Transformational Leadership of Superiors and Creativity Level among Faculty Members in Jordanian Universities

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Abstract

This study investigated the transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) in one public higher education institution in Jordan and the level of faculty members' creativity. It also examined the relationship between transformational leadership behavior of superiors and the level of creativity of faculty members. A random sample of 200 faculty members was employed in the study. The results of the study indicated a moderate transformational leadership behavior among superiors and moderate level of creativity among faculty members. The study also revealed a very strong and positive correlation between transformational leadership behavior and creativity, indicating that the higher the transformational leadership behavior of superiors the higher the creativity level of faculty members. The implications of the findings and possible directions for future research were discussed.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Creativity, higher education Institution, Jordan.

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

There is a general agreement among researchers and practitioners that creativity is critical for organizations’ ability to gain competitive advantage and to remain successful in a turbulent and ever-changing work environment (Boekarts et al., 2000). Creativity is valued by organizations because it maximizes human potential and impacts employee job performance (Gilson, 2008). Creativity is defined as the generation of new and useful ideas concerning products, services, processes, and procedures in organizations (Britannic Encyclopedia, 2003).

The importance of creativity to the entire human society and to each individual has encouraged organizations to try to preserve and promote the most important feature of human mind represented by its creativity (Gardner, 1991). Based on that, an increasing interest in understanding the key factors that promote employee creativity in organizations has emerged (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Zhou, 1998). Researchers believe that employee creativity will prosper when transformational
leadership is practiced by superiors in organizations (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Shin & Zhou, 2003). Transformational leadership is concerned with the process of how certain leaders are able to inspire followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them; empower employees to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organization; and create an atmosphere where followers are compelled to be more productive (Bass, 1995; Dubrin, 2001; Northhouse, 2004).

Transformational leaders are able to influence followers’ creativity by encouraging them to think critically by seeking new approaches to solving problems and recognizing and appreciating the different needs of each follower to maximize their potential (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Avolio, 1999; Bono & Judge, 2003; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Bass (1998) described transformational leadership as having four main components: idealized influence (leaders serve as role models); inspirational motivation (leaders can inspire followers to work as a team to meet the goals of the organization and provide meaning and challenge to employees’ work); intellectual stimulation (leaders stimulate followers to be creative, innovative, and to challenge their own values as well as those of the leader and the organization to break away from old ways of thinking); and individualized influence (leaders provide supportive working environment and attention is given to each employee's needs).

Transformational leaders can set the expectation for creativity and serve as creative role models for their followers; enhance followers’ ability to develop new ideas; show empathy and support for followers, which may lead to higher creativity (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Shin & Zhou, 2003). Therefore, transformational leaders are speculated to enhance and is positively related to followers’ creativity (Shin & Zhou, 2003).

Several studies, particularly in a foreign context have been discussed the relationship between transformational leadership and creativity and innovation. Some of the studies were focused on the determinants of creativity at the individual level, such as attitudes (Basadur et al., 2000), personality (Feist, 1999), problem solving (Scott & Bruce, 1994), and the like. A number of present researches have confirmed a positive relationship between transformational leadership and creativity (Sosik et al., 1998, 1999; Jung, 2000-2001; Kahai et al., 2003; Jung et al., 2003; Politis, 2004; Chen et al., 2007; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Gong et al., 2009).

**Statement of the Problem**

Creativity has been the focus of ongoing research for decades due to its importance in impacting employee performance and organizational survival. Despite the widespread acknowledgment of the importance and value of creativity, there has been limited number of studies aimed at understanding of how transformational leadership is related to individual employees’ creativity (Zhou & Oldham, 2001). To be more specific and to the researcher best knowledge, no research studies in Jordan addressed the relationship between transformational leadership and creativity. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between transformational leadership behavior
of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) in one public higher education institution in Jordan and the level of creativity of faculty members.

**Research Objectives**

To accomplish the primary purpose of this study, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. To determine the transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) in one public higher education institution in Jordan and the level of faculty members’ creativity.
2. To determine the relationship between transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) and their faculty members level of creativity.

**Methodology**

**Population and Sample**

The target population for this study was all faculty members employed by a public higher education institution located in the middle part of Jordan with a total number of (500) according to the institution records. A random sample of (200) faculty members was used in the study. The sample distribution was 139 (69.5%) males and 61 (30.5%) females. There were 76 (38%) assistant professors, 85 associate professors (42.5%), and 39 professors (19.5%). Of the sample, 37 (18.5%) had less than 5 years of experience, 117 (58.5%) had experience between 5-15 years, and 46 (23%) had more than 15 years of experience.

**Instrumentation**

A three-part instrument was used to collect data in this study. The first part included the Transformational Leadership Scale (TLS) designed by Bass & Avolio (1990) to measure individual perceptions of the transformational leadership behavior of superiors. The Transformational Leadership Scale is comprised of four components represented by 12 items as follow: idealized influence (3 items), inspirational motivation (3 items), intellectual stimulation (3 items), and individualized consideration (3 items). These 12 items are rated on a five-point Likert type-scale ranged as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The overall alpha reliability for the scale ranged from 0.81 to 0.94 (Bass, 1985, 1998; Avolio et al., 1999; Bono & Judge, 2003). The second part contained the creativity scale which was developed by the researcher after extensive review of the literature and included 8 items to measure creativity on a five-point scale ranging from 1, “not at all typical of me” to “very typical of me,”. Sample items are “I come with new ideas to improve the research productivity of faculty members in my university”; “I develop projects aimed at improving the performance of my department”; and “I come up with creative solutions to problems
faced by my university”. The third part of the instrument included a section on demographics of respondents. The TLS was translated from Arabic to English by three proficient scholars who are fluent in both languages. A pilot study of 30 faculty members responded to both instruments and alpha coefficients for the TLS ranged from 0.85 to 0.91. The alpha coefficient for the creativity scale was 0.93. These figures indicate that both instruments are suitable to measure constructs under study.

Data Collection

Data were collected during the first semester of the academic years of 2009/2010. The researcher met with faculty members under study and explained to them the nature and purpose of the study. The researcher assured participants complete secrecy, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of the study. The instruments took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Data were collected from participants within one-month time frame. Finally, the data collected from all participants were coded, entered to the SPSS spreadsheets, and analyzed using software package SPSS version 13.

Results

The results of the study are presented by objective.

Results Pertain to Objective One

The first research objective was to determine the transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) in one public higher education institution in Jordan and the level of faculty members’ creativity. This objective was answered with descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations. As shown in Table 1, the mean value for the transformational leadership total score was 3.38 (SD = 0.75). Four categories comprised the scales that measured transformational leadership. The mean value for idealized influence was 3.35 (SD = 0.88); the mean value for inspirational motivation was 3.48 (SD = 0.86); the mean value for intellectual stimulation was 3.45 (SD = 0.88); and the mean value for individualized consideration was 3.25 (SD = 0.88). These results indicate a moderate transformational leadership behavior among superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans). Further, the mean value of creativity of faculty members was 3.31 (SD = 0.77) indicating a moderate level of creativity among faculty members.

| Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of the Four Dimensions of Transformational Leadership and Creativity |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimension** | **Means** | **Standard Deviations** |
| Transformational Leadership Total Score | 3.38 | 0.75 |
| Idealized Influence | 3.35 | 0.88 |
| Inspirational Motivation | 3.48 | 0.86 |
| Intellectual Stimulation | 3.45 | 0.88 |
| Individualized Consideration | 3.25 | 0.88 |
| Creativity Total Score | 3.31 | 0.77 |
Results Pertain to Objective Two

The second research objective was to determine the relationship between transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) and their faculty members’ level of creativity. This objective was accomplished using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient (r). The interpretation of the correlation coefficients was based on the following set of descriptors: 0.70 or higher—very strong relationship; 0.50 to 0.69—substantial relationship; 0.30 to 0.49—moderate relationship; 0.10 to 0.29—low relationship; and 0.09 or lower—negligible relationship (Davis, 1971). As indicated in Table 2, the results of the correlation analyses between the total transformational leadership score and total creativity score (r = 0.75, p = 0.000) was statistically significant. Using Davis’ descriptors (1971), this correlation would be classified as very strong and positive relationship, indicating that the higher the transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans) the higher the creativity level of faculty members. When the categories of transformational leadership were correlated with creativity, the category which was most highly related was individualized consideration (r = 0.71, p = 0.000), followed by intellectual stimulation (r = 0.68, p = 0.000), inspirational motivation (r = 0.61, p = 0.000), and idealized influence (r = 0.57, p = 0.000). All of these correlations were statistically significant. According to Davis (1971), these correlations would be classified as substantial positive relationships.

*Table 2* Pearson Correlation Analysis between Transformational Leadership Behavior and Creativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational Leadership Total Score</th>
<th>Creativity Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sig. Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
<td>(0.75**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sig. Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>(0.61**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sig. Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>(0.68**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sig. Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>(0.71**)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

**Discussion**

The current study was motivated by two goals. First, to determine the transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans and deans) in one public higher education institution in Jordan and the level of faculty members’ creativity. A second goal is to empirically test the relationship between transformational leadership behavior of superiors (department chairs, vice deans and deans) and their faculty
members' level of creativity. This study is the first, in Jordan if not in Arab World to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on creativity in one of the public higher education institutions.

Several studies have examined the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation. The majority of the past empirical literature exhibit associations between transformational leadership and creativity. For instance, Sosik et al., (1998) claimed that transformational leaders encourage creative ideas that promote innovation within the organizations. A study by Jung et al., (2003) revealed positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and firm's innovation. Gumusluougлу and Ilsev (2009) also found transformational leadership to positively and significantly affect organization's tendency to innovate.

At the individual level, transformational leadership positively correlated to followers' creativity. Transformational leadership behaviors are thought to affect employees by motivating them (Shamir et al., 1993). Very few findings of previous studies were inconsistent and future research in real world is needed in this matter. For instance, Jaussi and Dionne (2003) found that transformational leadership had no effect on individual creativity. The results of this research indicates a moderate transformational leadership behavior among superiors (department chairs, vice deans, and deans). Further, the mean value of creativity of faculty members indicated a moderate level of creativity among faculty members. This research also found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and followers' individual creativity. The results of the current study are consistent with those of Shin & Zhou (2003), and Gong et al., (2009). Further, Jung (2006) found transformational leadership promoting innovative abilities of the employees.

As mentioned earlier, the results demonstrate positive relationships between transformational leadership and creativity. This means that the facets of transformational leadership, that is, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration affect the creativity level of faculty members. In short, the findings of the present study indicate that transformational leader play an important role in enhancing creativity of individuals.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The Sample of the study has limited this research. Generalization of the findings to other higher education institutions in Jordan and Arab World might be limited since the data were collected from one specific public higher education institution.

Obviously, the interaction of leadership styles and followers' creativity requires further studying. Moreover, further investigation of the higher education institutions environment is necessary. Finally, further empirical studies must be replicated using, for instance, larger samples, different factors, and different contexts. If such replications are successful, the benefits of transformational leadership would be extended.
References


