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The Relationship between Transactional/Transformational Leadership Attributes and Best Workplace Organizations

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research paper was to examine to what extent a relationship existed between transformational/ transactional leadership and corporate rank on the Best Workplaces List published by the Great Places to Work Institute. The study included a sample of 35 chief executive officers (CEOs) whose organizations were ranked among the 2012 best workplaces in the United States. The study had a sample of 35 chief executive officers whose organizations were ranked among the 2012 best workplaces in the United States. Study participants completed a mailed self-report survey in form of an adapted Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Companies of participants were categorized by size and ranked based on the Best Workplace List. The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the variables of interest. The findings of this study indicated no significant relationships between the transformational and transformational leadership behaviors and corporate ranking for the small and midsize companies. Overall, the findings of this study do not support the interactive relationship between transformational and transactional leadership attributes of CEOs and corporate ranking of best workplaces. The small sample size was the primary confounding factor, and therefore additional research is warranted with a larger sample.

Keywords: CEO success, Great Place to Work Institute, Leadership traits, Leadership behaviors, Level 5 hierarchy

Introduction:

According to Wong and Davey (2007), though there appears to be a lot written about organizational leadership and management, and several graduate schools appear to have been improved their curricula in terms of teaching leadership and management. However, one might still ask the question: Are the right leaders being trained/developed for what is described for today's complex and unpredictable future? Thus, there appears to be a pressing need to do what is described as some soul *searching and hard thinking* concerning how to develop leadership for the next generation (Wong & Davey, 2007). Furthermore, theorists such as Posner believed that there appears a shift in leadership about self to one about others. As a result, certain values are considered critical to maintain what is described as ethical management in an organization such as honesty, concern for others, justice, among others (Russell, 2001). This is because positional power is not as influential in today's organization. Instead, today's leaders (CEOs) tend to derive one's influence from values. For example, when an organizational leader brings ethical values into one's organization it tends to lead to increase productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, and employee retention (McLaughlin, 2009).

Thus, the researcher is a proponent that today's leadership should not be one based on what is described by Wong and Davey (2007) as process and outcome. Instead, the researcher agrees that the new paradigm of leadership as one based on people and the future to be the only way for a 21st century leader to lead (Wong & Davey, 2007), and therefore organizations need to develop the right kind of organizational leaders (CEOs) for today's complex and unpredictable future. This is because there is usually condition for change that might emerge over time as the social climate tends to influence the well-being of certain groups such as employees, among others (Hickman, 2010). As a result, the dominant philosophy of only profit maximization for a particular organization needs to be balanced with a sense of caring for others such as employees in the workplace. In essence, the bottom line is insufficient in order to make an organization successful. It also needs a sense of humanity and community as well (Wong & Davey, 2007).

Wood and Vilkinas (2005) stated that a chief executive officer (CEO) should possess certain leadership attributes such as values in order to lead an organization effectively. According to Russell (2001) an organizational leader's personal value system is described as being a part of one's *psyche* and influences one's behavior (Russell, 2001). Furthermore, a CEO is considered as the most important person in the organizational development efforts of a particular organization (Boss & Boss, 1985). This is because a CEO is the organizational leader who establishes and applies operational strategies for the performance of that particular organization. In essence, a CEO is usually responsible for strategy making in an organization (O'Shannassy, 2010). However, one might argue that it appears a norm for leadership studies to focus attention on a blend of different types of organizational leaders, including middle and senior level managers rather than using only CEOS as participants. Notwithstanding this, it is essential that one comprehends that a CEO tends to operate in what is described as a different organizational context from other types of senior managers, and therefore, it might be profound differences in a particular research result using only CEOs as participants (Wood & Vikinas, 2005). More importantly, studies have found that there is usually a positive relationship between CEO performance and organizational performance.

The accomplishment of being selected as a best workplace organization in the United States appears to have implications for people's self- esteem. For instance, an employee who tends to high self –esteem usually views oneself as useful, invaluable, and competent (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). As a result the Great Place to Work Institute (2016) found that an organization tends to have higher levels of productivity and profitability when there are employees who are engaged and loyal when compared to an organization with disengaged employees. In essence, one might argue these engaged individuals have higher self-esteem of themselves than those who are disengaged. This is because a person's self –esteem usually relate s to one's self-worth (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). For example, according to the Great Place

to Work Institute, there are cases in which performance increased by up to 50 percent when there were loyal and engaged employees. Furthermore, overall engaged employees were approximately 65 percent less likely to leave their jobs in best workplace organizations (Great Place to Work, 2016). In addition, the Great Place to Work Institute also found that best workplace organizations tend to provide three times the rate of returns to shareholders when compared to other organizations.

Theoretical basis of research:

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance

It is telling that though Burns was considered to be the first theorist to discuss the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership, however, Bass was the theorist to introduce these concepts in an organizational setting (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). According to Ravazadeh and Ravazadeh (2013), the transformational leadership model in comparison with the transactional leadership model tends to go further than the exchange of a particular resource for productivity in an organization. Instead, a transformational leader tries to develop and empower an employee to realize one's fullest capability (Cavazotte, Moreno, & Bernardo, 2013). Burns (1978) also appeared to believe that transformational leadership tends to go beyond influencing a particular employee. It also influences the overall culture of a particular organization. Thus, one might argue that transformation leadership focuses on the greater good of a particular organization/group. This is because a transformational leader tends to communicates what is described as a collective vision for the particular organization (Groves & Larocca, 2011).

Boerner, Eisenbeiss, and Griesser (2007) discussed that there appear to be a series of quantitative studies that have investigated the relationship between transformational leadership attributes and organizational performance performed over the years. These studies found that there tends to be a positive relationship between transformational leadership attributes and organizational performance in terms of different organizational setting with different criteria for success. In addition, studies also found that transformational leadership attributes tend to relate positively to what is described as improvement in the shared identity of particular workgroup (Boerner et al., 2007). According to Polychroniou (2009), this shared identity usually encourages team spirit and cooperation among organizational members. Finally, studies also found that transformational leadership attributes tend to have a considerable, positive impact on organizational commitment among employees in an organization (Chen, Chen, & Chen, 2010). This organizational commitment might be observed when an employee applies more effort for the particular organization and exhibits commitment to the organization by staying with that organization. This is because the employee tends to believe and accept the principles and objectives of that particular organization (Dhammika, Ahmed, & Sam, 2013). However, according to Hamdi and Rajablu (2012), the opposite occurs, in that, there is poor performance when there is no organizational commitment from employees in a particular organization.

According to Fasola, Adeyemi and Olowe (2013), Burns identified four factors concerning the transformational leadership model: charisma, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. For example, the charisma factor is when an organizational leader earns trust and admiration from an employee by taking account of the person's need and emphasizes the importance of moral and ethical implications of certain critical decisions. The inspirational motivation factor is when an organizational leader provides meaning to an employee's task, and encourages the particular employee to imagine what is described as an *attractive future state* for one's organization. This might be achieved when the particular employee models the organizational leader's own passion and conviction (Groves & Larocca, 2011; Warrick, 2011). The intellectual stimulation factor is when an organizational leader encourages an employee to be creative by critiquing one's own assumption, being able to reframe a particular problem, and being able to approach a particular problem in a new way (Bacha &Walker, 2011; Groves & Larocca, 2011). Finally, the individualized consideration factor is when an organizational

leader pays close attention to an employee's individual need to achieve and grow, and creates new learning opportunity for that particular employee. In essence, one might argue that one acts as a coach to the employee (Bacha &Walker, 2011; Groves & Larocca, 2011).

Transactional Leadership and Organizational Performance

Fasola et al. (2013) stated that the transactional leadership model tends to focus on an exchange process between an organizational leader and an employee. Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2009) opined that this exchange process tends to assist an employee to get one's needs satisfied. For instance, one might argue that this exchange process might take different forms, such as either psychological to satisfy a particular need, or economical for the completion of a particular task. However, the exchange relationship seems to be temporary, in that, it last until the duration of the exchange. There does not appear to be any surety that it will go beyond that transaction point (Hughes et al., 2009).

According to Northouse (2012), there are two main transactional leadership factors: contingency reward and management-by-exception. Firstly, the contingency reward tends to be an exchange process, which relates an employee's effort to a particular external reward. This means that an organizational leader clarifies an employee's expectation and offers recognition and reward when a particular goal is accomplished (Groves & Larocca, 2011). Secondly, Northouse (2012) stated there are two types of management-by-exception: active and passive. For instance, an active type of management-by-exception occurs when an organizational leader observes an employee closely for a mistake and then takes the necessary corrective action. Meanwhile, the passive type of management is when an organizational leader tends to intervene only after certain standards have not been realized or met (Northouse, 2012). However, Northouse (2012) stated that either type of management-by-exception appear to use more negative reinforcement rather than positive reinforcement. One might argue that this is because negative reinforcement is when an organizational leader tends to withdraw something considered negative until an employee meets a certain expectation (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007).

Research Questions/Hypotheses

The main research question will relate to the question of a possible relationship between the transactional/transformational leadership attributes and organizational performance in terms of an organization being listed as a best workplace. In the research, the independent variables will be the transactional/transformational leadership attributes. Meanwhile, the dependent variable will be the ranking given to the best workplace organizations for a particular year, which is published in the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute. This ranking for best workplace organizations might be considered as a discrete variable because it is not continuous (Bluman, 2011). The Great Place to Work Institute tends to rank an organization as a best workplace based on a standardized metric scores obtained from its Trust Employee Survey and Culture Audit. In addition, the higher the score, the higher ranking a best workplace organization tends to obtain (Great Place to Work, 2012).

According to Creswell (2013), an independent variable is a variable that tends to affect a particular outcome, and a dependent variable usually depends on the independent variable. Furthermore, in a quantitative research, a researcher usually tests a particular theory with the use of hypotheses/questions that are derived from this particular theory (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the following research questions and hypotheses will guide this research study:

R1: Is there a positive correlation between profitable organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute and CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes?
H_1: There is a positive correlation between ranking given to small sized best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute and CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes?
H_o: There is no positive correlation between ranking given to small sized best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute and CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes?
R2: : Is there a positive correlation between ranking given to midsized best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute and CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes?
H_1: There is a positive correlation between ranking given to midsized best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute and CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes?
H_o: There is no positive correlation between ranking given to midsized best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute and CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes?

Research methodology

I decided to use the research design such as the survey design to conduct one's research study. Creswell (2013) stated that a survey design tends to provide a numeric description of perspectives of a population by studying a sample of that particular population (e.g., CEOs of best workplace organization in a specific year). In this research paper, I chose the sample of approximately 103 CEOs from these organizations being ranked for the particular year (e.g., 2012) listed by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Workplace. However, there will be an eligibility criterion in choosing a particular CEO for an organization, in that, he/she needs to be in one's position for at least two years (i.e., the researcher will collect demographic information such as age, tenure as CEOs, among others), which appears sufficient in order to effect change in the particular organization (Wood & Vilkinas, 2005).
This particular research study uses a quantitative approach, in that, it is considered as an applicable methodology to conduct leadership studies such as to build knowledge by validating an existing theory (Borland, 2001). Furthermore, a quantitative methodology is where the research study uses what is described as deductive / postpositivistic form of inquiry to investigate the relationship among independent and dependent variables as in the case of the current research (Creswell, 2013). Thus, a quantitative methodology will provide objective findings based on statistical /measurable evidence, and this process will be aided with the use of a survey- based instrument to collect data (Creswell, 2013).
The data collection process consisted of an established self –report survey called the adapted Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). This survey was mailed and requested CEOs to manually fill out the hard copy of the survey and returns it via postage paid mail to the current researcher. According to American Psychological Association (2010), a researcher such as the current researcher should maintain confidentiality and anonymity in the data collection process. One of the reasons for a mailed survey is that it gives the time and convenience to a particular respondent to complete the survey. In essence, it gives a rapid turnaround time in data collection (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, I will offer a copy of the findings to the participants along with emphasis on the importance of one's research study; the use of stamp, self-addressed envelopes; personalizing letters with individualized signatures preferably in blue ink, in order to increase response rates. This is because Dillman (2007) stated that a researcher should follow certain techniques to increase the response rates from a research using mailed survey. In essence, this type of exchange process is such that, a participant is more likely to return a mailed survey if

the perceived benefits appear to exceed the costs of participation, and where there is the establishment of trust.

The current researcher had requested permission to use the Rosener's (1990) adapted Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire in order to measure transactional and transformational leadership attributes of CEOs, whose organizations are listed among the best workplace organizations in the United States by the Great Place to Work Institute. I will be using this version of the MLQ because it does not appear to have implications for gender differences (Rosener, 1990). According to Fasola et al. (2013), the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is considered as one of the most frequently used and validated measurement of transactional and transformational leadership. This scale tends to have four subscales concerning the four factors of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. It also tends to have two subscales concerning the transactional leadership: management-by-exception and contingent reward. However, the adapted, MLQ scale tends to have subscales only based on the following transactional and transformational leadership factors: intellectual stimulation, charisma, contingent reward, individual consideration, and management-by-exception. In addition, according to Groves and Larocca (2011), Bass and Avolio developed the MLQ survey to measure the degree to which an organizational leader (e.g., a CEO) tends to exhibit transactional/transformational leadership attributes. I analyzed the collected data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software, however, the Spearman correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship among the dependent and independent variables. This is because the dependent variable is discrete and the independent variables are continuous (Bluman, 2011). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the adapted MLQ instrument. Below are the reliability scores for each subscale.

Table 1:Reliability Analysis for the Adapted MLQ Subscales

	Charisma	**IndConsid**	**Reward**	**Intellect**	**Exception**
Charisma	1.000	.935	.824	.924	.589
IndConsid	.935	1.000	.882	.920	.553
Reward	.824	.882	1.000	.859	.569
Intellect	.924	.920	.859	1.000	.587
Exception	.589	.553	.569	.587	1.000

Results/Conclusion

According to American Psychological Association (2010), the results/findings section of a particular research study as in the case of the current research study, tends to summarize the collected data and the analysis conducted on these data. However, a researcher such as the current researcher needs to make sure that one mentions all pertinent results, even if these findings run counter to the expected results.

Subsequent to presenting one's findings, a researcher usually interprets and evaluates the implications of one's findings for instance, in terms of the original hypotheses (American Psychological Association, 2010). In essence, one examines, interprets, and qualifies one's findings and draws inferences and certain conclusions (American Psychological Association, 2010).

Babbie (2009) explained that when there is no response bias in one's research study it is considered more significant than the actual response rate in a particular research study as in the case of the current research study. However, I obtained a response rate nearing 44 percent from using Dillman's (2007) techniques for mail survey. The finding of this study indicated that there was no significant result between the interaction of transformational and transactional behaviors and corporate rank on the Best Workplaces List (BWL) published by the Great Place to Work Institute in terms of small businesses, midsized businesses, small-sized Fortune 500 companies, and midsized Fortune 500 companies. Please see Table 2 below, r_s (35) = -.191, p >.05

Table 2: Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between Rank on Best workplaces and Interactive Transformational and Transformational Leadership Behaviors

		RaRank
Avg. Behav	Spearman's Rho Rank Correlation Coefficient	-.191
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.136
	N	35

Discussion

It was not known if a relationship existed between the interaction of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors and organizational performance in terms of best workplaces. This might be applicable because theorists such as Waldman appeared to agree with the interactive relationship between transactional and transformational styles, claiming that leadership characteristics such as transactional and charisma behaviors might affect the financial performance of an organization. However, for the most part these results were inconclusive and did not reach the level of statistical significance (Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001). In addition, some studies found that when leaders exhibit transactional leadership behaviors with transformational leadership behaviors it usually produces above average performance among employees (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2012). Thus, this study examined how the combination of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors associates with organizational performance in terms of best workplaces. However, a major weakness of this particular research study was a low response rate, and this tends to produce what is described as a non-response bias in the study (Paxson, 1995). This is because the CEOs, who did not complete the survey, usually do not sufficiently represent the true sample population. In essence, the perspectives of those CEO who did not participate in the research study may differ considerably from those CEOs who actually engaged in the research study (Paxson, 1995).

Limitations

The sample size in this study deserves some comment. The CEOs selection process was difficult. An important limitation in this study is that low response rates may produce a major source of error through non –response bias. This is because those who completed the survey questionnaires probably do not adequately represent the population. This means that opinions of those who did not respond may differ significantly from those who did respond (Paxson, 1995). In addition, I am cognizant that some of the CEOs who answered the survey might have scored themselves higher than they should have. Therefore, ranking given to best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute does not seem to be a factor in terms of transformational and transactional leadership. Instead, I decided to examine the interaction of transformational and transformational leadership and the overall best workplace organizations in the United States.

Implications

The objective of the findings was an attempt to assist in the development of certain leadership attributes in future CEOs to achieve success in terms of an organization-based award such as best workplaces. This is because there is still little known about the defining attributes of effective leadership. The study used transactional and transformational leadership behaviors concerning the full-range theory (charisma, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, contingent reward, and management-by-exception). However, the results found that overall there was no relationship between the interaction of transformational and transformational leadership behaviors and the ranking by the Great Place to Work Institute.

Recommendation

The Recommendation section of this particular research study will discuss recommendations in order to advance research studies on this particular topic: What is the relationship between CEO transactional/transformational leadership attributes and ranking given to best workplace organizations in the United States published by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute. Though, I did not find a positive relationship between the independent and independent variables, one is cognizant that the findings might be improved. Thus, I will give some recommendations on how a future researcher might improve one's findings based on this particular research study.

For example, according to Larson and Poist (2004), one might need to address the response rates for CEOs in order to guard against non-response bias. Thus, a recommendation might be for a future researcher to obtain trade association sponsorship, and then the particular researcher sends mail survey to CEOs through one's university. Another recommendation might be to provide an alternative for a CEO to fill out the particular survey. This means that the particular researcher gives a particular CEO an option to complete the survey, either manually and then one returns the mail survey to the researcher through a postage paid mail. Another option might be that particular CEO logs onto a secured website and completes the survey online. This particular recommendation might provide flexibility to the respondent

to complete the survey, and therefore might increase the response rate. Finally, I will focus only on CEOs of best workplace organizations in the United States ranked and listed by the Fortune magazine in collaboration with the Great Place to Work Institute. However, a future researcher might replicate this particular research study to include CEOs from abroad. This is because the Great Place to Work Institute also ranked international organizations as best workplaces as well. For example, when one replicates this particular study with international participants, the particular researcher might compare the findings for similarities with the participants from the United States. Thus, this might add to the generalization of one's findings in terms of certain defining leadership attributes to make an organization becomes a best workplace organization regardless of culture/nationality such as in India among others.

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