

EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT- AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN SELECT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract *The present knowledge-driven economy – coupled with market pressures, competitive work environment and advancement in technologies – is posing numerous challenges to organizations, in general, and higher educational institutions, in particular. In this regard, academic institutions need to become as centre of excellence with focus on enriching the developmental aspects of their employees both teaching and non teaching staff who contribute significantly towards institution building process. Academic heads need to involve and engage their workforce towards organizational growth by entrusting them with academic and administrative assignments and responsibilities. They need to be inspired and guided by leaders so that they can be more effective and result oriented. It calls for the role of transformational leaders to instil a sense of commitment and dedication amongst their followers. Keeping this in view, the present article is aimed to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement in some sample select institutions. It will also explore the relationship that exists between them. The findings of the study revealed that there exists a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. It is also revealed from the results that employee engagement is positively influenced by transformational leadership. The findings of the study suggest that transformational leadership needs to be further enhanced in order to enrich employee engagement in the sample study institutions.*

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Transformational Leadership, Academic and Non-Academic Staff, Higher Education*

INTRODUCTION

In this competitive business environment, the organizations are expected to continuously innovate, excel and outperform their competitors. The success factor of organizations lies in developing and managing capable and competent human resource that can contribute significantly towards organizational growth and prosperity. Organizations need to possess sound, effective and dedicated employees who can engage and involve themselves in attaining organizational objectives. Such employees are attributed as ‘engaged employees’. Engaged employees are highly motivated and committed in increasing the productivity of organizations. They are highly enthusiastic and passionate about their work and strive hard in accomplishing their tasks. Kular et al. (2008) opined that engaged employees play a critical role in achieving organizational outcomes. It calls for the role of transformational leaders who can inspire and motivate their followers to work together in attaining organizational objec-

tives. Transformational leaders inculcate a sense of positivity, commitment and motivation amongst their workers with a purpose to make them more effective and result oriented. Yukl and Howell (1999) believed that leadership is one of the crucial factors in encouraging employee engagement. As the complexity of business changes, the role of leadership in manoeuvring human resources for the betterment of organizations becomes all the more critical and more so in developing dedicated and engaged workforce. In this respect, the transformational leadership style is most suitable leadership style as it involves followers to produce results and encourage them to.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Employee Engagement

The term engagement refers to an ‘individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work’ (Harter,

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Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Khan (1990) viewed employee engagement as 'the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances'. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), employee engagement has three components, namely 1) vigour, 2) dedication and 3) absorption. Vigour refers to the stimulating and energizing experience the employee has towards his/her work. Dedication refers to employee's commitment, involvement and devotion to his/her work. Absorption is characterized by the extent to which an employee is engrossed and attentive towards his work. It helps employee to shy away from any kind of distraction at work places. Absorption at work places refers to highly engrossed employee, who finds it difficult to leisure and rather concentrates minutely towards his work (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006; Langelan et al., 2006; Liorens et al., 2007). The vigour aspect of employee engagement drives high energy, mental resilience, strength and resistance amongst employees (Salanova et al., 2005; Latham & Pinder, 2005; Steers et al., 2004). The third dimension of employee engagement is 'dedication' that is characterized with a sense of pride, enthusiasm and high involvement of employees in performing their tasks (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, 2006; Brown, 1996).

Transformational Leadership

Over the years, a vast number of researches have been conducted on transformational leadership in varied organizational settings. The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. He stated that transformational leadership is an ongoing process in which leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. The existing body of knowledge on transformational leadership was added and contributed by many researchers. Bass (1985) extended the work of Burns by explaining how transformational leadership can be measured and how it affects follower's motivation and performance. Gibson et al. (2012) explain that transformational leaders have the ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve results greater than originally planned by re-inventing the entire philosophy, system and culture of the organization. Mokgolo et al. (2012) believed that transformational leadership is critical for attaining organizational objectives.

Transformational leadership style is measured using five factors, namely i) idealized attribute, ii) idealized behaviour, iii) inspirational motivation, iv) intellectual stimulation and v) individual consideration (Bass and Avolio, 2000). With the passage of time, the area of transformational leadership gained immense popularity amongst

academicians, researchers and policy makers. Marquis and Huston (2008) stated that transformational leaders help in creating a productive environment at workplaces, which aimed at acknowledging the individual and organizational needs. Groenewald and Ashfield (2008) pointed out that transformational leadership reduces the effects of uncertainty and change and effectively guides employees to attain their occupational goals. Transformational leaders can encourage employees towards gaining valuable organizational goals include higher productivity, presenting better services and solving social problems (Spector, 2004). Transformational leadership includes affective and charismatic elements of leadership that resonate with workers who experience a need to be inspired and empowered in uncertain and volatile times (Hughes, 2010).

Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has been found to be very vital in enhancing organizational performance. Organizations strive hard in ensuring that they possess sound and dedicated workforce at their disposal who eventually would lead in contributing towards organizational success. In this regard, organizational leaders have a significant role to perform in providing an atmosphere at workplaces where each individual focuses on improving their performance. Past research studies have made an attempt to highlight the significance of employee engagement for organizations. However, the academic literature on the subject of employee engagement with reference to transformational leadership has found very less mention. Hayati et al. (2014), in their study, found that transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement. Joubert and Roodt (2011) pointed out that transformational leadership has a sound relationship with employee engagement. Bezuidenhout and Schultz (2013) believed that transformational leadership helps in aligning individuals goals with organizations' strategic goals. Transformational leadership is a process of engaging with followers, creating a common understanding and raising the level of motivation for both the leader and his follower. Northouse (2010) pointed out that transformational leadership plays an effective role in ensuring dedicated, motivated and commitment workforce, which helps them to become involved and engaged with their work. Bass (1985) suggested that employees were more likely to devote additional extra effort at work, if they reported to a transformational leader, who guided their employees by stimulating them and inspiring their trust. (Zhu et al., 2009; Gill, 2006; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Yukl, 2002; Harter, et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Howell and Avolio, 1993) have highlighted that transformational leaders inspire

and motivate their followers to put extra efforts and enable them to be more engaged with their work and contribute towards organizational outcomes.

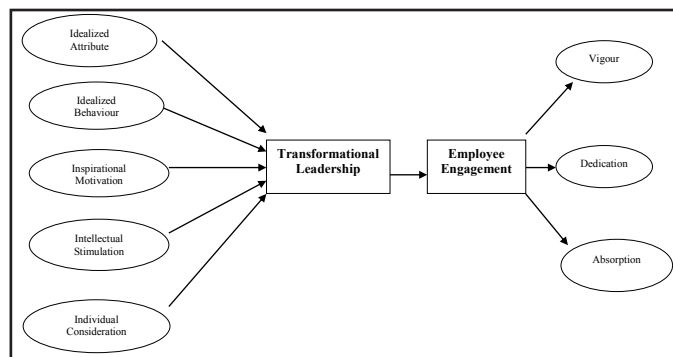


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework of Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives:

- to analyse and compare the perceptions of teaching and non-teaching staff towards transformational leadership and employee engagement in select institutions.
- to study the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.
- to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement.
- to draw conclusions and suggest measures for improving employee engagement in sampled institutions.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H1 (a): Perceptions of teaching and non-teaching staff towards transformational leadership do not significantly differ.

H1 (b): Perceptions of teaching and non-teaching staff towards employee engagement do not significantly differ.

H2: There exists a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

H3: Transformational leadership positively and significantly effects employee engagement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive study of primary and secondary sources was done for purpose of collecting data. A well-systematic

questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from four different colleges of Srinagar district namely Amar Singh College, Government College for Women, Bemina Degree College and S. P. college. A total of 160 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 133 questionnaires were received. Of the 133 questionnaires returned, six responses were incomplete. The remaining 127 valid and complete questionnaires were used for the quantitative analysis. It represented a useable response rate of 79.37%. Employee engagement was measured using the Schaufeli et al.'s (2006) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, which has three subscales: i) vigour, ii) dedication and iii) absorption consisting of three items in each subscale whilst as transformational leadership was measured by employing MLQ- 5X questionnaire developed by Bass and Avalio (1995) consisting of five subscales: i) idealized attribute, ii) idealized behaviour, iii) inspirational motivation, iv) intellectual stimulation and v) individual consideration having four items in each subscale. The reliability coefficient of the research instrument variables varied from 0.73 to 0.85.

The data were analysed using SPSS 20.0. Version. Descriptive statistics such as mean score, % mean score, standard deviation and frequency were used to study the employee's perception with respect to transformational leadership practices and employee engagement elements. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson's correlation, was employed for the hypotheses testing purpose.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Study Variables

Construct	No. of Items	Reliability
Idealized Attribute	4	.75
Idealized Behaviour	4	.73
Inspirational Motivation	4	.79
Intellectual Stimulation	4	.80
Individual Consideration	4	.85
Vigour	3	.72
Absorption	3	.83
Dedication	3	.77

Cronbach's Alpha's internal consistency coefficients were calculated to find reliability of the constructs under study and obtain dependable picture of internal consistency of the measuring instruments. The results of the reliability test, given in Table 1, reveal that the Cronbach's alpha values for all the five dimensions of transformational leadership practices. Three elements of employee engagement are above the threshold level of 0.7 reflecting that the items imposed on leadership variables and employee engagement are consistently measuring its constructs

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to elicit response of teaching and non-teaching personnel regarding present laid down research objectives, descriptive statistics was used and the same is discussed below.

Table 2 depicts the comparison between teaching and non-teaching staff's perception towards leadership practices. It has been reported from Table 2 that teaching staff (mean

score = 3.43) shows slightly higher satisfaction towards leadership practices as compared to non-teaching staff (mean score = 3.37).

However, the results of z-test (Table 2) indicated that the difference in the mean scores is statistically insignificant (z-value = 0.072; $p > .05$), indicating that there is no significant difference in the perception levels of teaching and non-teaching staff with respect to leadership practices (Table 2). Hence, hypothesis (1a) is accepted.

Table 2: Comparison of Employee Perception Towards Transformational Leadership

Construct	Mean Score		Total Mean Score	Z Value*
	Teaching Staff (N = 78)	Non-Teaching Staff (N = 49)		
Idealized Attribute	3.42	3.36	3.39	.047
Idealized Behaviour	3.46	3.38	3.42	.040
Inspirational Motivation	3.48	3.42	3.45	.072
Intellectual Stimulation	3.42	3.38	3.40	.089
Individual Consideration	3.37	3.31	3.34	.054
Total Score	3.43	3.37	3.40	.072

* $p < .05$;

Note: Higher the % of mean score, higher is the level of satisfaction.

Table 3 depicts the comparison between teaching and non-teaching staff's perception towards employee engagement. It has been reported from Table 3 that teaching staff (mean score = 3.34) shows slightly higher satisfaction towards employee engagement as compared to non-teaching staff (mean score = 3.28).

However, the results of z-test, (Table 3) indicated that the difference in the mean scores is statistically insignificant (z-value = 0.063; $p > .05$), indicating that there is no significant difference in the perception levels of teaching and non-teaching staff with respect to employee engagement. Hence, hypothesis (1b) is accepted.

Table 3: Comparison of Employee Perception Towards Employee Engagement

Construct	Mean Score		Total Mean Score	Z Value*
	Academic Staff (N = 78)	Non- Academic Staff (N = 49)		
Vigour	3.31	3.25	3.28	.054
Dedication	3.38	3.30	3.34	.069
Absorption	3.33	3.29	3.31	.042
Total Score	3.34	3.28	3.31	.063

* $p < .05$;

Note: Higher the % of mean score, higher is the level of satisfaction.

Table 4: Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

(Correlation)			
		Transformational leadership	Employee Engagement
Transformational Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.511**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	127	127
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.511**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	127	127

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

From Table 4, it can be seen that there is a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement in sampled institutions. It depicts that the more we exhibit transformational leadership, the more it will result in promoting employee engagement of academic staff. Therefore hypothesis 2 is supported since correlation between transformational leadership practices and employee engagement was found ($r = .508$, $p = 0.000$), which is both positive as well as statistically significant.

Table 5: Effect of Transformational Leadership practices on Employee Engagement (Regression Analysis)

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F-Value	Sig.
1	.511 ^a	.432	.431	93.20	.000 ^a
a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership					

Further, in order to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement, regression analysis was performed (Table 5). The regression analysis indicates that the perception of teaching and non-teaching staff regarding transformational leadership practices has a significant positive effect on employee engagement prevailing in sample select institutions. The value of $R^2 = 0.432$, which shows that 43.20% variance is explained by independent variable (transformational leadership) in dependent variable (employee engagement). Thus our hypothesis 3 is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examined the existing perception of teaching and non-teaching staff towards transformational leadership and employee engagement in the sample study institutions. On the whole, it was found that transformational leadership and employee engagement was perceived positively by teaching and non-teaching staff of the sample select institutions.

The findings of the study revealed that there exists a favourable and significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. Further, on the basis of findings, it is concluded that transformational leadership positively and significantly influences employee engagement. The findings of the study pointed out that teaching staff showed higher satisfaction level towards both transformational leadership as well as employee engagement as compared to non-teaching staff. The results of the study depicted that idealized behaviour and inspirational motivation showed higher satisfaction levels as compared to other transformational leadership elements.

As such, leaders have to display these styles more often due to its acceptability amongst academic staff. The elements like individual consideration, intellectual stimulation and idealized attribute need to be focused more by leaders so that employees would feel that they are been given recognition to their needs, are being motivated and inspired to work better and being provided with an environment where there ideas and thoughts can be promoted positively. Moreover, amongst the elements of employee engagement, the element dedication was perceived more favourably by academic staff whilst as element vigour showed least satisfaction amongst the subscales of employee engagement.

The present study is faced with some limitations. First, the study targeted only four colleges in Kashmir region and that too with a small sample size. As such, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to whole population. Therefore, future research can include universities as well, so as to present a broader perception towards study variables. Second, no demographic variable was examined in the present study. Therefore, future research can consider factors namely age, gender and designation so that transformational leadership practices and employee engagement elements can be studied more holistically.

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