

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in Selected Porcelain Manufacturing Companies in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Transformational leadership is a concept and a belief in the contemporary business world which has proven results in employee development and organizational success. Leaders with transformational leadership behaviors coach and inspire their followers to achieve the targets by changing the value systems, culture and mindsets and sometimes being the role models to them. This paper aims to fill the existing research gap by examining the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance in the context of porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka, specifying the production worker level. Further this study investigates the mediating role of employee engagement between transformational leadership and employee performance. Thus, the current study contributes to the literature in the field of transformational leadership, employee performance and employee engagement. The study was conducted on a sample of 250 production workers in selected porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka. The data was analyzed using the analytical software SPSS version 23 and descriptive, correlation and regression analysis were conducted. The findings revealed that transformational leadership has a positive impact on employee performance and employee engagement and also employee engagement has a positive impact on employee performance. Importantly, employee engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. According to the findings of the study, it is concluded that transformational

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leadership behaviors impact employee performance and employee engagement. This study adds to the current body of literature by providing insight into the impact of transformational leadership and employee engagement on employee performance in the porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka, and on the empirical ground, some of the findings and judgements of this study may be important to other organizations to make their employees engaged, develop and increase employee performance towards the organizations.

Keywords:

Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, Porcelain Manufacturing Companies, Production Workers, Transformational Leadership

Introduction

Human capital has become a source of success and revolution. The theory of transformational leadership describes the encouragement and motivation of an individual's positive behavior or enhanced thinking by leaders (Burns, 1978). It is evidenced that transformational leadership is productive under such conditions and a majority of existing literature supports the fact that leader practices contribute to organizational performance (Datche & Hazel, 2015). These kinds of leaders assist followers to engage in their jobs and choice-making process. Additionally, according to Ghafoor, Syed, & Qureshi, (2011), transformational leadership also helps employees to feel that they matter a lot to the employer and the aim of the organization is their progress. The same authors have further described that these positive feelings towards the organization can enhance employees' organizational attitude and finally their quality of work. Lockwood (2007) stated that culture of the institute, conveying style, style of management, behavior of the leader, belief and admiration are the primary factors of employee engagement and these factors must be supported to build-up an engaging cultural behavior inside the workplace.

Currently, most of the organizations suffer with retrenchments and financial difficulties and are making an effort to uplift the organizational performances with limited employers and finances. Even under these circumstances, employee engagement still plays a greater role (Datche & Hazel, 2015). Engagement is known as individual efforts and hard work for enhancing one's performances (Maslach, 2003). Engaged employees support the company towards success through increased performance. The leadership actions to motivate employees to perform over expectations by transforming their behaviors, attitudes and values

is defined as a Transformation (Pillai & Williams, 2004). Though several researches have been conducted to examine this said relationship and the mediating effect, there is a scarcity of research to address the impact of Transformational Leadership (TL) and Employee Engagement (EE) on Employee Performance (EP) in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to identify the (1) impact of TL on EP, (2) impact of EE on EP, (3) impact of TL on EE and (4) the mediating role of EE on TL and EP in selected porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined as those actions displayed by a leader which enrich the value system of the followers, and convince them to reach beyond their expected performance (Han, Oh, & Kang, 2020). TL is an encouraging and predominant style that has an impact on the outcomes and the actions of the people (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015); (Butler, Stanton, & Soane, 2015). This study defined TL as transforming the norms and values of the followers and inspiring them to elevate their desires for achievements, perform beyond presumption and self-development while promoting the development of the organization.

Employee Performance

Employee performance is mainly the outcomes attained and achievements made at work (Anitha, 2014). As cited in (Dixit & Arrawati, 2018), EP refers to how ingeniously employees act in their jobs in accordance with the given targets of the company (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). This study defined EP as “the expertise of the worker executing dominant work duties, employee behavior that supports the related environment in which the core tasks and duties are performed, the capacity of the worker to adjust to modifications in the work climate and the harmful behavior that negatively affects the well-being of the organization” (Koopmans, 2014).

Employee Engagement

Xie (2006) explained that dedicated employees to a job, together with untiring efforts, who are faithful to the company and the leader, and who are assertive, is employee engagement. According to Sun (2019), logical employee engagement generally implies the relationship between employees and organizations, as the extent to which the employee understands their jobs and the roles in the department. This study defined EE from the viewpoint of Kahn (1990), “job engagement is best explained as a different measurement of inspirational concept contemplating the coincident investment of an individual’s physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance” (Rich & Crawford, 2010).

Conceptual Framework

Reviewing the prevailing literature, the conceptual framework of the study is depicted in Figure 1. In the conceptual framework TL was considered as the independent construct, EP as the dependent construct and EE as the mediator construct.

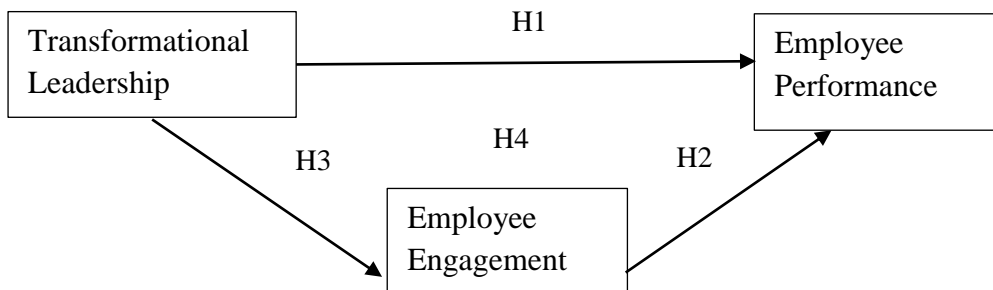


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author’s compilation (2020)

Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

The managers who transform the followers strive to enhance their perception by recalling their deep-rooted dreams and morals, such as liberty, fairness and compassion not based on sentiments such as avidity, resentment, and aversion (Rita, Payangan, Rante, Tuhumena, & Erari, 2018). A considerable amount of enhancement in performance is related with those leaders who are considered to score higher on the measures of active individualized transformational and social processes of leadership (Groves & LaRocca, 2011). The leader converts

and encourages followers by personality, intellectual arousal, and individual consideration (Bacha, 2014).

Hence, the first hypothesis is developed as follows:

H₁: Transformational Leadership positively impacts on Employee Performance

Employee Engagement and Employee Performance

Some empirical studies have figured out that employee performance can be enhanced by employee engagement and also it can conclusively relate to lucrativeness, customer contentment, detention of workers and growth of the institute (Bates, 2004); (Baumruk, 2004); (Richman, 2006). Employee engagement is one of the most effective factors which leads to higher employee performance (Macey , Schneider, & Bar, 2009); (Mone & London, 2010), as well as predict the output and organizational success (Saks, 2006), (Macey , Schneider, & Bar, 2009) and (Perera & Wijewardene, 2019). Hence, the second hypothesis is developed as follows:

H₂: Employee Engagement positively impacts on Employee Performance

Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

Much scholarly attention has been given to the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement at work (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009); (Salanova, Lorente, Chambel, & Martí´nez, 2011). Research findings by Devi & Narayanamma (2016) have confirmed that there is a notable constructive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

Transformational leadership is an essential antecedent of work engagement and the relationship between transformational leadership and employee work engagement is a type of relationship to be considered for further studies Pourbarkhordari, Zhou, & Pourkarimi, (2016). Hence, the third hypothesis is developed as follows:

H₃: Transformational Leadership impacts on Employee Engagement

Mediating Role of Employee Engagement between Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

A study conducted by Mariam (2020) has proved that engagement has a mediating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors on employee performance. So, the results explained that, all idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual simulation, individual

consideration and employee engagement were significant on the employee performance. Moreover, the findings indicated that, employee engagement mediates the relationship between leaders who have transformational leadership actions is a precondition for employees to be engaged, and also enhance the outcomes of the followers (Pourbarkhordari, Zhou, & Pourkarimi, 2016).

Hence, the final hypothesis is developed as follows:

H₄: Employee Engagement mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Methodology

This research can be regarded as an analytical study and the investigation type is causal. This study gathered data in the chosen porcelain manufacturing companies' normal surroundings without regulating the internal or external factors. The survey was conducted among a sample of 260 production workers of selected porcelain manufacturing companies among a total population of 805 employees of three selected porcelain manufacturing companies. The sample was selected using simple random sampling method and the sample frame is the payroll register. The sample is derived with the Morgan & Krejcie (1970) table. A set of questionnaires were distributed among the sample and the primary data was collected. A questionnaire was developed based on TL, EE and EP to gather information about employees from the selected porcelain manufacturing companies and five point Likert scales were used to measure the variables in the study. The secondary data was collected through numerous sources such as journals, published reports, internet and books relating to the topic. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software package 23 was used to analyze the data and for data preparation and screening, reliability validity and relationships were tested. The developed hypotheses were tested by correlation analysis and simple regression analysis. Sobel test was used to measure the mediator effect of the study.

Measures

In the first part of this questionnaire a scale of 20 items has been developed referring to well accepted questions of other scholarly work which is used to measure TL practices by Bass & Avolio (1995). There are four dimensions namely, idealized influence (both attributed and behavior), individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation.

The next section has been devoted to measure the EP aspects of the production workers. Referring to other scholarly work, a scale of 45 items has been developed for this purpose consisting of four components namely task performance, contextual performance (both interpersonal and organizational), adaptive performance and counter-productive work behavior (Koopmans, 2014).

The third part of the questionnaire consists of data about EE aspects of the production workers. Referring to other scholarly work, a scale of 5 items has been developed for this purpose consisting of three dimensions namely Vigor, Dedication and Absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

The fourth part was used to gather data about demographic details of the production workers such as gender, age group and service period.

Items have been presented in Sinhala since the production workers are comfortable with the Sinhala language which they find easy to understand. Production workers were advised to record their agreements with the items through the five point Likert scales.

Results

Reliability

To ensure the internal consistency of measures Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were computed. CR is a measure of an internal consistency in scale items (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003). To ensure CR for the construct the value should be greater than 0.6 and AVE should be greater than 0.5 (Hair, Black , Babin , & Anderson, 2014). As Table 1 indicates this criteria was met and the internal consistency of these measures was ensured.

Table 1: Measure of Internal Consistency

Variable	No. of Questions	Factor Min-Max >0.3	CR >0.6	AVE >0.5
Transformational Leadership	20	0.835-0.466	0.864	0.507
Employee Performance	45	0.921-0.465	0.953	0.501
Employee Engagement	17	0.847 -0.514	0.872	0.503

*Validity***Table 2: Discriminant Validity**

Variable	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Employee Engagement
Transformational Leadership	0.427		
Employee Performance	0.391	0.481	
Employee Engagement	0.262	0.345	0.463

The above tables depict the data for discriminant validity and the results of the present study ensures the discriminant validity as the squared coefficient values are below the AVE (Hair, Black , Babin , & Anderson, 2014).

Questionnaires were circulated among 260 production workers and 10 valid replies were not received, yielding a reply rate of 96%.

Demographic profile of the respondents

Considering the demographic characteristics, 63% of females and 37% of male production workers are in the sample. Moreover, the largest age group representation is 37% who are reaching their retirement and the companies must think of their recruitments and this staff category is the skilled worker category. Then 31% and 23% represent the age 29-39 and 18-28 categories, respectively. The age group representing 51-60 is 9% of the sample and that is significant. Further, service year-based categorization is significant as most senior, and junior samples are the same with 25% which expresses that the new recruits and the workers who are senior remained the same, but the middle category varied. 30% and 19% of the sample represents service year group 6-10 and 11-20 respectively.

Hypotheses Testing*H₁: Transformational leadership positively impacts on employee performance*

The impact of the TL on EP was measured by regression analysis.

Table 3: Model Summary H₁

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.625 ^a	.391	.388	.36889

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

The outcomes show (Table 3) that the multiple regression coefficients (R) of the TL related independent variables and EP was 0.625 and the R Square was 0.391. It indicates that about 39.1 percent of the variance (R Square) in the EP is explicated by TL.

Table 4: ANOVA H₁

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.635	1	21.635	158.988	.000 ^p
	Residual	33.748	248	.136		
	Total	55.384	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

The p-value is below 0.05, which ensures which TL can be used to forecast EP (Table 4). Thus, results conclude that transformational leadership positively impacts employee performance.

H₂: Employee Engagement positively impacts on employee performance

Table 5: Model Summary H₂

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.587 ^a	.345	.342	.38246

a. Predictors: (Constant), employee engagement

Regression analysis was also run to measure the impact of EE on EP. Under the model summary (refer Table 5), value of R square is 0.345, depicting that EP is explained by 34.5% through variation in EE.

As per Table 6 given below, the p-value is below 0.05 which ensures which EE can be used to forecast EP. It is concluded that Employee engagement positively impacts employee performance.

Table 6: ANOVA H₂

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.107	1	19.107	130.626	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.276	248	.146		
	Total	55.384	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement

H₃: Transformational leadership impacts on employee engagement.

Regression analysis was also conducted to measure the impact of TL on EE. Under the model summary (Table 7) value of R square is 0.512, depicting that EP is explained by 25.9% through variation in TL.

Table 7: Model Summary H₃

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.512 ^a	.262	.259	.47533

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

The p-value is below 0.05 which ensures which TL can be used to forecast EE (refer Table 8). Therefore, it can be concluded that transformational leadership positively impacts employee engagement.

Table 8: ANOVA H₃

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.929	1	19.929	88.205	.000 ^b
	Residual	56.033	248	.226		
	Total	75.962	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

H₄: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between Transformational leadership and employee performance

Multiple Regression Analysis and Sobel test were done to explore the mediating impact of EE between TL and EP. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016) when these two independent variables (TL and EE) are collectively regressed in opposition to the dependent variable (EP) with the purpose of explaining the variance in it, the sizes of the individual regression coefficients explain how much one unit of change will affect the dependent variable. This is based on the assumption that all the other independent variables remain unchanged. Based on the results of Multiple Regression Analysis, the Sobel test was done and Table 9 depicts the output of the analysis.

Table 9: Sobel Test

Item	Value
Test Statistics	14.540869
Std. Error	0.3072
P value	0.000

Sobel test has three values and if the P value falls below 0.05 the predictor variable (TL) has an indirect effect on the measured variable (EP) and it is significant (Jacob , 2017). Therefore, it is culminated that EE is a mediator of the correlation between TL and EP.

Discussion

This is the first objective of the study, and the result has supported the first hypothesis. So, this concludes that TL has a positive impact on EP of production workers in selected porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka. Han, Oh, & Kang, (2020), Jyoti & Bhau (2015), Walumbwa & Hartnell (2011) and Tohardi (2002) in their studies have found that TL has a constructive impact on EP.

This is the second objective of this study, and the result has supported the second hypothesis. So, this culminates that EE has a constructive effect on EP of production workers in chosen porcelain production factories in Sri Lanka. This relationship has been tested and proved several times by various studies conducted by (Harter , Hayes, & Schmidt, 2002), (Richman, 2006), (Saks, 2006), (Choo, 2009), (Bakker & Bal, 2010), (Chung & Angeline, 2010) and (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012).

The results indicate the significant positive impact of TL on EE. So, this concludes that TL has a positive impact on EE of production workers in selected porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka. Pourbarkhordari, Zhou, & Pourkarimi, (2016), Xu & Thomes (2011), Aryee & Walumbuwa (2012) and Devi & Narayanamma (2016) have tested and stated that there is a constructive correlation between transformational leadership and employee engagement in different contexts.

As per the Sobel test the P value is 0.000 which falls below 0.05. The predictor variable (TL) has an indirect effect on the measured variable (EP) and it is significant. So, this concludes that EE is a mediator between TL and EP of manufacturing workers in selected porcelain production companies in Sri Lanka. Pourbarkhordari, Zhou, & Pourkarimi, (2016), Md. Al-Amin, (2017), Hee, Ibrahim, Kowang, & Fei, (2018) and Mariam (2020) have tested and concluded the mediating effect of EE on TL and EE and this hypothesis has been empirically proved.

Conclusion

The study was based on the emerging and challenging sphere of Human Resource Management today, 'Transformational Leadership,' which is strategically relevant to the achievements of the organizations. The present paper has executed mainly to identify the impact of TL on EP amidst manufacturing workers of chosen porcelain producing organizations in Sri Lanka. To fill the existing research gap, this explanatory research was mainly conducted using correlational and regression analysis with SPSS for providing more meaning and clarifications over the context.

The findings have concluded not only a strong direct impact of TL on EP but also a significant indirect impact via EE. To get confirmation of the study, it has tested both TL and EP with EE separately under the hypotheses and has revealed a significant positive impact. According to the results, a mediation of EE between TL and EP, has been revealed.

The empirical link between TL and EP and the mediating role of EE is a major contribution of this study. These results of the study have provided an insight into the existing theory of TL and EP. Consequently, the study enlarges the EE theory by studying the relationship of TL on EP. The importance of these correlations or linkages has not been treated well in the local settings mainly in the factory environment. Therefore, the current study will be an eye opener for the leaders, and the management should revisit these concepts and grab the core of the relationships. Then they can absorb the idea of these dimensions and practice them as required. Especially there is a lack of research pertaining to Sri Lankan culture. The current study has contributed to the Human Resource Management literature from a theoretical perspective by examining TL on EP among the production workers of selected porcelain manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka. This study indicates a new avenue for the TL – EP link of which the direct and indirect paths were significant results of mediation between the constructs.

Further, it is suggested that the relationships can be tested for each dimension separately with the dependent variable employee performance. Moreover, the scope of the study needs to be expanded, creating more complex models that can include some other independent variable and test the indirect or direct relationship and the combined impact of these predictor variables on the measured variable. Apart from that the correlations can be tested for each dimension of employee performance as well. The levels of each dimension can

be tested with reference to transformational leadership. Moreover, testing the follower's characteristics considered by both leader and follower as potential mediators or moderators of the effect of TL on EE and EP is suggested. Apart from that conducting studies with other leadership styles such as authentic leadership and servant leadership to identify the relationship with EE and EP is also proposed. Finally, the current study bridged the gaps in existing literature pertaining to the context of TL and its outcomes.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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