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## THE EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN EMPLOYEE INNOVATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*The significance of creating innovation in Organizations have become increasingly important in the contemporary context. The study discuss the Effect of Transformational Leadership in creating innovation in employees in Organizations.*

**Purpose** *The study is to determine the relationship Transformational leadership is having with employee innovation in organizations. It also examines the effectiveness of the four types of Transformational Leadership namely, Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational motivation (IM), Intellectual stimulation (IS) and Individualized consideration (IC) in employee innovation in organizations. The study also explores the mediating and moderating factors that support the relationship between employee innovation and Transformational leadership in Organizations.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach** *The research is conducted perusing the recent and major Journals and articles that are published in reliable, high quality Journals on the captioned subject. The paper rationally discusses the variables and its relationships as per the discussions in the literature referred.*

**Findings** *Although the context within which the conclusions were derived in many researches varies, the fact that the Transformational leadership is showing a positive relationship with employee innovation in organization is justified. The findings of the paper also reveal certain mediating and moderating factors that influence the main relationship between the transformational leadership and employee innovation. These factors are significant in terms of organizations understanding the practical set ups that is needed to be enforced to get the best results out of their efforts.*

**Originality/Value** *The paper reviews literature on the relationship between the Transformational Leadership and Employee Innovation. The mediating and Moderating factors like individual level, organizational level, outside to the organization, young age employees, learning orientation, type of employees and Learning orientation is discussed*

within the framework of transformational leadership and employee innovation.

**Paper Type** Conceptual Paper

**KEYWORDS** Transformational leadership, Organizational innovation, Organizational creativity

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary management literature reiterated the fact that new management shifts were needed to meet the challenges in competition in organizations (Brown and May, 2010). For over two decades, leadership theory and research have dwelt so much on transformational leadership. The expectation has been that this leadership paradigm would offer the much-needed competitive advantage in the present-day complex organizational environment (Ngodo, 2008). Bernie Bass (1990,1999) was the first to identify the concept of Transformational leadership from the Transactional leadership in organizations. Transactional leadership demonstrates an exchange relationship with employees where rewards are given for compliance and punishments given for deviations from the expected standards whilst Transformational leadership deals with inspiring employee commitment through personal identification and involvement (Kirkbride, 2006)

Innovation has been defined by West and Farr (1990), as generation and implementation of new ideas that the potentially useful in organizations. Innovation has long been cited as essential for organizational competitiveness and success and defined as the adoption of an idea or behavior – whether pertaining to a device, system, process, policy, program, product, or service – that is new to the adopting organization (Bae et al., 2011). As per Chang et al (2016) innovation not only comes from creative products and services but from transformation of the management practices. Today innovation is greatly considered as the sources of sustained success in corporates (Adams et al., 2006). As a result, the factors for creativity and innovation has drawn much attention of the researchers. Leadership is therefore identified as a major factor in creating creativity and innovation in organizations (Scott and Bruce, 1994)

With the global environment becoming more complex, organizations need to be agile and change for competitive advantage and advancement. As per Shostack (1988), Innovation brings in competitive advantage, operating efficiency and market leadership in organizations. The fact that Innovation helps firms to make radical changes in processes, structures and cultures ensures competitive advantage, was justified by many literature (Bartlett, 2009). The types of leadership styles organizations should develop in their respective work settings need to be identified to support them foster a better innovative organizational setting.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) distinguished the difference between Transactional leadership from Transformational leadership. Transactional leadership relating to social exchange where rewards are given to achievements and punishment given to non-achievements. Transformational leadership is focused on stimulating and inspiring followers to achieve extraordinary results whilst developing themselves in addition to the organizational goals. Bass and Avolio (1991) came out with the Full range leadership model which quantifies all types of leadership styles into three main categories. They are Transformational, transactional and avoiding types of leadership styles. The importance of Transformational leadership in organizational performance was established in similar researches there onwards (Howell and Frost (1989); Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996); Yammarino et al., (1993); Sosik, (1997)). The followers are not only inspired by the leader, but they also start believing themselves in their own potential finally creating a better future for the organization (Samson and Daft, 2015) in Transformational Leadership. The Bass and Avolio (1992) Model describes four major components in Transformational leadership as Idealized Influence (II), Individualized consideration (IC), Intellectual stimulation (IS) and Inspirational motivation (IM).

*Idealized Influence (II):* Leader demonstrates moral behaviours and charisma where they are regarded as Role models (Bass and Avolio, 1992; Kirkbridge, 2006)

*Individualized Consideration (IC):* Leaders individual attention is made on followers and identifies strengths and weaknesses. They also encourage two-way exchange of views and focuses on individual employee's self-development (Bass and Avolio, 1992; Kirkbridge, 2006).

*Intellectual Stimulation (IS):* Leader stimulates the followers to develop their own capabilities by thinking through issues and problems for themselves (Bass and Avolio, 1992). Leaders allow followers to bring in new ideas and ensures the environment for innovation is created (Bass and Riggio, 2008; kirkbridge 2006).

*Inspirational Motivation (IM):* Leader communicates a vision with followers where confidence is instilled ensuring an elevated organizational performance (Bass and Avolio, 1992).

### 2.2 Innovation

As per Sorros et al. (2008), the word innovation is derived from the Latin word Novus or New.

Innovation creates the competitive advantage over competition for organizations which is vital for contemporary corporate environments. The Innovation comes in by way of new and useful ideas regarding products, services, processes and procedures in an organization (Cheung and Wong, 2011).

Product innovation is described as the novelty and meaningfulness of new products introduced to the market in a timely manner (Schumpeter (1934); Miller and Friesen (1983); Avlonitis et al. (1994); Lyon et al (2000); North and Smallbone (2000))

Market Innovativeness is described as the newness of the approach that companies adopt to enter and exploit the target market {Schumpeter (1934); Capon et al (1992); North and Smallbone (2000)}

Process Innovativeness is introduction of new production methods, new management approaches and new technology that supports production and management practices {Schumpeter (1934); Miller and Friesen (1983); Avlonitis et al. (1994); Subramaniam and Neelakantha (1996); Lyon et al (2000); North and Smallbone (2000)}

Behavioural Innovation is through individuals where teams and management building an innovative culture as the receptivity to innovation is fostered {Miller and Friesen (1983); Avlonitis et al (1994); Hurley and Hult (1998); Rainey (1999); North and Smallbone (2000)}

Strategic Innovativeness is an organizations ability to manage ambitious organizational objectives through proper matching of resources creatively {Miller and Friesen (1983); Capon et al (1992); Avlonitis et al (1994); Rainey (1999)}

## **2.3 The Effects of Transformational leadership in Innovation**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Transformational leadership shows a positive relationship to employee innovation as per many studies done in organizations (Cheung and Wong, 2011). The leader relationship support has shown direct impact on employee creativity once adopting transformational leadership environment. A vision-based leadership with transformational leadership attributes like motivational inspiration and intellectual stimulation encourages the employees to be creative and innovative (Lee, 2008; Morales and Torres, 2008; Hu et al., (2013), Nusair et al. (2012)). As per Paulsen et al. (2013), Transformational leadership influences the team climate and identification and as a result creates innovation among the employees. Whilst endorsing the fact that the Transformational leadership has a strong positive correlation to innovation in employees in organizations, it was identified that the demographic factors like gender, age, education, experience and job title has no significant impact in the relationship (Nuzair et al.,2012). The studies of Hu et al. (2013) highlights indirect effects of

Transformational leadership having on Innovation of employees in organizations. These indirect effects come by way of mediators and moderators that fall in to four categories namely Individual, group, organization and the external environment.

### **2.3.2 Individual level factors Indirectly effecting Transformational leaderships effect on Employee Innovation**

As per Hu et al. (2013), psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, creative self-efficacy, conservation, organization-based self-esteem and self-presentation propensity are identified as indirect factors effecting transformational leadership on innovation at individual level. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) level behaviour on Transformational leadership is found to be effective in creating employee innovation in organizations than transactional leadership behaviours (Prasad and Junni, 2016). A study on the top managers individual leadership in terms of Values and behaviour was measured to identify the effectiveness on employee innovation. The two categories measured in this exercise was transformational and transactional style of leadership behaviours. The outcome was that the individual leader behaviours of transformational style was more effective in creating employee innovation than transactional leadership behaviours (Jia et al., 2018)

### **2.3.3 Organization level factors indirectly effecting Transformational Leadership effect on Employee Innovation**

Factors like organizational climate, organizational learning and organizational structure are identified as indirectly effecting Transformational leadership to relate to Employee Innovation (Hu et al., (2013)). As per Khalili (2016), the impact of transformational leadership in employee innovation is based on the climate created in support of same in the organization. The study of Michaelis (2010), also endorses the fact that the climate for innovation is a factor in the positive relationship the employee innovation is demonstrating as a result of transformational leadership. Internal environment dimension has shown a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership of Chief Executive Officers (CEO) towards Employee Innovation (Prasad and Junni, 2016). The perceived organizational setting, which is an organizations contribution to a positive reciprocity with employees is found moderating the Transformational leadership in employee innovation as per the study done by Choi et al. (2016)

### **2.3.4 Factors outside organizations that indirectly effect Transformational leadership on Employee innovation**

The uncertainty of external environment, market competition and external support for innovation



are the factors identified to effect Transformational Leadership on Employee Innovation (Hu et al., 2013)). As per Duncan (1972), the external environment plays a major role in the effectiveness of transformational leadership.

### **2.3.5 The Effect of Transformational leadership on Employee innovation among young ages**

As per Kakkuri and Kultalahti (2016), The young crowd (below the age of 30 years) becomes innovative based on the preference of the leadership style demonstrated by the leadership. Leadership style intellectual stimulation is seen strongly related to Innovation in young employees and inspirational motivation is seen suitable for laggards and the majority of the of the group. It is also revealed that the leadership should carefully select the type of Transformational leadership to be implemented in creating innovation among young employees.

### **2.3.6 The successful adaptation of Innovation through transformational leadership based on the type of employees**

The study done by Afsar et al. (2014), reveals that the employees who are interdependent types are more innovative under transformational leadership than those who display independent types. Therefore, programmes that socialize employees is a recommendation along with selecting employees who demonstrate group goals than individual goals at recruitment level.

### **2.3.7 Effecting employee innovation by Transformational leadership through learning orientation**

Creative highly innovative employees could be effectively done through transformational leadership such as idealized influence, Individual consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation with the availability of a proper learning orientation (Jyothi and Dev (2015)). The findings help organizations to effectively implement their transformational leadership practices in creating a better innovative employee climate. Geijsel et al. (1999), reiterates the fact that Learning or education has an impact on creation of Innovation through Transformational Leadership.

### **2.3.8 Group innovative behaviour by Transformational Leadership**

Organizations generally grow with an incremental change platform or a radical change platform depending on the internal and external factors effecting an organization. The study done by Feng et al. (2016) shows that the group innovation of an organization is evident when the organization is on a radical change platform. The involvement of transformational leaders in communicating and

inspiring employees at a time of radical change is important.

### **2.3.9 The Applicability of employee innovation by Transformational Leadership at Unit Levels**

Organizations do have different units at differing managerial functions. Lower level or operational level, middle management level and corporate management level are few units that function within one organization. The research shows that the innovation could take place at any unit level and therefore innovation is important at any unit level. It also suggests that Transformational leadership is important in creating employee innovation at any given unit level (Chang, 2006). The effect of leadership involvement in effective employee innovation at unit or departmental level was endorsed by the study of Mohamed (2002).

## **3. DISCUSSION**

Based on the literature review the following conclusions were derived,

1. Transformational leadership is positively related to employee innovation in organizations. The four components of Transformational leadership namely Idealized Influence (II), Individualized consideration (IC), Intellectual stimulation (IS) and Inspirational Motivation (IM) are able to create employee innovation in organizations. However, the intensity of the relationship differs as per the context within which the observations are made {Kakkuri and Kultalahti (2016)}. Therefore, organizations need to properly identify the context properly and adopt the style of transformational leadership to best suit the intended innovative behaviours of the employees.
2. Innovation takes place in many forms in organizations and the major types could be in the form of Product, Market, Process, Behaviour and Strategic {North and Smallbone (2000); Lyon et al (2000); Rainey (1999)}. Organizations need to understand the complexity of innovation that is needed within the respective industry and identify the necessary leadership initiatives, organizational cultures to support the desired results. Whilst the strategic focus on innovation is an initiative of top management, the process and product innovativeness need to come from all leaders across the organization. Building an innovative culture is discussed as an integral part of transformational leadership
3. As individual level factors are supporting the transformational leadership to effectively create innovation within employees,

organizations need to focus on the attributes needed to develop within the individual leader. Organizations need a properly planned out strategy to develop the factors like psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, creative self-efficacy, conservation, organization-based self-esteem and self-presentation propensity through training or skill development activities {Hu et al. (2013)}.

4. Organizational level factors demonstrate a stronger relationship between the transformational leadership and employee innovation in organizations. Setting a climate that is conducive for innovation is therefore, essential to foster greater innovation (Prasad and Junni, 2016). The organizational structures, processes and practices are identified as the climate for innovation where transformational leaders need to take the initiatives to make them conducive for employee innovation. Intellectual stimulation style of transformational leadership is best suited for setting the environment {Bass and Riggio (2008); Kirkbridge (2006)}.
5. Transformational leadership has a strong relationship to employee innovation among younger employees. Intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation styles of transformational leadership is observed as highly effective in this regard as per Kakkuri and Kultalahti (2016). This finding would be of immense support for the management of organizations in contemporary times. Leadership needs to focus on these types of transformational styles when they manage younger employees
6. Availability of a learning orientation climate in an organization improves the innovative behaviours among employees through Transformational Leadership {Geijsel et al. (1999)}. In order to achieve high level of innovation, leaders need to foster learning orientation in organizations.
7. Radical changes in organizations tend to create innovation among employees than incremental changes as per Feng et al. (2016). Therefore, organizations need to focus on the fact of radical change climate in order to create innovative behaviours.
8. Although there are many units and departments in organizations, the study of Chang (2016) proves that transformational leadership behaviours are important in any level of a unit in an organization. Therefore, Leaders at every level of an organization need

to be adopting transformational leadership styles to create employee innovation.

9. Future research may focus on the mediating and moderating factors discussed above together in one model to understand the significance of each element in transformational leadership creating employee innovation in organizations. The study of each factor separately may not indicate the overall effect of each element in a given situation.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Transformational leadership has shown much importance in creating employee innovation that drives organizations to compete in the market place. Whilst most of the products and services are becoming generic, and could be easily copied from the competition, constant innovation is set to be the driving force in Corporate world. The innovation in organizations need to be driven at every level in an organization and in order to encourage same, organizations need to create a culture that is conducive for Innovation. This task is vested upon the leadership of an organization where radical changes are needed at transformational leadership level. The transactional leadership styles that promotes reward and punishment is the most common climate available in most of the organisations today as the tight control and vertically structured organizational system is stable and reduces the risk elements in processes. As this type of leadership styles do not stimulate employees enough to transform organizations in the innovation levels, the successful adoption of transformational leadership has become inevitable in driving organizations successfully to meet the future challenges. Therefore, organizations need to strategize their activities within a Transformational leadership environment.

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