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INFLUENCING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER: STRATEGIES USED BY FOLLOWERS

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Abstract. Burns (1978) held that transformational leadership results in a transforming effect on both leaders and followers. Studies in the past have, however, primarily focused on how transformational leaders influence their followers. This study is an attempt to look at how transformational leaders are influenced by their followers. Results indicate that subordinates are likely to use friendliness and reasoning strategies to influence their managers who are rated high on transformational leadership.

In an age of complexity, change, large enterprises and nation states, leaders are more important than ever (House, Spangler & Woycke, 1991). Burns (1978) wrote that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. He defined leadership as inducing followers to pursue common or at least joint purposes, which could be done in two ways—transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership involves an exchange and is based on current values of leaders and followers. Transformational leadership on the other hand, does not take the current values and motivations to be fixed, but rather seeks to change them.

According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership occurs when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of values and motivations. Only transformational leadership is capable of motivating followers to do more than they originally expected to do (Bass, 1985a). Studies have found significant and positive relationships between transformational leadership and the amount of effort followers are willing to exert, satisfaction with leader, ratings of job performance, and perceived effectiveness (Avolio, Waldman & Einstein, 1988; Bass, Waldman, Avolio & Bebb, 1987; Bycio, Hackett & Allen, 1995; Hater & Bass, 1988; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). The complexity and change that have become a part of life for many organizations today, highlight the importance of transformational leadership for effectiveness.

There have been a number of studies on transformational leadership during the last two decades (House & Aditya, 1997), but hardly any of them has focused on how transformational leaders are influenced by their followers. Transformational leadership is a

dynamic relationship between leader and follower. Leaders take the major part in initiating and maintaining the relationship, but followers also play a role in influencing the leader, and bringing about the transforming effect on the leader. This study aims at understanding the various methods by which followers influence their transformational leaders.

LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

Leadership models are dominated by a typology that suggests leaders engage in transactions or exchange processes with their subordinates. There is nothing wrong with the transactional leadership models as far as they go, but they are incomplete. To explain how some leaders motivate followers to do more than originally expected and why some organizations are excited and others are not, calls for a new approach to leadership—one that is provided by the transformational model of leadership (Berlew, 1974).

Transformational Leadership

According to Burns (1978), "the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (page 4) thus resulting in a transforming effect on both leaders and followers. Transformational leadership raises the level of human conduct of both leader and follower. It consists of four factors—charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985a).

Charismatic Leadership. The charismatic person is seen as different from ordinary people and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least exceptional power and qualities. House (1977) suggested that charismatic leaders may be found throughout complex organizations and that charismatic leadership is characterized by followers' trust in the correctness of the leader's beliefs, unquestioning acceptance of the leader, affection for the leader, willingness to obey the leader, and emotional involvement in the mission of the organization. It has been found that charismatic relationship between leader and followers positively affects leader and organizational performance (House et al., 1991; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996).

Inspirational Leadership. Envisioning a desired future state, making followers see that vision, and showing followers how to get to that state are part of the inspirational process. The process of evolving commitment and mobilizing support for the vision requires a great deal of dialogue and exchange. Envisioning requires translating intentions into realities by communicating that vision to others to gain their support (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). The right vision attracts commitment, energizes people, creates meaning in followers' lives, and establishes a standard of excellence (Kotter, 1995; Nanus, 1992).

Intellectual Stimulation. Intellectual stimulation arouses in followers the awareness of problems and how they may be solved, and stirs the imagination and generates thoughts and insights. The intellectual stimulation provided by a transformational leader forces followers to rethink some of their ideas that they never questioned before. Transformational leaders also enable followers to think about old problems in new ways, and provide followers with new ways of looking at things that used to puzzle followers before (Bass, 1985a).

Individualized Consideration. Transformational leaders have a developmental orientation toward followers. They give personal attention to followers who seem neglected, treat each follower individually, and help each follower get what he or she wants (Bass, 1985a). They have empathy or the capacity to sense intuitively the thoughts and feelings of others, and to receive and understand emotional signals in a relationship.

Influence

Influence is the effect, either intended or unintended, of one party (the agent) on another person's (the target's) attitudes, perceptions, behavior, or some combination of these outcomes (Yukl, 1994). Influence is the exercise of power. The essence of managerial work is influencing. Most people however, do not influence for the sheer joy of changing other peoples' behavior. They do so with specific reasons in mind. Influence could be used for such personal reasons as securing better work assignments, or for such organizational reasons as introducing new work procedures, the latter being more common (Kipnis, Schmidt, Swaffin-Smith & Wilkinson, 1984; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Attempts have been made to classify influence tactics into categories like rational persuasion and ingratiation (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Schilit & Locke, 1982; Yukl, Kim & Falbe, 1996). Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson (1980) identified and classified examples of behavioral tactics used to influence superiors, peers and subordinates. An inductive method was used based on responses from organization members, and the tactics used to influence superiors were grouped into the six categories of assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, friendliness, higher authority and reasoning.

Assertiveness strategy includes demanding compliance, ordering, setting deadlines, nagging and expressing anger. Bargaining strategy consists of offering to help others in exchange for reciprocal favors. Coalition strategy refers to attempts to build alliances with others. Praising, politely asking, acting humble, making the other person feel important, and acting friendly form part of friendliness strategy. Bypassing the superiors and appealing to those higher in hierarchy than the superiors comprises the strategy of higher authority. Reasoning strategy includes using reason and logic, and convincing others that certain actions are in their own best interests (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988).

Influencing the Transformational Leader

People tend to use different influence strategies depending on whether their goals are personal or organizational, and depending on the organizational climate (Schmidt & Kipnis, 1984). For example, individuals working in a rational organizational climate would more frequently use strategies like reasoning (Cheng, 1983). Similarly, the characteristics of the target person also affect the choice of influence strategies. Ansari and Kapoor (1987) found that subordinates had a greater tendency to use reasoning strategy to influence their managers who were participative rather than autocratic.

Transformational leaders are held in high regard and respected by their followers. Vision, emotional expressiveness, articulation skills, high activity level and exemplary behavior characterize transformational leaders. By presenting an idealized goal to followers, a transformational leader provides a challenge and a motivating force for change. The shared perspective of the transformational leader's idealized vision and its potential for satisfying followers' needs make the leader likable. Therefore we have:

<u>Hypothesis 1</u>. Frequency of use of friendliness strategy by subordinate will be positively related to transformational leadership of manager.

Bass (1985b) found that charisma is the most important component in the larger concept of transformational leadership. Followers described their charismatic leaders as those who made everyone enthusiastic about assignments, who commanded respect from everyone, who had a special gift of seeing what was important, and who had a sense of mission that they transmitted to their followers. Followers had complete faith in charismatic leaders, felt proud to be associated with them, and trusted their capacity to overcome any obstacle (Bass, 1985a). Hence:

Hypothesis 2. Charismatic leadership of manager will mediate the relationship between frequency of use of friendliness strategy by subordinate, and manager's inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

Transformational leadership is a personal relationship between leader and follower. The leader enables the follower, and builds self-confidence in the follower. Transformational leaders have empathy towards followers; they are sensitive to followers' needs, wants and fears (Behling & McFillen, 1996). Transformational leaders are respected by their followers, but not feared. The personalized relationship between transformational leader and followers creates an environment in which the followers would feel comfortable to reason and argue with the leader. Therefore:

Hypothesis 3. Frequency of use of reasoning strategy by subordinate will be positively related to transformational leadership of manager.

Reasoning strategy involves using available information, facts and figures to support one's case. This being essentially a cognitive strategy, it would be directly related to the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership. Intellectual stimulation involves changing the belief structure of followers, and thereby making them look at things from different perspectives. The process of intellectual stimulation results in creating new beliefs, or in expanding the entire gamut of beliefs in followers. The new belief structure and the resultant new perspectives serve as the basis for using reasoning strategy. So:

Hypothesis 4. Intellectual stimulation of manager will mediate the relationship between frequency of use of reasoning strategy by subordinate, and manager's charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership and individualized consideration.

Transformational leaders often serve as mentors for their followers. Mentors being like father figures, the followers hold transformational leaders in awe. Followers are likely to accept the leader's direction and judgment in many aspects of their work and non-work life. The transformational leader is an ideal or a role model for the follower, and hence the follower would not be inclined to take any issue to those in the hierarchy who are at a higher level than the transformational leader. Therefore we have:

Hypothesis 5. Frequency of use of higher authority strategy by subordinate will be negatively related to transformational leadership of manager.

It is the individualized consideration shown by the transformational leader that forms the basis of the relationship between the leader and follower. Followers will not be inclined to appeal to higher authority, if they have a personal relationship with their leader. When the leader shows individualized consideration, the leader would be familiar with the needs and motivations of the follower, and therefore there may not be any need for the follower to appeal to higher authority. Hence:

Hypothesis 6. Individualized consideration of manager will mediate the relationship between frequency of use of higher authority strategy by subordinate, and manager's charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership and intellectual stimulation.

METHODOLOGY

I collected data for this study from junior and middle level managers attending evening MBA and executive MBA programs at a prominent business school in eastern India, and from senior managers attending an executive development program conducted by the same school in western India. A total of 96 managers were surveyed, of whom 4 were women

and 92 were men. Respondents filled in the questionnaires during regular classroom sessions. Respondents were not asked to give any form of identification like name or roll number. All responses were thus anonymous, and this was made clear to every respondent. The questionnaires consisted of two sections. The first section on influence styles aimed at measuring the frequency of usage of different influence strategies by the respondent. The second section on leadership was for measuring the transformational leadership of the respondent's supervisor. A majority of respondents surveyed were at least 30 years old, and had been working with the supervisor they were rating, for at least 2 years.

Influence Strategies

I used Profile of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS) Form M (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980) consisting of 27 items, to measure the frequency with which subordinates (respondents) used the six strategies—assertiveness (6 items), bargaining (5 items), coalition (2 items), friendliness (6 items), higher authority (4 items), and reasoning (4 items)—to influence their immediate supervisors. Each item represented an influence tactic, and respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Occasionally; 4=Frequently; 5=Almost always), how often they generally use each of the 27 tactics. The mean score on the tactics comprising a particular strategy was taken as the measure of that strategy.

Transformational Leadership

I used Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6S of Bass and Avolio (1992) to measure transformational leadership of respondent's supervisor. The Questionnaire has a total of 12 items to measure the 4 factors of transformational leadership—3 items each for charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Respondents were requested to answer the MLQ by rating how frequently their current immediate supervisor had displayed the behaviors described, using a five-point scale (1=Not at all; 2=Once in a while; 3=Sometimes; 4=Fairly often; 5=Frequently, if not always). The mean rating on the 3 items comprising a factor was taken as the score for that factor. Correlations among the four factors are given in Table 1. The mean of the scores for the four factors was taken as the score for transformational leadership.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Transformational Components

Variables	mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4
1. Charismatic Leadership	3.27	0.87	(0.73)			
2. Inspirational Leadership	3.34	0.82	** 0.79	(0.69)		
3. Intellectual Stimulation	3.34	0.91	** 0.61	** 0.74	(0.79)	
4. Individualized Consideration	3.23	0.88	** 0.62	** 0.62	** 0.64	(0.70)

N=96. ** = $p < 0.01$. s.d.=standard deviation. Cronbach alpha is in parentheses along diagonal.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations between all variables in the study. Transformational leadership was significantly ($p<0.01$) positively related to the frequency of use of friendliness and reasoning strategies, thus verifying hypotheses 1 and 3. Hypothesis 5 obtained only moderate support since the negative relationship between transformational leadership and higher authority was not significant at 0.05 level ($r = -0.17$, $p<0.10$).

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Variables Studied

Variables	mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Assertiveness	2.33	0.61	(0.65)						
2. Bargaining	2.31	0.74	** 0.42	(0.68)					
3. Coalition	2.89	0.91	** 0.27	0.12	(0.54)				
4. Friendliness	3.21	0.60	0.07	** 0.30	0.06	(0.60)			
5. Higher Authority	2.04	0.60	** 0.46	** 0.36	* 0.21	0.11	(0.44)		
6. Reasoning	4.08	0.56	** 0.44	0.12	0.14	0.05	0.13	(0.58)	
7. Transformational Leadership	3.29	0.75	0.02	0.08	0.04	** 0.32	-0.17	** 0.27	(0.89)

N=96. * = p < 0.05. ** = p < 0.01. s.d.=standard deviation. Cronbach alpha is in parentheses along diagonal.

Zero-order and partial correlations between influence strategies (friendliness, higher authority and reasoning) and the four components of transformational leadership, controlling for one component at a time, are given in Table 3. Friendliness was significantly (p<0.05) positively related to inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, but the relationship became non-significant when charismatic leadership was controlled for. This supports Hypothesis 2. However, a similar feature was observed when each of the other three components—inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration—was separately controlled for.

Table 3. Mediating Effect of Transformational Components

Variable	CL	IL	IS	IC
Friendliness				
Zero-order correlation (r)	** 0.27	* 0.25	** 0.30	** 0.27
Charismatic Leadership (CL) controlled, partial r		0.06	0.18	0.13
Inspirational Leadership (IL) controlled, partial r	0.12		0.18	0.15
Intellectual Stimulation (IS) controlled, partial r	0.11	0.04		0.10
Individualized Consideration (IC) controlled, partial r	0.14	0.11	0.18	
Higher Authority				
Zero-order correlation (r)	-0.15	-0.20	* -0.24	-0.01
Charismatic Leadership (CL) controlled, partial r		-0.13	-0.19	0.11
Inspirational Leadership (IL) controlled, partial r	0.02		-0.15	0.15
Intellectual Stimulation (IS) controlled, partial r	0.01	-0.03		0.20
Individualized Consideration (IC) controlled, partial r	-0.18	* -0.25	** -0.31	
Reasoning				
Zero-order correlation (r)	0.16	0.17	** 0.26	** 0.35
Charismatic Leadership (CL) controlled, partial r		0.08	* 0.21	** 0.32
Inspirational Leadership (IL) controlled, partial r	0.04		* 0.20	** 0.31
Intellectual Stimulation (IS) controlled, partial r	-0.01	-0.03		* 0.25
Individualized Consideration (IC) controlled, partial r	-0.08	-0.06	0.05	

N=96. * = p < 0.05. ** = p < 0.01.

The relationship between reasoning and each of the three components—charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership and individualized consideration—decreased in strength when intellectual stimulation was controlled for. This provides support for Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 6 was not supported since the relationship between higher authority and each of the three components—charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership and intellectual stimulation—slightly increased in strength when individualized consideration was controlled for. Also, assertiveness, bargaining and coalition were not significantly related to any of the components of transformational leadership, when one component was controlled at a time.

DISCUSSION

Frequency of use of friendliness strategy by subordinate is significantly ($p<0.05$) positively related to manager's transformational leadership, and to each of the four components of transformational leadership—charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The relationship between friendliness and each of the four components becomes non-significant whenever any of the four components is controlled for. This seems to suggest that subordinates do not distinguish among the four components when it comes to using friendliness as an influence strategy. This also raises the possibility that the distinctiveness of the four components of transformational leadership might depend on specific situations.

Among the four components of transformational leadership, it is individualized consideration that has the strongest relationship with reasoning strategy. This relationship continues to be significant even when each of the other three components of transformational leadership is controlled for. This is probably because subordinates would want to reason out and convince their managers only if they see their managers to be showing them individualized consideration. When individualized consideration is controlled for, reasoning ceases to have any relationship with the other three components of transformational leadership. This indicates that individualized consideration is a stronger mediating variable between reasoning and intellectual stimulation than intellectual stimulation is between reasoning and individualized consideration. When intellectual stimulation or individualized consideration is controlled for, reasoning is not related to charismatic leadership and inspirational leadership. This demonstrates that charisma and inspiration are emotional appeals that hardly leave any room for a cognitive strategy like reasoning.

Frequency of use of higher authority strategy by subordinate is significantly ($p<0.05$) positively related to manager's intellectual stimulation, but not to the other three components of transformational leadership. The relationship however becomes non-significant when charismatic leadership or inspirational leadership is controlled for. When individualized consideration is controlled for, the relationship between higher authority and each of the other three components of transformational leadership increases in strength. Thus individualized consideration, contrary to the mediating effect that was hypothesized, seems to be moderating the relationship between higher authority and each of the other three components of transformational leadership. It should however be noted that the Cronbach Alpha for the four-item measure of higher authority is only 0.44, which makes the relationship of higher authority with other variables less reliable.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The sample of respondents consisted of those attending educational and training programs. Therefore a certain amount of self-selection bias might have crept in. Findings based on this sample may not be generalizable over the entire population of managers, since those who attend such programs may have a different profile from those who do not attend such programs. Also, both transformational leadership of manager and influence strategies of subordinate were measured by surveying the subordinate. The same source being used for measuring both the variables could have caused some measurement error.

Future research might benefit from extending this study to include measures of influence outcomes. Outcomes could capture success of influence strategies, and the impact the strategies have on the transformational leader. Longitudinal research is needed to assess the extent to which transformational leaders themselves are transformed because of the influence attempts made by followers.

Conclusion

The results of the study make it possible to conclude that some behavioral tactics are more likely to be used to influence transformational leaders. The relationship between influence strategies and the four components of transformational leadership is very complex. In the case of some strategies, followers may not even distinguish among the four components. Understanding the influence tactics that followers of transformational leaders use, would be a key first step toward analyzing the transforming effect that transformational leadership has on leaders.

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