
Impact of Spirituality and Political Skills on Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

The impact of spirituality and political skills on transformational leadership was studied using a 2 x 2 experimental design. Spirituality was operationalized as oneness, keeping in mind the context of the Indian culture. The sample consisted of 81 employees working in a public sector services organization in India. Results of analysis of variance show that transformational leadership is enhanced by spirituality but not by political skills. However, when used in combination with political skills, the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership is significantly lowered. This is perhaps because human beings are essentially spiritual in nature

and not what the organizational context demands from them as political beings. Hence, this paper focuses on the essentialness of people to behave in ways not in basic contradiction with their fundamental nature if they wish to enhance their transformational leadership.

Key words: Transformational leadership, spirituality, political skills, experimental design

There has been a growing interest in the field of transformational leadership. In this study, we examined the nature of the relationship between spirituality and transformational leadership. Spirituality, which implies the rejection of mere self-interest, is likely to enhance transformational leadership. We also analyzed the impact of political skills on transformational leadership in this study. Spirituality arises at the inner phenomenological level of human beings, and hence it becomes basic to their essential nature. Trying to induce people to be different from their basic nature can prove to be destructive of the human spirit. Keeping this in mind, we looked at spirituality in combination with political skills and studied their combined effect on transformational leadership, on the belief that human beings are not political by nature but the organizational context makes them political.

Theory and Hypotheses

Burns (1978) initially identified two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. The more traditional transactional leadership involves an exchange relationship between leaders and followers, but transformational leadership is based on leaders' shifting the values, beliefs, and needs of their followers. It is known to result in superior performance in organizations facing renewal and change.

Transformational Leadership

According to Burns (1978: 20), transformational leadership "occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality." Transformational leadership has been shown to affect various organizational outcomes. Nemanich and Keller (2007) studied a major acquisition and found that transformational leadership was positively related to acquisition acceptance, supervisor-rated performance, and job satisfaction. Transformational leaders also affected subordinate outcomes through the perceived climate they created for goal clarity and support for creative thinking. According to Bass (1985), there are four dimensions of transformational leadership—charisma (later subdivided into attributed charisma and idealized influence behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Key behaviors of successful transformational leaders include articulating goals, demonstrating confidence, and motivating followers without bartering for goods and rights that characterize transactional leaders (Kuhert & Lewis, 1987). To investigate if a consistent pattern of personality attributes could be associated with transformational leadership, Ross and Offermann (1997) considered nine personality variables. They found that an enabling personality profile, characterized by pragmatism, encouragement, and acceptance was strongly predictive of transformational leadership. Kejriwal and Krishnan (2004) showed that Vedic worldview enhanced transformational leadership. Krishnan (2001) attempted to draw a value profile of a transformational leader. He found that transformational leaders gave greater importance to values pertaining to others than to values concerning only themselves.

A study of U.S. presidents by House, Spangler, and Woycke (1991) revealed that presidential behavioral charisma was positively related to presidential need for power and presidential activity inhibition and negatively to presidential need for achievement. Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, and Popper (1998) showed that emphasis on collective identity by the leader enhanced the follower's perception of the leader being charismatic. Sosik (2005) found that the intensity of traditional, collectivistic work, self-transcendent, and self-enhancement values related positively to charismatic leadership. Van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005) found that leader prototypicality moderated the effect of leader self-sacrifice on perceptions of charisma. Rubin, Munz, and Bommer (2005) found that leader's emotion recognition, positive affectivity, and agreeableness positively predicted transformational leadership behavior.

Atwater and Yammarino (1993) showed that personal attributes accounted for a significant portion of the variance in subordinates' ratings of transformational leadership, using a sample of people at a military academy. Four types of predictors—trait, coping style, decision style, and athletic style—were investigated. Results showed that intelligence and emotional coping predicted higher ratings of transformational leadership. Sosik and Megerian (1999) extended Atwater and Yammarino's (1993) study to business contexts and found that self-awareness, motivation, and relationship management were positively related to transformational leadership.

Popper, Mayseless, and Castelnovo (2000) examined transformational leadership from a developmental perspective. Their study showed a positive correlation between transformational leadership and secure attachment style of development. Judge and Bono (2000) linked traits from the Big 5 to transformational leadership behavior and showed that extraversion and agreeableness positively predicted transformational leadership. Bono and Judge (2004) demonstrated through a meta-analysis that all the Big Five factors were

significantly related to transformational leadership, but only extraversion and neuroticism were large enough to be practically meaningful. Howell and Avolio (1993) indicated that internally oriented leaders exhibited more transformational behavior than the externally oriented ones.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) argued that authentic transformational leadership must be grounded in moral foundations, which included the moral foundation of the leaders and their concerns for self as well as the other. Banerji and Krishnan (2000) studied the relationship between the factors of transformational leadership and leader's preference for unethical behavior using five ethical scenarios—bribery, endangering the physical environment, lying, personal gain, and favoritism. They found that inspirational leadership was negatively related to leader's preference for bribery and favoritism, and intellectual stimulation was negatively related to preference for bribery. Transformational leadership is possible when leaders' end values like those of integrity, honor, and justice are adopted by followers thereby producing changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and goals (Kuhert & Lewis, 1987).

Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) claimed that spiritual self-identity characterized the inner psychological worldview of charismatic leaders. If the task of transformational leadership is uniting followers in some common higher purpose, this could be achieved by enhancing oneness in people and in their groups. This would be facilitated through the cultivation of spirituality by the leaders in themselves. We look at spirituality in the next section to understand its relationship with transformational leadership.

Spirituality

Spirituality comes from the Latin word *spiritus* meaning “breath of life.” It is a way of being and experiencing that comes through the awareness of a transcendental dimension and is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the ultimate (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1998). Spirituality refers to the direct feeling level experience of the ground of being, or of the process or flow of the universe. It refers to an experience in which one feels at one with creation, deeply meaningful, and in pervasive union with all things. The first trait of this unitive experience or spirituality involves the quality of oneness. We participate in oneness or unity to the extent that self-defining activities cease. In other words, it is not the addition of a unitive feeling but the subtraction of self-definition that characterizes true spirituality (Russell, 1992).

Spirituality is perceived in the way people seek, find, create, use, and expand personal meaning in the context of the entire universe (Thibault, Ellor, & Netting, 1991). Spirituality involves integration of three dimensions—knowledge base and belief systems, interior life and

inner self, and exterior life and institutional activity. These three domains overlap and interact with each other. They form the individuals' own life experiences and influence the world at large. Extending this concept of personal meaning to the workplace, spirituality is being part of a larger community, having work that has meaning and is purposeful as well as consistent with the spirit, and being able to work in an integrated fashion (Pfeffer, 2003).

In this paper, we have operationalized spirituality in the context of the Indian culture. The most prominent feature of spirituality in Indian culture is the ideal of oneness of all beings in the universe (Radhakrishnan, 1927). Hence, in this study, we operationalized spirituality as oneness with all beings.

According to the Upanishads, which comprise the foundations of Indian culture, the ultimate reality in this world is the universal spirit, which lies deep within us. Often it remains so deep within us that we are unaware of its existence. Hence, we falsely imagine that we are individuals composed only of body, senses, and mind. We imagine further that this individual being has a separate and independent existence, whereas in fact, it is only an appearance—a light upon a screen, the source of which is the spirit that we do not see (Prabhavananda, 1960: 51). A story from one of the Upanishads explains this concept well: a disciple on being asked by a teacher saw a potter each time lifting a lump of huge mass of clay resembling a mass of dough on his right and shaping it into a variety of objects of different sizes and shapes arrayed on the left. Later, on the disciple's inability to answer what he learnt from the process, the teacher explained that the original mass of clay was a unity and a homogeneity, while the differentiated objects a secondary derivative. The latter alone is not the truth. In like manner, when individuals are seen as different from each other, it is only a secondary fact of existence; the primary, original fact is that of unity, of the oneness of all existence (Chakraborty, 1995: 24-25).

Dimensions and outcomes of oneness. The process of realizing the spirit for what it is (the reality) and our individual being for what it is (a mere appearance), is the process of spiritual growth (Prabhavananda, 1960). When a person is aware of this reality, he or she begins to feel that backbiting a colleague is denigration of himself or herself. Cheating, lying, or concealing for selfish gain at someone else's expense is really harm done to oneself. Torturing the earth for human greed is knifing one's own self. Hating someone else is hating oneself (Chakraborty, 1995: 25). Hence, it is imperative that holistic outlook permeates, and expresses itself through appropriate thoughts, words, and deeds; else, wholesome management will remain an unrealized dream.

We have defined spirituality as oneness or identification with the universal or transcendental spirit or with all beings. Those who perceive their oneness with others could be characterized by certain specific dimensions. These are:

1. *Universal love.* Spirituality or oneness makes individuals friendly, compassionate, and love all living beings.

2. *Equanimity.* Those who are high on oneness will be even-minded in pain and pleasure, untroubled by circumstances, and free from attachment.

3. *Fair and just.* When people see no difference between themselves and others, they cannot be prejudiced or biased with respect to one particular person and are thus fair to all.

4. *Holistic approach.* Oneness involves sympathy, empathy, and identification not only with the feelings of others but also with their goals and objectives.

5. *Sensitivity.* Spirituality is characterized by sensitivity, such that the person can identify with the feelings, needs, demands, and aspirations of people around.

Transformational leadership and spirituality. Spirituality made manifest is the essence of transformational leadership. According to Burns (1978), leaders, as distinguished from mere power-holders, are genuinely interested in addressing the concerns of others. Transformational leadership involves lifting followers into their better selves. Addressing the long-term real needs of followers is what makes it synonymous with moral leadership. The transcendental concept of spirituality includes the rejection of self-interest values (Fairholm, 1996). Parameshwar (2006) studied how transformational leaders of global social change invented their higher purpose. The leaders awakened from entranced consciousness by (a) reframing personal suffering in the light of perceived eternal truths, (b) referencing inspiring standards of others in reflecting upon suffering, (c) reinforcing their identification with others in suffering, and (d) reorienting themselves toward serving others in suffering by invoking their perceived eternal truths. Tichy and Ulrich (1984) claimed that building shared values and vision setting is an important role of a transformational leader; Ross and Offermann (1997) found that enabling is an important predictor of transformational leadership. When leaders identify themselves with their followers, they are likely to be more transformational.

Hypothesis 1. Leader's spirituality enhances transformational leadership.

It has been documented that inter-role conflicts lead to stress in individuals, which arises when peoples' work roles require them to do work that is inconsistent with their basic beliefs and self-concept. Researchers on human spirituality argue that spirituality comes close to being the essential and basic nature of a human being. If this is correct, then trying to compel people to be different than what they are, is not only stressful and uses energy, but it also sends a message that what people's nature is in reality, is not what the organization wants or desires. (Pfeffer, 2003). Previous studies have explained how conventional organizational politics arouses anxiety by inducing workers to withdraw emotionally from organizations, possibly because politics does not come naturally to them, and organizational climate compels people to exhibit political behavior (Baum, 1989). Hence, in this study we combine political skills with spirituality and study their combined effect on transformational leadership.

Political Skill

Henry Mintzberg (1985) considered politics to constitute one among a number of systems of influence in an organization. He, however, described the system of politics as reflecting power that was technically illegitimate. Individual political behavior can be defined as the exercise of tactical influence by individuals which is strategically goal directed, rational, conscious, and intended to promote self-interest (Valle & Perrewe, 2000). Baum (1989) explained how conventional organizational politics aroused anxiety but suggested that people must participate in politics that would enable them to discover and serve collective interests.

Ferris, Berkson, Kaplan, Gilmore, Buckley, Hochwarter, and Witt (1999) pointed out that it was not enough to study the particular influence tactics or political behaviors, which reflect the "what" of influence but it was important to understand the "how" of influence which ultimately determined whether political behavior was successful or not. Perrewe, Ferris, Frink, and Anthony (2000) saw political skill as a construct that combined what to do in a particular work situation with how to execute the behavior in a convincing manner creating synergy among discrete behaviors. Ferris, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, and Frink (2001) defined political skill as "an interpersonal style construct that includes social perceptiveness or astuteness." They suggested that people high in political skill not only knew precisely what to do in different social situations at work, but also knew exactly how to do it in a sincere and engaging manner that disguised any ulterior, self-serving motives. Ferris et al. (2005) showed that political skill was positively related to self-monitoring, political savvy, and emotional intelligence; negatively related to trait anxiety; and not correlated with general mental ability. In addition, political skills predicted performance ratings of managers in two samples.

Dimensions of political skill. Ferris et al. (2001) contended that there were four dimensions that adequately represented the underlying structure of the political skill construct. These are:

1. *Self and social astuteness.* Individuals possessing political skill are astute observers of others and keenly attuned to diverse social situations.

2. *Interpersonal influence/control.* Politically skilled individuals have a strong and convincing personal style that tends to exert a powerful influence on those around them.

3. *Network building/social capital.* Individuals with strong political skills are adept at using diverse networks of people by easily developing friendships and building strong and beneficial alliances and coalitions.

4. *Genuineness/sincerity.* Tactics of politically skilled individuals are seen as subtle and their motives do not appear self-serving. They appear to others to be congruent, sincere, and genuine.

Implications of political behavior for the organization. Harrell-Cook, Ferris, and Dulebohn (1999) pointed out the implications of widespread political behavior for human resource decision making, especially when those behaviors are directed towards the supervisor as the target. Bartol and Martin (1983) conducted a study that gave minor indications that a manager's dependence on a subordinate was related to the subordinate's possession of organizational connections. Bartol and Martin (1990) elaborated that subordinates who had connections with powerful others in the organization exposed the manager to potential vulnerabilities.

Thus, as research suggests, political behavior has both positive and negative implications for an organization. Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar, and Ferris (2005) found that those opting to employ political behavior at work experienced a higher degree of emotional labor, but this relationship was found to operate differently at low and high levels of political skill. Specifically, emotional labor was a consequence of political behavior for those low in political skill, but emotional labor reactions from political behavior were neutralized for individuals high in political skill.

Yukl and Falbe (1990) argued that one of the most important determinants of managerial effectiveness was success in influencing subordinates, peers, and superiors. Wayne and Ferris (1990) concluded that subordinates' impression management tactics affected supervisor-subordinate exchange quality by influencing supervisors' liking for their subordinates. The individuals who were rewarded and promoted were not those who were the most competent but rather those who were most adept at behaving politically (Harrell-Cook et al., 1999).

Semadar, Robins, and Ferris (2006) examined four social effectiveness constructs (i.e., self-monitoring, leadership self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and political skill) in the prediction of managerial job performance. They found that political skill was the strongest predictor and that it had significant incremental validity in the prediction of performance over the prediction provided by the other three social effectiveness constructs as a set.

Politically skilled individuals enjoy a favorable social identity and hence earn significant and tangible benefits such as gaining favorable reactions to their ideas, enhanced access to important information, and increased cooperation and trust (Baron & Markman, 2000). Political skills create feeling of success, accomplishment, and self-efficacy, which lead to positive health-related outcomes. Perrewe, Ferris, Frink, and Anthony (2000) found that people with strong political skills viewed interpersonal interactions as opportunities rather than threats. Political skills helped deal with ambiguity and turbulence. Perrewe et al. (2005) examined the role of political skill in providing interpersonal control in the stressor-strain relationship. They obtained support for the hypothesized moderating effects of political skill such that greater political skill reduced the negative effects of role overload on all types of strain. Hence, politically skilled people fit naturally in executive positions. Hochwarter et al. (2007) examined the effects of felt accountability, political skill, and job tension on job performance ratings. They found that political skill moderated felt accountability-job performance ratings, felt accountability-job tension, and job tension-job performance ratings relationships. However, political skill most strongly moderated the job tension-job performance ratings linkage.

Political skills and transformational leadership. It is known that impression management strategies can be used to elicit attributions of charisma (Gardner, William, & Cleavenger, 1998). Judge and Bono (2000) conducted a study, which revealed that extraversion and agreeableness were positively related to transformational leadership. Extraversion is a personality dimension describing someone who is sociable, talkative, and assertive. Such characteristics make them skilled negotiators and adept at using diverse networks of people, which is an important political skill dimension. Agreeableness is being good-natured, cooperative, and trusting. Such leaders will exercise greater interpersonal control and they will be seen as genuine and sincere.

Hypothesis 2. Political skill is positively related to transformational leadership.

The effectiveness of transformational leaders will depend largely on the influence that such leaders have on their followers and the impression management tactics they use. We have referred to these as political skills. Spirituality, spoken in the context of oneness, gives rise to holistic concerns in the leader, which makes leaders transformational, as they will always keep the well-being of their followers in mind. While the focus of oneness is feeling for others' goals

as if they are one's own goals, the focus of political skill is often one's own goals only. Thus, if someone is high on spirituality, presence of political skill can only reduce the effect on transformational leadership. The interactive effect of spirituality and political skills should then make the leader less transformational.

Hypothesis 3. Political skill reduces the effect of spirituality on transformational leadership.

Method

The data for the study were collected from a large public sector services organization in India. The organization has a very wide client base, providing service to 11.6 million people. It has staff strength of about 124000 employees, 2048 branches all over India, and over 600000 agency force.

The sample size for the study was 81. The sample consisted of 5 females and 76 males. Their age group ranged from 27 to 59 years. The median age was 39 years. Of the 81 respondents, 74 belonged to grade 1, 5 were from grade 2, and 2 from grade 3. Their work experience ranged from 6 months to 40 years, the median work experience being 17 years.

Respondents were divided into four groups. Each group referred to as a cell, on four different occasions, was instructed to play a game as part of the experiment designed by us. We used a 2 x 2 experimental design, with spirituality and political skill as the manipulated variables. Each cell represented the presence or absence of the two variables we manipulated—spirituality and political skill.

A female student played the role of the leader of each group in the experiment. The scenario describing the leader in accordance with the manipulated cell was given in writing to all the subjects who were part of that cell. The subjects in each cell were asked to divide themselves into sub-groups of five each and each sub-group was given Indian Rupees 500 for being distributed among its members in any manner other than equal distribution. The distributions had to be justified by the sub-groups and approved by the leader. During the interactions, the leader demonstrated the presence of either manipulated variable or both as required by the cell assigned.

At the end of the experiment, the respondents were administered a questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire was the 47-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1991). The second part of the questionnaire included items for checking the success of experimental manipulation. The four dimensions of political skills were measured using the 40-item scale designed by Ferris, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, and Frink (2001). The 19-item scale for spirituality developed by us captured the five dimensions (sample item: "she is unhappy when

others are sad”). The respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire by judging the extent to which they agreed with each description of the leader’s behavior they had observed in the experiment just concluded. All responses were recorded on a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

The Cronbach alpha for all the dimensions was found to be greater than 0.54, except for the “fair and just” dimension of spirituality which had an alpha value of 0.20. Hence, we decided to drop this dimension for the purpose of our manipulation check. Results of ANOVA revealed that all the four dimensions of oneness were significantly higher in the yes-oneness cells as compared to the no-oneness cells. With respect to political skills, the four dimensions were higher in the yes-political skill cell as compared to the no-political skill cell, though the dimension network building/social capital did not reach statistical significance.

Results

All the five dimensions of transformational leadership were significantly correlated to each other. The results are presented in Table 1. We created a combined aggregate transformational leadership variable.

Table 1

Correlations between Variables

(N =81)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attributed Charisma	5.28	.96	(.67)				
2. Idealized Influence	5.38	.80	.64	(.64)			
3. Inspirational Leadership	5.25	.80	.59	.69	(.64)		
4. Intellectual Stimulation	4.81	.90	.47	.50	.64	(.69)	
5. Individualized Consideration	5.00	.88	.53	.51	.62	.53	(.63)

p < .001 for all correlations.

We did a 2 x 2 factored ANOVA of the five factors of transformational leadership and the aggregate transformational leadership score. The main effect of oneness on attributed charisma, individualized consideration, and aggregate transformational leadership was significant. Attributed charisma, individualized consideration, and aggregate transformational leadership were significantly higher in the yes-oneness as compared to the no-oneness cells thus supporting our first hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

ANOVA of Transformational Leadership across Yes-Oneness and No-Oneness Cells

Variables	M		SD		T
	Yes-Oneness	No-Oneness	Yes-Oneness	No-Oneness	
1. Attributed charisma	5.65	4.09	0.72	1.04	***14.19
2. Idealized influence	5.55	5.21	0.63	0.91	†3.92
3. Inspirational leadership	5.38	5.12	0.70	0.87	2.28
4. Intellectual stimulation	4.97	4.64	0.76	1.00	†2.92
5. Individualized consideration	5.31	4.68	0.78	0.88	***12.15
6. Transformational Leadership	5.37	4.19	0.52	0.49	**10.22

† = $p < .10$. ** = $p < .01$. *** = $p < .001$.

The main effect of political skill on all the five factors and aggregate transformational leadership was not significant. Transformational leadership was not significantly different across the yes-political skills and the no-political skill cells. Thus, no support could be obtained for our second hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

ANOVA of Transformational Leadership across Yes-Political Skill and No-Political Skill Cells

Variables	M		SD		F
	Yes-PS	No-PS	Yes-PS	No-PS	
1. Attributed Charisma	5.40	5.07	0.77	1.22	0.01
2. Idealized Influence	5.53	5.13	0.61	1.01	0.60
3. Inspirational Leadership	5.30	5.16	0.66	0.99	0.03
4. Intellectual Stimulation	4.84	4.74	0.82	1.04	1.44
5. Individualized consideration	5.07	4.88	0.83	0.97	0.46
6. Transformational Leadership	5.23	4.99	0.52	0.93	0.10

PS=Political Skill. $p > .10$ for all F.

The interaction effect of oneness and political skill on idealized influence, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and aggregate transformational leadership was significant. Transformational leadership was significantly higher in the yes-oneness and no-

political skill cell than in the yes-oneness and yes-political skill cell. Thus, introducing political skill reduced transformational leadership if oneness was present. This provided support for our Hypothesis 3.

Table 4

ANOVA of Transformational Leadership across All the Four Cells

	No-Oneness		Yes-Oneness		F
	No-PS	Yes-PS	Yes-PS	No-PS	
1. Attributed charisma	4.74	5.07	5.51	5.79	2.39
2. Idealized influence	4.96	5.47	5.44	5.67	*4.63
3. Inspirational leadership	4.94	5.30	5.18	5.59	*4.98
4. Intellectual stimulation	4.55	4.81	5.07	5.57	†2.95
5. Individualized consideration	5.59	4.69	4.70	5.26	*4.39
6. Transformational leadership	4.75	5.07	5.18	5.58	*6.03

PS=Political Skill. Cell means are presented in the table.

† = $p < .10$. * = $p < .05$. ** = $p < .01$.

Discussion

The hypothesized effect of spirituality on transformational leadership has been supported. The implication of this finding is that followers are more likely to be transformed when the leader is high on spirituality or oneness. Followers are transformed only when there is a change in their attitudes and beliefs and this in turn is a consequence of them adopting the leaders' end values of integrity, honor, and justice (Kuhert & Lewis, 1987). Transformational leadership, in which both leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978) is possible when leaders identify themselves with their followers and treat them as ends in themselves rather than as pawns for achieving some goals.

Another important aspect of our study was the combined impact of political skills and spirituality on transformational leadership. Our study revealed a reduction in the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership when political skills were also introduced. A possible reason for this could be that the dimensions of political skills like astuteness, interpersonal influence, and networking are inconsistent with the dimensions of spirituality as has been operationalized by us. A person high on spirituality has universal love, self-control, and a holistic approach, and is characterized by compassion, identifying with others' emotions, and

keeping in mind the needs, aspirations, and demands of people around them. Politically skilled people on the other hand, are those who develop an understanding of people around them, but influence outcomes in their desired direction. Being skilled negotiators, they use their skills to influence their social environment to serve their own purpose and not out of genuine love for the people they lead. This might explain the reduction in the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership when combined with political skills.

Implications

Our study also focuses on the practical aspects of being a transformational leader. The task of leaders today is to transform people and build cohesive teams. Increasing one's spirituality or oneness will help leaders in such a transformational effort. This means that enhancing the dimensions of oneness, namely universal love, sensitivity, self-control, and holistic approach in one's daily work life will help in making a leader more transformational.

If political skills reduce the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership as this study shows, it has serious implications for practicing managers. It means that a leader should be careful not to come across as being socially adept or highly networked as this may lead to suspicions in the minds of the followers, reducing the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership. Leaders being sincere and having universal love may be more transformational, but not as much more transformational if they are also seen as too self-serving as a result of being politically skilled, reducing transformational leadership to a mere bartering of goods and services, a characteristic of transactional and not transformational leadership.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The sample consisted of employees of an extremely large and bureaucratic organization, and was mainly from the supervisory and lower management cadre. A more representative sample may make the findings more generalizable. Another limitation could be the sample size, which was perhaps not adequate for some relationships to reach statistical significance.

A significant finding of this study is the positive impact of spirituality on transformational leadership. However, since we looked at only a small number of dimensions of spirituality, future research can reexamine these findings by including more dimensions. Studying more dimensions will also help future researchers delve into a deeper understanding of the reduction in the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership when political skill is also introduced.

Conclusion

The study of transformational leadership has always been of much interest in the organizational context. The findings of this study provide evidence on the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership. Spirituality, in a person, which has been operationalized in terms of oneness, is found to enhance transformational leadership. However, the organizational climate being political in nature is perhaps in fundamental conflict between what people are (as spiritual human beings) and what the organization expects them to be (as political beings). This reduces the impact of spirituality on transformational leadership. With spirituality emerging as an important workplace characteristic, this study assumes significance, as a holistic approach will go a long way in making an individual leader transformational.

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