



Dimensions of transformational leadership: Conceptual and empirical extensions

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Abstract

This study identified aspects of transformational leadership theory that have resulted in a lack of empirical support for the hypothesized factor structure of the model, and very strong relationships among the leadership components. We proposed five more focused subdimensions of transformational leadership including vision, inspirational communication, intellectual stimulation, supportive leadership, and personal recognition. Confirmatory factor analyses provided support for the hypothesized factor structure of the measures selected to assess these subdimensions, and also provided support for the discriminant validity of the subdimensions with each other. After controlling for the effects of common method variance, a number of the subdimensions of transformational leadership demonstrated significant unique relationships with a range of outcomes. Results provided initial support for the five subdimensions of transformational leadership that were identified.

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1. Introduction

Bass' (1985) model of transformational leadership has been embraced by scholars and practitioners alike as one way in which organizations can encourage employees to perform beyond expectations. Despite the degree of interest in transformational leadership, a number of theoretical issues have been identified with this model. Most importantly, there is ambiguity concerning the differentiation of the subdimensions of transformational leadership (Bryman, 1992; Yukl, 1999a). Empirically, this issue has been reflected in a lack of support for the hypothesized factor structure of the transformational model and for the discriminant validity of the components of the model with each other (e.g., Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Carless, 1998).

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As a result of mixed empirical support for the transformational model, authors such as Carless (1998) and Tepper and Percy (1994) have argued that the higher-order factors of transformational leadership and transactional leadership should be examined rather than the individual components of the model. To address these issues, we identify a set of more focused and theoretically distinct subdimensions of transformational leadership. The empirical properties of measures selected to assess these subdimensions are examined, and a nomological network, relating the leadership factors with theoretically selected outcomes, is developed and tested.

1.1. Transformational leadership theory

Burns (1978) was the first author to contrast “transforming” and transactional leadership. Transactional leadership involves an exchange relationship between leaders and followers such that followers receive wages or prestige for complying with a leader’s wishes. Transactional leadership encompasses contingent reward and management-by-exception.

In contrast, transformational leaders motivate followers to achieve performance beyond expectations by transforming followers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values as opposed to simply gaining compliance (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1999a, 1999b). Bass identified a number of subdimensions of transformational leadership including charisma (which was later renamed idealized influence), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Despite the popularity of transformational leadership theory, concerns have been raised about the way in which the subdimensions of the model have been defined. In particular, theoretical distinctions between charisma and inspirational motivation have become blurred over time (Barbuto, 1997). The diversity of behaviors encompassed by individualized consideration and contingent reward has also been identified as problematic (Yukl, 1999a, 1999b). An even more critical problem has been identified with contingent reward. Authors have argued that ways of operationalizing this construct assess both transactional *and* transformational processes (Goodwin, Wofford, & Whittington, 2001).

The above issues have meant that empirical research has provided mixed support for the differentiation of the components of the transformational model. Below, we review empirical evidence concerning the factor structure of the most commonly used measure of transformational leadership, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

1.2. Empirical support for the transformational leadership model

Research has not provided convincing evidence in support of the transformational leadership model (Bycio et al., 1995; Tepper & Percy, 1994). Conflicting evidence has been reported concerning the factor structure of the model, and very strong relationships have been reported among the leadership factors (Avolio et al., 1999; Carless, 1998; Tejada, Scandura, & Pillai, 2001).

Using the MLQ-1, Bycio et al. (1995) found that a five-factor model including charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, and management-by-exception, was a good fit to the data. However, a two-factor model representing an active and passive leadership factor was also a good fit to the data. Latent factor correlations revealed that the transformational leadership scales were highly intercorrelated (r s ranged from .83 to .91), and the contingent reward scale was strongly associated with the transformational scales (r s ranged from .79 to .83). The average latent factor

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