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Transformational Leadership and Teacher's Performance: The mediating role of motivation and commitment

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Abstract

This multilevel study examines the psychological mechanisms (i.e., motivation and commitment) that might underlie the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. Models were tested using the sample of teachers, $n = 266$ embedded in 55 teams from secondary schools in Malaysia. Using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), we found that there was a cross-level effect of transformational leadership on motivation, commitment and performance. In conclusion, our finding proposes that transformational leadership is a vital

organizational leadership style construct, and acts to enhance teachers' performance via psychological boost.

Keywords: Quantitative Analysis, Hierarchical Linear Model.

Liderazgo transformacional y desempeño del docente: El papel mediador de la motivación y el compromiso

Resumen

Este estudio multinivel examina los mecanismos psicológicos (es decir, la motivación y el compromiso) que podrían subyacer en la relación entre el liderazgo transformacional y el desempeño laboral. Los modelos se probaron utilizando la muestra de maestros, $n = 266$ integrados en 55 equipos de escuelas secundarias en Malasia. Usando el modelado lineal jerárquico (HLM), encontramos que hubo un efecto de nivel transversal del liderazgo transformacional en la motivación, el compromiso y el desempeño. En conclusión, nuestro hallazgo propone que el liderazgo transformacional es una construcción de estilo de liderazgo organizacional vital, y actúa para mejorar el desempeño de los maestros a través del impulso psicológico.

Palabras clave: Análisis cuantitativo, modelo lineal jerárquico.

1. INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership has been continuously in the limelight and captured the interest of many researchers in recent years since Bass pioneering works on it in 1985. It is a style of leadership where one person takes control of a situation and motivates the group to follow. Previous studies have consistently shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and performance. It has been recognized as pivotal criteria to improve employee effectiveness. Although this topic

receives huge attention and has been widely conceptualized in numerous management studies, it is still sparse in educational setting.

Due to the limited research about the tangled relationship between transformational leadership, motivation, commitment and teachers' performance, this empirical study contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways. First, we use multilevel approach as it results in more accurate test of significance and provides an opportunity to examine possible interactions between both individual and group level variables. To date, fewer studies have explored the multilevel between transformational leadership especially among teachers at school level. The most prevalent approach to organizational study is using single level data and examining the direct effect of transformational leadership on follower outcomes.

Secondly, we test motivation and commitment as a mediator in relationship between transformational leadership and job performance to unravel the psychosocial mechanisms which underlie such relationships. Although research on transformational leadership has consistently stated that there is an underlying process through which transformational leaders exhibit their influences on their follower's performance, surprisingly relatively limited research has scrutinized this topic especially in school organization. Thirdly, we attempt to identify whether there is any possibility to generalize the theory and apply this Western theoretical framework in other regions by carrying out a study of the transformational leadership in Eastern culture which has not been sufficiently explored in the past. For example, recent meta-analysis found 11 studies dominated in

Western, and only 7 in Asia region. More generally, our study is among the first in the East, particularly in Malaysia. Fourth, our study is conducted among teachers in schools' organization. Yet, more transformational leadership is only focusing on some specific occupation, but rare in educational field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leadership as a Multilevel Phenomenon

Literature reviews have indicated that the concept of leadership orientation is ongoing debating, particularly whether leadership resides at the individual or group level. Some scholars stress that the study of leadership is inherently multilevel in nature with the view that leadership is a shared group level perception (Bliese, 2002), while the others have argued that leadership is an individual's perception of their leaders' ability to lead. However, these individual-level studies could not explain whether the effect of leadership on psychological outcomes was due to organizational or individual influences. So, we stick at the contention that leadership is by nature a multi-level phenomenon, and it precedes conditions at the organization level.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The Relationship between Motivation, Commitment, and Performance Scholars had referred performance either the process of performance or the outcome of performance (Bakker et al., 2008). The

first definition focuses on employee's behavior in achieving work goal, while the second refers to the outcome of the process by which employees try to meet organizational visions by fulfilling task requirements, making contributions that go beyond specified task accomplishments. In this present study, performance is defined as an outcome where employees behave to contribute to the effectiveness in achieving work goal and commitment is defined as the degree of positive, effective bond between the teacher and the school which reflects internal motivation, enthusiasm, and job satisfaction teachers derive from their teaching careers.

As regards the concept of commitment, essentially it has been debated for more than five decades. Commitment, in general, is an internal agreement and enthusiasm when carrying out a task such as a sense of loyalty and attachment to the organization (Bass, 1995). In relation to performance, we expect that commitment is associated with better performance. As highlighted by Bass, commitment is an attitude of organizational loyalty shown by employees and it is a key component of overall their performance. While the affective commitment, a feature that we focused on in this study is defined as the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization.

2.3 The Relationship between Transformational Leadership, Motivation, Commitment, and Performance

School principal's leadership style has a profound and pervasive impact on the school community achievement. Therefore, not surprisingly

this topic has attracted an extensive investigation in recent years. Drawing from the literature review, transformational leadership is defined as the one that creates valuable and positive changes in its followers through a process of helping members individually. More clearly, transformational leader endeavors to stimulate change in subordinates' attitude and values through strategies of empowerment, thus augmenting their personal resources and fostering the internalization of the leader's vision. The view that empowerment is an outcome of transformational leadership is also consistent with Kelley's theory of styles of followership.

Inasmuch, by acting as a mentor, this type of leader creates a clear visions and direction, supports employees as partners in decision making, challenges employees' with organizations target Avolio et al. (1999) and at the same time, guides his or her followers using empowering behaviors that correspond with the follower's particular needs. Such supporting behaviors are delivered to the followers by a mutual relationship in a friendly, close and equal manner (Bass, 1995). This bonding will activate followers' self-confidence and self-esteem to deal with their given task and indirectly will reduce pressure.

2.4 Mediating role of motivation between transformational leadership; commitment and performance

Previous literature indicates that leadership and teacher commitment are influential factors in school effectiveness. It is significantly important for school principals to embrace transformational

leadership as it affects not only the level of teacher commitment but also school achievement quality. This is because transformational principals pay attention to the culture of the school and focus on creating a collaborative work environment that would directly increase teachers' motivation which then consequently affects teachers' commitment. Teams can operate effectively in an environment that facilitates and encourages their functioning. In other words, the organizational environment created by leaders supports towards teamwork and member orientation, which motivates them to execute commit transition and action for better performance. We believe that these psychological mechanisms (motivation and commitment) derive from the style of leadership and this principle parallels Hackman & Oldham notion that proposed organizations are supposed to be run from the top down, not from the bottom up.

Organizations' success is evaluated by it workers' performance. Workers need support to increase their satisfaction and motivation, and this will come about through leaderships' effective style. In this sense, organizations need efficient leaders and transformational leadership is often identified to mobilize and motivate others to apply their abilities and resources to a given cause. This capacity is fundamental to discussions of leadership in general and in the educational sphere in particular. It was widely proven that transformational leadership is highly effective in terms of improving follower's level of motivation, which in turn will increase the level of performance where leaders influence subordinates by promoting their personal resources and this motivates employee in coping more successfully with job demands.

In other words, motivation directly associates to transformational leadership and mediates the relations between transformational leadership and performance as well. This assertion is supported by Isaac et al., when their study mentioned that the levels of employees' performance increase beyond their expectations in a motivating environment and inspiring individuals. It also appears more specifically in a rich literature concerning that autonomous motivation tends to be associated with positive psychological consequences like well-being and high performance (Baard et al., 2004; Ranjbaran, A. (2014).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study uses a multilevel analysis technique by conducting a voluntary basis survey among secondary school teachers in Selangor, Malaysia. We approach 5 teachers from each school as a participant. 285 teachers from 57 schools out of 360 teachers from 72 schools that we initially approached were willing to participate in the study (79%).

As our data spanned two levels of analysis (individual teachers' perceptions of transformational leadership nested within schools), multilevel analysis with the hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) program, version 7.0 software which explicitly accounts for the nested nature of data is thus used in order to analyze the data. On the rule of thumb for power in multilevel modeling (i.e., a minimum of 30 cases at level 2), it may be suggested that the sample of the present study is adequate for

robust estimations. Data is standardized and differentiated into two levels, namely level 1 variable across 266 individual teachers and level 2 variable across the 55 schools. HLM estimates simultaneously the effects of independent variables at different levels on individual-level outcomes, while maintaining the appropriate levels of analysis for the predictors. In particular, to test the indirect effects of the hypotheses proposed, we utilized a Monte Carlo method for assessing multilevel mediation at 95% confidence interval (CI) with 20,000 repetitions. Monte Carlo methods have been suggested as a better test than the Sobel test in multi-level mediation analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis

Table 1 presents the scale means, standard deviations, alphas and correlations for the study variables at the individual-level. As shown in the table, all measures significantly correlated at the 0.01 level of significance. Cronbach's alpha for the measures in all models exceeds the recommended cut-off point of 0.70.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations (N=266)

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	F _{III}
1 Transformational leadership	4.2	0.517	0.8	1.00				2.34*
	4		9	0				**
2 Motivation	4.3	0.42	0.8	0.31	1.0			1.47*
	4		4	**	00			

3	Commitment	4.1 0	0.589	0.9 2	0.41 **	0.3 5**	1.0 00	1.27
4	Performance	4.1 5	0.38	0.8 3	0.33 **	0.4 9**	0.5 3**	1.0 00

Note: *p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001

ICC (1); Transformational leadership = 0.218, Motivation = 0.091,

Commitment = 0.053, Performance = 0.031

Hypothesis testing and HLM analysis

We followed Baron in assessing our research hypotheses. First, we evaluated the hypothesis 1 to 4. Then we tested the cross-level direct effect hypotheses (hypothesis 5 to 10) lower level variables to assess the level 1 direct effect on each other. We tested each of by assessing the effect of transformational leadership (upper level) on lower level outcomes (performance, commitment and motivation). Afterward, we tested the mediation paths (hypothesis 4, 8 through 10) using a Monte Carlo test and followed Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation steps as explained. Results for HLM analysis are shown in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2: HLM Analysis of Lower-Level Outcomes

Effects Model	Performanc e 1	Commitmen t 2	Performanc e 3	Performanc e 4
Commitment	0.52 (.07) ***			0.40 (.07) ***
Motivation		0.34 (.05) ***	0.49 (.06) ***	0.35 (.06) ***

Note : The first value is the standardized parameter estimate, and the value in parentheses is the standard error. n = 266 individuals, 55 organizations.

^a Significant at one-tailed. * p<.05. ** p<.01. *** p<.001

Table 3: HLM Analysis of Cross-Level Effect of Transformational Leadership on Lower-Level Outcomes

Effect	Motiv	Commit	Perform	Commit	Perfor	Perfor
s	ation	ment	ance	ment	mance	mance
Mode	5	6	7	8	9	10
l						
Lower-level effects						
Com						0.50
mitme						(.07)
nt						***
Motiv					0.30	.46
ation					(.06) ***	(.06)

Cross-level effects						
Trans	0.35	0.43	0.38	0.32	0.21	0.16
forma	(.12) **	(.08) ***	(.10) ***	(.08) ***	(.08) **	(.08)
tional						
Leade						
rship						

Note : The first value is the standardized parameter estimate, and the value in parentheses is the standard error . n = 266 individuals, 55 organizations.

^a Significant at one-tailed. * p<0.05. ** p<0.01. *** p<0.001

Hypothesis 1 predicted that commitment positively relates to performance. We ran an analysis for Hypothesis 1 at the lower level effect with the equation as follows:

$$\text{Level-1 Model: Performance}_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * (\text{Commitment}_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Level-2 Model: } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$$

We found a significant effect as indicated in Table 2 (Model 1); commitment was positively related to performance ($\beta = 0.52$ (.07), $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Next, we ran an analysis

for Hypothesis 2 at the lower level effect which proposed that motivation would be positively related to commitment:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level-1 Model: } \text{Commitment}_{ij} &= \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * (\text{Motivation}_{ij}) + r_{ij} \\ \text{Level-2 Model: } \beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} \end{aligned}$$

We found a significant effect as indicated in Table 2 (Model 2); motivation was positively related to commitment ($\beta = 0.34$ (0.05), $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. For Hypothesis 3, we predicted that motivation positively relates to performance. We also ran an analysis for Hypotheses 3 at the lower level effect of motivation to predict performance. The statistical model for testing Hypothesis 3 was therefore as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level-1 Model: } \text{Performance}_{ij} &= \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * (\text{Motivation}_{ij}) + r_{ij} \\ \text{Level-2 Model: } \beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} \end{aligned}$$

Result yielded a significant effect, $\beta = 0.49$ (0.06), $p < 0.001$. Thus, as indicated by the Model 3 in Table 2, the higher teachers rated their own autonomous motivation, the higher they perceived themselves have performed well. Hypothesis 3 was supported. Taking into account the Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3, we extended Hypothesis 4 that we expected commitment would mediate the positive relationship between motivation and performance. All the conditions as specified by Baron and Kenny's (1986) are met, with the

exception that the main effect of motivation on performance is still significant when the mediator, commitment is in the model, indicating that the effect is only partially mediate. We tested the significance of the indirect parameter estimate using the Monte Carlo test. Conclusively, result reveals that motivation has a significant effect on performance through commitment (95% confident interval [CI], lower level [LL] = 0.07984, upper level [UL] = 0.2026) (See Figure 2 and Table 4).

The main purpose of the current study is to investigate the linkage between transformational leadership and followers' performance by focusing on the mediating role of motivation and commitment. Although leadership research relates to levels-of-analysis issue and multi-level approaches, surprisingly, it has been suffering from a dearth of deliberate theoretical and empirical differentiation between levels of analysis. So, responding to recent calls to shift to multilevel modeling technique (Bliese, 2002), we used HLM to analyze concurrently the cross-level relationship, to solicit evidence for a mediational process and to explain the process via which transformational leadership exerts its effect on followers' outcome.

Given that most research on transformational leadership spearheaded by the Western context, our study was carried out in Eastern workplaces culture to identify the generalizability issue of applicability of transformational leadership theory. While transformational leadership has captured the imagination of scholars

with the evidence showing that it is universally the most desirable and effective style of leadership, it nevertheless does not mean that culture does not have an effect. It is noteworthy since culture has an influence on some psychological variables as well. For example, autonomy is seen as one important factor in collective society, but not much emphasis in Western contextual (Sulistyaningsih et al., 2019).

5. CONCLUSION

This study is significant because it would help in achieving effective leadership styles in the education field. The results obtained from this study would provide information to administrators based on research and theory to assist them in their administrative responsibilities. Thus, they can employ the leadership orientation which can suit their personality, knowledge and situations affecting their roles. Overall, this study adds to the knowledge of transformational leadership and psychological mechanisms in school, based on a multi-level approach. Our findings suggest that the leader's orientation (i.e., transformational leadership) operate at multiple levels, and relates to a teacher's performance via motivation and commitment. Specifically, when a teacher perceives a transformational principal as supportive, positive, cooperative, and effective, this serves as a basis for inspiring them to engage in work in schools with full motivation.

Therefore, it is likely a trigger of the commitment and work performance paths as formulated in the Social Exchange Theory. This study thus sheds light on the influence of leadership orientation on teachers' performance and helps to build a more inclusive world picture of healthy psychological for better work performance. This corresponds to our desire to provide some initial work that would stimulate continuing concerning the association between transformational leadership, motivation, commitment and work performance in school.

We believe this line of work helps us to address the fundamental research agenda in transformational leadership: How transformational leaders influence individual followers as well as a group as a whole, and why followers react to the leadership behavior. We encourage researchers to seek out further insights into these important relationships in various structural and cultural contexts as future research progresses. In conclusion, the study supports the proposition that leadership makes the most important contribution to teachers' performance and also as predicted, work performance among school teachers is associated positively with motivation and commitment.

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