

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Innovation in Iraqi Higher Education

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Abstract: Leadership plays important role in the stimulation of creativity among employees and in the establishment of an innovative organizational environment. This is especially true in the context of higher education. The higher education sector of any country acts as a backbone for that country as it provides a skilled human resource. In Iraq, higher education faces many challenges including brain drain in the sector. In the academic context, leadership plays a critical role in the achievement of success. The academic leadership of a higher education institution more specifically, the transformational leadership is responsible for enhancing job satisfaction of employees by adopting policies and creating a culture that fosters employee satisfaction and innovation. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of transformational leadership on organizational innovation in Iraq universities when job satisfaction is the mediator. The population for this study consisted of academic staff from 10 public universities distributed throughout Iraq. The sample consisted of 280 academic staff members selected through the random sampling technique. SPSS was used to analyze the data. The results show, there are significant impacts of the transformational leadership on both organizational innovation and job satisfaction. In addition, transformational leadership plays an important role in determining job satisfaction and innovation within the organization. The results suggest that leaders should consider matching both leadership behaviors based on the individual situation of the employee. Thus, the study contributes to the existing pool of knowledge on the impact of transformation leadership on job satisfaction and organizational innovation. Different aspects of these variables were tested, so as to provide a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect public universities in the Iraqi higher education sector.

Key words: Transformational leadership, job satisfaction, organizational innovation higher education, SPSS, leadership

INTRODUCTION

Chen (2009) suggests that leadership should be flexible enough to support employees in their job performance. Thus, it becomes imperative that leadership communicate clearly with employees (Kavanagh and Ashkanasy, 2006) in order to build a bond between the two (Bromley and Kirschner-Bromley, 2007) that can lead to enhanced performance. Researchers like Falk and Blaylock (2012) and Luria (2008) further confirm that in order to build effective interrelationships within and outside the organizational environment, leadership is the most important prerequisite. Furthermore, Dorfman and House (2004) believe that a cross-cultural perspective of the leadership is needed to ensure organizational survival and to develop employee trust and enhancing motivation. Falk and Fischbacher (2006) add that leaders should be knowledgeable and skilled in order to help employees. Garcia-Morales *et al.* (2012) highlight that leaders should

have demonstrably high self-esteem and competency to articulate a vision and a charismatic personality to influence employees; whereas leaders without any demonstrable skills and vision would lead an organization towards failure (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), the transformational leader is committed to leading with an ethical philosophy which states that an organization worth is measured by the extent to which it satisfies the needs and targets of its constituents. Higher education sector of any country acts as a backbone for that country as it provides skilled human resource as well as helps in developing the socio-economic and cultural environment of a country. The leadership of a higher education institution is responsible for the change in demographic of a university along with the research and development. Role of leadership in an academic context has become more important as there is lack of innovation from the universities. To achieve this end, higher education plays

a vital role in training and developing human resources that are much needed in the market place. From 1950 till 1990 Iraq had one of the most advanced higher educational systems in the Arab world. In 1991, economic sanctions were imposed by the United Nations Security Council on Iraq after its occupation and subsequent release of Kuwait. These sanctions lasted from 1991 till middle of 2003. These decade long economic sanctions had hurt the Iraqi higher education sector badly leading to destruction of infrastructure, information technology and reduced support for the higher education academic community.

Literature review

Transformational leadership: According to Avolio and Bass (2004), transformational leadership is “a process of influencing in which leaders change their associates’ awareness of what is important and move them to see themselves and the opportunities and challenges of their environment in a new way. Transformational leaders are proactive: they seek to optimize individual, group and organizational development and innovation, not just achieve performance at expectations. “They convince their associates to strive for higher levels of potential as well as higher levels of moral and ethical standards”. Inspirational motivation is reflected in the leader’s ability to effectively express the significance of the work at hand and the importance of the employee’s role in the overall organizational success (Salter *et al.*, 2010). The leader must do this in such a manner that ignites energy within the individual. The emphasis of inspirational motivation is future oriented and rooted in community building (Bass, 1985). Researchers believe that transformational leaders inspire and motivate their employees to achieve goals and objectives beyond expectations by articulating a vision that can be looked upon by everyone in the organization (Bass, 1994; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Kouzes and Posner, 2002). Furthermore, it has been stated that inspirational leaders help build a welfare oriented culture within an organization that promotes harmony, team spirit and eagerness in employees (Bass, 1994; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). Similarly, Gill *et al.* (1999) demonstrate that inspirational leaders are able to integrate personal and organizational goals to such an extent that employees will work towards the actualization of organizational goals to attain their individual own goals.

Organizational innovation: According to Damanpour and Aravind (2012), organizational innovation refers to “new approaches in knowledge for performing management

functions and new processes that produce changes in the organization’s strategy, structure, administrative procedures and system”. Therefore, innovators who initiate such actions can be made outcasts or viewed with aversion within an organization. People who exhibit ‘out of the box’ behavior inside an organization are frequently labeled and ostracized as ‘rebels’ (Mulgan, 2007). Bernier and Hafsi (2007) have attempted to answer the questions of who these innovators are; why individuals innovate in public sector organizations “where risks are several and the rewards can be imperfect”; what motivates them to undertake such challenging endeavors and what the key attributes of innovators are. Innovations require innovators. From the individualist framework perception, innovative people are the driving force behind organizational innovation. The individualist approach focuses on individual level antecedents related to innovators (Slappendel, 1996). Generally, innovative individuals are more likely to be “less conforming to rules, social norms and recognized work pattern” (Kirton, 1976). Linden (1990) added four more characteristics to Kirton’s general explanation of an innovator as someone who questions status quo or the prevailing wisdom and performs.

Job satisfaction: According to Oshagbemi (1999), job satisfaction refers to an individual’s positive emotional reactions to a particular job which result from comparing the actual and present results with those that are desired or anticipated by the individual. Job satisfaction has been a source of interest and concern for decades (Hardman, 1996; Mckee, 1991; Proffit, 1990). Job satisfaction is the emotional satisfaction resulting from one’s job experience. Job satisfaction literature reveals connections between job satisfaction and various other influencing factors (Hardman, 1996). Job satisfaction is generally viewed as the attitude of the worker toward the job (Lawler, 1994). Locke described three periods of thought and inquiry relative to job satisfaction. The first of these periods is characterized as the Physical Economic School. During this period of inquiry, little concern was shown for the individual. It was believed that efficient working methods resulted in increased production. Efficiency increased production and resulted in greater monetary rewards for individual workers. These monetary rewards would, in turn, provide job satisfaction for the workers (Taylor, 1947).

Relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation: For organizations, innovation is related to the creation of valuable and useful new

products or services. For most organizations, innovation is a competitive strategy to outperform competitors. The present study is related to organizational innovations in higher education institutions to attain competitive position, thus a market oriented approach is adopted for the study. Accordingly, organizational innovation is the tendency of the organization to develop new or improved services and providing these new services to its customers (students in case of educational institutions). This approach is consistent with Damanpour (1991) definition of product innovations as “new products/services introduced to meet an external user or market need” and is in-line with the co-operation and development of OECD (2005) as “the successful bringing of the new product or service to the market”. Transformational leadership has been found to enhance innovation within their organizations through inspiring and motivating their employees’ intellectual capabilities (Elkins and Keller, 2003). Transformational leaders promote creative ideas within their organizations through championing of ideas (Howell and Higgins, 1990). These leaders not only have the vision but also motivate their employees’ to perform beyond expectations by stimulating their intellectual senses to adopt innovative approaches in their research. Thus, in the process enhance organizational innovation (Mumford *et al.*, 2002). A number of empirical studies have been conducted on the role transformational leadership plays in innovation (Keller, 1992; Waldman and Atwater, 1994). These studies examine the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation R&D and in projects. However, recently researchers have started looking at the influence of transformational leadership on innovation in organizational context. For example, Jung *et al.* (2003), conducted a study on the role of transformational leadership on organizational innovation in Taiwan and found a strong and positive relationship between transformational leadership and innovation in organizational context. He opines that transformational leaders who articulate strong vision and champions the idea would strive to ensure the market success of the innovation. These leaders would encourage and mobilize their employees to ensure the success of innovations (Jung *et al.*, 2003). Keller (1992) has suggested that professional employees require more than traditional leader behaviors especially in R&D projects where quality determines the performance. Furthermore, researchers view transformational leadership effectiveness in entrepreneurial activities and championing of ideas and innovations necessary for understanding the market

needs (Howell and Higgins, 1990). The present study proposes a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation which is conceptualized in this study as including both the tendency of the organization to innovate and the success of innovations. In line with the view suggested in the literature, the study formulates the research hypotheses as below.

Relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction:

The influence of leadership style or leadership behavior on organizations has received a great deal of attention in organizational behavior studies (McFarland, 1974). Beginning with the Ohio State University studies in the late 1940s, based on the Stogdill’s finding that consideration leadership behavior is a very important element in leadership research (Bass and Avolio, 1990). Research on motivation of subordinates indicates that the leadership style or leadership behavior represents a foundation of reward for employees and reward has an impact on satisfaction. Therefore, employees’ satisfaction is related to leadership style or leadership behavior (Lawler, 1994). Studies have indicated that managerial style or behavior of leadership is related to employees’ job satisfaction. There is significant positive evidence that two dimensions of leadership behavior, Consideration and Initiating Structure, are related to job satisfaction (Bartolo and Furlonger, 2000; Fleishman, 1953; Leary *et al.*, 2001; Stogdill, 1974). Specifically, there is a significant positive relationship between consideration leadership behavior and job satisfaction and a negative relationship between initiating structure leadership behavior and job satisfaction (Pool, 1997). Other studies confirm that, there is a significant positive relationship between consideration leadership behavior and job satisfaction (House, 1977).

Relationship between and job satisfaction organizational innovation:

Chen *et al.* (2012), Lambert *et al.* (2010), Shipton *et al.* (2006) highlighted that various job related behaviors, stated that employees who do combination of works at a time in their jobs are also compromising in nature and have higher satisfaction level as compared to other employees who have same nature of task every day. Researches indicates that variation in task on job is associated with creativity and innovation. Moreover, De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) argue that it is not necessary that integration is an effective way of dealing with any kind of conflict at work place but sometimes avoidance is better as it is related to higher team performance and effectiveness. A number of studies suggested that job satisfaction is significantly linked to innovation.

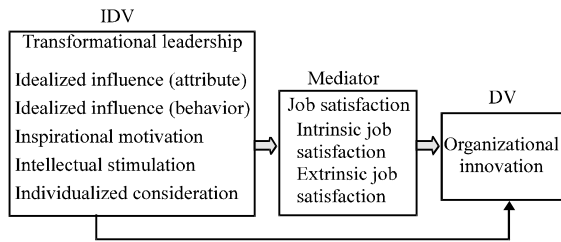


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Researches highlighted that satisfied employees' are more enthusiastic towards generation of new ideas and are more creative as compared to other employees who are not satisfied (Fig. 1). Thus, the earlier arguments lead to the following hypotheses:

- H₁: Transformational Leadership (TL) has a positive effect on Organizational Innovation (OI)
- H₂: Transformational Leadership (TL) has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction (JS)
- H₃: Job Satisfaction (JS) has a positive effect on Organizational Innovation (OI)
- H₄: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and data collection: This correlation research attempted to describe the relationships among the variables. Quantitative data was collected through a survey instrument. The population for this study consisted of academic staff from 10 public universities distributed throughout Iraq. The sample consists of 280 academic staff members selected through a random sampling technique. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale.

Transformational leadership questionnaire: Transformational leadership was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form from (Bass and Avolio, 1995, 1997), also known as 5X-Short Bass *et al.* (2003). MLQ-5X has been shown to be a psychometrically sound instrument (Avolio *et al.*, 1997). The MLQ has been extensively used in prior research and is considered to be a well-validated measure of transformational leadership (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999). In fact, it is one of the most widely used and tested measures of transformational leadership (Singh and Krishnan, 2008). The MLQ-5X is a recent version of the scale that has been in development for nearly 20 years and is used extensively to measure leadership practices,

particularly transformational leadership. The five subscales (idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behavioral), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration) that measure transformational leadership were extracted from the MLQ and a composite transformational leadership score was computed from those items (Carless, 1998). The 20 items represented by these subscales employ a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "Not at all" to 5 = "Frequently, if not always".

Organizational innovation questionnaire: Organizational innovation was measured using 16 items adapted from (Abdi and Ali, 2013; Tsai *et al.*, 2008). Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Job satisfaction questionnaire: To measure the job satisfaction of the academicians, the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss *et al.*, 1967) was used. Of the 20 facets, 12 measured intrinsic factors/occupational conditions (ability utilization, achievement, activity, authority, creativity, independence, moral values, responsibility, security, social status, social service and variety) and 8 measured extrinsic factors/environmental conditions (advancement, organization policies and practices, compensation, recognition, supervision-human relations and supervision-technical) (Baylor, 2010; Van Schalkwyk and Rothmann, 2010). Respondents were asked to express the extent of their satisfaction with each of the 20 items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability result variables: Reliability was tested for each variable of transformational leadership, job satisfaction and organization allInnovation. To measure the consistency of the scale, Cronbachs alpha was used as a measure of reliability. Table 1 showed an acceptable range of reliability where the results score and normal distribution in Table 2.

Regression analysis: A series of linear regression analyses was conducted to measure the impacts between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The regression results are shown in Table 2-5, R² is the square of the multiple correlation coefficients; it indicates the proportion of the variance of the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The closer R² near to 1, the better the linear regression model is.

Table 1: The reliability result variables transformational leadership, job satisfaction and organizational innovation

Variables	No. of items	Cranach's Alpha
Transformational leadership	20	0.908
Job satisfaction	20	0.893
Organizational innovation	16	0.894

Table 2: Descriptive statistics normal distribution

Descriptive statistics	Statistic					Skewness		Kurtosis	
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
Transformational leadership	280	2.45	4.65	3.4727	0.57070	0.052	0.146	-0.777-	0.290
Job satisfaction	280	2.20	4.65	3.5632	0.51199	-0.352-	0.146	-0.573-	0.290
Organizational innovation	280	1.63	4.69	3.3578	0.65874	0.072	0.146	-0.451-	0.290
Valid N (listwise)	280								

Table 3: Regression analysis results

Variables	Standard		Adjusted			F	
	beta	Sig.	R ²	R ²	SE	statistics	p-value
Organizational innovation	0.68***	0.000	0.46	0.45	0.49	232.78	0.000
Job satisfaction	0.63***	0.000	0.40	0.40	0.55	184.94	0.000

**, *significant <0.01, 0.05; Predictors: (Constant), transformational leadership

Table 4: Regression analysis results

Variables	Standard		Adjusted			F	
	beta	Sig.	R ²	R ²	SE	statistics	p-value
Organizational innovation	0.55***	0.000	0.31	0.30	0.55	122.91	0.000

**, *significant <0.01, 0.05; Predictors: (Constant), job satisfaction

Table 5: Regression analysis results

Variables	Standard		Adjusted			F	
	beta	Sig.	R ²	R ²	SE	statistics	p-value
job satisfaction	0.21***	0.000	0.48	0.48	0.49	129.18	0.000
Transformational leadership	0.54***						

**, *significant <0.01, 0.05; Predictors: (Constant), organizational innovation

The F-value is computed as the ratio of the mean sums of squares of the regression equation and the residual. The coefficient indicates the number of units of increase in the dependent variable caused by an increase of one unit in the independent variable. The detailed verifications of the second hypothesis are provided in the following.

Hypothesis testing: H₁; Transformational Leadership (TL) has a positive effect on Organizational Innovation (OI). The statistical results in Table 1 illustrate the impact of transformational leadership on organizational innovation. As indicated in the test (F), the calculated (F) value is 232.78 which is the largest indexed value (F) at a p<0.01. As a result, the value of the adjusted coefficient (interpretation) R² = 0.46. This means that transformational leadership explains 0.46 of the gains in organizational innovation. In addition, the value of the coefficient Beta (β) for transformational leadership as an explanatory (independent) variable for the respondent (dependent) variable of organizational innovation is 0.68 at a p<0.01.

In other word, the change of one unit in transformational leadership is followed by an increase of 0.68 in organizational innovation. The results show that H₁ is supported.

H₂; Transformational Leadership (TL) has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction (JS). The statistical results in Table 1 illustrate the impact of transformational leadership on job satisfaction. As indicated in the test (F), the calculated (F) value is 184.94 which is the largest of indexed value (F) with a p<0.01. As a result, the value of the adjusted coefficient (interpretation) R² is 0.40. This means that transformational leadership explains 0.40 of the gains in job satisfaction. In addition, the value of the coefficient Beta (β) for transformational leadership as an explanatory (independent) variable for the respondent (dependent) variable of job satisfaction is 0.63 with a p<0.01. In other words, the a one-unit change in transformational leadership causes a 0.63 increase in organizational innovation. The results show that H₂ is supported.

H₄; Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation.

The statistical result is shown in Table 3. The result indicates that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation. The value of R² is 0.48, indicating that 48% of variance is caused by job satisfaction when it acts as a mediator. Similarly, the beta coefficient value is 0.21 for job satisfaction and 0.54 for transformational leadership. The coefficient result indicates that job satisfaction is a significant mediator between the two variables. This result shows that H₄ is supported.

CONCLUSION

The earlier statistical results prove that there is a significant influence of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and organizational innovation. More

importantly, the mediation results indicate a significant influence of job satisfaction as a mediator on the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation. Leaders are the key personnel within organizations who give directions and guide employees to be more creative in their approaches. They are the ones who are responsible for ensuring an environment conducive to organizational innovation.

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