Relationship between Perceived Transformational Behaviors of Leaders and Emotional Connect to the Organization of Faculty Members in the Indian Higher Education Context

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ABSTRACT

The research explores the relationship between perceived transformational leadership behavior of the heads of departments and the affective commitment of faculty members in the higher education institutions in Bangalore. The sample consists of 308 faculty members from various universities and affiliated colleges in Bangalore. It was found that there is a positive statistically significant relationship between the two variables of the study. The finding is relevant in terms of choosing and managing the performance of academic leadership in the Indian higher education context.

Keywords — affective commitment, individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, transformational leadership

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership in higher educational institutions are crucial to realize the qualitative standards of higher education which is difficult to measure. Heads of the Departments have the most important role in providing academic leadership in the higher education context. They are responsible for maintaining the standards and overseeing the performance of faculty members. Their leadership style has the most direct and significant impact on faculty members. Heads of departments are often promoted to that position on the basis of experience within the institution with little or no leadership training, and hence adopt a more common-sensical transactional leadership style (Bolman & Gallos, 2012). Faculty members in general, are often self-motivated and would be comfortable in working where there is a fit between personal and organizational values (Lindholm, 2003). A transformational leadership style reinforces this value alignment (Lee & Kamarul Zaman, 2009); yet the head of department often focuses more on transactional administrative tasks and less on the transformational leadership behaviors (Boyko, 2010).

Leadership behaviors are the key factor for building an emotional connect for the faculty members with the institution. Higher education institutions cannot sustain and ensure quality without the presence of committed faculty resources. Since students also tend to associate their overall satisfaction with faculty experiences within the university, the presence of committed faculty members is extremely significant for the sustainability of a university (Vance & Aaron, 2009). The most comprehensive understanding of organizational commitment was developed by Meyers and Allen (1991), which included affective, normative, and continuance commitment. The present study focuses on affective commitment which relates to the emotional attachment towards the organization (Mexiner & Kruck, 2010). Research indicates a positive relationship between higher levels of all three components of commitment to the institution both with the effectiveness and performance of faculty (Umbach & Wells, 2009). Shapira-Lishchinsky and Even-Zohar (2011) notes that levels of organizational commitment is dependent on the leadership style and the relationship that develops between the leader and the follower.

Researchers have often tested the impact of leadership style on various employee outcomes (Toor & Ofori, 2009). It is found that there is a positive association between faculty levels of overall organizational commitment and transformational leadership styles (Bodla & Nawaz, 2010). Emery and Barker (2007) found the
intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration components of transformational leadership were more positively associated with increased levels of organizational commitment and higher levels of job satisfaction than were the contingency reward and management by exception components of a more transactional leadership style.

There are a few studies in the context of India regarding the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011; Sandhu & Kaur, 2010) in a corporate environment. But there is a dearth of documented researches in the field of Indian Higher education with regard to the relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. This study intends to explore how transformational leadership behavior influence the effective commitment of the faculty members. More specifically, the role of transformational leadership styles of heads of departments in enhancing the emotional connect of the individual faculty members to the institution. This knowledge can be of great significance to develop appropriate leadership behaviors which can contribute to the overall quality of higher education in India.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem investigated in this study is the insufficient amount or emotional attachment to the institution exhibited by the faculty members in higher education institutions leading to inadequate quality in the overall educational outcomes. As educational processes and outcomes are highly qualitative, organizational commitment, especially in the affective dimension is very significant to ensure academic quality. Only those who are emotionally connected to the institution can make a qualitative difference in a higher education institution. In this context, the problem faced by the educational administration is how to instill the right amount of effective commitment to the faculty members. As more and more members join the educational sector for a career with yearly increase in the gross enrolment ratio of students in the Indian higher education scenario, it is a great challenge for colleges and universities to keep their staff committed to ensure quality of academic initiatives.

As leadership is very significant in influencing the performance of staff members, the question is what leadership style would foster appropriate affective commitment among faculty members of higher education. From this macro picture, the research question has narrowed down to explore the impact transformational leadership style to the affective commitment of faculty members in the higher education scenario.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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, Trjonyte, & Reardon, 2013). The result showed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles have relationship with all three dimensions of organizational commitment at varying degrees. The passive/avoidant leadership style was negatively correlated only with affective commitment. The transformational style has strong positive relationship with affective and normative commitment whereas transactional style has strong correlation with continuance commitment. These results are predicted by earlier researches as well (Buciuniene & Skudiene, 2008; Lo, Ramayah, Min, & Songan, 2010). 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.

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). Affective commitment is found to have much stronger relation with transformational leadership than continuance or normative commitment. Examining the sub-constructs of transformational leadership, this study presented that vision articulation, group goal promotion and intellectual simulation have greater impact on organizational commitment than role modelling and individual consideration. Employees who are inspired by the vision articulated by the leader will be more attached to the organisation. 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., Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations, 1985).

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). Another study assert the positive correlation between transformational and transactional leadership styles with organizational commitment (Ali, Babar, & Bangash, 2011). Research also confirms job satisfaction to be a mediator between leadership style and organizational commitment (Yang, 2012).

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). The study concluded that transformational leadership enhances the
commitment of the employees and their loyalty to the organization. Among the three types of commitment, affective and normative commitments were found to have high level of relationship with transformational leadership. Additionally, the study shows greater significance for leadership charisma and individualized consideration in attaining 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).

In a research done among the banking employees in Pakistan (Riaz, Akrum, & Ijaz, 2011), it was found that there is significant relationship between transformational leadership style and employees’ affective commitment. The researcher states that transformational leadership style brings positive changes in the behaviours of employees as they feel more emotionally connected with the organisation. There are similar findings from the neighboring country India as well showing the positive relationship between transformational leadership style and affective commitment among employees from the information technology companies (Chandna & Krishnan, 2009).

Study conducted among educators in a higher education context in South Africa revealed that transformational leadership style has a significant and positive relationship with affective and continuance employee commitment while transactional leadership style has significant and positive relationship with only normative commitment (Wiza & Hlanganipai, 2014).

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). However, the results from the study showed that the transactional leadership is more effective than transformational in contributing positively to organizational commitment. Leadership based on contingent reward and punishment makes significant impact in employees’ attitude which is argued against by some of the previous researchers (Bass, 2008; Howell & Avolio, 1993).

In a research exploring the moderating effect of CEO’s transformational leadership on the relationship between human resources management practice and employee organizational commitment, a total of 3,185 samples were surveyed of the top six out of 11 financial control groups in Taiwan. Results have shown variables like education and training, salary and remuneration, benefits, career development, and communication, have significant positive effects on employee organizational commitment whereas there was no such link established in the case of performance management. Interestingly CEO’s transformational leadership had only positive moderating effect on employee commitment with regard to variables like performance management, salary and remuneration, but no direct significant effect on employee organizational commitment (Lin, Lin, & Lin, 2012).

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). This means that an employee who is satisfied by the monetary benefits provided by the organisation will be committed to it for emotional as well as moral reasons. The same study also found that transformational leadership is related to affective and normative commitment of the employees. When leaders shows transformational leadership behaviours, the employees are likely to emotionally connected to the organisation resulting in the affective commitment. Similarly, as followers of transformational leaders, they find meaning and purpose with their organizational existence and feel obliged to the institution. The third type of commitment, continuance commitment is related to the tenure of the employee than any other factor. This is understood as the risk associated with leaving an organization after a long tenure.

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).

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study explores the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors of academic leaders and its impact on the emotional level connect to the organization by faculty members. Heads of the departments are considered as the academic leaders for this study. Their leadership style as perceived by the faculty members of those department is measured along with the emotional connect of the same faculty members. Only those departments with a minimum 20 faculty members are staffed is included for the data collection. The population of the study is the faculty members from different universities and affiliated colleges in Bangalore. A convenient sampling approach has employed to send questionnaire to various institutions and 300 responses were returned. The response rate is about 60%.

Questions from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (2004) is used to measure the perceived transformational leadership style of the heads of the departments. Organizational commitment questionnaire developed by Meyer and Allen (2004) is used to measure the affective organizational commitment of the faculty members. Both these questionnaires are most used instruments to measure
leadership style and organizational commitment and found to be highly reliable and valid.

The reliability of the data is tested using Cronbach’s alpha and found to have higher score than .6 and hence reliable. Correlation and multiple regression provided the analysis on the research questions of the study related to the relationship between transformational leadership style and affective commitment.

V. RESULTS

The study explores the relationship between the perceived transformational leadership behaviours of the heads of the departments and the affective commitment of the faculty members. Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of the collected data in terms of different components of transformational leadership and affective commitment with the corresponding Cronbach’s Alpha score. As observed, all scores are above .6 which emphasizes a good internal consistency of the instrument used for the study.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Idealized influence</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Individual Consideration</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation between perceived transformational leadership behaviors of academic leaders and the affective commitment of the faculty members. As it is observed there is a positive correlation between both the variables. As the sigma value is 0, the statistical significance of this relationship also is proved at 95% confidence level. Hence H0 is rejected, and H1 is accepted.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Affective commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation score of various components of Transformational leadership behaviors of the heads of the departments with the affective commitment of the faculty members. As seen from the table, all the individual transformational leadership behaviors are statistically significant at 95% confidence interval as the sigma values are less than 0.05 in each cases.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Affective commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Idealized influence Behavioral</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Individual Consideration</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Model summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.313*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>10.86</td>
<td>.000b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the model summary, it is understood that, R is .313, which is correlation coefficient, the R square is explained about variation between predictors and dependent variable which is 0.10, it is explained the linear relation between set of independent on Affective commitment. F value is 10.86 and sig value is <.05, which indicated the linear relation between set of predictors and dependent variable is statistically significant a 5% level.

Table 4: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients*</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>4.238</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>13.285</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. DISCUSSION

The results from the study brings forth a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived transformational leadership behaviors of the heads of the department and the affective commitment of the faculty members. Correlation analysis displayed in the table 2 shows that the sigma value is less than 0.05 for each dimension of transformational leadership which ensures the statistical significance at 95% confidence interval for the relationship to affective commitment. Hence Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted that there is a significant relationship between a faculty member’s perception of the head of the department’s transformational leadership style and faculty self-reported level of the affective component of organizational commitment. At the same time, though the relationship is positive, it is very moderate ranging from 0.17 to 0.31 denoting a weak correlation between the variables. Various studies from other countries have shown a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment (Clinebell, Skudiene, Trijonyte, & Reardon, 2013; Bucioniene & Skudiene, 2008; Lo, Ramayah, Min, & Songan, 2010). The weak relationship in the present study might be due to cultural factors and for the fact that it is done in the higher education context in contrast to the corporate context of most other studies.

Among the different dimensions of transformational behaviors, it is found that individual consideration (0.31) and inspirational motivation (0.30) have greater relationship with affective commitment in comparison with other factors. Individualized consideration refers to those leaders who attend to each member's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to them, and listens to their concerns. Inspirational motivation is about leaders having a vision that inspires and motivates followers to achieve important goals. These two dimensions are found to outweigh other aspects of leadership in terms of contributing towards creating an emotional connect to the organization for the employees. Idealized influence (behavioral) has the least score (0.17) which is surprising as it signifies the role modelling behavior of the leader. Having acquired academic accomplishments in the higher education domain, faculty members may not value this dimension more profoundly in comparison with their business counterparts.

Multiple Regression analysis considers the strength of transformational behaviors with respect to other two independent variables in the MLQ instrument, i.e. transactional and laissez faire behaviors. It is clear from the Regression table that only transformational behaviors as predictor variable contributes in a statistically significant way to the affective commitment as dependent variable. Hence it can be concluded that the transformational behaviors of academic leaders in the Indian higher education context is significant in enhancing the emotional connect of the faculty members to the institution.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

Higher education in India is going through a critical period today which offers tremendous opportunities as well as threatening challenges. While the Indian higher education system has made considerable progress in terms of capacity creation and enrolment especially in the last decade, it lags significantly in terms of “global relevance and competitiveness” (FICCI Higher Educational Summit, 2014). The present study explores the both leadership behaviors and its impact on commitment levels of faculty members in higher education both of which are very important to take the Indian higher education to the next level. It is found that transformational leadership behaviors exhibited by academic leaders can enhance the emotional commitment of the faculty members to the organization which in turn will contribute to their performance and satisfaction in the institution. Based on the findings from the study, I intend to make the following recommendations to the higher education institutions in India:

- Higher education institutional management has to look beyond academic qualifications and experience in choosing leaders and academic heads in the institution. In other words, leadership potential in terms of skills and aptitude has to be an important criteria.
- Academic leaders like heads of the department have to be trained in transformational leadership behaviors.
- Heads of the departments should develop individualized relationship with the staff members in their department to attend to their unique and
specific needs and provide support and guidance on a one on one basis.

- Leaders in the higher education sector should develop adequate skills and aptitude through professional training to be a coach and mentor for the faculty members.
- A work environment that promote active listening both as a leadership behavior and as a communication strategy should be fostered.
- Leadership with integrity in terms of ensuring highest standards in teaching learning process, research and administration has to be promoted so that staff members can emulate the examples set by the leader in those areas.
- Performance and outcome based culture by articulating, communicating and inspiring a clear vision is to be ensured.
- Leadership that internalize the noble ideals and philosophy of higher education which also adapts to the changing educational landscape has be nurtured.

**VIII. FUTURE RESEARCH**

The Indian higher education context and challenges are very much different from that of developed nations. Two factors key for enhancing quality of higher education in India are academic leadership and committed faculty members. This study explored the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment. The emotional connect of the faculty with the institution has been found to be weak and moderate. Further research to explore the reasons for weak commitment and ways to create strong commitment is warranted. Again, this study is limited to recognize the perceived transformational behaviors of the academic leaders. Understanding the leadership behaviors and practices at a deeper level and its impact to overall performance of the institution also is necessary to be undertaken in the Indian higher education context.

**VIII. CONCLUSION**

In the context of Indian higher education, the present study explored the impact of perceived transformational leadership behaviors of department heads on the affective commitment of the faculty members. The research found that there is a statistically significant positive, though moderate, relationship between the transformational behaviors and emotional attachment to the organization. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the criteria for choosing personnel for academic leadership positions has to be looked into. It is also suggested that the chosen leaders have to be trained professionally to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors.

**REFERENCES**


