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The Perception of Transformational Leadership and Demographic Characteristics: An Empirical Study of Indian Situation

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Abstract

The literature on leadership has stressed conducting empirical studies that investigate the impacts of gender, education, and experience on the different leadership styles. This study contributes to the study of transformational leadership and its perception in demographic characteristics- gender, education, and experience in Indian settings. The data is collected through an instrument called- the Indian Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (ITLQ), a modified version of MLQ. Both instruments are based on the same construct. The findings of the independent sample t-Test and ANOVA revealed that gender and experiences have a significant influence on transformational leadership. However, no significant difference was found among different age groups and transformational leadership. The study concludes that gender and experience are associated with transformational leadership but not with the ages of the participants.

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Introduction

In the modern global world, today leadership is one of the very enthralling and eyes catching topics. As we know that leadership is one of the most important aspects of human behavior. It gives a positive direction to use and develop human resources and brings out the best transformational changes in the workforce and organizations.

Demand for effective managers is constantly growing in modern times due to the changing nature of business, technology, society, and organizational structure (Ince, 2023 ^[19]; Kotter, 2007) ^[21]. The dynamism of business has exerted great pressure on strategic management and business enterprises to deal with such issues (Quatro, et al., 2007 ^[27]; Kotter, 2007) ^[21]. This paradigm shift has created a crucial need to develop leaders, who by virtue of mission, vision, and ability can meet the challenges of organizations operating in complex and competitive environments (Budhawar & Verma, 2011 ^[11]; Bass, 1990 ^[6]; Sinha, 1985).

The significance of leaders can be understood by the fact that business organizations are spending billions of dollars on the training and development of executives and managers to advance critical managerial skills (Kotter, 2007) ^[21]. Additionally, leaders are innovative in technological

advancement to keep pace with changes taking place around them (Burns, 2004). However, the Indian situation is incredibly complex and different from other nations due to its cultural diversity, multiple religions, and languages (Budhawar, & Verma, 2011 ^[11]; Northouse; 2007; Jung, Sosik, & Bass, 1995 ^[20]; Ansari & Kapoor, 1987) ^[1]. Moreover, Indian organizations are caught in the middle of a web of authoritarian hierarchies and traditional leadership approaches, as well as bureaucratic hierarchies mixed with modern approaches to leadership (Sinha, 1985; Subramanian, 2007) ^[31].

There has been little research on leadership styles in developing economies (Panda & Gupta, 2007 ^[24]; Singh & Krishnan, 2007) ^[29]. The lack of leadership research in developing countries has left a shocking impression on the management of scarce resources in undeveloped economies. Thus, it must be addressed to determine, if the leadership theories developed abroad are applicable in developing countries in which economic as well as cultural conditions are different from developed countries (Panda & Gupta, 2007 ^[24]; Thomas, et al., 2011).

The results of this research will contribute to the body of knowledge in respect of leadership style and its practices in

Indian scenarios. Thus, such theories must be tested empirically in developing economies, especially India, and extend their applicability to different economic and cultural environments which exist in India.

Researchers have investigated the relationship between leadership styles and many demographic characteristics and factors for their study. The demographic characteristics included in these studies are predominantly gender, age, education, experiences, management levels, race, ethnicity, culture, etc. These factors are important from the point of view of organizations for leading, motivating, and taking strategic decisions with respect to diversified and sustainable organizations.

Literature Review

According to Burns (1978) ^[10], transformational leaders raise questions, probing all levels of information, testing their own and followers' perceptions, checking, rechecking the facts, and talking to their constituents. They are ready and want to know what is working and what is not. They are alert and in search of opportunities that offer them the knowledge and wisdom of facts. They learn from failures and mistakes that are made in the organizations and are kept in mind as future learnings and reaffirmed by Bass.

Components of Transformational Leadership

According to Bass the following are the main components of Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985 ^[20]; Antonakis, 2011).

Charisma-Idealized Influence Attributed and Idealized Influence Behavioral Bass defined it as "the emotional component of leadership, which is used to describe leaders who by the power of their person have profound and extraordinary effects on their followers." Idealized Influence attributes and behavior are also called charisma because it creates an intense emotional attachment between followers and leaders

Inspirational Motivation is the component of transformational leadership that inspires and motivates followers to reach ambitious goals that may have previously seemed unreachable. Under this component, the leader raises followers' expectations and inspires action by communicating confidence that they can achieve these ambitious goals. The leader inspires the followers to reach the essential level of performance beyond normal expectations, and a self-fulfilling prophecy occurs (Bass).

Intellectual Stimulation is mostly a rational and non-emotional component of transformational leadership, distinct from the other transformational components. Through this component, the leader appeals to followers' minds by creating "problem awareness and problem-solving thought and imagination, and of beliefs and values. As a result of intellectual stimulation, followers' conceptualization, comprehension of the nature of the problems they face, and their solutions" are radically altered. It involves challenging follower assumptions, generalizations and stimulating followers to seek ways of improving current performance.

Individualized Consideration refers to acts of a leader providing socio-emotional support to followers and is concerned with developing followers to their highest level of potential and empowering them. The leader in this gives individualized attention and a developmental or mentoring orientation toward followers. This outcome is achieved by coaching and counseling followers, maintaining frequent contact with them, and helping them to self-actualize.

To measure the effects of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership behaviors, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire is used most frequently and this instrument contains 45 statements related to transformational leadership behaviors. A modified version of MLQ was developed by Singh and Krishnan and named this instrument "Indian Transformational Leadership Questionnaires" ITLQ for testing the leadership theory in the Indian context and culture.

Leadership and Demographic Variables

Although there is an extensive body of research that has examined the above-noted variables' differences as they pertain to leadership and management., (2006) notes that researchers focus on gender differences because the leadership literature has shown that there are differences in the expectations of male and female leaders as well as differences in how such leaders lead and perform. Gender creates much controversy concerning leadership. According to Bruke & Collins (2001) ^[12] as women are becoming a more prominent presence in organizations occupying the posts of managers and executives in recent years, which in turn create more attention toward the possible differences between the leadership styles of women and men.

Although research prior to the late 20th century that has explored gender disparities found a lack of empirical pieces of evidence in support of women leaders using different leadership styles than male leaders (Eagly & Karau, 1992 ^[16]; Eagly & Johnson, 1990) ^[15]. But this previously reached deduction of no gender difference was questioned and recent studies suggest that there are differences in the leadership styles followed by male and female leaders (Avolio et al., 2009 ^[4]; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Yukl, 2006; Bono & Judge, 2003).

Avolio et al., (2009) ^[4] noted that generally, people have more positive attitudes toward women because of their common attributes, except when leadership roles are considered. When managerial roles are added, the views of women tend to be more negative to the extent that people feel that women should not seek to openly assume leadership roles or forcefully influence others.

Bruke and Collins (2001) ^[12] claim in their study that the management styles emphasized by female accountants differ somewhat from the management styles emphasized by male accountants. They find out small but significant gender disparities in the self-ratings of all three managerial styles transformational, contingent reward, and management by exception.

Weaver (2001) contends that Women are more likely to adopt a democratic less autocratic and directive style in contrast to their counterpart male leaders. Women leaders encourage participation, share power, and enhance followers' self-worth. However, men leaders are more likely to use a directive, command-and-control style and they rely on the formal authority of their position for their influence.

Pounder and Coleman (2002) ^[25], in a survey of male and female executives with similar jobs and education and of similar age, found that women tend to be more transformational in their leadership than men.

Bass, Avolio, and Atwater (1996) ^[7] found that in a sample of respondents, subordinates rated female leaders higher on all transformational leader dimensions compared to males.

Similarly, Davidson and Bruke (2004) have concluded that almost all the evidence shows little or no difference in the traits and abilities of managerial and professional women and men.

Thompson (2000) testing the effects of gender on leadership orientation and effectiveness of educational male and female leaders found that there was no evidence of significant differences in any of the leadership variables or effectiveness. Mohammad et al. (2012) found no evidence of significant differences in top management transformational leadership styles and social demographic factors gender, race, marital status, and educational qualification in survey research conducted on top management executives in Malaysia.

Baba, (2018) in his study establishes that the faculty members perceived the transformational leadership of their academic leaders at an above-average level; presently, they are fairly satisfied with their academic leader's TL. The results also revealed that the perception of the respondent faculty members towards their HOD's transformational leadership among the different universities is the same, and the demographic variables age, gender, experience, and designation have a significant impact on transformational leadership.

Pradhan and Jena (2019) ^[26] used demographic variables (age, gender, and experience control measures so that the relationship among the study variables was not affected.

Flanigan et al., (2017) ^[18] in their study of leadership and small firm performance and used age, tenure as a leader, level of education, and experience as mediator variables that could have moderating effects on the relationship between leadership style and small business financial performance in a distribution wholesale industry.

Research Hypotheses

The perception of transformational leadership behavior is found to vary in male and female leaders, leaders with different educational levels and experiences. The following hypothesis has been formulated considering the review of the literature.

H₀:1-There is no significant difference in leadership style mean scores of male and female groups ($\mu_1 = \mu_2$).

H₀:2-There are no significant differences in leadership style mean scores in undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate groups ($\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$).

H₀:3-There are no significant differences in leadership style mean scores between experience groups ($\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$).

Methodology

This study is based on primary data and has used a survey research methodology.

The researcher used the Indian Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (ITLQ) developed by Singh and Krishnan (2009). This Questionnaire contained 30 statements in the form of research questions that identify and measures the key aspect of leadership attributes or behaviors. Of 30 statements, 24 statements were related to the construct of transformational leadership, and the rest to transactional and laissez faire leadership. The researcher chose all those 24 statements for the purpose of this study. The respondents' responses were collected through the two sets of the same questionnaire, the first being the "Leader Raters" version and the second the "Subordinate Raters" version. The respondents were required to judge how frequently the behavior described in the statement was exhibited by the leaders in their organization. The statements were measured on an ordinal scale, ranging from "Not at all" if the behavior is not displayed to "frequently, if not always" if the behavior is described in the statement (Krishnan, 2007 ^[29]; Bass & Avolio, 2004). Additionally, both versions had a demographic section to

collect data with respect to the respondents' gender, education, experiences, and sector under which they were employed.

The leader raters were required complete a questionnaire describing their own leadership behavior, while the subordinate raters were also required to complete the same questionnaire but designed differently from the perspective of subordinates, regarding the leadership behavior of their immediate manager/leader/supervisor.

The "Leader Version" questionnaire was given to the 'leader raters' under whom there were at least two subordinates, this study attempted to obtain a holistic view of transformational leadership. Those leader raters were excluded from those who had only one or no subordinates. The "Leader version" questionnaire was completed by supervisors or managers or team leaders having charge of leading and managing the team(s). The subordinate respondents were asked to complete the "Rater Version" questionnaire regarding the transformational leadership of their immediate supervisor or manager. The two versions questionnaire for the leader raters as well as subordinate raters were made of exactly, the same statements but designed from different points of view.

The reliability of the ITLQ has also been proven on many occasions through test-retest, internal consistency methods, and alternative methods (Krishnan, 2009 ^[28]; Singh & Krishnan, 2007) ^[29]. The researcher also tested the reliability of ITLQ through a pilot study in the Indian context a found a high Cronbach alpha of construct ranging from 0.86 to 0.89 as recommended by De Villis (2003) at least 0.7 or higher.

In terms of the validity of the instruments the ITLQ was validated from previous research, and several experts have agreed on its internal consistency before administering it to the respondents (Krishnan, 2007; Singh and Krishnan, 2009) ^[28].

The total numbers of employees (Population) in this company were 24300 and out of which 4,988 were employed in northern India. The remaining were in the other part of India with more concentration in western India. The is engaged in textile and garment, retail, manufacturing, and oil, gas, and petroleum business.

The sample selected for the research comprised 235 of the 855 leaders and 800 subordinates out of the 4133 working in the Northern division in India from a large diversified Public Ltd. The company is predominately a family business managed and is managed controlled by a Hindu undivided family-Karta along with other Board members. The convenience sampling technique was used and the sample, population, and response rate are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Showing Population, Sample, and Response Rate

Population, Sample Size, and Response Rates			
	Leader Raters	Subordinate Raters	Total
Population	855	4133	4988
Sample Size	120	398	518
Response Rate	53%	51%	50%

The researcher in consultation with HR placed certain requirements to consider when selecting the participants and sending them questionnaires by email. The respondents were assured of confidentiality and were given adequate time to respond to the questionnaire in their free time, and without any interruption, to avoid any leading influence and disruption of their work. In order to ensure adequate response two reminder emails were sent. In case of any difficulties,

they were asked to contact the HR manager or the researcher for immediate help either by email or phone. At the end, 531 out of 1,035 questionnaires were filled and received. 13 out of 531 filled questionnaires were inappropriately filled or incomplete and these were rejected and the sample size for the study is 518 as presented in Table 1.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software. Independent sample t-Test and One-way Analysis of Variance Test- ANOVA was employed to test if there is any statistical difference between and among the groups. Levene's test for equality of variances was performed to test whether the variance of scores for the groups is the same. Table 2 shows the dependent and independent variables, groups, and statistical tests applied.

Table 2: Showing Independent Variables, Dependent Variables, and Statistical Tests applied

Independent Variables	Number of Groups	Statistical Test	Dependent Variables: Leadership Style
Gender	2	Independent-Samples- <i>t</i> -Test.	Transformational
Education	3	One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	
Experience	4	<i>F</i> - Test.	

Results

Table 5: Transformational Leadership Independent Samples equality of Means

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for equality of Means					
		f	sig	T	df	Sig (2tailed)	Mean Diff	95% Confidence	
								Lower	Upper
Transformational Leadership	Equal Var. assumed	0.229	0.585	-2.357	516	0.09	-0.151	-0.277	-0.025

An independent samples t-test was run to determine whether there were significant differences in the perception of transformational leadership between male and female groups. There were no outliers in the data. Additionally, there is homogeneity of variances assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances of transformational leadership ($p=0.58$). It means the variance of groups male and female was equal and the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the t-test was met shown in table 4. The descriptive group statistics of transformational leadership are given below in Table 4. The mean score of the female group is more than the male group for transformational leadership.

Conclusion

The results of the *t*-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in mean transformation leadership scores between male and female groups, with females scoring higher than Males.

$$M = .152, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.28, -0.03], t(516) = 2.357, p = .019, d = .22$$

Thus, $H_0:1$ is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that there is a statistically significant

Table 3: Showing Descriptive Statistics: Participants' Gender, Education, and Experience

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	Male	397	76.6	76.6
	Female	121	23.4	23.4
Education	Undergraduate	133	25.7	25.7
	Graduate	195	37.6	63.3
	Master	190	36.7	100
Experience	1-3 Years	128	24.7	24.7
	3-5 Years	189	36.5	61.2
	5-10 Years	136	26.3	87.5
	< 10 Years	65	12.5	100

1. Transformational Leadership and Respondents' Gender

Table 4: Showing Group Statistics-Transformational Leadership vs. Gender

Group Statistics					
	Participants' Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Transformational Leadership	Male	358	2.7563	.6878	.0364
	Female	160	2.9078	.6483	.0513

difference in the mean of transformational leadership scores between male and female groups. As a result of a rejection of the null hypothesis, Cohen's *d* is also calculated to show the effect size which is moderate.

2. Transformational Leadership and Respondents Education

The participants were classified into three groups-undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate based on their educational qualifications treated as the independent variable and transformational leadership as the dependent variable. The hypotheses set for the same was-

H₀:2-All group means are equal in transformational leadership ($\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$).

Transformational leadership scores were normally distributed in the groups. Additionally, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances for all groups of transformational leadership and the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, being $p > .05$ for a $F(2,514)$ shown in Table 5. It clearly means that the variances of groups-undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate are equal for transformational leadership.

Table 6: Levene's test results for Homogeneity of Variance- Education vs. TL

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Statistics	df1	df2	Sig.
Transformational leadership	Education	.078	2	515	.925

Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics for Participants' Education vs. Transformational Leadership

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Transformational Leadership	Undergraduate	133	2.711	0.676	2.595	2.8265	1.50	4
	Graduate	195	2.764	0.662	2.673	2.8601	1.25	4
	Master	190	2.774	0.665	2.679	2.8688	1.25	4
	Total	518	2.755	0.666	2.697	2.8123	1.25	4

The result of descriptive statistics showed that the participants were classified into three groups: undergraduate ($n = 133$), graduate ($n = 195$), and post-graduate ($n = 190$). Data are presented as mean \pm standard deviation. The transformational leadership means score with standard deviation for the undergraduate group is ($2.71 \pm .676$), graduate ($2.764 \pm .661$), and postgraduate ($2.77 \pm .664$).

Additionally, it was found from the analysis that the average score of groups under transformation leadership is increasing slightly but the marginal mean differences are insignificant. At the same time, the standard deviation decreases from undergraduate to graduate to post-graduate. Based on the analysis of descriptive results, it is concluded that transformational leadership attributes increase as the level of participants' education increases. The descriptive result of the one-way analysis of the variance test is shown in Table 5.1.

The result of the analysis of the variance test given in Table 5.2 revealed that the mean differences in transformational leadership score at least in one group was not statistically significant, $F(2,515) = .401$, being $p > .05$.

Table 5.2: Showing ANOVA results for Participants' Education vs. Leadership

Anova						
Leadership		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Transformational	Between Groups	.356	2	.178	.401	.670
	Within Groups	228.757	515	.444		
	Total	229.113	517			

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Tukey post-hoc multiple comparison analysis conducted revealed that the mean differences in transformational leadership from undergraduate to graduate to postgraduate were not statistically significant ($p > .05$) as shown in Table 5.3.

Table 7.25: showing Tukey *Post-hoc* test for group's mean differences

Dependent Variable	(I) Participants' Education	(J) Participants' Education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Transformational Leadership	Master	Undergraduate	.0632	.679	-.1140	.2403
	Graduate	Undergraduate	.0561	.734	-.1200	.2323
	Master	Graduate	.0070	.994	-.1527	.1667

Conclusion

The results of *F*-test showed that there were no statistically significant means differences in independent group transformational leadership $F(2,515) = .401$; being $p > .05$. Tukey post-hoc analysis also revealed that the increase in transformational leadership score from undergraduate to graduate (.056, 95%; CI - .120 to .232) and graduate to postgraduate (.007, 95%; CI - .152 to .166) and from undergraduate to postgraduate (.063, 95%; CI - .144 to .240) was not statistically significant being significance values of $p > .05$. Thus, The Null Hypothesis- $H_{0.2}$ was not rejected retained in the light of above result.

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