

FOLLOWERSHIP MODERATION BETWEEN THE RELATIONSHIP OF TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEES REACTIONS TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract: The purpose of the present study is to analyze the relationship between transactional leadership style and factors of employees' reactions towards organizational change in the telecommunication companies of Pakistan. Furthermore, to understand the importance of followership this study has also incorporated followership as a moderating variable. Quantitative methodology is applied to investigate the underline relationships. The Pearson correlation results have identified that transactional leadership is positively related to all three factors (frequency of change, trust in management, and employees' participation) of employees' reactions towards change. The moderation results further clarify that followership significantly moderates the relationship between transactional leadership style, frequency of change and employees participation. However, there is no moderation effect found between transactional leadership style and trust in management.

Key words: transactional leadership style, followership, employees' reactions, organizational change, Pakistan

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2018.17.1.11

Article history:

Received March 2, 2018; *Revised* April 11, 2018; *Accepted* April 23, 2018

Introduction

According to Burns (1978, p. 2) "*Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth*". The history of leadership in management is very rich and long, and considered as one of the most researched phenomena but in organizational point of view, leadership is least understood social process (Avolio and Bass, 2002). The full range leadership theory (FRLT) contains nine factors that comprises three major categories of leaders' behaviour (styles), ranging from transformational to transactional to completely inactive (laissez-faire) behaviour (Barbuto, 2005; Bass and Avolio, 1995). Among many leadership styles, transformational leadership is mostly studied in organizational change context (Ahmad and Cheng, 2018; Holten and Brenner, 2015; Yasir et al., 2016) due to its

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charismatic influence, and change-oriented behaviour. Conversely, Bass, (1985); Avolio and Bass (1999) and Antonakis et al., (2003) claimed that transactional leadership style mostly relates to stable organizational situation and try to maintain status quo in organizations. On the other hand, a meta-analysis conducted by Lowe et al. (1996) concluded that due to its contingent reward characteristics transactional leadership is a necessary component of effective management. The focus of transactional leadership style is managing rewards and incentives and observing quality standards, another meta-analysis, has claimed that contingent reward is strongly linked with many antecedents of satisfaction (job, group, and organization) and also relates to organizational change processes (Podsakoff et al., 2006). Judge and Piccolo, (2004) identified in their meta-analysis that transformational and transactional leadership are so highly related that it makes it difficult to separate their unique effects. Therefore, it is critical to understand the role of transactional leadership in shaping employees reactions towards organizational change.

Change is a basic, notable and recurring part of life. As a result, it has become one of the big comforts in organization theory (Wetzel and Van Gorp, 2014). This makes more fascination to explore and study organizational change. Previous studies have focused on the macro perspective of change like “how” and “what” features of change or in other words the content and trends (Sashkin and Burke, 1987), explore change introduction (Pasmore and Fagans, 1992), summarize and categorize change developments (Woodman, 1989), and assess change themes (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Conversely, Psychological perspective deals with the human side of organizational change, which explains that how change looks and feels like from the standpoint of change recipients [employees] of the organization (Oreg et al., 2013, 2011). In last two decades, realization of the importance of recipients’ perspective is gently increasing and researchers acknowledging the role of employees in the success of organizational change (Mdletye et al., 2013; Oreg, 2006; Rafferty and Restubog, 2010). This study utilized Oreg et al. (2011) the model of employees’ reactions to understand the role of content, context and process factors of employees’ reactions towards organizational change. The content of change refers to the type of change occurred in the organization, more simply it explains the “what” of organizational change (Burk, 2017; Oreg et al., 2011). The content of change reports the area where change occurs. The content factor in the present study is the frequency of change, which explains that how frequently change occurs in the organization (Rafferty and Jimmieson, 2017). The context of change has highlighted that why organization needs to change. It refers to the pre-change organizational condition (Oreg et al., 2011). The context factor for the present study is trust in management highlighted the level of employees trust upon their managers (leaders) (den Hartog et al., 2002). Finely, Process of change explained how organizational change would be implemented (Oreg et al., 2011). The process factor of change for this study is employees’ participation explained the level of employee’s participation

in organizational change process (Oreg et al., 2011). Many of the researchers have analyzed only one or two factor of these three factors about organizational change (Oreg, 2006; Vakola, 2016). Therefore, this study combines all three factors (content, context, and process) of employees' reactions and analyse their relationship with transactional leadership style in Pakistani context.

In terms of followership, it has been argued that in order to bring change in organization followers can play an effective role through both challenging and supporting leaders within the adoptive culture of the organization (Doppelt, 2009). Following behaviour shows a willingness to defer to someone else one way or another (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). This is similar to granting leader identity and for oneself claiming follower identity (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Additionally, nowadays with shared, distributed leadership where individuals at the same time play the role of both as a leader and as a follower has positively identified that the concept of followership has become important to both academician and practitioners (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). Zhu et al. (2009) analysed the moderating role of followers' characteristics (dimensions) between the relationship of transformational leadership and follower work engagement. Zhu et al. (2009) suggested that future research should take into consideration the followership dimension (characteristics) as a potential moderator while when analysing leadership in different samples and studies. Indeed, currently, general research regarding the moderating role of followership is still in its infancy. Therefore, this Study analyzes followership proposed by Kelley in (1992) as a moderator between the relationship of transactional leadership style and content, context and process factors of employees' reactions towards organizational change.

Literature Review

Transactional Leadership Style and Frequency of Change

There is no study found which directly relates to transactional leadership style and frequency of change, but generally, some previous studies have identified with a positive association between transactional leadership style and organizational change (Judge and Piccolo 2004; Lowe et al., 1996; Podsakoff et al., 2006). The focus of transactional leadership style is managing rewards and incentives and observing quality standards, meta-analysis, has been proved that contingent reward is strongly linked many antecedents of satisfaction (job, group, and organization) and also related to organizational change processes (Podsakoff et al., 2006). Yasir et al. (2016) have identified a positive relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational change and argue that rewarding and encouraging followers played an important role in supporting organizational change capacity. Harms and Credé (2010) and Judge and Piccolo (2004) articulated that leaders should be supportive, dynamic and interactive to recognize employees efforts and achievements by providing intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The contingent reward and management by exception qualities enable transactional leaders to support

and manage organizational change processes (Bass and Avolio, 1990; Long and Mao, 2008). A study conducted by Diab (2014) in Jordanian Pharmaceutical Companies identified that transactional leadership style was positively related to all area of organizational change (technological change, change in organizational structure and change in human resources). In summary, it has been argued that on the basis of previous findings transactional leadership style may also be important in managing organizational changes in Pakistani context. Therefore, it has been proposed that:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership style and frequency of change.

Transactional Leadership Style and Trust in Management

The leader-member relationship under transactional leadership style is instrumental in nature and the basis of trust is the contingent rewards offered by the leaders to their followers (Antonakis and House, 2013). Similarly, it is important to highlight that the relationship between reward and trust is complex because the interpretation of followers of what a bonus or reward means and how it is communicated and applied are strongly impacted by the intentions of followers towards their leaders trust (Bligh, 2017). Asencio (2016) found in his study that transactional leadership style significantly related to organizational performance and trust in leadership mediates the relationship positively. Oreg (2006) analyzed the relationship between trust in management and resistance. It was found that the lack of trust or faith in management leads to three types of resistance (affective, cognitive and behavioural). Lack of trust in management further caused anxiety, frustration, and anger, employees start questioning whether or not management able to make informed decisions (Oreg, 2006). Previous research has identified that trust in management (leaders) is an essential factor of change, which acts as an antecedent or consequence of leader's, follower's relationship at work (Neves and Caetano, 2009). Therefore, another proposition is:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership style and trust in management.

Transactional Leadership Style and Employees Participation

In the meta-analysis conducted by Judge and Piccolo (2004) confirmed that transactional leaders adopt consultative style for decision making which is based on what followers needs and desires. Once the exchange condition determined then leaders clarify the way of meeting those needs and desires in the exchange relationship. By clarifying the exchange conditions transactional leaders are then able to build confidence in followers to put necessary efforts to reach the desired level of performance. However, the ultimate decision remains in the leader's hands and followers are not very empowered, subordinates are motivated to participate due to the agreements, rewards, and expectations in the exchange. The subordinate level of participation will be higher if leader clearly identify and explain the needs

of subordinates (Lau, 2014). Lau (2014) identified in his study that transactional leadership style is positively related to participation in the contest of organizational justice. When leaders (managers) provide information or highlight clearly identified opportunities then employee participation would be high in organizational change processes (Oreg et al., 2011). Therefore, transactional leadership style relates to employee participation in organizational change programs by providing contingent rewards and communicating the outcomes and standards to the followers (Bass, 1985; Dumdum et al., 2013). Thus, it has been proposed that:

H3: *There is a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership style and employees participation.*

Moderating Role of Followership

In terms of transactional leadership approach Bass (1985) and Antonakis and House (2013) explained that the foundation of the relationship between transactional leaders and their followers is based on expectations, negotiating a contract, clarifying responsibilities and giving reward and recognition for meeting the targets. Followers' expectations are reward based and leaders specify the targets before their followers. In order to bring change in an organization, followers can play an effective role through both challenging and supporting leaders within the adoptive culture of the organization (Doppelt, 2009). It has been recognized that follower trust is the bond that holds organization as a system and is the basic unit of commerce (Kouzes and Posner, 2011). A number of researchers have pointed out that for successful change initiatives, it is important to establish a trusting relationship between employees and management (Gomez and Rosen, 2001; Schneider et al., 1996). It has been suggested that element of leader's task is to continually work with people to find problems and their solutions and to gain access to creative thinking and knowledge, it depends mostly on how much followers trust them. Therefore, both trust and trustworthiness modulate the leader access to cooperation and knowledge (Lines et al., 2005).

In addition, actively engaged followers take full participation, assume ownership and do beyond their job goals and provide substantial effort to accomplish targets (Blanchard et al., 2009). They go beyond and above expectations and provide high-quality work. Busari et al. (2017), found that followers who made decisions rationally on the basis of critical and judgemental thinking stay with the organization. According to Oreg et al. (2011) employees' participation, communication and information are termed as the process of change, and it is the antecedents of employees' reactions towards organizational change. Thus, employees who exhibit active engagement produce more positive reactions towards organizational change. For a successful organizational change the recognition of the followership concept on individual, group, and organizational levels and methods for producing good effective followers are very important (Bennis, 2010). Therefore, the final preposition is:

H4: Followership significantly moderates the relationship between transactional leadership style and factors of employees' reactions towards organizational change.

Methodology

Participants

For the purpose of data collection, 600 questionnaires were distributed among employees of the telecom sector of Pakistan, it consisted of employees from all levels (i.e. from the lower level to top level). The target locations were the two head offices of the telecom companies. Among 600 questionnaires 506 questionnaires returned, which was 84.33% of the total distributed questionnaires. The questionnaires were filled by 72.7% of male and 27.3% of female respondents representing more than half of the respondents were male. The maximum age group of the respondents lies between 26 and 30, which was 41.9%. The second age group, which represents most respondents, was 31-35, which showed 28.7%. The highest level of academic qualification was master level, which depicted 59.3% of the academic qualification; the second was bachelor level, which showed 22.5% of the total qualification. In terms of experience, 45.1% of respondents had worked for 1 to 5 years, and 31.2% respondents had worked for 6 to 10 years.

Measures

Transactional leadership style measured by Bass and Avolio registered MLQ version 5X. Five points Likert-type scale ranging from (not at all) to (Frequently if not always) was adopted. Kelley (1992) instrument of followership dimensions was used to collect data about followership. The responses were recorded with the five point Likert-type scale ranging from (rarely) to (almost always). The change frequency was measured by Rafferty and Griffin (2006), the responses were recorded with the five points Likert-type scale ranging from (Strongly disagree) to (strongly agree). Trust in management, the context factor of change was measured by Gillespie, (2003) behavioural trust inventory. Participation in organizational change was measured by organizational change questionnaire-Climate of change, Processes, and Readiness (OCQ-C, P, R) developed by Bouckennooghe et al. (2009) using five point Likert-type scale ranging from (Strongly disagree) to (strongly agree). The reliability analyses showed that the overall reliability of all the instruments was in acceptable range. The reliability of transactional leadership Style was ($\alpha = .87$). Reliability of the (frequency of change, trust in management and employees participation) factors of employees reactions were ($\alpha = .90$). Followership showed the reliability of overall items was ($\alpha = .86$) represented that the instrument was fit in the telecom sector of Pakistan to collect the data about the underline phenomenon.

Hypotheses Testing

Three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) have been developed in order to test the direct relationship between transactional leadership style and content, context and process factors of employees' reactions towards organizational change. Table (1), shows the descriptive and Pearson correlation results. These results show that transactional leadership is significantly correlated with all three factors, the frequency of change ($r_s = .382, p < .01$), trust in management ($r_s = .514, p < .01$) and employees participation ($r_s = .473, p < .01$) of employees reactions towards organizational change. These results provide support to hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 that transactional leadership style is significantly related to the frequency of change, trust in management and employees participation during organizational change in the telecom sector of Pakistan.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Results

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Transactional Leadership	3.22	.42	1			
Frequency of Change	3.19	.60	.382**	1		
Trust in Management	3.24	.54	.514**	.400	1	
Employees Participation	3.28	.55	.473**	.426**	.561**	1

Note: N = 506, **= Correlation significant at the .01 level (two-tailed)

Table, 2 depicts the results of followership moderation between the relationship of transactional leadership style and frequency of change, trust in management, and employees' participation factors. Model 1 has showed that transactional leadership*followership (interaction) = -0.2408 [-0.4640, -0.0175], R^2 change = .0102, $t = -2.11, p = .0346$; which means that followership significantly moderates the direct relationship of transactional leadership style and frequency of change. It further has explained that as the moderating effect of followership increases the direct relationship decreases. Model 2 exhibits that transactional leadership*followership (interaction) = -.1304 [-0.2917, 0.0310], R^2 change = .0036, $t = -1.58, p = .1130$; which indicates that followership does not significantly moderated the direct relationship of transactional leadership style and trust in management, because $p > .05$ and the upper and lower confidence intervals contain 0, [-0.2917, 0.0310]. Model 3 has highlighted that transactional leadership*followership (interaction) = -.2202 [-0.2917, -0.0310], R^2 change = .0103, $t = -2.13, p = .0330$; which expresses that followership significantly moderates the direct relationship of transactional leadership style and employees participation. Furthermore, as the moderating effect of followership increases the direct relationship decreases. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is partially supported because followership significantly effect the direct relationship between transactional leadership style and frequency of change (content), and employees participation (process) factors of employees reactions. But there is no followership moderation

effect found between transactional leadership style and trust in management (context) factor of employees reactions (Table 2).

Table 2. Followership Moderation, Transactional Leadership Style, Frequency of Change, Trust in Management, and Employees Participation

	Coefficient (b)	SE (B)	R ²	R ² Change	t	p
Model 1						
Constant	3.2191 [3.1704,3.2678]	.0248	.2492	.0102	129.77	.0000
Followership	0.4268 [0.2991,0.5545]	.0650			6.56	.0000
Transactional Leadership	0.3396 [0.2010,0.4781]	.0708			4.81	.0000
T. L*F	-0.2408 [-0.4640,-0.0175]	.1136			-2.11	.0346
Model 2						
Constant	3.2557 [3.2172, 3.2941]	.0196	.4523	.0036	166.31	.0000
Followership	.6211 [0.4931, 0.7492]	.0652			9.53	
Transactional Leadership	.3126 [.2004, .4247]	.0571			5.47	
T. L*F	-.1304 [-0.2917, 0.0310]	.0821			-1.58	.1130
Model 3						
Constant	3.3085 [3.2172, 3.2941]	.0201	.3858	.0103	164.42	.0000
Followership	.5685 [0.4931, 0.7492]	.0553			10.27	.0000
Transactional Leadership	.2842 [.2004, .4247]	.0643			4.41	.0000
T. L*F	-.2202 [-0.2917, -0.0310]	.1030			-2.13	.0330

T.L*F= interaction term of transactional leadership and followership

Conclusion and Discussion

One of the most significant findings emerge from this study is that transactional leadership style positively relates to the frequency of change. These findings contradicted with Bass (1985) original claim that transactional leadership only relates to the stable organizational situation and does not promote changes. According to Harms and Credé, (2010) and Judge and Piccolo (2004), it is the duty of the transactional leader to be supportive, interactive and dynamic in order

to acknowledge employee efforts and achievements by reward, and reward can be intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. In terms of trust in management during organizational change, transactional leadership style affects trust in management positively. Transactional leadership style increases the development of trust in leader. Management by exception leads to calculus based trust through controlling and monitoring subordinate performance. On the other hand, contingent reward increases knowledge based trust when leaders promise the exchange of material or non-material recognition against the better performance and target achievement (Hartog et al., 2002). In transactional leadership style, employee participation based on rewards, agreements, and negotiation are with the leader. The employees' participation is high if leaders clearly understand employees' needs and clearly explain the exchange process (Judge and Piccolo 2004; Lau, 2014). Thus, transactional leadership is important for the telecom organizations in Pakistan in shaping employees reactions towards change by providing opportunities for participation and building trust by providing contingent rewards and sound monitoring of employees performance.

The moderation results confirm that followership does not affect the direct relationship between transactional leadership style and trust in management. It shows that employee trust in transactional leaders is less strong than transformational leadership (Hartog et al., 2002). Transactional leadership behavior is instrumental in nature and does not allow followers to engage beyond their expectations and think critically about organizational goals and processes. Additionally, followership has effected the relationship between transactional leadership style and frequency of change. Blanchard et al., (2009) argued that exemplary or courageous followers does not need leaders' directions on every step and they participate in organizational processes to fulfil organizational goals. Zhang et al. (2014) concluded that employees with higher needs for achievement engaged more in organizational processes under all leadership (classical, transactional, visionary and organic) paradigms. Therefore, employees having independent critical thinking and active engagement characteristics perform well in organizational change processes and need limited support from transactional leaders. Finally, it has been found that followership moderation occurs between the relationship of transactional leadership style and employees participation. Followers with higher need achievements, independent critical thinking ability and active engagement behaviour are proactive and do not wait for leaders directions and instructions (Kelley, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). Therefore, exemplary and courageous followers participate in organizational change programs without or with limited support from transactional leaders.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

This study has not focused on any specific type of change like incremental change or strategic change. Future research needs to focus on any type of change to study employee's reactions. From a leadership perspective, this study has only focused

on transactional leadership style; future research may take other leadership styles such as servant leadership, distributed leadership, and global leadership to study employee's reactions. Followership research is still infancy, future studies need to focus on followership from different perspectives like implicit followership theories, follower's role orientation, and follower's identity. The focus of this study is the telecom sector of Pakistan, there is still more room to study followership and organizational change in different contexts and samples.

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UMIAR W PODAŻANIU ZA PRZYWÓDCĄ POMIĘDZY RELACJAMI TRANSAKCYJNEGO STYLU PRZYWÓDZTWA A REAKCJAMI PRACOWNIKÓW W KIERUNKU ZMIANY ORGANIZACYJNEJ

Streszczenie: Celem niniejszego badania jest analiza związku między stylem przywództwa transakcyjnego a czynnikami reakcji pracowników na zmiany organizacyjne w przedsiębiorstwach telekomunikacyjnych w Pakistanie. Ponadto, aby zrozumieć znaczenie podążania za przywódcą, zostało ono włączone jako zmienna moderująca. W celu zbadania istniejących zależności, zastosowana została metodologia ilościowa. Wyniki korelacji Pearsona wykazały, że przywództwo transakcyjne jest pozytywnie powiązane ze wszystkimi trzema czynnikami (częstością zmian, zaufaniem do zarządzania i udziałem pracowników) reakcji pracowników na zmiany. Uzyskane wyniki pozwoliły stwierdzić, że wyniki moderacji dodatkowo wyjaśniły, że podążanie za przywódcą znacząco moderowało związek pomiędzy stylem przywództwa transakcyjnego, częstotliwością zmian a udziałem pracowników. Jednak nie znaleziono efektu powiązania pomiędzy stylem przywództwa transakcyjnego a zaufaniem do zarządzania.

Słowa kluczowe: transakcyjny styl przywództwa, podążanie za przywódcą, reakcje pracowników, zmiana organizacyjna, Pakistan

事务性领导风格与员工对组织变革的关系之间的后续调整

摘要: 本研究的目的是分析巴基斯坦电信公司中交易领导风格与员工对组织变革反应因素之间的关系。此外，为了理解追随者的重要性，本研究还将追随者作为一个调节变量。定量方法学被用于调查下划线关系。Pearson相关结果表明，事务型领导力与员工对变革的反应的所有三个因素（变化频率，管理层信任度和员工参与度）呈正相关。调节结果进一步明确了追随者显著调节了事务型领导风格，变化频率和员工参与之间的关系。然而，事务型领导风格与管理信任之间没有调节作用。

关键词: 交易型领导风格; 追随力; 员工的反应; 组织变革; 巴基斯坦。