Effects of Transformational leadership on Organizational Commitment at University Departmental Level

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Abstract

Previous studies have consistently shown that the transformational leadership and organizational outcomes are major factors of the organizational success. There are a huge number of studies in leadership style regarding organizational commitment; however the image is not clear. The available educational researches show that transformational leadership can predict academic staff commitment. This study is a survey related to transformational leadership at the department level in higher educational organizations. The research attempts to investigate how leaders affect academic staff's organizational commitment. The results revealed that transformational leadership have direct and indirect effect on academic staff organizational commitment. The research findings in this study showed that the quality of transformational leadership within an organization had an effect on the organizational commitment of academic staff. In order to understand the contribution of leadership to organizational commitment clearly, this research reviewed the effect of transformational leadership style on organizational commitment.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Organizational Commitment, Academic Staff

INTRODUCTION

A Higher education faces complex financial, educational, managerial and ethical challenges[1-2]due to the huge of information and telecommunication technology, and needs to reform and transformation. Much of this problem can be traced back to ineffective management, increased enrolments, a shortage of technology, antiquated instructional methods largely. Academic leaders attempt to find the solution for these challenges based on the established academic values and practices.[3-4] The appropriate resources is required to respond to these changes. [5-6]

Nowadays, universities as main part of higher education face to multitude of crises such as leading institutional renewal attracting and retaining top quality faculty, academic and non-academic staff and student, [7-8] and as follow academic department heads confront the challenge of functioning at the interface between the universities' central administration and the faculties and departments where the rubber of the new marketed and strategic research environment meets the road of daily academic life. Then, universities must give more attention to the role of a department head. Higher education need to take the position of the department head more seriously to have paramount role in the transformation of higher education .[9-10-11]

The previous studies of the management offer Kouzes and Posner transformational leadership behavior model in face of the academic challenges that leaders are encountering. According to Kouzes and Posner[12], organizational success depends on the relationship, strength of people within the organization. They developed a transformational leadership model for effective leader.

Transformational leaders play a special role in the valuing of individual or group achievements; they are the most prominent personality in the organization and serve as role models. By ennobling achievements together, leaders let people feel that they are part of the group .[15-16] When leaders encourage their employees through recognition and celebration, they inspire them to perform better[12].This study investigated how leaders affect academic staff's organizational commitment

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL

Academic departments date back to the nineteenth century. Over the years, critics and supporters have argued the merits of academic departments on college campuses. It is the basic unit of colleges and universities, the main building block around which all academic endeavors revolve .[17-18]

Academic departments are strategic units within colleges and universities, and are critical with regard to decisions that influence the character of the institution, course content, major requirements, and faculty salaries .[19-20] The academic department is the basic decision-making unit responsible for the institutional missions of teaching, research, and public services.[21] Department heads and the faculty of their departments provide for the development and transmission of knowledge, and there is a clearly defined hierarchy of authority within the department. As such, it can be argued that the success of an institution of higher learning is measured largely by the success of its academic departments. [22-19]

HEADS of DEPARTMENT (HOD) ROLES

The position of the academic department head in higher education is one that requires leadership, administrative skills, and scholarship[23-17] and bridges the gap between faculty and administration. Nearly 80 percent of all administrative decisions in higher education are made at the academic department level .[24-25] In universities academic leaders are appointed in a discipline and expected them to exercise academic leadership in two roles - as the lecturer and researcher in the department and as administrative head.[26-27-28] Bennett *et al.*,[29] explained that HoDs are accountable upwards to the senior leadership team, and downwards to departmental members. Upward accountability can be classified as functional, where instructions that are issued by the senior leadership team are operationalized by the middle manager. Downwards accountability can be classified as leadership and managerial where the leader in learning is strategic in their role and consequently leads and manages their departmental members (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2006).[30]

The academic department head plays an important role in the decision-making process at institutions of higher education, however, little research has been conducted on the topic of department heads, and even less has been done in the areas of department head leadership.[24] The literature does make mention of middle leaders employing strategies such as delegation, distributing leadership out amongst departmental members and utilizing a team approach in collective intellectual problem solving to overcome educational problems and issues (Bennett *et al.*, 2007).[31]

HEAD of DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP AND CHALLENGES

The role of HoD has changed considerably over the last one to two decades. To foster success in department heads' expanding roles, many universities are making adjustments to aspects of the position to ensure that it is structured in a way that will allow it's incumbent to provide quality management and leadership. Yet, most institutions pay little attention to the evaluation of changes they have made to the head of department position.[33]

This is evident in the complexity of the role and the subsequent tensions that now exist. A key issue for HoD is the tension between being a leader and a lecturer. HoDs are squeezed between these two roles and face challenges involved in balancing the duality of the role of a lecturer and a leader.[27-32] The time constraints facing the HoD lead to tension within the role as tasks they need to complete. In addition, Selection and training of department heads is another challenges facing HoD. Departmental leaders often come to their positions without leadership training, without any prior leadership or managerial experience, and without a clear understanding of the ambiguity and complexity of their jobs.[32-34] The mentioned study identified the lack of leadership training despite it being an important aspect of their multi natured role.

Based on above mention, the lack of leadership training and the lack of time available (leader and lecturer role) to complete tasks are main issues facing HoDs. According to Basham[35] and Stephenson[32] major issues confronting academic leaders are lack of incentives or rewards for initiating changes in higher education, subordinates' influence in wanting to maintain the status quo, leadership qualities lacking in personnel and lack of a vision or thoughts as to where to begin with improving the direction of higher education. The ability of universities to grow and thrive will depend ultimately upon the application of leadership skills. Thus, it is necessary to better designate authorities, roles of academic staff and leaders at governance.[5] The many studies in higher education investigated head of

department's leadership and the findings pointed towards the need for effective change processes and a conceptualized head of department role. [36-33-37-32-38-34-7]

THE ROLE of TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR in HIGHER EDUCATION

Regarding the role of transformational leadership in the higher education system it can be said that most of transformational leadership literature in education is concentrated on higher education and also transformational leadership style has been proposed as efficient for universities.[39-40] According to Bush [41],the main concentration of the leader must be on communication and the capabilities of the organization members. Transformational leadership has prepared a normal and basic approach to leadership in schools and universities. Transformational leader in educational institutes should seek for efficiency of the outcomes rather than moving along their own conclusions.[41]

Transformational leader can help the individual's growth of followers to the extent of his recognition rather than organization's expectation. Followers have proven that they are quite satisfied working with transformational leaders. They endeavored more and had high performance.[42-43] Transformational leadership can be observed when both the leader and followers had reached the highest levels of motivation and morale among them and high performance. This is due to: the power of their personality and the clarity of their vision, the ability of the transformational leader in influencing the followers to change their expectations and perceptions, and the continuation of the leader to motivate these followers to work and achieve common goals.[44]

Robinson *et al*.[45], Brown[46] and woods[47] have performed researches in higher education organizations. According to their researches result, transformational leadership flows and has been very successful in these institutes. Noorshahi[48], Marie[49] have also accomplished researches in higher education institutes and universities with similar outcomes.

KOUZES and POSNER TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

Transformational leadership theory of Kouzes and Posner[50], asserts that the demonstration of five key behaviors by organizational leaders within a specific organizational setting will result in an increase in organizational morale, efficiency, and effectiveness within that organizational setting. Those behaviors are:

1. **Challenging the processes:** Transformational leaders search new opportunities in order to transform the current status.
2. **Inspiring a shared vision:** Transformational leaders have an extensive thinking paradigm and have the ability to imagine the future.
3. **Enabling the others to act:** Transformational leaders support others in their planning and help to improve their skills and abilities.
4. **Modelling the way:** Transformational leaders act clearly about the values and beliefs.
5. **Encouraging the hearts:** Transformational leaders would encourage the human workforce to have efforts. [50]

This theory involves specific leadership behaviors that stimulate social responses within subordinates that benefit the overall organization. The Kouzes and Posner leadership approach suggests that leadership is largely behavioral based and relationship oriented.[51] The research indicated the Kouzes and Posner[12] transformational leadership are antecedent to positive individual and organizational outcomes. More broadly, the positive effect of leadership on organizational outcomes is well researched.[52]

Leaders, as agents exercising leadership, (a) are performance focused[53], (b) are in service to others [54], (c) are focused on tasks and relationships[55], and (d) generate excitement[56]. Kouzes and Posner's[12] transformational leadership serve as a superior behavioural compendium of exemplary leadership. Leadership involves motivating people and accomplishing important ends[57].

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT in UNIVERSITIES

In a research titled the investigation of the influential factors on the organizational commitment, Allen and Meyer[58] proved that there exists a direct relationship between the quality of the managers' information about the organization members and their overall imagination of their chief-employees relationships with granting some

responsibilities to the organization members. This responsibility granting was reported to have effect on the members' occupation determined decisions.

In one side, lack of commitment in organizations leads to lack of the desired amount of social capital and trust in the organizational climate[59]. Organizational commitment is one of the significant constant organizational problems faced by managers.[105-106-107] From the viewpoint of Farzad *et al.*[60], lack of commitment from employees can be harmful to an organization, resulting in poorer performance arising from inferior service offerings and higher costs. Organization commitment is important for organizations because of the changes in the way that employees and employers interact.[61] Further, organizations have started to recognize that a competitive advantage can be gained through human resources. As this realization has occurred, research on organizational commitment has gained importance.[62] More recently, commitment has been defined as "the force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets".[63] Organizational commitment has attracted interest because of its attempt to understand the intensity and stability of employee dedication to work organizations .[64] An employee's commitment is a concern to all organizations because it has been linked to reduced turnover[65] increased knowledge sharing [104], increased organizational citizenship behaviours and reduced absenteeism[66].

Understanding how lecturers become satisfied and committed to their institutions, and to what degree different factors contribute to their level of commitment, is crucial to boosting their performance. Sim and Idrus [67], Jusoh *et al.* [68] and Sahney *et al* [69] concurred and they uphold the notion that commitment from the academic staff in the education sector to the overall organizational goal such as in the delivery of high service quality is a better strategy in the case of customer retention and satisfaction. As above mentioned problems, higher education system is suffering from lack of organizational commitment, because the mentioned issues are affecting organizational commitment .[70-71-72]

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR and ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Transformational leaders evaluate the potential of all followers in terms of their ability to fulfil current commitments while also envisioning further expansion of their responsibilities. The main characteristic of transformational leaders is their extraordinary effect on subordinates and their success in establishing their commitment.[73-74] A transformational leader transforms and creates meaning for his or her followers, a meaning that enhances the subordinates' commitment. A transformational leader is the catalyst who transforms the subordinates' motivation to commitment and their commitment into exceptional achievements .[61-70-75-76] Transformational leaders also indirectly support innovation via influencing the followers' commitments and building an organizational atmosphere which motivates them to generate new ideas and sustain a long term survival of the organization.[77]

Several previous research studies have established the relationship between subordinate-perceived supervisor leadership behavior and subordinate organizational commitment [78-79-80-81-82].

There is little research so far on the relationship between the transformational leadership style on one hand and the employees' commitment on the other. What follows is a list of such surveys:

Investigating the effects of transformational leadership on the commitment to change among Hong Kong teachers in 2002 proved that the teachers' commitment had a significant correlation with transformational leadership and that transformational leadership is the predictor of 10.7% of the variance of the teacher's commitment. Yet, the considerable point in the abovementioned research is that out of the transformational leadership dimensions which were investigated, vision had the highest correlation with the teachers' commitment.[83] In a similar survey done by Rafferty and Griffin [84], it was identified that creating the future vision for the organization had a positive and significant correlation with the employees' commitment.

Geijsel *et al.* [85] in their research had focusing on an investigation of the effects of transformational leadership on the commitment and effort of the schoolteachers in 2003, it was revealed that the dimensions of the transformational leadership significantly affect the commitment and effort levels of the teachers. Moreover, it was demonstrated that creating a vision of the future and intellectually stimulating the followers have a significant effect in this process.

In 2004, 303 employees of the Fire Department were chosen for a study investigating the relationship between the transformational leadership, self-efficacy, group coherence, commitment, and performance. The results proved that in working teams, the process of transformational leadership increases the commitment, enhances the

performance, and affects the self-efficacy.[86] Gwavuya[87] affirms that incompetent leadership results in poor employee performance, high stress, low job commitment, low job satisfaction and turnover intent.

KOUZES and POSNER MODEL and ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

There has been a significant amount of research that has examined the relationship between subordinate perceptions of supervisor transformational leadership and subordinate organizational commitment.

Lowe and Barnes [80] studied the relationship between perceived transformational leadership by using Kouzes and Posner model of fire officers and the organizational commitment of firefighters serving within a municipal Southeastern U.S. fire department. Results of the study revealed a strong positive relationship between all five of the perceived transformational leadership measured by leadership practices inventory (LPI) and the organizational commitment levels of fire service personnel.

The influence of transformational leadership (Kouzes and Posner model) was determined by Chiok Foong Loke [79] upon job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity within a sample of 100 registered nurses and 20 managers serving in an acute care hospital in Singapore. Results of the study revealed that manager use of transformational leadership and employee outcomes in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity were significantly correlated.

McKey[88] studied the self-perceptions of transformational leadership and organizational commitment of 133 chief nursing officers in Ontario, Canada as these factors pertain to conditions of work effectiveness in restructured hospitals. Results of the study revealed a strong positive correlational relationship between self-perceptions of transformational leadership and work effectiveness.

Stonestreet [82] examined the relationship between perceived transformational leadership and employee organizational commitment in the North American automobile industry. Results of the study indicated a statistically significant direct correlation between transformational leadership and employee organizational commitment. The results of the study also indicated that the female respondents who participated in the study had higher levels of organizational commitment than the male respondents involved in the study.

Chien [78] used a modified version of the Kouzes and Posner model in a study that illustrated the relationships between leadership behavior, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in a sample of 469 no management employees from 30 health club branches in Taiwan. Results of the study revealed that both organizational commitment and leadership behavior directly influence job satisfaction.

Metscher [81] studied the relationship between the perceived transformational leadership and the organizational commitment of subordinates within the U.S. Air Force. Results of the study indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between the perceived transformational leadership of supervisors and the organizational commitment of subordinates.

The transformational leadership of the campus manager and dean of education at campuses of a U.S. higher education college correlate with job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment in the study of John.[108]

HEAD of DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP and ACADEMIC STAFF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

The concern to optimize leadership orientation springs from the need for leaders who will not only set goals and direct organizational resources towards these goals, but will also stimulate positive attitudes and behaviours among workers, enhancing their commitment to high performances and values. As earlier studies have suggested, commitment to an organization is reflected in how employees feel about their leaders and the behaviours they exhibit. [89]

Transformational leadership behaviours represent the most effective leadership style and principal contributors for the realization of outcomes in colleges and universities because transformational leadership is characterized as the formal collegial model of leadership to higher educational institutions.[90-91-92].

The strength and quality of leadership skills and the effectiveness of educational leaders play a vital role in influencing the characteristics of educational organizations[93], and has been shown to have significant impact on the commitment of lecturers to their educational institution. Effective leadership behaviors will influence employees to remain employed, and will increase their productivity.[24-94] [70-23] The transformational leadership practice and

effectiveness of department heads in performing their various roles were shown to be strongly related to lecturers' performance, job satisfaction, and commitment [70-10--94]. An effective department head, whose sense of achievement is based in part on lecturers' perceptions[95], is a person with the ability to influence the activities of the lecturer toward goal achievement[96], and to enjoy their confidence and respect. They are constantly evaluated in terms of their actions and reactions to the problems, opportunities, and challenges they face. [97] Gmelch and Miskin [98] have identified comprehensive roles of academic department heads that are critical to lecturers' performance and productivity: managers, leaders, faculty developers, scholars, and students affairs managers.

Thus, it is important to identify transformational leadership that enhances lecturers' commitment, so that academic heads of department can work to maximize the productivity of lecturers. Although a substantial quantity of research focusing on organizational commitment and transformational leadership behavior in organizations has accumulated, comparatively little data has been employed to address the impact of the leadership orientations of academic heads of department on faculty members' commitment in higher education settings. [11-99-100]

In brief, leadership in universities is imperative, as it affects subordinates' organizational commitment [61-70-75-76-100-101-102-103] which are all related in defining the success of a university in delivering its goals.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between Kouzes and Posner transformational leadership and academic staff organizational commitment in universities. The literature review showed transformational leadership of the department's head can encourage and inspired academic staff. The previous studies provided an overview of organizational commitment of academic staff. They have defined a relationship of this variable to departmental heads' transformational leadership behavior. The literature review on organizational commitment ended with a perspective of past conducted studies related to Kouzes and Posner leadership model and organizational commitment. In sum, Kouzes and Posner transformational leadership has direct and indirect positive effect on academic staff organizational commitment. The further research needs to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership behavior, and subordinates organizational commitment in universities to reach success in universities and increase organizational of academic staff.

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