in both types of leadership styles such as transformational and transactional leadership styles. Therefore, a leader needs to be able to identify his/her style that works best in a particular situation. This will be matched with the expectations of the employees which leads to being engaged employee easily and push them for better performance. Employee engagement is a vital variable affecting numerous organisational and individual outcomes. Since the study considered the immediate supervisors as leaders, it might be beneficial for organisations to concentrate on them through leadership improvement programmes and prepare for each of those employees who are managing associates at client interface level. Organisations should work with direct supervisors to ensure that they adopt appropriate leadership style that serves to drive employee engagement. Like transformational leadership in previous studies, the study identified that authentic leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership, and participative leadership styles enhance employee engagement. These leadership styles are attributed to the transformational leadership style. HR/ OD experts can encourage managers by building important practices and services. Every HR practice ought to be conveyed and connected purposefully and from a comprehensive point of view. That is, improving the engagement of employees will require an integrated methodology, consolidating components of staffing, leadership advancement, and job redesign.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership style has a direct and strong ability to create an environment for higher employee engagement. Transformational leadership, an approach of upgrading interpersonal relationship amongst supervisors and subordinate, is an approach to make the more elevated amount of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, and employee engagement. Transformational leadership likewise helps employees end up distinctly more imaginative and inventive, and brings such new thoughts which permit the organisation to develop intensely and adjust to the changing outside condition. Lamentably, this kind of leadership is not being practiced by many organisations in India. The consequences of this review presumed that if supervisors receive transformational leadership style, they can improve employee satisfaction, loyalty, and engaged employee effectively. It may be worthwhile to explore the components of leadership styles; psychological capital and employee engagement in future research to plan in specific actions of employee engagement and performance. The consequences of the present work ought to give essential bits of knowledge to any individual who is keen on examining leadership and its effect on employee engagement in the Indian cultural

setting. Future research could be conducted pan-India and also covering other cultures, countries, in order to validate and generalise the findings of this thesis to broader settings. Similarly, more industries or only one specific industry and comparison of industries in the service sector can be considered to explain and generalise the findings more comprehensively. The longitudinal study will give more authentic and valid results instead of cross-sectional study.

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