

The Relationship between Leadership Styles and Organizational Commitment: A Test on Saudi Arabian Airline

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The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employees organizational commitment among the employees in an airline company. Three airports and 83 employees were chosen to achieve this purpose. The results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and employees affective commitment. The findings also reveal that there is no relationship between transactional leadership style and employees affective commitment. Hence, it is recommended that leaders should employ transformational leadership style to enhance the level of organizational commitment among employees in the airline company. Further studies on other leadership styles which can result in better understanding of the relationship between the study variables are also suggested.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Transactional leadership, Leadership Style, organizational affective commitment, Saudi Arabia Airline, Saudi Arabia.

Field of Research: Management

1. Introduction

In a competitive and fast changing business environment, organizations must change and keep pace with development in order to maintain their positions. According to Mosadeghrad (2003) if the organization wants to run effectively and efficiently, the most important and indispensable factor that organization need is the human resource. The success of organization depends on several factors and human resource is considered as one of the most significant factors. Organization needs hard working, loyal and engaged managers and employees. Committed employees have little or no intention to leave their jobs and are highly motivated to perform excellent work tasks. Therefore, organizations are always looking for committed workers in order to stay ahead of their competitors and to achieve their goals.

Organizational commitment is an indicator of employees' turnover and performance (Morris and Sherman, 1981). Many studies have proven that organizational commitment plays vital role in organizational performance and effectiveness (Riketta, 2002, Spence Laschinger et al., 2001). However, organizational commitment can be attributed to many factors and leadership styles are one of the factors that can influence organizational commitment. Studies have found that employees who are treated with respect and valued by their leaders feel more attached to their

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organizations (Stup, 2006). According to Ramchandran and Krishnan (2009), a leader and his leadership style are considered important determinants of employees' commitment.

Leadership styles and organizational commitment have been the focus of many studies worldwide, however, until today, to the researcher's knowledge, there has been no such study conducted in Saudi Arabia especially in the air transport industry. Since Saudi Arabia has an area of approximately 2,149,690 km², many Saudis prefer to travel by **plane** due to the long distances between the cities. Hence, it can be said that air transport plays a major role in the country's economy and social development. In **line** with this, the Saudi Arabian Airline has allocated a large sum of money to enhance the quality of its services to both local and international customers. In addition, Saudi Arabian Airline is considered as the mirror that reflects the image of the country since the employees in the airport are among the first people that the travelers from all over the world will first meet. Although much effort has been taken to enhance the quality of services, Saudi Airline has to deal with issues concerning its employees. One of the issues is the loyalty of its employees.

Leadership styles and organizational commitment was the focus of several studies worldwide. However, to researcher's knowledge, a few studies have addressed the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the context of airlines sector. In addition, despite many studies have focused on transformational leadership style (Avolio et al., 2004, Emery and Barker, 2007, Ismail et al., 2011, Koh et al., 1995, Limsila and Ogunlana, 2008), few studies include transactional leadership (Hayward et al., 2004, Lee, 2005). Hence, this study aims at investigating the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment among Saudi Arabian Airline employees. The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment among the employees of Saudi Arabian Airlines.

The remaining sections of this study are organized as follows: the immediate section presents the literature review relating to leadership styles and organizational commitment as well as the link between two variables. It followed by research methodology, results and discussion, and conclusion in section 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leadership Styles

Leadership is one of the most studied topics across the world(Kuchler, 2008). Leadership can be described as a process of interaction between leaders and their employees where leaders try to influence employees to fulfill a common goals(Northouse, 2010, Yukl, 2005). In other words, it is a process that affects people in order to get the desired outcomes. Previous studies on leadership have identified several types of leadership styles that leaders use in managing organizations(Chen and Chen, 2008). Leadership style is the way that leaders use to direct and stimulate their employees to achieve an organization's goals. The most prominent leadership styles are Burns' (1978) transactional and transformational leadership styles. According to Burns (1978), leadership process can be categorized into two, which are transformational and transactional.

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Transformational leadership is described in terms of a leader's influence on his or her subordinates, in which the leader's influence is able to make them trust, respect and be loyal to him or her and eventually to the organization. This in turn, will motivate them to do more than what they usually do (Bass and Avolio, 1994). These leaders act as role models for their employees and help them to look at the problem from different angles (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Burns (1978) has defined transformational leadership as a leadership style that stimulates subordinates by appealing to higher ideals and moral values.

According to Bass and Avolio (1990) transformational leaders display various types of behavior. The first type of behavior that transformational leaders show is that they usually maintains high standard of ethics and moral, in which, in turn is respected and trusted by subordinates and therefore, the subordinates emulate them. This concept of behavior is called idealized influence whereby such behavior refers to charismatic actions of the leader who centered on values and beliefs. The second type of behavior displayed by transformational leaders is known as inspirational motivation whereby it refers to leaders who encourage subordinates to accomplish goals by providing clear vision and explaining important idea in simple ways. The third type of behavior involves the simulation of subordinates' mind to be more creative and innovative in solving problems at the workplace and thus, this will eventually boost the subordinates' intellect. Finally, the type of behavior that transformational leaders have is called individualized consideration. It refers to leaders who treat each individual fairly and pay attention to individual's needs. When leaders are aware of individual needs, they can assign tasks more effectively.

Another type of leadership is transactional leadership. Burns (1978) who first introduced the study of transactional leadership has indicated that transactional leaders are those who seek to motivate subordinates by appealing their self-interest. Bass (1995) described transactional leadership as an exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates. Transactional leadership style is when a leader awards his or her subordinates in exchange for their excellent performance, and punish them for their poor performance (Bass and Riggio, 2006). According to Bass and Avolio (1990), transactional leaders exhibit different types of behavior : Contingent reward based on exchange process between leader and subordinates, he rewards them for good performance and punishes them for poor performance. Management-by-exception (active) leader determines standards and procedures for work and continuously monitors the followers' work and take corrective action when needed. Management-by-exception (passive) leader intervenes with subordinates only when mistakes occur.

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has become an important issue. It has been linked with a number of outcomes. Workers who are committed to their work are less likely to leave than those who are not(Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Organizational commitment has also been linked to low rate of absenteeism and high job performance (Geurts et al., 1999, Morris and Sherman, 1981, Somers, 1995). Therefore, it is become important for leaders to pay more attention to the employees' organizational commitment.

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Based on different opinions, the definition of organizational commitment differ. Luthans (2005) defined organizational commitment as an attitude reflecting workers' loyalty to their organization. Henkin and Marchiori (2003) described organizational commitment as a feeling of workers which push them to be part of their organization and recognize the goals, values of an organization.

Many authors proposed different models for organizational commitment. One of the most prominent model was developed by Mayer and Allen(1991) consisted three level of commitment; affective commitment, continuous commitment, and normative commitment. According to Mayer and Allen (1991) affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to the organization including beliefs, and desire regarding organizational goal achievements. Continuous commitment refers to employees' feeling of obligation to stay with the organization. And finally, normative commitment is based on the cost that employees have to incur if they want to quit the organization. However, affective commitment is more important for employees. It has been associated with positive organizational outcomes such as retention, attendance, and performance (Meyer and Allen, 1997). It is also seen as most beneficial to organizations (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Furthermore, the affective commitment has received the most study attention (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990, Meyer et al., 2002). In this study, the organizational commitment refers to affective commitment.

2.3 Relationship between Leadership Styles and Organizational Commitment

A number of studies have been conducted on the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment. For example, in the study on teachers' attitudes consisting of 864 samples in Singapore, the researchers found that the transformational leadership was significantly related to organizational commitment (Koh et al., 1995). In the study conducted by Emery and Barker (2007), the findings have found a positive relationship between all components of transformational leadership and organizational commitment among 124 managers in banking and food industries in U.S.A. Avolio et al. (2004) carried out a study on staff nurses in a public hospital in Singapore and found that transformational leadership style positively influences organizational commitment. In the study conducted by Limsili and Ogunlana (2008) the findings revealed that organizational commitment is facilitated by transformational leadership. Ismail and Yusuf (2009) found that there is a significant positive relation between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

Other researchers such as Lee (2005) stated that transformational leadership correlates significantly with organizational commitment, while transactional leadership does not have a significant relationship with organizational commitment. In a similar vein, Hayward et al. (2004) stated that transformational leadership has moderate positive correlation with affective commitment, and lower correlation with normative and continuous. The findings also indicated that no correlation was found between transactional leadership and organizational commitment components. Based on the above literature, hypotheses are formulated as follow:

H1: there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment.

H2: there is no significant relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational affective commitment.

3. Research Methodology

This study was conducted with a purpose to examine the relationship between transformational, transactional leadership styles and employees' organizational commitment. The population of this study was employees of Saudi Arabian Airline working at King Khalid International Airport, King Abdulaziz International Airport and King Fahad International Airport. These airports were chosen because they are the biggest airports in Saudi Arabia and they provide services to both local and international passengers. Questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data. The sampling procedure employed was the simple random sampling technique. 150 questionnaires were distributed in these three locations (airports), with the help received from the human resource management. Out of 96 questionnaires that were received, 13 questionnaires were excluded due to invalid responses. The final sample was 83, showing a response rate of 55.33 %.

In this study, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass And Avolio (1995) was used to measure leadership styles . The questionnaire consisting of 32 items, 20 items measuring transformational leadership style which consists of Idealized influence (attributed), Idealized influence (behavior), Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation, Individualized consideration. While 12 items measuring transactional leadership style consists of Contingent reward, Management-by-exception (active), Management-by-exception (passive). However, each component of transformational leadership and transactional leadership have been treated as one variable which is transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Five point Likert scales ranging from (1= Not at all, 2= once in a while, 3= sometimes, 4= fairly often, and 5= frequently, if not always) was used.

In order to measure affective organizational commitment, the questionnaire developed by Meyer, Allen, & Smith (1993) and Meyer & Allen (1997) was adopted in this study. The questionnaire consisted of 18 items measuring of components of organizational commitment (6 items for each scale), as this study focusing on affective organizational commitment, the 6 items related to this dimension were used. Respondents answered on a Five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree).

The reliability of instruments was tested via Cronbach's alpha. All instruments showed an acceptable level of reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Transformational level was .84, transactional was .77, and organizational commitment was .81. Descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages were used for describing characteristics of respondents such as gender, age, level of education, and number of years in service.

Pearson's correlations coefficient was applied in determining the relationship between independent variables (transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style) and dependent variable (affective organizational commitment). A positive correlation refers to a tendency for a high value in one variable to be associated with a high value in another, while a negative correlation reflects an association between a high value in one variable and a low value in another (Aaker et al., 2000).

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Sekaran (2003) stated that the correlation between two variables is considered a perfect positive correlation when it is close to +1, or perfect negative correlation when it close to -1. According to Salkind (2003) the relationship between variables can be described as very strong if the correlation coefficient is between $r=.80$ to $r=1.0$, strong if it between $r=.60$ to $r=.79$, moderate if the range between $.40$ to $.59$, and weak if it come between $r= .20$ to $r= .39$. Regression analysis was used to evaluate the predictive values of independents variables (transformational and transactional leadership styles) on dependents variables (organizational affective commitment).

4. Results and Discussion

The total number of employees participated in this study was 83. The demographic data revealed that 83.1 % of participants was male and 16.9 % was female. 15.6 % of the respondents aged between 20 and 30 years, 45.7 % was between 31 and 40 years, 25.3 % was between 41 and 50 years, and 13.2 % was from 51 to 60 years. In terms of respondents' education level, majority of them (59%) was degree holders , 26.5% had secondary school qualification, and 14.4 was master holders. In terms of number of the years in service, employees having experience between 1 and 5 years formed 39.8 %, between 6 and 10 years formed 34.9 %, between 11 and 15 years formed 15.6 % and between 16 -20 years formed 9.6 %. The data had been collected from King Khalid International Airport 46.9 %, King Fahad International Airport 21.6 % , King Abdulaziz International Airport 31.3 %. Table 1 illustrates frequency and percentage.

Table 1 : Respondents' Demographic Data

Name	Frequency	Percentage
King Khalid International Airport	39	46.9%
King Abdulaziz International Airport	26	31.3 %
King Fahad International Airport	18	21.6 %
Gender		
Male	69	83.1 %
Female	14	16.9 %
Age 20 – 30	13	15.6 %
Age 31 – 40	38	45.7 %
Age 41- 50	21	25.3 %
Age 51- 60	11	13.2 %
Master	12	14.4 %
Bachelor	49	59 %
Secondary school	22	26.5 %
Experience 1 – 5	33	39.8 %
Experience 6- 10	29	34.9 %
Experience 11- 15	13	15.6 %
Experience 16- 20	8	9.6 %

Correlation

The results of Pearson's correlation between the independent variable (transformational leadership style) and dependent variable (organizational affective commitment) are shown in (table 2) below. The analysis shows that there is a

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significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment among the Saudi Arabian Airline employees. The significance level gathered was at $p \leq 0.01$ significance level ($r = .601$). Therefore, this study has proven that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment. However, the analysis results also reveal that there is no relationship between transactional leadership style as the independent variable and organizational affective commitment as the dependent variable (table 3). Hence, it has been proven that there is no significant relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational affective commitment.

Table 2: correlation between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment

		Correlations	
		Transformational leadership style	Organizational affective commitment
TL	Pearson Correlation	1	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	83	83
OAC	Pearson Correlation	.601**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	83	83

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TL = Transformational Leadership Style, OAC = Organizational Affective Commitment

Table 3: correlation between transactional leadership style and organizational affective commitment

		Correlations	
		Transactional leadership style	Organizational affective commitment
TF	Pearson Correlation	1	-.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.766
	N	83	83
OAC	Pearson Correlation	-.033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.766	
	N	83	83

TF = Transactional Leadership

OAC = Organizational Affective Commitment

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Regression Analysis

Table 4: model summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.601 ^a	.361	.353	11.44332

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership Style

Model summary (table 4) shows that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment R = .601 . R Square = .361 which indicates that transformational leadership style can contribute 36.1 percent to increase organizational affective commitment.

Table 5: ANOVA

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5994.954	1	5994.954	45.781	.000 ^a
	Residual	10606.920	81	130.950		
	Total	16601.874	82			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership Style

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Affective Commitment

The ANOVA (table 5) shows that the F value = 45.781 is significant at the .000 level. The df degree of freedom in same table, represents the number of independent variable (1) , while second number 81 show the total number of complete responses minus the number of independent variable, minus 1. However, results in table 5 show that the model is fit. F value shows that there is a model fit between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment.

Table 6: Coefficients

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.494	7.990		2.189	.031
	TL	.785	.116	.601	6.766	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Affective Commitment

TL: Transformational leadership style

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Based on the results from table 6, $B = .785$, this means if there is one unit change in independent variable (transformational leadership style) there would be .785 change in dependent variable (organizational affective commitment).

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership style and employees organizational commitment among the employees of Saudi Arabian Airlines. Pearson's correlation was used to determine the relationship between research variables. Regression analysis was applied to investigate the impact of independent variables on dependent variable. The findings of the study have revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational affective commitment. It also found that there is no relationship between transactional leadership styles.

The results of study confirmed the arguments posed by Lee (2005), and Hayward et al. (2004). This study revealed that the findings found in some society might be evident in a different society. In terms of relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational commitment, the finding of this study are consistent with previous studies which found a positive relationship between two variables (Avolio et al., 2004, Emery and Barker, 2007, Ismail et al., 2011, Koh et al., 1995, Limsila and Ogunlana, 2008). This means that adopting transformational leadership style can increase organizational commitment. Inevitably, this study has contributed to the body of research on leadership styles and organizational commitment, especially in Saudi Arabia as there is a lack of studies on leadership styles and organizational commitment. It is believed that this study would help decision makers and the top management in Saudi Arabian Airline to enhance the employees' organizational commitment which in turn will be reflected through the high quality service offered by its employees.

Despite the contribution of this study to the body of research in the way that practicing transformational leadership style can increase the employees' organizational commitment. This study like other studies has certain limitations. Firstly the data that was used in this study was based on a small sample size, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized. Secondly, this study highlighted the relationship of transformational and transactional leadership style and employee's affective commitment, while there are other leadership styles can be related to organizational affective commitment. It is suggested that future studies will include other leadership styles and use bigger sample size, in which could result in a better understanding of the relationship between leadership styles and employees' organizational commitment.

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