

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Knowledge Sharing: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Knowledge is the most valuable asset for organizations seeking sustainable competitive advantage. Thus, knowledge sharing is essential to maintaining an organization's productivity and performance. This paper explores the dimensions of transformational leadership to promote knowledge sharing to examine leaders' behaviors in organizations. This paper discussed new combined transformational leadership with six dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, empowerment, and personal recognition. These dimensions have the potential to influence knowledge sharing. By drawing on various previous studies, the paper constructs a conceptual framework and formulates six propositions to further address the impact of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing within organizations.

Keywords: knowledge sharing, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, empowerment, personal recognition

1. Introduction

The up-to-date information-based economy views knowledge as a crucial asset for individuals and businesses, and at the same time acts as the foundation for achieving continuously driven benefits (Yadav et al., 2019). As knowledge in business becomes a very strategic asset, knowledge in the minds of employees must be managed well so that it may be used to increase competitive advantage (Islamy et al., 2020). It is critical not just to retain existing knowledge, but also to constantly improve it by expanding it and making better use of it. Knowledge is frequently transferred among employees and seldom provides value until shared and implemented (Chae et al., 2019). Individuals engage in knowledge sharing when they apply and innovate their expertise, utilizing the organization's existing knowledge bases to obtain a competitive advantage (Wang & Noe, 2010). Therefore, the significance of knowledge sharing for a company's performance lies in its ability to expedite the dissemination of knowledge to relevant sections of the organization (Farooq, 2018). Successful knowledge sharing enables organizations to achieve competitive advantages and maintain long-term operations (Wu & Lee, 2020). Encouraging knowledge workers to share their expertise improves reciprocal learning, promotes best practices, lowers operational costs of redundant learning, increases knowledge generation, fosters innovation, and increases organizational productivity (Ahmad, 2017).

The role of human capital development plays a more challenging role that goes beyond simply ensuring the welfare of employees to include fostering career development, improving knowledge skills, fostering professional development, and providing competitive rewards based on their performance (Sija, 2021). Transformational leaders prioritize clear communication about organizational objectives, acting as the organization's driving force, active coaching, supporting new skill development among followers, and continually finding new chances for organizational progress (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership fosters an environment of trust and mutual respect at work and can promote employee participation in the decision-making process through knowledge sharing, thereby contributing to the success of the organization (Sudibjo & Prameswari, 2021). Transformational leaders encourage their followers to share information and expertise in the workplace and emphasize the importance of teamwork, knowledge sharing, and the development of new abilities while working as a team (Żywiołek et al., 2022).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is viewed as behavior (interaction or activity) by which individuals commonly trade their insight (data, abilities, and mastery) (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004). According to Wang and Noe (2010), knowledge sharing is the act of giving others task information and expertise so they can work together to solve issues, create new ideas, or put rules or procedures into place. Meanwhile, knowledge sharing refers to the sharing and

exchanging of concepts, insights, and expertise with others to guarantee that knowledge persists, endures, and is kept within the company (Razak et al., 2016). In essence, knowledge sharing is the process of people exchanging information, data, skills, expertise, and know-how to enable them to perform their jobs and meet business goals, along with helping to create new knowledge (Lei et al., 2021).

2.2 Transformational Leadership

Díaz-Sáenz (2011) defined transformational leadership as the procedure by which a leader raises the performance of a group or organization above expectations due to the group's commitment to a higher moral purpose and the leader's close emotional connection with their followers. By motivating followers to put aside their personal interests in favor of the organization and goal achievement, transformational leadership requires an underlying influence process (Yammarino et al., 2005). Jin et al. (2016) conceptualized transformational leadership as a leadership style that benefits employees in a variety of organizational situations and is built on interactions between leaders and followers. Most significantly, transformational leaders work to meet the basic needs of their followers, such as integrity, respect, and trust, which raises morality and motivation (Xiao et al., 2017). Hence, inspiration, development, and empowerment of followers appear to be the core principles of transformational leadership (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Transformational leaders engage with their followers more, give higher priority to their intrinsic needs, and improve comprehension of the relevance of particular results and novel approaches to achieving objectives (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

The researcher critically analyzed the available transformational models before deciding on a specific transformational leadership model for the investigation. There is a great deal of consensus among the researchers on some of these models, but not on others. Most of the transformational leadership models examined primarily consist of four dimensions (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration). Through a comparison of transformational leadership models, the researcher selects a combined model that encompasses all components of transformational leadership behaviors addressed in the literature. In this study, dimensions of transformational leadership models derived from three well-known models of transformational leadership are proposed by Bass and Avolio (1990), Carless et al. (2000), and Rafferty and Griffin (2004). The combined model of transformational leadership comprises the following dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, empowerment and personal recognition.

2.2.1 Idealized Influence

Antonakis et al. (2003) described idealized influence as charismatic leadership that focuses on values, beliefs and mission. Moreover, leaders with idealized influence are regarded as those who make everyone passionate about their obligations, command admiration, and convey a sense of responsibility to followers (Puni et al., 2018). Yukl and Gardner (2020)

classified idealized influence as behavior that strengthens follower identification with the leader, such as exhibiting courage and dedication and making self-sacrifices for followers. Leaders gain idealized influence by choosing to act ethically rather than expediently, making moral commitments to their followers, and prioritizing the organization's interest over their own (Abolnasser et al., 2023).

2.2.2 Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation refers to how leaders encourage their followers by highlighting ambitious objectives, communicating an idealized vision, and reassuring them that the vision is feasible (Antonakis et al., 2003). Leaders possessing inspiring motivation can effectively shift their followers' attention from individual concerns to a shared issue, motivating them to go above and beyond their assigned responsibilities and take part in helping others (Rubin et al., 2005). Furthermore, inspirational motivation indicates that the leader has a distinct vision that is easily communicated to their followers in the form of manageable strategic goals, and that they motivate their followers to share their passion for achieving these goals with the organization (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). Inspirational motivation is linked to the leader's ability to communicate and give clear instructions and expectations, highlight critical components, and simply identify important goals (Abolnasser et al., 2023).

2.2.3 Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation enhances intelligence, rationality, and careful problem-solving (Bass, 1990). Besides, it describes the actions of a leader who challenges their followers to think creatively and discover solutions to difficult situations to appeal to their sense of logic and analysis (Antonakis et al., 2003). Moreover, intellectual stimulation defines leaders who inspire innovation and creativity by challenging the group's normal beliefs or viewpoints (Puni et al., 2018). Leaders who practice this form of leadership assist followers in reframing and rethinking obstacles and problems (Bakker et al., 2022). To encourage an individual's intellectual development, leaders must motivate people to think creatively and seek innovative approaches to achieving tasks (Abolnasser et al., 2023).

2.2.4 Individualized Consideration

Individualized consideration describes a leader's actions that encourage follower satisfaction by offering guidance, support, and attention to each follower's unique requirements, thereby enabling them to grow and realize their full potential (Antonakis et al., 2003). To help employees fulfil their potential, leaders who practice individualized consideration concept take on the role of coach or mentor to provide learning opportunities and a supportive environment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Individualized consideration refers to a leader's actions as a coach or mentor, which entail giving each subordinate individual attention and concern (Kim & Shin, 2019). In essence, individualized consideration is a characteristic that enables transformational leaders to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of individual followers (Amankwaa et al., 2019).

2.2.5 Empowerment

Empowering employees is when management realizes that those who work for them should have more autonomy, control, and power in their positions also promotes employees' engagement and satisfaction with their organization (Zaraket et al., 2018). A leader with empowerment inspires followers to become self-directed individuals capable of initiating tasks, taking up responsibilities and coordinating activities to achieve higher organizational goals (Rao Jada et al., 2019). The enhancement of decision-making abilities, task dedication, problem-solving initiative, and skill development are among the possible advantages of empowerment for employees (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Empowerment is the practice of giving employees duties that allow them to own the work they want to do (McNaughtan et al., 2022).

2.2.6 Personal Recognition

Employee recognition is the open acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' contributions to their organization (Ventrice, 2003). Moreover, recognition refers to the expression of gratitude or approval for an individual or group's well-done actions or accomplishments (Tessema et al., 2013). Employee recognition is crucial for fostering their sense of self, motivation, and sense of significance in their work, as well as for advancing their growth and well-being (Masri & Suliman, 2019). Therefore, personal recognition happens when a leader shows that he or she appreciates each person's work and rewards followers for achieving achievements that are in line with the vision (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004).

2.3 *Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Knowledge Sharing*

Baytok et al., (2014) focused on knowledge sharing practices at international hotel chains (IHC) and the data were collected through questionnaires from 227 junior administrative and mid-level managers Turkey. The findings showed a positive and significant link between transformational leadership dimensions and knowledge sharing practices. However, there was no significant relationship between individual support and knowledge sharing practices.

In another study, Li et al. (2014) divided transformational leadership into two separate constructs, namely, group-focused leadership and individual-focused leadership (i.e., individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) respectively. Data were gathered from 71 work groups including 275 employees across five Chinese organizations. The results indicated that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and both group-focused leadership and individual-focused leadership.

Drawing upon the same ideals, Yaghoubi et al. (2014) examined the relationship between transformational leadership with knowledge management (knowledge creation and knowledge sharing) practices. The data were collected from 180 questionnaires from managers and senior experts of administrative and commercial departments of the NIOPDC.

The findings showed that sub-dimensions of transformational leadership like idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual inspiration, and individual consideration have a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management (knowledge creation and knowledge sharing) practices.

Allameh et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in 181 respondents selected from employees in Shahid Ghazi Pharmaceutical Company. Based on structural equation modelling (SEM), the findings showed that transformational leadership (i.e., intellectual stimulation, charismatic influence, inspiring motivation and individual consideration) has a significant positive influence on knowledge sharing among employees.

Bradshaw et al. (2015) discussed the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing. The findings showed that the three dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) all have a significant positive relationship with knowledge sharing.

In another case study, Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2016) explored the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in higher education in Iraq. 250 questionnaires were collected from Iraq's public higher education institutions and analyzed by structural equation modelling. The findings supported the fact that each dimension of transformational leadership (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) has a significant positive impact on both knowledge donating and knowledge collecting.

Wu and Lee (2017) explored the interrelationship among empowering leadership, psychological capital and knowledge sharing by using multilevel analysis. The sample involved 64 work groups consisting of 537 group members. The findings showed that empowering leadership in a work group has a direct cross-level effect on members' knowledge sharing.

On the other hand, Le and Lei (2018) studied the effect of transformational leadership on two components of knowledge sharing (knowledge collecting and knowledge donating). Data were gathered from 336 individuals at 35 large service organizations and evaluated using structural equation modelling. The findings indicated that transformational leadership was positively correlated with not only knowledge collecting but also knowledge donating.

Rao Jada et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between empowering leadership and workers' innovative behavior by examining the mediating role of knowledge sharing. The study employed a cross-sectional methodology and explored the hypothesized relationship in 235 supervisor-subordinate dyads working in Indian organizations. The results found that empowering leadership was positively and significantly related to knowledge sharing.

Yadav et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and freelancer knowledge sharing behavior. The data were collected from 320 freelancers working in various organizations in North India and Pearson correlation was used. The results once again ascertained that transformational leadership significantly and positively influenced knowledge sharing activities in freelancers through knowledge collecting and knowledge donating behavior.

Kim and Park (2020) studied the links between transformational leadership, organizational climate, employees' knowledge-sharing behavior and organizational learning in multiple South Korean organizations. The findings revealed that transformational leadership has a direct impact on organizational climate, knowledge-sharing and organizational learning.

Yin et al. (2020) investigated the influence of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing in China. Data were gathered from more than 400 employees of Chinese knowledge-based enterprises to test the suggested relationships using structural equation modelling. The results showed that all four dimensions of transformational leadership, namely intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence were positively correlated with employee knowledge sharing in China.

Furthermore, Al-Ahmad Char and Easa (2021) also attempted to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in banks. Data were obtained from 310 workers at 27 banks in Lebanon. Quantitative analysis was carried out by using the structural equations modelling. The findings showed that idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration are significantly and positively associated with knowledge sharing, whereas inspirational motivation reveals an insignificant predictive capability on knowledge sharing.

Ampofo et al. (2023) examined the links between employee recognition, job embeddedness, knowledge sharing, service orientation and abusive supervision. Data were collected from restaurant frontline employees in three waves in Ghana. The hypothesized linkages were assessed using structural equation modeling. The findings suggested that employee recognition had a positive relationship with knowledge sharing.

Zhao et al. (2023) studied how extrinsic and intrinsic rewards affect employees' explicit and tacit knowledge sharing in the context of CoPS development, as well as the moderating effects of transformational leadership on the relationships between two types of rewards and two types of knowledge sharing. The findings demonstrated that extrinsic rewards have no effect on explicit information sharing but have a detrimental influence on tacit knowledge sharing, whereas intrinsic rewards significantly increase both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing.

3. Conceptual Framework

The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is a regularly utilized framework for examining

knowledge-sharing behavior (Kim et al., 2015; Li, 2015; Liang et al., 2008; Wu & Lee, 2017). Social exchange theory is essentially defined as the transaction of a valuable resource in which both parties anticipate receiving benefits (Razak et al., 2016). The primary tenet of the theory is the reciprocity principle to which interpersonal relationships comply (Li, 2015).

According to the social exchange theory, people interact with one another based on a self-interested assessment of the costs and benefits to maximize gains and minimize losses (Razak et al., 2016). Moreover, according to social exchange theory, individuals' attitudes and behaviors may alter based on their perceptions of how they are being treated or the demand for reciprocity (Kim et al., 2015). In addition to financial gain, rewards for the transaction will also yield psychological benefits including reputation, support, trust, and self-esteem (Li, 2015). According to social exchange theory, an employee's social behavior is the result of an exchange process (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2021). Social exchange theory facilitates the acceptance of the roles of organizations and managers in fostering employee responsibilities and positive work perspectives. When managers express concern for their employees, social exchange networks flourish, resulting in positive outcomes (Thomas & Gupta, 2021).

Knowledge sharing is more than just exchanging ideas; it also involves creative methods and followers who are inspired by transformational leadership to share ever-greater amounts of knowledge (Sharif et al., 2024). Transformational leaders inspire the followers, provide intellectual challenges, attend to their needs for personal growth, and finally guide them to rise beyond themselves for a common goal to inspire the followers to perform excellently. Transformational leaders instill their followers with a sense of the organization's mission and pride, respect, and trust (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to the reciprocity principles of social exchange theory, if employees receive a great deal of motivation and inspiration from their leaders, they may be more eager to share knowledge with their coworkers (Wu & Lee, 2017).

Several studies have found that transformational leadership is an important enabler of knowledge sharing. Specifically, the relationships between the four components of transformational leadership, namely, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration in relation to knowledge sharing have been explored. Furthermore, the newly added dimensions of empowerment and personal recognition also have a positive relationship with knowledge sharing respectively. Hence, this study proposes a conceptual framework related to new combined transformational leadership with six dimensions and knowledge sharing, as shown in Figure 1:

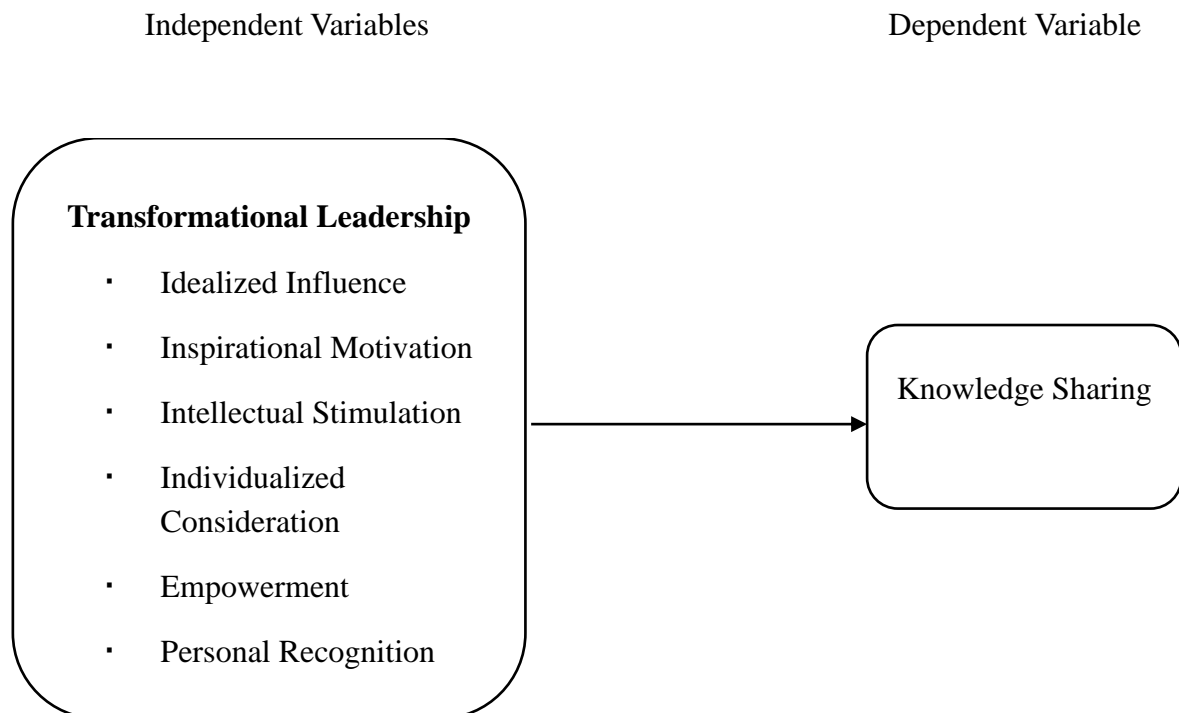


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Impact of Transformational Leadership on Knowledge Sharing

4. Propositions

Building upon the above literature review, the following propositions will be explored, including:

P1: Idealized Influence is significantly related to knowledge sharing

P2: Inspirational Motivation is significantly related to knowledge sharing

P3: Intellectual Stimulation is significantly related to knowledge sharing

P4: Individualized Consideration is significantly related to knowledge sharing

P5: Empowerment is significantly related to knowledge sharing

P6: Personal Recognition is significantly related to knowledge sharing

5. Conclusion

The conceptual framework of this study conducted a comprehensive review and reexamination of the relationship between dimensions of transformational leadership and knowledge sharing. This research adds two new dimensions to the transformational leadership model, which are empowerment and personal recognition. Drawing upon proposed causal relationships between variables, it was observed that transformational leadership, particularly through its dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation,

intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, empowerment and personal recognition exert a significant on knowledge sharing. The new combined transformational leadership model aims to explore the effect of different dimensions of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing, thereby addressing the question of what leadership factors influence knowledge sharing within organizations. A more comprehensive examination of the relationship between the six dimensions of transformational leadership and knowledge sharing will offer novel insights into the managerial role in fostering long-term competitive advantages within a competitive and dynamic environment.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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