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Leadership That Counts

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A Reflective Hybrid Approach to Connecting Leadership Style and Stakeholder Perspective

Abstract

Using quantitative analysis and reflection techniques, we examine employee perception of leadership style and perceived results within organizations based in Whistler, Canada. We are primarily concerned with results in terms of organizational culture towards three key stakeholder groups: customers, community, and employees. The observed differences in results between transformational and transactional leadership provide a basis for enriching the mapping of leadership style to desired outcomes.

Keywords: Leadership, Organizational Stakeholder Performance, Corporate Social Responsibility

1 Introduction

Scholars and practitioners alike have struggled to fully explain how leaders affect organizational culture. This paper contributes insight to the debate surrounding the relationship between leadership style and certain outcomes in organizational culture. The study of organizational leadership styles is largely motivated by the belief that leadership makes differences in organizational outcomes (Zhu et al, 2005). With our particular interest in cultural outcomes, we tested hypotheses associated with two well-studied and contrasting leader types within the literature: transformational (Burns, 1978) and transactional (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

Transactional leadership (TL) drives followers to achieve desired outcomes by controlling valued rewards and assuring the presence of essential resources (Bass, 1985; Zhu et al., 2005). By contrast, transformational leadership (TFL) emphasizes leader effect on follower values, beliefs and considerations

of ideal future states (Burns, 1978). We came to a common position that, for considerations of performance results alone, we might usefully cast the difference between these two leadership styles, respectively, in terms of emphasis on measurable consequences in the case of transactional leadership and emphasis on self-awareness and alignment with a future identity in the case of transformational leadership. It is with these distinctions in mind that we developed the hypotheses and research design described below.

2 Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework

We compare the association of the stakeholder perspective of organizational performance with transformational and transactional leadership, respectively. As observed at the Challenging Organisations and Society (COS)[1] dialogue, 'What Matters' in leadership and organizations is a point of contention, as participants vehemently disagreed. A famous simple view of what matters in business is the increase of profits (Friedman, 1970); we observed dialogue participants perhaps incorrectly associating the term 'results' with the Friedman doctrine. However, results need not be purely financial. Indeed, Kaplan and Norton (1992) exemplify this with their balanced score card (BSC) measure combining financial and non-financial results.

We consider non-financial components of 'what matters' from 'the stakeholder perspective of organizational performance'. This perspective entails how organizational culture orientates towards organizational stakeholders from a strategic viewpoint, a neglected area of research (Ding & Ma, 2014). 'Results' are how well organizations do this. Further, to examine 'what matters' in leadership, we measure the impacts of leadership type on these 'results' since leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational strategies and practices (Du et al, 2013).

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1 Dialogue on 21st century leadership August 2015 at the Segal Graduate School of Business, Vancouver, Canada

We measure results with a concise version of Ding and Ma's (2014) organizational assessment model, which overlays the characteristics of organizational culture on the balance scorecard's strategic perspectives: customer, internal process, learning and innovation. We apply three key measures of the BSC 'customer' perspective: customer orientation (CO), social responsibility (SR), and staff satisfaction (SS), each of which map to a different stakeholder. A more detailed view of these factors is provided in Table 3.3 of section 3.

We view leadership in terms of its influence on strategic organizational processes according to the paradigm of Du et al. (2013). Within this context, we examine transactional and transformational styles. Transactional emphasizes the exchange of rewards for performance (Bass, 1985; Zhu et al., 2005), whereas transformational emphasizes the leader's effect on follower values, beliefs and considerations of ideal future states (Burns, 1978). Using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (2000), we follow the advice of Du et al. (2013) measuring transactional leadership using a key construct of Management by Exception Active (MBEA), where a leader actively monitors task execution and anticipates problem correction to maintain current performance levels, and a composite variable for transformational leadership comprised of Charisma (CHI) and Intellectual Stimulation (IS). Charisma refers to managers energizing employees through a sense of purpose, modeling ethical conduct, and building identity with employees. Intellectual stimulation describes the encouragement of employees to seek improvement through questioning familiar paradigms.

Our hypothesis development process was inspired and informed by the treatment of reflective hybrids in Brown et al. (2013). Our discussions first centered around the challenge of discerning just what differential results, as defined in this paper, should be expected of the two contrasting leadership styles examined. For example, one author felt that the shared nature of culture alone would make strong achievements along those lines difficult to obtain through transactional approaches because such an approach sustains employee focus on the reward, while the timing and the nature of the reward

may tend to be imperfect across different individuals. This point was unclear to the other author, who felt that, even if the basis of the aforementioned argument is sound, this does not provide a reason that a transformative leadership style would necessarily result in greater performance within the broad definition of the stakeholder perspective.

Ultimately, the discussions driving our hypothesis development led us to the conjecture that transformational leadership should map more positively to the stakeholder perspective on organizational performance. By its very definition, transformative leadership directly addresses key elements of culture that underlie this perspective, including values, individually held purpose and meanings. To quote Bass (1985), transformational leaders "attempt and succeed in raising colleagues, subordinates, followers, clients, or constituencies to higher awareness about issues of consequence" (p.27). Furthermore, we felt that transactional leadership places a premium on the accuracy and appropriateness of a set of measures that can be very complex with respect to our stakeholder perspective. This suggested lower likelihood of transactional leadership displaying the stronger association with stakeholder perspectives. We consequently expect the direct effects of transformational leadership to more positively associate with all three stakeholder dimensions and Organizational Stakeholder Performance (OSP):

H1: Transformational Leadership has a stronger positive relationship with Customer Orientation than does Transactional Leadership

H2: Transformational Leadership has a stronger positive relationship with Social Responsibility than does Transactional Leadership

H3: Transformational Leadership has a stronger positive relationship with Staff Satisfaction than does Transactional Leadership

H4: Transformative Leadership has a stronger positive relationship with Organizational Stakeholder Performance than does Transactional Leadership
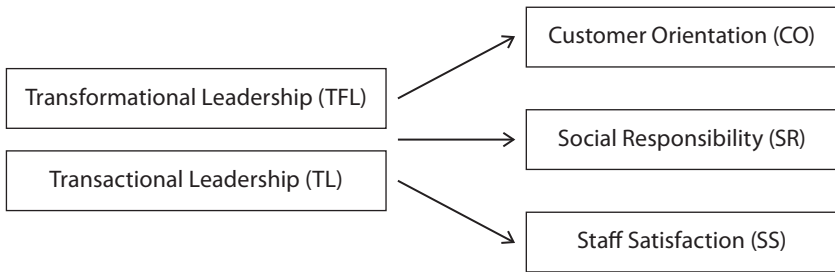
Figure 2.1: Leadership Type and Organizational Performance Dimensions

3 Method

3.1 Survey Methodology and Demographic Variables

Quantitative survey research targeted the working population of Whistler, Canada. Whistler is a global all-season resort town with a local population of approximately 10,000 (Statistics Canada, 2011) that hosts approximately 2.7 million visitors each year (Tourism Whistler, 2016). The sampling frame was formed of three 'closed' Whistler Facebook groups representing 3 key themes: social (4544 members), employment (2013 members), politics (602 members). 1 survey invitation and 1 reminder were posted on each group at different times of day 3 days apart, reaching an estimated 10.4% of members. Invitees were linked to the survey hosted on SurveyMonkey, with persons not working in Whistler or under age 18 screened out. N=151 useable responses were collected from n=718 invitations, representing a response rate of approximately 21%. Personal demographics included: gender (1 = male, 2 = female); age (1 = 18-24 years, 2 = 25-34 years, 3 = 35-44 years, 4 = 45-54 years, 5 = 55 years and older); years living in Whistler (1 = less than 1 year, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-5 years, 4 = 6-10 years, 5 = 10 or more years). (In respect to respondents' current employer, we asked their tenure with their current employer (1 = less than 1 year, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-5 years, 4 = 6-10 years,

5 = 10 or more years); and organization size (1 = 5 employees or less, 2 = 6-10 employees, 3 = 11-20 employees, 4 = 21-50 employees, 5 = 50 or more employees).

3.2 Leadership Style

To measure transactional and transformational leaderships, respondents were asked to answer questions about "the mangers in your organization" on a 5-point scale (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always) (Du et al, 2013). Subsequent Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) confirmed the appropriateness of each variable where loadings were all greater than the minimum acceptable loading of 0.5 and most greater than 0.7 (Malhotra, 2010, 734). In line with Bass and Avolio (2000) and Du et al (2013), we subsequently combined the 2 transformational factors into 1 overall measure of transformational leaderships (Cronbach's Alpha of .958), transactional leadership was reliable at .793 (Malhotra, 2010, 319).

Table 3.2: EFA Results for Leadership Styles

	Item	Loading
Transactional leadership (TL) (Eigenvalue=3.29; var explained=16.5%)		
Focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards	MBEA1	.859
Concentrate their full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures	MBEA2	.852
Keep track of all mistakes	MBEA3	.634
Direct their attention towards failure to meet standard	MBEA4	.737

	Item	Loading
Transformational leadership (TFL) (Eigenvalue=9.4; var explained=46.7%)		
Re-examine critical assumptions to question whether these are appropriate	IS1	.873
Seek differing perspectives when solving problems	IS2	.908
Get others to look at problems from many different angles	IS3	.868
Suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	IS4	.922
Talk about their most important values and beliefs	CHI1	.756
Specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	CHI2	.751
Consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	CHI3	.806
Emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission	CHI4	.763
Talk optimistically about the future	CHI5	.766
Talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	CHI6	.803
Articulate a compelling vision of the future	CHI7	.827
Express confidence that goals will be achieved	CHI8	.814
Instill pride in others for being associated with them	CHI9	.806
Go beyond self-interest for the good of the group	CHI10	.790
Act in ways that build others' respect for me	CHI11	.812
Display a sense of power and confidence	CHI12	.548

3.2 Organizational Stakeholder Performance

To measure the dimensions of organizational stakeholder performance (CO, SR, SS), respondents were asked to state the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree,

3=Neither disagree nor agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree) (Ding and Ma, 2014). All factor loadings were greater than the minimum acceptable loading of 0.5 and most greater than 0.7. The Cronbach's alphas for the subsequent dimensions were: Customer Orientation, .840; Social Responsibility, .820; Staff Satisfaction, .883; Stakeholders composite variable, .924.

Table 3.3: EFA Results for Organizational Stakeholder Performance Dimensions

	Item	Loading
Customer Orientation (CO) (Eigenvalue=3.97; var explained=20.4%)		
Have an in-depth knowledge of customer needs	CO1	.768
Customer interests are considered first when we make decisions	CO2	.831
The development and improvement of new products are mainly based on information feedback from customers and the market	CO3	.785
There is an assessment system for customer service level	CO4	.654
The company has a speedy response to customer feedback or complaints	CO5	.643
Be able to get quick feedback about information of market change and get problem-solving measures	CO6	.749
Social Responsibility (SR) (Eigenvalue=3.10; var explained=16.5%)		
The company is actively involved in social charity events	SR1	.646
The company encourages and organizes staff to volunteer in charitable activities	SR2	.710
The company complies with government requirements and legal regulations	SR3	.787

	Item	Loading
The company abides by social norms and moral rules	SR4	.739
The company actively involves in solving social problems	SR5	.825
Staff Satisfaction (SS) (Eigenvalue=4.47; var explained=20.5%)		
You like your present job very much	SS1	.649
The company is greatly concerned about its staff (Whether the company cares about your personal problems or difficulties)	SS2	.741
I have a happy mood every day when at work	SS3	.694
Staff promotion is based on personal ability and performance	SS4	.715
I am very satisfied with my income level	SS5	.673
I think the company's assessment system is fair to me	SS6	.762
The company provides me with good development space and chances	SS7	.805
The working environment makes me feel comfortable and safe	SS8	.773

Measures were assessed for normality, skewness and kurtosis between -1 and +1 (Hair et al, 1995). Skewness was acceptable, 3 measures exceeded the kurtosis range: SR_3 (1.372), Tenure_whistler (-1.008), and Tenure_employer (-1.123). No treatment was applied, and this is acknowledged. Nevertheless, the generally high validity of constructs makes for suitable analyses in this study.

4 Analysis and Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics
The following page displays descriptive statistics for the key variables.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas for the key variables

		Mean	Std	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Gender	1.33	.47											
2	Age	2.66	.88	.12										
3	Tenure Whis-tler	3.59	1.28	.16*	.55**									
4	Tenure Org	2.88	1.37	.07	.48**	.68**								
5	Org Size	3.85	1.37	.00	-.08	.03	.11							
6	TFL	3.36	1.05	.32**	-.15	-.22**	-.07	-.04	0.96					
7	TL	2.91	.77	.16*	-.05	.04	.10	.11	.37**	0.79				
8	CO	3.31	.72	.28**	-.07	-.23**	-.03	.02	.55**	.14	0.84			
9	SR	3.25	.77	.35**	-.09	-.12	-.05	.06	.57**	.38**	.58**	0.82		
10	SS	3.09	.70	.33**	-.05	-.02	.01	-.08	.67**	.30**	.61**	.68**	0.88	
11	OSP	3.22	.63	.37**	-.08	-.14	-.03	-.00	.69**	.31**	.84**	.87**	.89**	0.92

* 0.05 sig (two-tailed) ** 0.01 sig (two-tailed)
Cronbach's Alphas detailed diagonally in bold

4.2 Regression Analysis

Four regression models examined transformational and transactional leaderships towards the stakeholder construct and each stakeholder dimension: customer orientation, social responsibility, staff satisfaction. In model 1, control variables were regressed to the dependent variables. In subsequent models, control variables and dependent variables were entered in step 1 followed by the independent variable(s) in step 2. Specifically, model 2 added only transformational in step 2, model 3 added only transactional in step 2, and model 4 was the full model adding both transformational and transactional leaderships in step 2.

Table 4.2 Regression Analysis Results

	Customer Orientation	Social Responsibility	Staff Satisfaction	Organizational Stakeholder Performance
Model 1. Covariates				
Gender	.294***	.347***	.380***	.402***
Age	.020	-.019	-.092	-.048
Tenure in Whistler	-.477	-.225	-.128	-.301
Tenure in Organization	.244**	.108	.137	.187*
Organization Size	.084	.115	-.062	.019
R^2	.161***	.121***	.124***	.165***
Model 2				
Transformational leadership	.489***	.461***	.618***	.619***
R^2	.353***	.290***	.433***	.458***

	Customer Orientation	Social Responsibility	Staff Satisfaction	Organizational Stakeholder Performance
Model 3				
Transactional leadership	.176	.385***	.267***	.310***
R^2	.186**	.258***	.188***	.260***
Model 4				
Transformational leadership	.499***	.347***	.604***	.581***
Transactional leadership	-.020	.248***	.029	.081
R^2	.349***	.335***	.430***	.463***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < .001$. Covariate results for models 2 to 4 not shown.

We expected transformational leadership to more positively associate with all 3 stakeholder dimensions and organizational stakeholder performance. Transformational leadership was positively related to customer orientation, social responsibility, staff satisfaction, and organizational stakeholder performance (model 2, p<.001). Whereas transactional was positively related to social responsibility, staff satisfaction, and organizational stakeholder performance (model 3, p<.001), there was a nonsignificant relationship with customer orientation. In Model 4, which included both leadership variables, transformational remained significantly and positively related to all four stakeholder dependent variables (p<.001) while transactional remained only significantly related to social responsibility (p<.001). Further, transformational leadership displayed stronger relationships with all dependent variables as all beta coefficients were greater and all R^2 changes were greater.

5 Conclusions, Implications, and Discussion

We provide compelling evidence that resort town-based organizations aiming to strategically align towards stakeholders both inside and outside the organization would benefit most from the use of a transformational leadership style focusing on intellectual stimulation and charisma.

However, we do not suggest complete dismissal of transactional leadership as an approach to influencing stakeholder perspective results. We found an intriguing and unexpected relationship between transactional leadership and the stakeholder dimension of 'social responsibility'. Our expectation was that transactional leadership would have the least impact on social responsibility, but we found otherwise. One author noted that, since the literature varies considerably on both definition and measurement of the concept (Parmar et al, 2010), we have cause for concern over this variable's veracity. The other author acknowledges this, but argues that this particular result for transactional leadership may be due to a weaker-felt context of 'society' relative to 'customer' or 'staff.' This argument centers around the notion that transformational leadership appeals to the positive effects of social identity on job performance (Herman & Chiu, 2014). The author making this argument held that identity with coworkers and customers is far more available for managers to foster in their organizations than solidarity or identity with more distant stakeholders would tend to be. Hence, transformational leadership effects may tend to be weaker than expected drivers of social responsibility in the presence of rewards and incentives for measurable behaviors held to be consistent with social responsibility. Through their shared reflection, the authors came to agreement that the social responsibility construct measured by Ding and Ma (2014) chiefly measures 'checkbook CSR' and 'adherence', to which a transactional approach would be highly relevant. If organizations simply want to 'account' for 'social responsibility', transactional qualities may be suitable yet inferior for driving deeper commitment. However, if organizations wish to inspire and create a culture of socially responsible employees and business practices, transformational leadership qualities

remain superior. To examine this further, we subsequently recommend the effect of leadership style on multiple measures of CSR be examined in future research.

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