



Transformational Leadership Influence on Innovation Directly and Indirectly through Affective Commitment in Hotel Industry of Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

In order to be innovative in hospitality industry the role of leadership style on employees is very crucial. Leaders are in direct contact with employees and their encouragement and support can trigger the employees to be innovative in delivering the service. In hospitality industry the front-line employees need utmost attention as this industry totally depends on the service of employees especially front-line employees who set the first impression of the hotels. Leadership styles have significant impact on employees' innovation. The study aim was to examine the impact transformational leadership (TL) on innovation in hotel industry of Malaysia. This study filled the gap by examining the transformational leadership style impact on innovation in front line employees. Total 480 questionnaires were distributed among the employees of 5stars hotels which were located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. To examine the hypotheses, this study applied the SEM (AMOS). Findings revealed that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on employees' innovation. Interesting finding came in mediation analysis, in which affective commitment mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation. Findings of this study are beneficial for management of hotels to understand the role of transformational leadership style, affective commitment on employees in order to be innovative in delivering services. This study provided the in depth analysis for top management to better handle and incite the innovation in employees as the leaders are directly responsible to lead employees in innovative way to be innovative.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Innovation, Affective Commitment, SEM

JEL Classifications: H12, A12

1. INTRODUCTION

Now a day. When situation and environment keeps on changing so instantly that organization needs to be proactive than ever before. Similarly, since human are the prime source to be successful and survival of any organization is highly dependent on the innovation in service and product (Dutton et al., 1997; Abbasi and Hollman, 2000). Innovation not only helps in capturing the new markets but also helps in retaining the top position of an organization to be ahead of competitors (Lok and Crawford, 2003). Particularly, the service sector the role of the leaders is remained undeniable and

has major influence on the organizations (Bass et al., 2003; Sultana, 2012). Leaders direct the organization as well as the employees towards better productivity. The concept of leadership and the different styles of leadership is not limited to the operational effects (Wilson-Evered et al., 2001) but also play major role in developing intellectual abilities of employees which ultimately results in better performance and innovation (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Abbas and Riaz, 2012; Jung et al., 2003). Researchers have established link between them (Amar, 1998; Mumford and Licuanan, 2004; Jung and Avolio, 2000; Eisenbeiss et al., 2008; Felfe and Goihl, 2002; Reuvers et al., 2008; Nassani et al., 2020;

Nosheen et al., 2020; Abbas and Riaz, 2012). They further argued that it's the leaders who direct and guide the employees in a way which pave the way for innovation. In the similar way, leadership incite the belief and motivate towards expectation to move forward towards the vision and mission of the organization which is called as an inspirational motivation while the routine work is being challenged by the leaders to stimulate the intellect which is called as intellectual stimulation. In hotel industry of Malaysia, the role of leaders, especially the transformational leadership is very crucial in delivery the quality services by innovation.

Hotel industry is the one of big contributor in Malaysian economy (Shah and Beh, 2016; Beh and Shah, 2017). Transformational leadership has major influence on employee innovation in hotel industry (Wang et al., 2014; Tracey and Hinkin, 1996; Tracey and Hinkin, 1994). Organizational commitment is the binding force which ensure the smooth running of affairs of the organization. Organizational commitment has three types but according to various researchers, the most important and crucial is the affective commitment (Gardner et al., 2011; Beh and Shah, 2017). Affective commitment can be boost up by the leadership, particularly the transformational leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Herold et al., 2008; Kent and Chelladurai, 2001; Bushra et al., 2011; Shah et al., 2016). The gap is found in the literature to investigate the mediating effect of affective commitment between the TL and innovation. To the best researcher's knowledge, In Malaysia, the transformational leadership with respect to innovation has never been explored adequately and particularly the hotel industry of Malaysia. This led to the basis of this study to investigate such variables in the hotel industry and to provide new information to the management and top management to better incite the employees and equip them to be more innovative in their work and duties.

This study is important for practitioners as well that how transformational leader's role are critical to evaluate and boost up the employees in the organization. Moreover, this study provides the empirical evidence related to leadership and results to the academia and support the argument of how to be more innovative while having appropriate leadership style particularly the transformational leadership.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Leadership finds its roots in various field like humanities, history, philosophies, sociology and psychology. Every discipline defined the leadership according to their own understanding but there is no universal definition exists (Northouse, 2006). Leadership role is crucial in today's dynamic environment (Northouse, 2006; Bass et al., 2003). The five components of the transformational leadership are the: Bass and Avolio (1994) came up the proposal in which they referred to different separate behavior groups which are the five components of transformational leadership. Leadership behavior attract and develop confidence, trust which is an idealized influence. While the individual consideration is taken as the individual as separate entity with its own uniqueness, need, quality and taking them to new level by the leadership. In the similar way,

leadership incite the belief and motivate towards expectation to move forward towards the vision and mission of the organization which is called as an inspirational motivation while the routine work is being challenged by the leaders to stimulate the intellect which is called as intellectual stimulation. Leadership has a tendency to invoke innovation in services delivering by employees.'

Transformational leaders apply the inspire motivation and intellectual stimulation in organization which are requisites for innovation (Northouse, 2006; Elkins and Keller, 2003; Tierney et al., 1999) (Elkins and Keller, 2003; Mumford et al., 2002). Same is advocated by Sosik et al. (1998) that TL appreciate new ideas which also enhance the forces of creativity in employees, the individual stimulation and consideration which provide basis for generation of new ideas. Further, transformational leaders reduce turnover intentions (Shah et al., 2017). The transformational leaders incite the self-esteem and motivation in employees (Chandler and Chandler, 2013) which as a result enhance the innovation process in organization Studies advocated and proved relation between the transformational leaders and its impact on innovation (Waldman and Atwater, 1994; Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Keller, 1992; Jung et al., 2003; Shamir et al., 1993; De Jong et al., 2003).

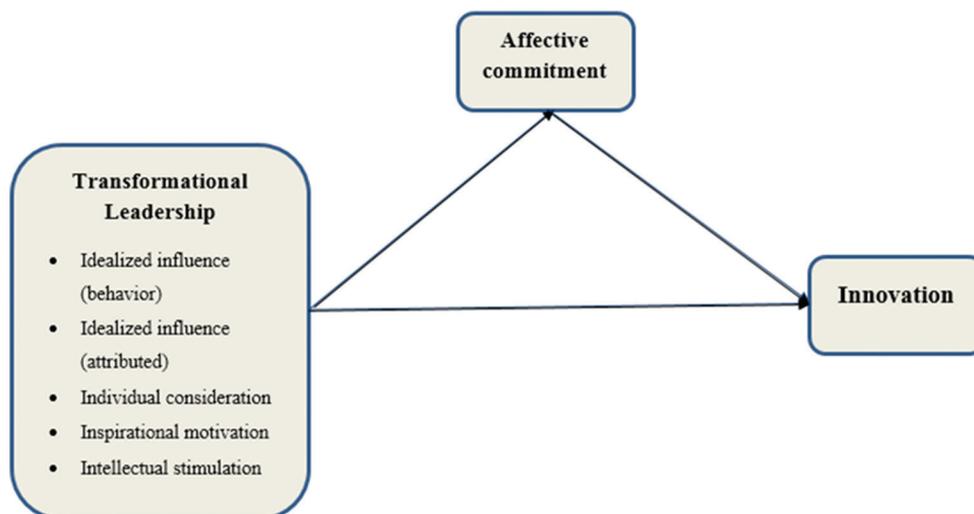
2.2. Innovation

Innovation is key for success in today's world, the term innovation refers to the creative ideas. The innovation defined as the operationalizing the creative ideas in appropriate manner is called innovation (Scott and Bruce, 1994; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile, 1983; Scott and Bruce, 1994; De Jong, 2006). Similarly, another study conducted by Woodman et al. (1993) defined the innovation as the adding new value to the product or services. Further the Damanpour's (1992) defined it as the meeting the requirement of market in an innovative way in product or services. Study by Jung et al., (2003) investigated the relationship of transformational leaders on innovation and they found significant relationship. Transformational leadership which is organizational support in terms of motivation, intellectual stimulation influences the creative environment which results in creativity (Scott and Bruce, 1994). Same is evident by another study which portrays that organizational climate trigger the innovativeness in the organization by providing the transformational leadership attributes (Abbey and Dickson, 1983). On the contrary, another study conducted in China, found no relationship between transformational leaders and innovation (Wei and Morgan, 2004). Studies connect transformative leadership to organizational success (Bass, 1985; Howell and Avolio, 1990). Similarly, another study also advocated the association between TL and innovation (Damanpour, 1992; Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Yukl, 2006).

2.3. Affective Commitment

Organizational commitment remained a corner stone and most of the researcher paid attention to this concept because of its importance. This concept represents that how employee attach and identifies him/herself with organization and wish to stay in the organization (Robbins and Judge, 2012). The three popular dimensions of (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Study conducted by the Liou (2008) in USA explained and argued that organizational commitment must be investigated and considered with due

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



attention as its role is major role in enhancing the performance as well as the retention of employees’. Becker (1960) is considered as the founder of organizational commitment concept. The three dimensions of commitment are cost associated with leaving is a continuance, while obligation not to leave organization refers to normative and emotional related to the affective commitment domain. Affective commitment is emotional attachment and psychological bond with organization (Allen and Meyer, 2000; Robbins and Judge, 2012; Liou, 2008; Meyer et al., 2002).

2.4. Relationship between Transformational Leadership, Innovation and Affective Commitment

TL has significant impact in bringing innovation in the organization (Woodman et al., 1993; Cummings and O’Connell, 1978). Various studies identified the relationship and established the link between them (Shin and Zhou, 2003; Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Cummings and O’Connell, 1978; Tierney et al., 1999). Another study conducted by the Amabile et al., (2004) found the positive association between TL and innovation. Same is evident by another study advocated that transformational leadership as organizational supportive climate provide basis for the innovation. Moreover, TL as compensation, motivational polices had significant impact on creativity and innovation (Scott and Bruce, 1994; Jung et al., 2003). Another study portrays that transformational leadership provides the emotional needs to employee which results in the better performance and innovation (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990). In line with them, various studies conducted to investigate the relationship of transformational leadership and affective commitment (Orabi, 2016). Another study by the Gillet and Vandenberghe, (2014) investigated the role of TL on affective commitment and mediating role of job characteristics. In this study they found the significant impact of TL on affective commitment. Furthermore, Avolio et al., (2004), found out the influence of TL on organizational commitment. They also found a significant impact. Another study by Verma and Krishnan (2013) argued that TL play an important role in enhancing the OC. Similarly, the study carried out by Michaelis et al. (2009) mentioned that affective commitment provides the environment to be for innovative. They further argued that it is the affective commitment which binds the employees to the organization and which ultimately results in better innovation.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Number	SD
HR Practices	3.79	5	1	390	0.931
OCB	3.71	5	1	390	0.923
Turnover Intentions	3.85	5	1	390	0.720

Table 2: Construct validity

Construct	Number of dimension	Factor loading	AVE	CR	CB alpha
Transformational leadership	TL 1	0.71	0.572	0.82	0.83
	TL 3	0.63			
	TL 5	0.56			
	TL 8	0.81			
	TL 11	0.65			
	TL 12	0.74			
	TL 14	0.71			
	TL 17	0.82			
	TL 19	0.76			
	TL 20	0.58			
Affective Commitment	AC 1	0.83	0.556	0.862	0.72
	AC 2	0.78			
	AC 4	0.74			
	AC 5	0.64			
	AC 6	0.63			
	AC 7	0.79			
	Innovation	INN 1			
INN 3		0.63			
INN 4		0.71			
INN 5		0.79			

Table 3: Squared multiple correlation and average variance extracted

Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	AC	TL	INN
AC	0.862	0.556	0.366	0.267	0.563		
TL	0.821	0.572	0.016	0.023	0.089	0.089	
IIN	0.810	0.503	0.369	0.283	0.592	0.621	0.129

The following hypotheses were developed.

Table 4: Direct hypotheses of structural model (TL & INN)

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E	Standardized estimates	C.R	P-value	Decision
H1	TL→INN	0.660	0.20	0.621	3.318	0.05	Accepted H1

Table 5: Goodness of fit of direct relation

Variables	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2/df
TL→INN	0.943	0.958	0.053	5.485

Table 6: Mediation analysis (Indirect effect) of structural model

No	Hypothesis	Direct without mediator	Sig	Direct with mediator	Sig	Indirect effect	P-value (bootstrap)	Mediation	Decision
H2	TL→AC→INN	0.621	3.318 (0.05)	0.582	3.128 (0.001)	0.75	0.04	Partial Mediation	Accepted H2

Table 7: Goodness of fit, through AC

Variables	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2/df
TL→AC→INN	0.910	0.930	0.043	4.661

H₁: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and innovation

H₂: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation

Conceptual Framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

This study is conducted on front-line employees working in 5star hotels located in the Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Only those five-star hotels were taken which were registered with Malaysia Association of the Hotels, (MAH, 2017). 480 questionnaires were distributed and 410 were returned.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire consisted of twenty items to measure the transformational leadership consists of five attributes adopted from Bass and Avolio (1995) and Bass and Avolio, (2004). Seven items related to affective commitment from Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) and five items related to innovation were adopted from Zahra (1996). Moreover five-point likert scale were used.

4. DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research employed SEM (AMOS) to check hypothesis. Different parameters were used for the constructs reliability and validity. Which were following: factor loading, cronbach's alpha, construct reliability and average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity and convergent validity was established. Values are given in Tables 1-3.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were carried out. CFA revealed inappropriate of the model, for proper level of goodness, the researcher deleted the items of transformational leadership,

affective commitment and innovations which factor loadings were low. Goodness of fit model was [GFI = 0.932; CFI = 0.943; RMSEA = 0.065; χ^2/df = 3.633] (Tables 4-7).

H₁ is accepted. The results are similar to like Sosik et al. (1998) found a positive relationship between TL and innovation. Similarly, another study conducted by the Elkins and Keller, (2003) also established a link between TL and innovation, they also found positive association between them. Moreover, Waldman and Atwater (1994) narrated that their study also found the positive association between TL and innovation. Same is evident by another study conducted by Amabile et al. (1996) which proved the positive relationship between them. Other various studies advocated the same results (Howell and Avolio, 1990; Bass, 1985; Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Yukl, 2006; Damanpour, 1992).

In order to achieve the second objective, the mediation effect was investigated by the procedure described by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Initially only the transformational leadership and innovation was investigated and while in second phase the mediating variable which is affective commitment was included. The direct effects and indirect effects were calculated. To investigate the significance of indirect effect the bootstrapping was applied. Furthermore, the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach was applied to gauge the mediation. The indirect effect was (0.75) and the significance was (0.04). While the mediation was (partial mediation) according to Baron and Kenny (1986). Results are similar like Michaelis et al. (2009), this study mentioned that commitment had significant impact on innovation. Similarly, another study conducted by the Verma and Krishnan (2013) advocated that TL lead to build the organizational commitment in employees and the relationship was significant. Moreover, study carried out by Gillet and Vandenberghe (2014) found a positive and significant impact of TL on commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

Results of this study portrays the positive relationship of TL on innovation and affective commitment mediates the relationship between TL and innovation. In hotel industry in which the success and survival of hotels are highly dependent on its employees. The leaders pave way for innovation by providing the direction and basis for employees and organization. The requisites for innovation

can be laid by the transformational leaders in organization, such attributes trigger the abilities in a way it results in better performance, innovation. In such industry the TL is immensely important to bring innovation in the services. This study proved the positive association between them. The more the transformational leaders play its part, the more the innovation will be in the services. Similarly, affective commitment, which is emotional bond of employees with the organization is crucial for survival of any organization. Affective commitment binds the employee to the organization and through transformational leadership it can be further enhanced which ultimately results in the innovation, better performance and retentions of employees. As Findings of this study proved that affective commitment has significant indirect effect on innovation. Affective commitment can be boost up through transformational leadership. Various studies proved the affective commitment has positive effect on innovation and similarly the transformational leadership had positive impact on innovation.

This study filled the gap by investigating the mediating role of affective commitment between transformational leadership and innovation. The findings proved partial mediation and significant impact on innovation through transformational leadership. Findings are important for the top management of hotel industry to incorporate transformational leadership attributes which are based on five components along with affective commitment. Affective commitment which truly bind the employees' with organizations and found to be contributing in work enhancement, better performance, retentions and this study found to be more innovative. To be innovative at workplace the workforce needs to be equipped with and build up the affective commitment which translates the organizational goals and objectives in an innovative way.

As this study concludes that affective commitment played an important role, this calls for top management to incorporate the affective commitment with proper zeal and fervor. In order to be innovative the role of top management is crucial as well as technical. Top management needs to bring the proper leadership style in an organization. In such leadership style the prime one is transformational leadership. Now this opens up the new avenue for top management that they ought to build such practices which strengthen the affective commitment and results in better workplace by being more innovative at work. This study provided the empirical evidences from Malaysia, such facts and figures can be used to map up for better performance with unique way which is called as innovation. Top management needs to introduce the practices which develop the affective commitment, this will in turn the effect the innovation and better productivity of the organization.

Some limitation are as: first this study focused the front line employees only. Future studies can target the other level of employee especial the supervisor level or middle line managers. Second limitation is that this study targeted the 5star hotel only. Future studies can target the others star level like 4star, 3star. Third, study targeted on hotels in the KL city of Malaysia. This is cross sectional and in future longitudinal studies can be conducted to investigate the said variables. Future studies can

conduct study in other cities of Malaysia. Future studies can apply the same conceptual frame work in other service sectors like hospitals education. Future studies can also extend the current study framework by incorporating other variables to investigate their impact on innovation. Impact of Individual dimensions of transformational leadership can also be investigated by future studies with innovation and affective commitment, such studies will bring new insights for top management and practitioners.

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