

Transformational leadership and follower's creativity: Does follower's sex matter?

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ABSTRACT: “Change is the only thing that never changes” keeping this in mind, every organization is trying to make necessary changes in management, systems they follow, products they produce, processes they follow, and people they recruit. To sustain the current competitive world, every organization is looking for creative employees who can help them cope with this changing environment. Creativity is not only about designing new products, it can be of any form like, solving existing problem in new ways, developing new processes, developing new ideas for improving business etc. According to Ray (2006) creativity has become the thrust area of business in this dynamic environment. Organizations are trying to foster creativity among its employees to bring in innovation and gain competitive advantage. Creativity is achieved by removing mind blocks and by thinking of the unthinkable. Transformational leaders influences the followers and change the follower's problem awareness, problem solving, imagination, beliefs, and values. They arouse follower's conceptualization, comprehension, and discernment of the problems they face. Sex differences in job related behavior depend on individual's internal factors as well as organizational environment. There is a chance of improving creativity if external factor like transformational leadership is introduced. Transformational leadership through its intellectual stimulation dimension enhances follower's creativity and problem solving skills. 252 MBA students were used as a sample to test the relationship between transformational leadership and creativity.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, creativity, intrinsic motivation, sex.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Creativity has become the thrust area of business in this dynamic environment. Organizations are trying to foster creativity among their employees to bring in innovation and gain competitive advantage. Creativity is not only about designing new products; it can be of any form like, solving existing problem in new ways, developing new processes, developing new ideas for improving business etc. Three basic components of creativity include - expertise, creativity skills, and task motivation. Expertise – is the foundation for creativity; this includes knowledge, technical skills, special talent in the particular domain. This component can be viewed as cognitive pathways to solve the given task or problem. Creativity skill – is “something extra” to perform in particular domain. The performance of individual who has this “something extra” will be “technically good” (Amabile, 1996). Creativity is achieved by removing mind blocks and by thinking of the unthinkable. Transformational leaders influence followers and change the follower's problem awareness, problem solving skills, imagination and discernment of the problems they face.

Among transactional leadership and transformational leadership, later is more effective when compared to the earlier one. Transformational leadership is more effective in terms of influencing the followers, increasing their performance and self-actualization. It comprises of dimensions like idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Among these dimensions intellectual stimulation may increase the creativity skill of individual and team. Intellectual stimulation of the transformational leader will force the followers to rethink some of their own ideas, which they had never questioned before (Bass, 1985).

There is a strong belief about male and female similarities and differences in basic interests, attitudes, behaviors, and their skills. Sex is a term classified by the biological characteristics of the individual such as physiological properties and reproductive apparatus (Powell & Graves, 2003). In other terms, sex is used to refer to biological differences and it is represented by female and male (Devraj & Krishnan 2009; Downing, Chan, Downing, Kwong & Lam, 2008). Sex differences in job related behavior depend on individual's internal factors as well as organizational environment, also it influences how an individual is willing to behave in work

settings. There is a chance of improving creativity if external factor like transformational leadership is introduced. Transformational leadership through its intellectual stimulation dimension enhances follower's creativity and problem solving skills.

II. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Creativity

There is a difference between creativity and innovation. Creativity is the creation of new ideas whereas innovation is implementation of those ideas. Thus, creativity is at the individual level and innovation is at the organizational level (Gumusluoglu&Ilsev 2009).

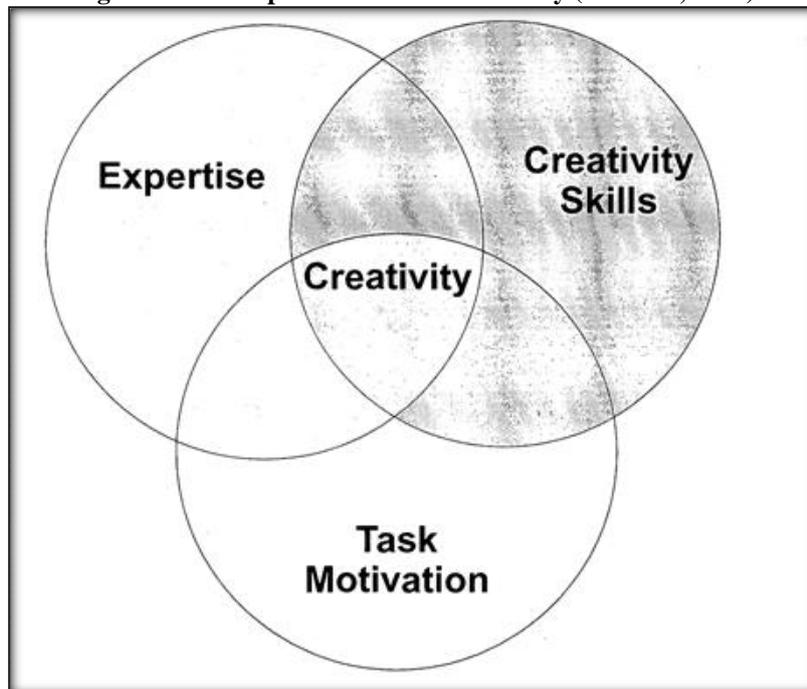
Creativity can be defined as,

The implementation of novel, useful ideas to establish a new business or new program to deliver products or services. The primary novel, useful ideas may have to do with (a) the products or services themselves, (b) identifying a market for the products or services, (c) ways of producing and delivering the products or services of (d) ways of obtaining resources to produce or deliver the products and services (Amabile, 1996, p.2).

Creativity has been conceptualized as “person-centered”, “process-centered” and “outcome-centered”. Person-centered focuses on individual differences in creative potential and individual personality. Process-centered focuses on the overall process that individuals engage in the creative outcomes. Outcome-centered focusses on creativity as tangible and intangible outputs (Kouloubandi, Jofreh, &Mahdavi 2012).

Three basic components of creativity includes expertise, creativity skills, and task motivation.

Fig 1. Three component model of creativity (Amabile, 1996)



Expertise – is the foundation for creativity, this includes knowledge, technical skills, special talent in the particular domain. This component can be viewed as cognitive pathways to solve the given task or problem. Creativity Skills – is “something extra” to perform in particular domain. The performance of individual who has this “something extra” will be “technically good”. Intrinsic task motivation – this component determines what the individual actually will do. This can be classified as intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation includes involvement in the task, enjoying the task, feel proud about the task, and feel personal sense of challenge (Amabile, 1996).

Creativity to some extent depends on personal characteristics related to self-orientation, self-determination, willing to take risks, involvement, and enjoying the task simply for doing it rather than expecting extrinsic rewards. Leaders play a vital role in influencing this personal characteristics of the followers (Amabile&Gryskiewicz, 1987; Stoltzfus, Nibbelink, Vredenburg, &Thyrum, 2011).

III. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

James MacGregor Burns identified two types of leadership: transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transformational leadership's four dimensions, 4Is include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Forsyth, 2010).

Idealized Influence (II). Follower is influenced by the leader who does the "right-thing" and engenders the trust and confidence of the follower (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007). Followers of this kind of leaders have greater feeling and attachment towards the leader as well as with the organization (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). Leader's ability of idealized influence build loyalty and devotion with the leader without considering for their own self-interest and helps them to identify with the leader (Ghadi, Fernando & Caputi, 2013). Leaders who have idealized influence behavior is thoroughly respected by the follower, have a strong referent power, set challenging goals, and have their follower's complete trust (Menon & Krishnan, 2004). Idealized influence is the degree to which leaders behave in charismatic ways that cause followers to identify with them (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Idealized influence refers to behaviors like considering that goals of the group are more important than of the individuals, showing high ethical norms, and being a role model for the followers (Tims et al. 2011). Followers of this kind of leaders are overwhelmed by leader's characteristics, and start considering the leader as extraordinary person (Muthia& Krishnan, 2015). In idealized stimulation leader exhibits high standards of moral conduct and engenders loyalty from followers and inspire them (Meyerson & Kline 2008). Leader who has the ability to act as a role model whereby he or she becomes admired, respected, and trusted by the follower.

Inspirational Motivation (IM). Leaders who has this quality motivates their followers to do more than what they are expected to perform and motivate them to achieve more (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway& McKee, 2007). Through inspirational motivation leaders are able to motivate followers to get more involvement in their job which results in high level of commitment towards the organization (Avolio, Zho, Koh, & Bhatia 2004). Inspirational motivation involves ability to create vision, which suits to the followers and accept them as common goals (Menon & Krishnan, 2004). Inspirational motivation is the degree to which leader articulates vision that are appealing to followers (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). It motivates followers to become involved with the vision of the leader and make sacrifices for that vision (Tims et al. 2011). In this, leaders inspire the followers and develops them to achieve greater heights. Here the leader grooms the follower to imbibe the leadership qualities and become leaders themselves (Muthia& Krishnan, 2015). In inspirational motivation leader has the ability to create an inspiring, motivating, convincing vision, and leader encourages follower's confident in their self-ability to perform more (Reuvers, Engen, Vinkenbunrg, & Wilson-Evered, 2008).

Intellectual Stimulation (IS). Intellectually stimulated leaders encourage followers to challenge their status quo (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007). Leaders exhibit intellectual stimulation to question follower's thoughts, creativity, values, beliefs, and encourages followers to solve old problems in new ways (Avolio, Zhu, Koh& Bhatia, 2004). Intellectual stimulation stimulates follower's ability to think outside the box way and encourage them to take risks (Ghadi, Fernando & Caputi, 2013). It enables followers to critically examine existing assumptions and provoke them to think along new directions (Krishnan, 2012). It also encourages followers to question their old ways of doing things, and followers are motivated to question their values, beliefs, as well as those of organization (Krishnan, 2004). It refers to the degree to which leaders challenge assumptions, encourages to take risks, and solicit follower's ideas (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). It means that the leader challenges the follower to see problem from a different perspective (Tims et al. 2011). In this leader creates opportunities by providing the followers a challenging environment, which will help the followers to develop their problem solving and analytical skills (Muthia& Krishnan 2015). In this process followers are encourage to think differently by challenging organizational standards and encourages followers to think outside the box (Meyerson & Kline, 2008). Leaders arouse follower's awareness of problems and recognition of their own values and beliefs. Followers are stimulated to question decisions and handle challenging tasks by reframing problems (Reuvers, Engen, Vinkenbunrg& Wilson-Evered, 2008).

Individualized Consideration (IC). In this leader treats each employee as an individual, cares about them, develops them, and recognizes their achievements (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway& McKee, 2007). Leaders listen carefully to the followers need for growth and develop them by providing more opportunities for new responsibilities (Avolio, Zhu, Bhatia, & Koh, 2004). Leaders act as a mentor and concentrate to the needs of the individuals (Ghadi, Fernando & Caputi, 2013). Leaders treat their followers differently but equally (Menon & Krishnan, 2004). Individualized consideration is the degree to which leaders attend to follower's needs, listen to follower's concerns, and develop them to achieve them. Leader act as mentor and helps the followers by giving feedback to enhance their self-efficacy and motivation (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Tims et al., 2011; Muthia& Krishnan, 2015; Meyerson & Kline, 2008). Individualized consideration is a trait whereby the leaders give personal attention to their followers, taking into consideration their differences. In this leader is continuously engaged in coaching or mentoring the follower and provding feedback linking follower's needs to

the organization's mission. Followers are provided with more opportunities for self-actualization and growth (Reuvers, Engen, Vinkenburg & Wilson-Evered, 2008).

Among these dimensions intellectual stimulation may increase the creativity skill of individual and team (Yukl, 2011). By intellectual stimulation of the transformational leaders, they change the follower's problem awareness, problem solving, imagination, beliefs, values, and they arouse follower's conceptualization, comprehension, and discernment of the problems they face. Intellectual stimulation of the transformational leader will force the follower to rethink some of their own ideas, which they had never questioned before. It will also enable them to think old problems in new ways.

Transformational leadership is essential when the organization is undergoing the uncertainties and it generates more effort, creativity, and productivity in long run. Intellectual contribution of the leader is important when the group exists in serious problems, and when there is disruption of the work in the organization. Transformational leaders are more likely to be proactive than reactive in their thinking, creative, novel and innovative in their ideas. The intellectual contribution of the transformational leader is seen in the leader's creation, interpretation, and elaboration of the symbols. Transforming symbols can directly modify cognitions and beliefs of the follower (Bass, 1985).

Creativity and transformational leadership

Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009) studied the impact of transformational leadership on follower's creativity and innovation. Feeling of self-efficacy leads to higher creativity, transformational leaders who develop follower's self-efficacy can positively affect their creativity. Transformational leadership was positively related to creativity by encouraging the followers to challenge the status quo and old way of doing things. Employees were encouraged to reformulate issues and problems, to use their imagination, and to generate new ideas. Because of this encouragement, followers were likely to be interested in focusing on their tasks instead of external worries and they exhibited greater creativity (Shin & Zhou 2003). 348 managers from IT SME professionals and their followers were used as the sample to reveal that transformational leadership was positively related to employee creativity. Transformational leaders motivated the followers to initiate the process of doing things differently, to solve old problems in new ways, seeing the problem in different perspective enhanced follower's creativity (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

According to Jaussi and Dionne (2003) transformational leadership enhanced motivation of the employee, employee who followed transformational leaders as role model gained their social support which helped the followers to explore their own creativity. Authors took a sample of 364 students from Northeastern (U.S) Public University to find a relationship between the leader behavior and follower creativity. The investigation revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the leader role modeling creativity and follower creative performance. Transformational leadership is positively related to creativity by encouraging the followers to challenge the status quo and old way of doing things. Employees are encouraged to reformulate issues and problems, to use their imagination, and to generate new ideas. Because of this encouragement, followers are likely to be interested in focusing on their tasks instead of external worries and they exhibit greater creativity (Shin & Zhou 2003).

The creativity and innovation quality of the employee were enhanced by the motivation provided by transformational leadership. According to Gong, Huang, and Farh (2009) all the dimensions (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) of transformational leadership worked together as whole to impact on employee creativity. 277 insurance agents were used as a sample to prove this expectation results revealed that transformational leadership had a positive relationship with employee creativity. Like Gong, there are so many researchers who focused on the transformational leadership dimensions as a whole, but in this study we tried to find out among all the 4Is (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) intellectual stimulation is having more impact on follower's creativity, thus we hypothesized as,

Hypothesis 1: Among the dimensions of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation is the strongest predictor of creativity.

Sex

Sex is a term classified by the biological characteristics of the individual such as physiological properties and reproductive apparatus (Powell & Graves, 2003). It is used to refer biological differences and it is represented by male and female (Devraj & Krishnan 2009; Downing, Chan, Downing, Kwong & Lam, 2008). There is a strong belief about male and female similarities and differences in basic interests, attitudes, behaviors, and their skills (Powell & Graves, 2003). Women's job performance was connected with their good luck and extraordinary effort rather than their ability and talent whereas men's job performance was directly connected to their ability. There is a general assumption that due to the difference in roles and responsibilities of men and women, women may have lower aspirations to become managers (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993).

Effects of transformational leadership on follower's Karma-Yoga were different as far as follower's sex was concerned (Menon & Krishnan, 2004).Stoltzfus, Nibbelink, Vredenburg, and Thyrum (2011) investigated the sex difference in creativity and they found male participant's performance on creativity is higher than the female participant. From the above studies, it is clearly understood that sex differences in job related behavior depends on individual's internal factors as well as organizational environment. There is a chance of improving female creativity if external factor like transformational leadership is introduced. Transformational leadership thro' their intellectual stimulation dimension enhances follower's creativity and problem solving skills. Hence we hypothesized as,

Hypothesis 2: Relationship between intellectual stimulation and creativity is stronger for female than male

Sample

Online survey form was circulated to the MBA students from a leading Business School located at South Chennai. 260 respondents were participated in this survey, the usable sample size was 252, out of which 71 were female and 181 were male. Participant's demographic details like age, sex, leader's sex, total work experience, and how long they worked with the leader whom they rated was also collected.

Measures

Transformational Leadership:We used Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6S of Bass and Avolio (1992) scale. MLQ Questionnaire had twenty one items to measure the full range leadership model which included transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. The questionnaire had four items for each of the four factors of transformational leadership-idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. It also had four items of the two factors of transactional leadership – management by exception and contingent reward. Questionnaire had three items on laissez-faire leadership.Participants were asked to rate their bosses, with whom they worked in their last employment, in the 5 point scale (0 = not at all; 1 = once in a while; 2 = sometimes; 3 = fairly often; 4 = if not always) sample items included – makes others feel good to be around him/her (transformational leadership); tells other what to do if they want to be rewarded for their work (transactional leadership); whatever others wants to do is ok with him/her (laissez-faire leadership)

Creativity: Creativity of the follower was measured by using the Tierney, Farmer, and Graen (1999) creativity scale consisting of five items. Respondents were asked to indicate how the statements were describe them on a five point scale (1 = not like me at all;2 = not like me;3 = a little like me;4 = moderately like me;5 = very much like me)scale consisted of sample items like - takes risks in terms of producing new ideas in doing job, generates novel but operable work-related ideas.

IV. METHOD

Correlation analysis was done between the idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration and creativity.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and correlation between all variables^a

Measures	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Idealized Influence	252	2.57	1.07	(0.72)				
2. Inspirational Motivation	252	2.51	0.91	***.85	(0.69)			
3. Intellectual Stimulation	252	2.39	0.95	***.79	***.80	(0.73)		
4. Individualized Consideration	252	2.62	0.93	***.74	***.75	***.73	(0.66)	
5. Creativity	252	3.60	0.59	*.11	*.13	***.21	.07	(0.73)

^a Alphas are in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Table 1 shows the correlations between all the variables. Cronbach alphas are indicated in parentheses along the diagonal. The mean and standard deviation values of all the variables are also shown in the table. Correlation between intellectual stimulation and creativity is higher than other variables. Hypothesis was tested using regression analysis method with the forward-selection technique. The forward-selection technique began with no variables in the model. For each independent variable, it calculated F statistics that reflected the variable's contribution to the model if it was included. The variable that would produce the largest F statistic was added in the model. The evaluation process was repeated with the variables remaining outside the model. Once a variable was entered into the model, it stayed. Thus, variables were added one by one to the model until no remaining variable produces a significance F statistic. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Linear regression using the forward option

Dependent variable	Step	Independent variable entered	Parameter estimate	t	R ²	Model F
Creativity	1	Intellectual Stimulation	.21	**3.52	.043	**12.38
Creativity	2	Intellectual Stimulation	.35	*** 3.95		
		Individualized Consideration	-.19	*-2.12	.057	*** 8.52

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

From Table 2 it understand that when intellectual stimulation alone is in the model in the second regression equation, relationship between intellectual stimulation and creativity is significant and there is a negative effect when individualized consideration is introduced in the model. Hypotheses 1 is supported.

The relationship between the intellectual stimulation and sex is done separately for each sex using regression analysis. Results are provided in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: Linear regression for female followers

Dependent variable	Independent variable entered	Parameter estimate	t	R ²	Model F
Creativity	Intellectual Stimulation	.29	*2.56	.074	*6.55

* $p < .05$

Table 4: Linear regression for male followers

Dependent variable	Independent variable entered	Parameter estimate	t	R ²	Model F
Creativity	Intellectual Stimulation	.18	*2.49	.028	*6.21

* $p < .05$

Relationship between intellectual stimulation and creativity is stronger for female when compared with male followers. This provides support for hypothesis 2.

V. DISCUSSION

Findings supported hypothesis 1 and 2. Among all the factors of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation was significantly positively related to follower's creativity and the effect of intellectual stimulation on follower's creativity is stronger for female followers when compared to male followers.

To sustain in market, organizations must develop and introduce new products or services. A key source of innovation in all the organization is the creativity of their employees. However, the creativity does not happen automatically. By fostering transformational leadership in the organization, management can promote as well as contribute to employee creativity. Creative contributions will be highest in an organization when the members feel themselves to be self-actualizing. The need of the transformational leader who can enhance the problem solving skills and encourages new ideas are imperative in this 21st century.

Suggestion for future research

In this study, we limited our study with the follower's sex, future research can focus on the leader's sex in this relationship. When this study was conducted participants were not in employment and they were the MBA students, who had the work experience of min two years, future research can be done with the working professionals.

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