

Comparative Study of Full Range Leadership Model among Faculty Members in Public and Private Sector Higher Education Institutes and Universities

Mahmood Ahmad Bodla

COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (Sahiwal Campus)

Sahiwal, Pakistan

Muhammad Musarrat Nawaz

Hailey College of Commerce, University of the Punjab

Lahore, Pakistan

E-mail: agoodperson101@yahoo.com

Abstract

Leadership has proved itself to be an interesting topic for researchers. Numerous investigators have studied leadership styles in different cultures, occupations, organizational settings. Nevertheless, it was rarely examined among teaching faculty members of higher education institutes and universities. The early studies focused on the personalities of the leaders or on their behavior. More recent studies are focusing on a full range of leadership styles such as transformational, transactional and passive/avoidant leadership styles. The current study seeks to determine the leadership style of regular faculty members employed by public as well as private sector higher education institutes and universities. The data were collected by administering Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to 265 faculty members in all. The results revealed that the faculty members in both public and private sectors were practicing transformational and passive/avoidant leadership styles to the same extent. On the other hand transactional leadership style was being experienced significantly with higher degree by the faculty members in private sector than those in public sector. Implications have been discussed for policy makers and education administrators specifically to develop their faculty for a challenging future. Guidelines for future research have also been provided.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Laissez-Faire leadership, Educational leadership

1. Introduction

Leadership is a topic with a vast appeal as most of the people are directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, involved in the process of being influenced or influencing others in the role of leadership. People are always interested in knowing the components that contribute in making an ordinary person a great leader (Bateman & Snell, 2002). The early studies of leadership had a clear focus on persona of leaders and termed as trait theories of leadership. Then it turned towards studying the behavior of leaders and an era of behavioral theories entered the battle with an emphasis on the interaction of leaders with others. Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership which soon grabbed the attention of the researchers and practitioners. This concept was studied and refined to build a Full Range Leadership Model (Bass, 1998; Avolio & Bass, 2004.). This model focuses on a complete range of leadership from transformational to passive/avoidant leadership. The following study has an objective of finding out the prevalent leadership style in public and private higher education institutions. This will enable us to compare the two sectors.

2. Literature Review

Robbins and Coulter (2005) define leadership as “*process of influencing a group towards the achievements of goals*” and a leader as “*someone who can influence others and who has managerial authority*”. The environment of business in recent times requires leaders and leadership abilities spread all over the organization (Zenger & Folkman, 2002). Leadership is important requirement whenever people gather as teams to accomplish certain tasks. The researchers began to study leadership as a part of academic and organizational disciplines in

the early part of twentieth century. The early studies of leadership were focusing leader, called the trait theories, and interaction of leaders with others, called behavioral theories (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

According to Miner (2006) successful managers are defined as those who accurately and flexibly adjust their behavior to various situational constraints on the choice of a leadership pattern. The organizational climate which prevails today needs leadership throughout the organization (Zenger & Folkman, 2002). The effectiveness of leadership, in its broad sense, is versatility. That versatility is helping the managers and subordinates so they can handle a variety of work challenges and tasks and handle diverse situations (Kaplan, 1996). Harling (1984) had a view that leader must make efforts to shape the behavior of groups or individuals so that they can contribute to the purpose of organization in its true spirit. Gunter (2001) remarked that leadership is not a function included in the job description of a manager yet it is the requirement towards the accomplishment of professional obligations.

As per Robbins and Judge (2006) trait theories of leadership are *“theories that consider personal qualities and characteristics that differentiate leaders from non-leaders”*. The studies of 1920s and 1930s were on leader traits and some traits that were part of the study included physical stature, appearance, social class, emotional stability, fluency of speech, and sociability. The final attempts to identify set of traits for successful leaders became successful and seven traits associated with effective leaders were identified. These are drive, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self confidence, intelligence, job-relevant knowledge, and extraversion (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

Robbins and Judge (2006) define behavioral theories of leadership as *“theories proposing that specific behaviors differentiate leaders from nonleaders”*. This approach defines three styles of leadership based on leader’s behavior that are autocratic style, democratic style, and laissez-faire style. Robbins and Coulter (2005) define autocratic style as *“a leaders who tended to centralize authority, dictate work methods, make unilateral decisions, and limit employee participation”*, the democratic style as *“a leader who tended to involve employees in decision making, designate authority, encourage participation in deciding work methods and goals, and use feedback as an opportunity for coaching employees”* and the laissez-faire style as *“a leaders who generally gave the group complete freedom to make decisions and complete the work in whatever way it saw fit”*.

There are contingency theories of leadership which describe what style of leadership is best for what type of situation. Robbins and Coulter (2005) called them *“if-then contingencies”*. These contingency theories include four major contributions called Fiedler Model, Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory, leader-participation model, and path-goal model. The Fiedler model suggests that there must be a proper fit between style of the leader and followers and the extent to which situational factors support the control of leader over followers. The situational leadership theory of Hersey and Blanchard has a main theme of readiness of followers. Leader participation model, developed in the early 1970s, focuses on behavior of leader and participation in decision making. This model has identified 5 distinct behavior of a leader Path-goal model suggests that a leader is the person who directs the followers towards goal achievement after specifying the goals as per organizational needs (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

Full range leadership model proposed by Burns (1978) and continuously tested by various researchers, also known as transformational-transactional leadership theory, has been a topic of much interest and research in the literature. Professor Robbins (2005) has termed the model as cutting-edge leadership theory. The theory suggests that the leaders who are charismatic and motivate employees by inspiring them, consider them individually, and stimulate their intellectual needs are transformational leaders. The other category of leaders is transactional who specify tasks and monitor performance to achieve the tasks by providing a reward system. A third category in this model is the style of leadership which avoids involvement and is called laissez-faire style of leadership. Numerous researchers investigated the full range leadership model in different cultures and occupations particularly in high schools. However, it was rarely examined among faculty staff of higher education institutions in Pakistan. Hence the current study intends to determine the leadership styles and their differences among public and private sector teaching staff.

The field of education is facing a lot more challenges (Jones, 2000). According to Gunter (2001) the responsibility of education leadership is to facilitate the learning activities and providing for an environment that is enabling and supportive for knowledge and related activities. Butcher et al (2000) recognized the importance of leadership for professional development in education. Harling (1984) supported the view to study higher education leadership. His view clarified that ‘an examination of the leadership within the educational system would be incomplete without an examination of the leadership role in, and of, higher education’.

The full range leadership model has become an important issue to research and to be discussed in scholarly communities and academic and business professionals and proved to be ‘the mainstream in leadership research’ (Stordeur et al, 2001). Antonakis et al (2003) validated the instrument Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and its factor structure in their study. Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) is one of the latest leadership theories which is measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. According to Kirkbride (2006) ‘The full range leadership model is probably the most researched and validated leadership model in use world wide today’. The full range leadership model comprises of three distinct leadership styles transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. These three styles are represented by nine distinct factors of leadership using the survey instrument called Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Original theory of Bass consisted of ‘four transformational and two transactional leadership factors’. The theory was further tested and validated by Bass and his colleagues throughout 1985 to 1990 and still it is being tested and validated. Until now the full range theory of leadership comprises of five transformational leadership factors three transactional leadership factors and one non-transactional laissez-faire leadership. Antonakis et al (2003) suggest that homogeneity in the sample will bring more reliable results if the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire form 5x is implied while in case of heterogeneous sample the context will be changed which will bring unexpected results. They suggest that the survey is to be a ‘context sensitive’ survey in order to have consistent result and true predictions. The reason being factors of leadership in full range leadership model may be seen as less or more effective if they are observed and measured in different contexts. The contextual factors identified and elaborated by Antonakis et al (2003) include environmental risk, leader hierarchical level, and leader-follower gender.

According to Avolio (1999) the full range leadership model does not mean that it covers all the dimensions of leadership but it is a model that ranges from passive/avoidant leadership to a highly encouraging charismatic role model leader. Clearly there are other leadership ranges that need to be explored and further researched. Antonakis et al (2003) concluded that beside some of the shortcomings in theoretical background and measurement ‘the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire form 5X is a valid and reliable instrument that can adequately measure the nine components comprising the full range theory of leadership’.

Transformational leaders are proactive, raise follower awareness for transcendent collective interests, and help followers achieve extraordinary goals. Transformational leadership is theorized to comprise the following five first-order factors: (a) Idealized influence (attributed) refers to the socialized charisma of the leader, whether the leader is perceived as being confident and powerful, and whether the leader is viewed as focusing on higher-order ideals and ethics; (b) idealized influence (behavior) refers to charismatic actions of the leader that are centered on values, beliefs, and a sense of mission; (c) inspirational motivation refers to the ways leaders energize their followers by viewing the future with optimism, stressing ambitious goals, projecting an idealized vision, and communicating to followers that the vision is achievable; (d) intellectual stimulation refers to leader actions that appeal to followers’ sense of logic and analysis by challenging followers to think creatively and find solutions to difficult problems; and (e) individualized consideration refers to leader behavior that contributes to follower satisfaction by advising, supporting, and paying attention to the individual needs of followers, and thus allowing them to develop and self-actualize (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Howell, and Higgins (1990) identified the transformational leadership behavior as a cause to build champion in organizations. They identified in their prescribed model that emergence of a champion is based upon personality characteristics, transformational leadership behavior, and variety of influence tactics.

Transactional leadership is an exchange process based on the fulfillment of contractual obligations and is typically represented as setting objectives and monitoring and controlling outcomes. Transactional leadership is theorized to comprise the following three first-order factors: (a) Contingent reward leadership (i.e., constructive transactions) refers to leader behaviors focused on clarifying role and task requirements and providing followers with material or psychological rewards contingent on the fulfillment of contractual obligations; (b) management-by-exception active (i.e., active corrective transactions) refers to the active vigilance of a leader whose goal is to ensure that standards are met; and (c) management-by-exception passive (i.e., passive corrective transactions) leaders only intervene after noncompliance has occurred or when mistakes have already happened. (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003)

Laissez-faire leadership represents the absence of a transaction of sorts with respect to leadership in which the leader avoids making decisions, abdicates responsibility, and does not use their authority. It is considered active to the extent that the leader ‘‘chooses’’ to avoid taking action. This component is generally considered the most passive and ineffective form of leadership. (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003)

3. Research Methodology

The current study is an exploratory field study based on a self-administered questionnaire. Following hypotheses are constructed to compare the leadership style of teaching staff in public and private higher education institutions.

Hypothesis 1: There is significant difference in transformational leadership between public and private sector teaching staff.

Hypothesis 2: There is significant difference in transactional leadership between public and private sector teaching staff.

Hypothesis 3: There is significant difference in passive/avoidant leadership between public and private sector teaching staff.

3.1 Population and Sample

Two stage stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a representative sample. The sampling frame was developed from websites of the different higher education institutions. The study population consists of about 7,500 persons serving as full time teaching staff in 36 public and private higher education institutions in the Punjab. Out of 36 institutions 20 are public sector institutions and 16 fall into the category of private higher education institutions. At the first stage, a total of 12 institutions are selected by using stratified random sampling technique to collect data which include 7 public and 5 private sector universities as the proportion of public universities is 57 %. There are about 2,700 faculty members in the 12 universities selected as sample among which 2,000 are working in public sector and 700 are in private sector institutions. In the second stage, to represent both the public sector and private sector universities 700 questionnaire were distributed as per the proportion of the faculty, 500 questionnaires to public sector faculty members and 200 questionnaires to private sector employees.

3.2 Data

Among a total of 700 questionnaires the response rate was 41% and 265 questionnaires were duly filled that are used in analysis. Public sector employees returned a total of 157 (31%) responses while private sector respondents contributed 108 (54%) usable questionnaires.

3.3 Survey Instrument

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (5x-short), a widely used questionnaire, is employed to measure transformational and transactional leadership styles among teaching staff in higher education institutions. It consists of 45 items in which leadership styles of the respondents are measured. The self rating questionnaire has measured the feelings of teaching staff on 5 point Likert-type scale where 0 means not at all and 4 reflects frequently, if not always. The internal consistency of scale is 0.74.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

The data was coded and entered into MS Excel 2003 and SPSS 13.0 for the purpose of making analysis. Sample (2007), while examining Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire proposed by Avolio and Bass (1995, 2004), recommended that the individuals who have the composite score of transformational leadership greater than the average score for all the respondents will be reflecting transformational leadership style. Similarly the transactional and passive/avoidant leadership styles could be measured by following the same criterion. The results are as follows.

Table 1 describes the collected data on 9 ingredients of full range leadership model. The average overall scores are given for transformational, transactional and passive/avoidant leadership as well as the individual category scores for these styles. For the analysis purpose, the leadership styles have been measured by following the method suggested by Sample (2007).

Descriptive statistics (Table 1) reflect that in case of transformational leadership, the teaching staff having score above 3.085 is considered to be practicing transformational leadership style. Transactional leaders must have score greater than average value (3.066) while for passive/avoidant leaders the score should be more than (1.34).

Hypothesis 1: There is significant difference in transformational leadership between public and private sector teaching staff.

The results (Table 2) reveal that 59 percent public sector teaching staff while 47 percent of those in private sector prefer transformational leadership style. The analysis of the data by employing independent samples t-test shows

that there is no significant difference in transformational leadership style between the teaching staff in public and private higher education institutions. This implies that the result is not consistent with the postulated hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: There is significant difference in transformational leadership between public and private sector teaching staff.

The results (Table 3) shows that 50 percent public sector teaching staff while 57 percent of those in private sector prefer transactional leadership style. The analysis of the data reflects that there is significant difference ($p < 0.10$) in transactional leadership style between the teaching staff in public and private higher education institutions implying that the finding is in line with the formulated hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: There is significant difference in passive/avoidant leadership between public and private sector teaching staff.

The results (Table 4) indicate that 52 percent public sector teaching staff while 54 percent of those in private sector prefer to be a passive/avoidant leader. The analysis of the responses reveals that there exists no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in passive/avoidant leadership style between the teaching staff in public and private higher education institutions implying that the finding is not commensurate with hypothesis 3.

4.1 Comparison of Public and Private sector leadership style

A comparison of the full range leadership scale for both the public and private sector (Table 5) indicates that public sector teaching faculty averages high on transformational and transactional scales as compared with the private sector.

5. Discussions

In the earlier days leadership was considered part of the organizational behavior and hence observed in micro environment within the organization. The basic purpose was to achieve personal and work related goals by motivating employees individually and in groups. The transformational-transactional theory of leadership represents such a paradigm that may help to understand leadership in a broader context and in different organizational levels and functions

The basic theme of research was transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership consisted of five major components which are much more important in terms of followers mentoring, coaching and development. The research found that in transactional leadership there is statistically significant difference in public and private sector. In the above study hypotheses H1 and H3 are not confirmed which indicate that teamwork is important in higher education institutions rather than the leadership style. When employees work in teams they share different values and interests. Although the autocracy does not permit a team to act freely, proper communication can bridge this gap. The results from the study reveal that transactional leadership is more motivating in public sector employees. Transactional leaders motivate the subordinates by exchanging rewards for services rendered but reward system in public sector are not objective. Hence it is advised for policy implication that reward system must be impartial and without favoritism. Leaders must also agree the opinion of the followers when they come with sound logic and reasoning.

The results also reflect that public and private sector teachers are not statistically different in transformational leadership which leads to the conclusion that the employees in both sectors have same degree of transformational leadership. Since there exists significant difference in the degree of transactional leadership, hence it can be concluded that public sector teaching faculty has higher level of transactional leadership than those in private sector. The analysis of the responses also discloses that teaching faculty in public and private higher education institutions have same level of passive/avoidant leadership.

5.1 Limitations and Future Guidelines

In this study we have tried to find out differences and bridge the gap between public and private sector, yet it is also important to find out the gender differences. There is a large number of institutions where male are dominant. Moreover the sample size was limited to a provincial region and if we could arrange a survey for the whole country the generalizability would be greater.

We only went for the education sector while there is also need to explore the leadership dimension in other industrial sectors like manufacturing, finance, health, etc. future research must also focus on the cultural dimensions such as Hofstede's. It is also advised that leadership style must be studied in relation with different job characteristics and employee behavior.

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Table 1. Description of 9 Factors of Full Range Leadership

Leadership Style	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Transformational	265	3.085	0.254
Idealized Influence (A)	265	2.993	0.463
Idealized Influence (B)	265	3.116	0.396
Inspirational Motivation	265	3.184	0.425
Intellectual Stimulation	265	3.140	0.375
Individualized Consideration	265	2.995	0.507
Transactional	265	3.066	0.361
Contingent Rewards	265	3.120	0.456
MBE (Active)	265	3.013	0.484
Passive/Avoidant	265	1.34	0.496
MBE (Passive)	265	1.587	0.674
Laissez Faire	265	1.093	0.621

Table 2. Comparison of Means for Transformational leadership style between public and private sector teaching staff

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Probability
Public Sector	93	3.27	0.15	0.98	0.33*
Private Sector	51	3.25	0.11		

* Not Significant at 0.05 level, two-tailed

Table 3. Comparison of Means for Transactional leadership style between public and private sector teaching staff

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Probability
Public Sector	79	3.36	0.20	1.67	0.09*
Private Sector	62	3.30	0.17		

* Significant at 0.10 level, two-tailed

Table 4. Comparison of Means for passive/avoidant leadership style between public and private sector teaching staff

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Probability
Public Sector	82	1.73	0.37	0.91	0.37*
Private Sector	58	1.68	0.28		

* Not Significant at 0.05 level, two-tailed

Table 5. Summary of the results

	PUBLIC SECTOR			PRIVATE SECTOR			t-value	Probability
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Transformational								
Idealized Influence (A)	106	3.26	0.29	58	3.30	0.25	0.74	0.46
Idealized Influence (B)	84	3.41	0.21	55	3.42	0.18	0.21	0.83
Inspirational Motivation	98	3.45	0.25	67	3.42	0.21	0.92	0.36
Intellectual Stimulation	87	3.43	0.22	56	3.41	0.19	0.61	0.54
Individualized Consideration	96	3.32	0.29	71	3.31	0.26	0.32	0.75
Transactional								
Contingent Rewards	80	3.47	0.23	64	3.45	0.21	0.60	0.55
MBE (Active)	67	3.46	0.25	50	3.39	0.18	1.77	0.08*
Passive/Avoidant								
MBE (Passive)	72	2.17	0.43	51	2.17	0.44	0.09	0.93
Laissez Faire	69	1.68	0.48	47	1.63	0.34	0.64	0.54

*Significant at 0.10 Level, two tailed