

# A Study of the Relationship between Leadership Styles and Employees' Behavioural Outcomes with respect to the Mediating Role of Organizational Politics

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Received: December 18 2013

Accepted: January 24 2014

## ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between leadership styles and employees' behavioral outcomes with respect to the mediating role of organizational politics. The research methodology was applied and descriptive-correlational in terms of purpose and conduction respectively. Statistical population included all the employees of Social Security Organization of Lorestan Province of Iran in year 2013; and 183 employees were selected as the sample size by using stratified random sampling method. In order to collect data, 5 standard questionnaires were used including transformational leadership of Bass and Avolio, William's transactional leadership, Balfour & Wechsler's organizational commitment, Chun's organizational citizenship behaviour and Karatepe's organizational politics. In order to analyze the data, the path analysis and t-test through smartPLS software were used. The results revealed that there is a positive and significant causal relationship between transformational leadership style and employees' behavioral outcomes (organizational commitment and citizenship behavior). However, no relationship was observed between transactional leadership style and employees' behavioral outcomes. Besides, employees' perception of organizational politics mediates the relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational commitment.

**KEY WORDS:** *Transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, perception of organizational politics, employees' behavioral outcomes*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a subject which has attracted the attention of researchers and the public from a long time ago. The reason why leadership is widely attractive is that it is a mysterious process which exists in all people's lives. In most cases, behavioral sciences researchers have tried to find out based on what characteristics, abilities, behaviors, and power sources or relying on what aspects of the position, it is possible to determine the leader's capability in affecting the followers and accomplishing shared objectives (Yukl, 2003, p. 2). It's been for years that leadership has been particularly considered in the academic, research and executive communities of industrial societies. By looking at history, it becomes clear that the essence of many myths and legends of various nations has been the presence of smart and brave leaders who could successfully save nations, groups and organizations in critical moments (Ghahreman Tabrizi, 2005, p. 4). Leadership style which is adopted by the leader while working has been called one of the most important elements of leadership or management situation. Style does not mean how a manager or leader behaves in a particular situation, but it means how others, especially subordinates perceive his/her behavior. Leadership style is defined as the individual's sustainable behavioral patterns in a form observed by others (Hersey & Blanchard, 2001). Leadership has a major impact on management, commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Leadership theories attempt to define leadership styles and relate them to different aspects of organizations' outcomes. Most researchers mainly focus on two leadership styles, i.e. transactional leadership style and transformational leadership style. The theories of leadership state that transformational leadership style largely affects related job behaviors of employees and eventually, in comparison to transactional leadership style, influences their job performance. Organizational politics has been explained by researchers through different approaches as the background of organizational citizenship behavior and their commitment. Most studies have relied on the definition of organizational politics as the technically designed behavior or behavior allocated for maximizing self-interest which is at odds with total desired organizational outcomes. Therefore, this perspective, from the organizational members' view along with several other studies which relate organizational politics to theory of justice, equity and equality, has a negative effect. However, some of the studies explain organizational politics as a power game and affect the plans intended to achieve the best outcomes to get accustomed to (Islam et al., 2013). The preliminary concept of transformational leadership was presented by Burns and as a result of his descriptive studies on political

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leaders. According to Burns, transforming leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation" (Rahmati, 2010, p.19).

Burns (1987) specified that transforming leaders possess insight and stimulate others to try to do great works. Burns continued: "only transforming leaders are able to outline the necessary paths for new organizations; it is because they are the source of changes, have mastery over changes governing the organization and have control over the changes" (Moghli, 2003, p. 80).

Burns (1987) defined transformational leadership as the factor motivating followers through more attractive higher ideals and morale values. Since transforming leaders have a clear vision of the future, they are in pursuit of changes and progress of the organization to realize their dreams. Transforming leaders are who inspire their followers, raise their spirit, and direct them in a path which promotes the organization's interests. Besides, these individuals cause their subordinates to act in high spirits and have deep effects on the organization (Bass, 1990).

Transforming leaders refers to those leaders who intend to make a new path of growth and flourishing by generating new ideas and perspectives, and mobilize the entire organizational members for making fundamental changes in pillars and foundation of the organization in order to make the required preparations and acquire capabilities for moving in the new path and reaching higher points of ideal performance by establishing commitment and abundant enthusiasm among managers and employees (Sanjaghi, 2000).

Transformational leaders persuade their followers to put aside their interests for the sake of the organization and they are able to have a deep and great influence on their followers. Transformational leaders pay attention to the needs and problems of the followers for progress, and raise their followers' awareness of affairs, so that they look at obsolete issues in new ways; besides, transformational leaders are able to stimulate, motivate and induce the followers to make more attempt to achieve the objectives. Transformational leadership considers individuals who apply wisdom features and qualitative communication to raise aspirations and wishes as well as transfer of forces and organizational systems towards a new model or high performance (Stone et al., 2004, p.352). Transformational leadership transforms the whole society through its words and deeds, and have a great influence on the followers' principles. This kind of leadership is accomplished when leaders increase their employees' interest in the work, make them aware of the goals and mission, and encourage their followers to think of beyond personal interests. Bernard Bass, based on Burns theory of transformational leadership, proposed a new theory in 1985 that leaders can exhibit both transformational and transactional behaviours; in fact, in contrast to Burns who believed that two transformational and transactional concepts cannot be added together, Bernard Bass called these two as complementary. Hater & Bass (1988) stated that transformational leadership affects the organization's mission through a symbolic mentality and affects followers through emphasis on increased attempt. While, transactional leaders act through structure, considerations and arousing the followers' expectation in relation to determined objectives (Hater & Bass, 1988).

In summary, transformational leaders emphasize strengthening the followers and pursuing organizational and formal changes of the new systems, processes and values, and transformational leaders are the ones who are moving the world. This group of managers have more freedom in their work. They mobilize their subordinates and inspire them to achieve the objectives, and stimulate them with respect to how it is possible to achieve a goal. They maintain the relationship with subordinates and freely share the information with them.

Transformational leadership is a series of exchanges and bargains between leaders and followers. In fact, it develops, intellectually stimulates, and inspires followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose (Kark, 2004, p. 160). Transformational leadership deals with daily exchanges between leaders and subordinates and it is adopted for reaching the normal performance agreed upon by leaders and subordinates. Transformational leader acts in the existing framework, specifies the task roles in attracting organization's goals, and reinforces them by using the mentioned exchanges (Moghli, 2003, p. 80). Burns considered transformational leadership as a social exchange process, where leaders rely on reward and punishment for enhancing their employees' performance. Transformational leaders direct their followers towards the goals and required, established roles, and rely on reward and punishment for motivating them (Robbins, 2002).

Nazem & Hadadpour (2013) conducted a study titled *Providing a Structural Model of Organizational Justice Based on Transactional and Transformational Leadership at Islamic Azad University of Roudehen town*, and concluded that transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles have a significant relationship with organizational justice and the most impact results from transformational leadership.

Almasian & Rahimikia (2012) conducted a study titled *A Study of the Relationship between Managers' Leadership Style and Job Burnout among Employees of Medical Sciences University of Lorestan Province*. The results revealed that there is a reverse relationship between managers' leadership style and employees' job burnout. Besides, the relationship between managers' leadership style and employees' job burnout requires that managers pay more and more attention to the personnel and apply scientific management methods.

Moradi et al. (2010) conducted a study titled *the Relationship between Transformational/Transactional Leadership Styles and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour in Physical Education Organization*. The results

indicated an average degree of transformational leadership among managers and of organizational citizenship behaviour of related experts of the organization. Besides, correlation coefficient revealed that transformational/transactional leadership styles have a significant relationship with organizational citizenship behaviour.

According to Blankenship's (2010) findings, employees who perceive their management's leadership style as transformational and transactional enjoy higher job satisfaction.

Charles et al. (2007) said there is a significant and positive relationship between transformational leadership factors and job satisfaction. Limsila & Ogunlana (2008) stated in a study that transformational leadership style has a more positive and stronger relationship with employees' commitment and performance than transactional leadership style. Kacmar (1992) and Kacmar & Ferris (1991, 1993, 1994) argued that perception of organizational politics is reversely correlated with equality, equity and justice. Drory (1993) pointed out the negative relationship between perception of organizational politics and, job satisfaction and organizational politics. He believed organizational politics, has a damaging effect on the lower status employees, but it does not have a negative effect on higher status employees; lower status employees react to a climate of politics by showing increasingly negative attitudes towards the organization, because they lack the power bases and effective means of influence. Ba'arz and Hadavi Nezhad (2009) in a study titled *the Relationship between Perception of Organizational Politics and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in State-run Universities of Tehran*, concluded that perception of organizational politics significantly moderates the organizational citizenship behavior.

Given the current evidence about the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes including organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour with respect to the mediating role of organizational politics, and in regard to the lack of generalizability of the studies conducted in various areas, the researcher sought to conduct the present study to achieve reasonable and scientific results with respect to the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes (organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour) with respect to the mediating role of organizational politics. Because one of the important and critical matters related to any organization is leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes with respect to the role of organizational politics and because this subject matter is not addressed in Social Security Organization of Lorestan province of Iran, it is significantly important to study this subject matter. Besides, since there has been few studies related to the present research in Iran, the results of this study and similar ones can contribute to the improvement of the current situation and as a result, can substantially help to increase the level of productivity and performance of the managers and employees of the organization. Therefore, the present study tries to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes with respect to the mediating role of organizational politics from the employees' standpoint, and answer the research hypotheses.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the relationship between leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes with respect to the mediating role of organizational politics. The research methodology is descriptive-correlational. Statistical population of the study included 348 employees of the Social Security Organization branches in Lorestan province; a sample size of 183 employees were selected based on Cochran's formula through stratified random sampling. In this study, data were collected through library and field data collection methods. In order to collect required data for measuring leadership style, 32-question questionnaire in 5-point Likert scale was used. This questionnaire specified 5 dimensions (idealized attributes, idealized behaviours, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized considerations) for transformational leadership style and 4 dimensions (affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect) for transactional leadership style. In order to determine the degree of organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour and perception of organizational politics of the employees, three questionnaires were used containing 22, 7 and 10 questions respectively. In order to make sure of the validity of the questionnaires, the opinions of the university professors were sought. In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha test was used. This test measures the internal consistency of the designed questionnaire. The achieved alpha coefficient for questionnaires of transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour, and organizational politics has been 0.909, 0.843, 0.854, 0.754 and 0.834 respectively, and the total alpha coefficient was 0.910; and since it is above 0.8, it represents that the applied questionnaire has a high reliability. In order to describe and analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In descriptive statistics, description of the data is in terms of frequency along with a chart and a table, and inferential statistics investigates and tests the research hypotheses. In order to analyze the data, the path analysis and t-test were used through smartPLS software.

It is to be mentioned that all the variables under investigation are significant since they are studied for the first time in the Social Security Organization of the Lorestan province.

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results from analyzing the data related to each one of the research hypotheses along with the related tables is presented as follows:

*Hypothesis 1 of the study:* there is a relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes (organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour).

**Table 1.** The results of coefficient of correlation between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employees' behavioral outcomes

Significance or of the paths	Path coefficient	t-statistics	paths
significant	0.376	2.702***	Transformational leadership style →organizational commitment
significant	0.758	11.18***	Transformational leadership style →organizational citizenship behavior
insignificant	0.054	0.342	Transactional leadership style →organizational commitment
insignificant	-0.032	0.317	Transactional leadership style →organizational citizenship behavior

\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001

As it is seen in the above table, a) based on the path analysis model in standardized coefficient mode and significance of model and since the value of t-statistic in paths of transformational leadership style and employees behavioural outcomes (organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour) is above 1.96, it can be stated that there is a causal relationship between transformational leadership style and employees' behavioural outcomes at the confidence level of 95 percent. Besides, with regard to the above table, the value of (correlation) path coefficient related to transformational leadership style and employees' behavioural outcomes (organizational commitment (0.376) and organizational citizenship behaviour (0.758)) shows that there is a positive and significant causal relationship between transformational leadership style and employees' behavioural outcomes.

b) Based on the path analysis model in standardized coefficient mode and significance of model and since the value of t-statistic in paths of transactional leadership style and employees behavioural outcomes (organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour) is below 1.96, it can be stated that there is no significant causal relationship between transactional leadership style and employees' behavioural outcomes at the confidence level of 95 per cent.

*Hypothesis 2 of the study:* there is a relationship between transformational leadership style and perception of organizational politics.

**Table 2.** The results of coefficient of correlation between transformational leadership style and perception of organizational politics

Significance or of the paths	Path coefficient	t-statistics	paths
insignificant	-.0464	1.716	Transformational leadership style →perception of organizational politics

\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001

Based on the path analysis model in standardized coefficient mode and significance of model and since the value of t-statistic in paths of transformational leadership style and perception of organizational politics is below 1.96, it can be stated that there is no significant causal relationship between transformational leadership style and perception of organizational politics at the confidence level of 95 percent.

*Hypothesis 3 of the study:* there is a relationship between transactional leadership style and perception of organizational politics.

**Table 3.** The results of coefficient of correlation between transactional leadership style and perception of organizational politics

Significance or of the paths	Path coefficient	t-statistics	paths
significant	-0.605	2.599	transactional leadership style →perception of organizational politics

\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001

Based on the path analysis model in standardized coefficient mode and significance of model and since the value of t-statistic in paths of transactional leadership style and perception of organizational politics is above 1.96, it can be stated that there is a significant causal relationship between transactional leadership style and perception of organizational politics at the confidence level of 95 percent. Besides, with regard to the above table, the value of (correlation) path coefficient shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between transactional leadership style and perception of organizational politics.

*Hypothesis 4 of the study:* there is a relationship between perception or organizational politics and organizational commitment.

**Table 4.** The results of coefficient of correlation between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment

Significance or insignificance of the paths	Path coefficient	t-statistics	paths
insignificant	0.082	0.589	perception of organizational politics → organizational commitment

\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001

Based on the path analysis model in standardized coefficient mode and significance of model and since the value of t-statistic in paths of perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment is below 1.96, it can be stated that there is no significant causal relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment at the confidence level of 95 percent.

*Hypothesis 5 of the study:* there is a relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational citizenship behaviour.

**Table 5.** The results of coefficient of correlation between perception of organizational politics and organizational citizenship behaviour

Significance or insignificance of the paths	Path coefficient	t-statistics	paths
insignificant	-0.554	0.994	perception of organizational politics → organizational citizenship behavior

\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001

Based on the path analysis model in standardized coefficient mode and significance of model and since the value of t-statistic in paths of perception of organizational politics and organizational citizenship behaviour is below 1.96, it can be stated that there is no significant causal relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational citizenship behaviour at the confidence level of 95 percent.

*Hypothesis 6 of the study:* perception of organizational politics mediates the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles on one hand, and organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour on the other hand.

**Table 6.** The summary of paths of mediating effect of perception of organizational politics

Significance or insignificance of the paths	After mediating effect	Before mediating effect	paths
Hypothesis rejected	-0.382	0.480	Transformational leadership style → organizational commitment
Hypothesis confirmed	0.687	0.054	Transactional leadership style → organizational commitment
Hypothesis rejected	-0.018	0.758	Transactional leadership style → organizational commitment
Hypothesis rejected	0.051	0.522	Transactional leadership style → organizational citizenship behavior

Based on the path analysis model, since the mediating effect of perception of organizational politics is only confirmed in the path of transactional leadership style, perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment, in this study, the perception of organizational politics only mediates the relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational commitment, but its mediating effect on other paths is rejected.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Management and leadership have been always considered as one the most important factors of any organization's success or failure, and many researches and studies have been conducted in this respect. It seems

that most of the studies have reviewed the different management and leadership styles as well as their relationship with important organizational variables, and have tried to shed light on strengths and weaknesses of each style in terms of their effect on the variables under question. It is worth mentioning that over the last ten years, study on transformational and transactional leadership has become a dominant approach and most of the studies in the area of management and leadership has been focused on this subject (Bass, 1990). This study is also an effort in this respect, which investigates the relationship between leadership styles and employees' behavioural outcomes with respect to the mediating role of organizational politics and tries to answer some questions in this respect. Based on the research results, there is a significant and positive causal relationship between transformational leadership style and employees' behavioural outcomes. The findings of the present study are consistent with findings of the studies conducted by Moghli (2003), Khodayari (2006), Javdani (2002), Yaghoubi et al. (2010), Islam et al. (2013), Ristow et al. (1999), Jung (2001), Chen & Lee Fahr (2001), Bass (1985), Chen Fei (2002) and Podsakoff (2000). However, there is no significant causal relationship between transactional leadership style and employees' behavioral outcomes. The findings of the present study are consistent with findings of the studies conducted by Khodayari (2006), Islam et al. (2013), Ristow et al. (1999), Young (2001) and Chen & Lee Fahr (2001). Another finding of the present study is that there is no significant causal relationship between transformational leadership style and perception of organizational politics. The findings of the present study are consistent with findings of the study conducted by Islam et al. (2013). Based on other findings of the study, there is a significant causal relationship between transactional leadership style and perception of organizational politics. The findings of the present study are not consistent with findings of the study conducted by Islam et al. (2013). Another finding of the study is that there is no significant causal relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational citizenship behaviour. The findings of the present study are consistent with findings of the studies conducted by Islam et al. (2013), Hadavi Nezhad et al. (2009) and Begum (2005). Finally, another finding of the study is that perception of organizational politics only mediates the relationship between transactional leadership style and organizational commitment, but its mediating effect on other paths is rejected. The findings of the present study are consistent with findings of the study conducted by Islam et al. (2013).

Therefore, it is suggested that the leaders of the organization under question, implement the following recommendations to reinforce and boost behavioral outcomes, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour as well as perception of organizational politics among its employees:

1- Managers should guide, train and support their employees and develop their capabilities through a systematic process. It is because employees, who possess a high level of personal empowerment, have a higher sense of dominance, show more initiative, feel more responsible about their works, and learn faster which could result in their increased job satisfaction and consequently, organizational commitment.

2- Organization's managers should persuade followers to pursue a personal approach, and help to promote organizational objectives by making changes instead of working with the existing system.

3- Managers should unify different individuals under the umbrella of a single thought and opinion, and train creative and entrepreneurial individuals. This is very effective in boosting the personal initiative aspect of organizational citizenship behaviour. Inspiring and inducing an optimistic vision of the future in organization's employees provides the source for enough motivation and stimulation to move towards the organization's goals, which facilitates the phenomena of organizational citizenship behaviour in the organization.

4- Managers should consider the factor of intellectual stimulation as a motive in the followers for reviewing the main assumptions and questioning them as well as for forcing the followers to look at the matters from a different angle, propose new methods, look at how tasks are performed, and examine the principles of reengineering as a strategy.

5- One of the main reasons of appearance of political behaviour in the organization is the lack of justice and fairness in the organization, which results in exhibition of political behaviours, and existence of justice or injustice manifests through the leadership style; thus, it is suggested not to use transactional leadership style in the organization, which increases the exhibition of political behaviours in the organization.

6- Transactional leadership in the organization should provide a nonpolitical atmosphere in the organization, because this can positively affect the organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour among the employees.

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