Leadership Styles and their Impact on Faculty Job Satisfaction: Case Study of a Public Sector University in South Asia

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Abstract

Research to-date has focused mainly on the impact of leadership styles of academic administrators of primary and secondary education institutions on faculty job satisfaction. There was however a growing need to investigate the correlation between leadership styles of academic administrators of higher education institutions i.e. universities particularly the public sector universities in South Asia on job satisfaction of faculty.

Through use of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, this paper identifies the leadership styles of several academic administrators of the public sector university in question who have served on this role during past 12 years. An assessment of faculty job satisfaction was performed through Job Satisfaction Survey whereas a correlation between various styles of leadership adopted by the academic administrators of the university in question and their impact on faculty job satisfaction has been studied.

Keywords: Leadership styles, faculty job satisfaction, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Job Satisfaction Survey.
1. Introduction

Research to-date has focused mainly on understanding correlation between the leadership styles of academic administrators of primary and secondary education institutions and the faculty job satisfaction [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. In order to improve the institutional performance, there is a growing need to investigate the correlation between leadership styles of academic administrators of higher education institutions i.e. universities particularly the public sector universities in South Asia on job satisfaction of faculty.

One of the main aspects of this research is its multidimensionality in terms of identifying leadership styles adopted by the academic administrators, investigating job satisfaction of the faculty and consequently establishing a relationship between leadership styles adopted by various leaders over the past 12 years and the job satisfaction of the faculty in a leading public sector university in Pakistan.

One of the main emphases of this research is to identify the leadership styles of the academic administrator through use of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) [19]. Although various leadership styles are available for the managers and leaders to adopt however this research will focus on transformational, transactions and passive/avoidant leadership styles. Justin et al [7] provide significant guidelines for identifying leadership style based on the outcomes of MLQ.

Literature suggests that the success of an organization depends on hiring and retaining satisfied employees whereas increased job satisfaction results in greater employee retention [6, 7, 9]. Therefore another important aspect of this multidimensional research is to investigate the faculty satisfaction in the public sector university through use of Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Spector [8].

This research is focused on evaluation of leadership styles adopted by several academic administrators during their tenures that span over a period 12 years through a survey involving Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. It also investigates the faculty job satisfaction during the tenures of the academic administrations in question. Thus an interesting and previously unexplored correlation between the leadership styles of academic administrators and faculty job satisfaction is studied in a public sector university in KPK province of Pakistan. This research provides an ever so important insight into the operations of the public sector universities in developing countries of South Asia.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the review of literature pertaining to leadership styles, MLQ based surveying and literature on job satisfaction survey. Section 3 explains the methodology adopted in this research to identify the correlation between leadership styles and faculty job satisfaction. Section 4 provides a discussion on results while Section 5 discusses limitations of the current research and the future work in perspective of this research.

2. Background study

2.1. Leadership styles

Review of literature suggests that the leadership styles have a direct impact on critical aspects of an organisation [10, 11, 12, 13]. There exist various leadership styles however this research will focus on three leadership style i.e. transformational, transaction and passive/avoidant. In transformational leadership the novel ideas from the subordinates are encouraged and therefore result in them being more confident. Under this style leaders motivate the subordinates to utilize their talent and skills to result in highest level of achievements. Some of the significant characteristics of this type of leadership style are intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and charisma influence.

In transactional leadership style the subordinates are kept motivated through praise and incentives in form of bonuses and promotions. Negative feedback and punishment in form disciplinary action are used as tools for correction of the subordinates that underperform. This type of leadership style relies on conditional reinforcement and is typically adopted in the organizations where the employees (including the managers) work for achievement of pre-set goals.
In the passive/avoidant style of leadership, passive management role in form of management-byexception is adopted by the leader. Leaders tend to interfere only if noncompliance with standards has been identified or if the mistakes have already committed. Another important aspect of the passive/avoidant leadership style is laissez-faire i.e. absence of leadership. Leaders tend to avoid involvement into making decisions, abdicate responsibility and avoid using their authority [16, 17]. Passive management avoids identify resolutions or even clarifying goals to be achieved by the followers.

2.2. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire is a globally acknowledged tool to identify the leadership style of a leader. It is important to mention that the MLQ can also be used to measure job satisfaction levels of the participants of survey. MLQ-5x is a 45-item questionnaire that takes into consideration various factors while assessing behaviour of a leader including intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward and laissez-faire behaviours. The MLQ-5x contains several subscales that can be combined to arrive at scores for the different leadership types. As per literature, transformational leadership can be measured combining the following subscales (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviours, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. The transactional leadership score depends on subscales (a) contingent rewards and (b) management by exception (active) whereas the passive/avoidant leadership can be measures using subscales (a) management by exception (passive) and (b) laissez-faire [7, 18].

Each subscale consisted of 4 questions. A five-point frequency rating scale (in which 0 represented not at all and 4 represented frequently) was utilized to acquire the scores against each question. An average of scores across each group of subscales representing a leadership style results in determining the average score for each leadership style. The leadership style with highest average is selected as the dominant leadership style.

2.3. Job Satisfaction Survey

The Job Satisfaction Survey is a measurement tool designed to assess how employees feel about their job and to provide assessment of the attitude of employees towards various aspect of their job. The JSS questionnaire consists of 36 questions pertaining to aspect such as salary, promotion, supervision, operational conditions, employee benefits and rewards, organisational communication, and co-workers and working environment [8]. Each question consists of answers on a scale of 6 where 1 represents disagree very much and 6 represents agree very much. To identify the satisfaction level, an average across all 36 items is taken. Reverse coding is usually utilized in case of negatively worded questions before calculating the average [7]. Spector [8] has discussed the possibilities to divide scores between two categories i.e. satisfied and dissatisfied. Average scores of 3.5 and above are graded as satisfied whereas the scores below 3.5 are graded as dissatisfied. Categorization of satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels further results in three categories i.e. dissatisfied with average scores between 1 and 3, ambivalent with scores between 3 and 4 as while satisfied with average scores between 4 and 6.

3. Methodology

One of the main aims of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the leadership style of the academic administrator leadership styles and institutional performance. This study was designed to be co-relational and non-experimental. Independent variables were the leadership styles of academic administrators (i.e. transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant styles) as evaluated by faculty members whereas the dependent variable was faculty job satisfaction. The sample consisted of 110 faculty members (i.e. 40% of the entire population of 272) of the university from which 65% (i.e. 71) completed the survey forms. The survey was conducted in a public sector university in KPK province of Pakistan in South Asia.

Unlike other studies of this nature, this research is based on the survey through tenures of 4 academic administrators of a public sector university between 2003 and 2015. Each faculty member was made to complete 4 MLQ-5x survey forms i.e. one for each academic administer. Following MLQ-5x standards, the
academic administrators were assigned leadership styles as per their dominant trait identified by the faculty members participating in the survey. MLQ was also used to evaluate the job satisfaction levels of faculty participating in the survey. Each faculty member was then requested to complete 4 Job Satisfaction Survey forms i.e. one for each academic administrator’s tenure. This was followed by analysis of results to correlate the leadership style of the academic administrators against the faculty job satisfaction.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the methodology described in the previous section, Table 1 provides the leadership styles of each of the 4 academic administrators identified during this study. As per the MLQ guidelines, an average of scores across each group of subscales representing a leadership style was calculated and the leadership style with highest average is selected as the dominant leadership style. Based on the MLQ-5x based survey, dominant leadership style of the academic administrator A-1 was perceived to be transformational whereas academic administrators A-2 and A-3 were perceived to be having transactional leadership style. A-4 was perceived by to be leading with passive/avoidant leadership style.

Table 1: Leadership Style of Academic Administrators Identified through MLQ-5x based Survey

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average scores for each leadership style on constituent MLQ scales</td>
<td>Transformational (3.9)</td>
<td>Transactional (3.7)</td>
<td>Transactional (3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transactional (3.3)</td>
<td>Transformational (3.2)</td>
<td>Transformational (3.4)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Passive/Avoidant (2.1)</td>
<td>Passive/Avoidant (1.8)</td>
<td>Passive/Avoidant (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived dominant leadership style of the academic administrator based on MLQ survey</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Transactional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Passive/Avoidant</td>
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Besides measuring the leadership style, MLQ-5x also allows to measure employee satisfaction. The average faculty job satisfaction score for A-1 with transformational leadership style was calculated to be 3.7 out of 5.0. Faculty job satisfaction score for A-2 and A-3 with transactional leadership style was measured to be 3.3 and 3.1 respectively whereas the faculty job satisfaction score for A-3 was recorded to be 3.6. It is interesting to notice that the faculty was by far more satisfied with passive/avoidant leadership style as compared to the transactional leadership style. Transformational leadership style in the perspective of the organisation in question resulted in more satisfied faculty compared to any other leadership style.

Job Satisfaction Survey was utilized to assess faculty job satisfaction under each of the four academic administrators with varying leadership styles. Out of the total population n=110, 71% (n=78) of the faculty was recorded to be satisfied (average 3.5 or above on scale of 6) under the academic administrator A-1 with transformational leadership style. Under A-2 with transactional leadership style, 59% (n=65) of the faculty was recorded to be satisfied whereas under academic administrator A-3 with the transactional leadership style, 55% (n=61) of the faculty was recorded satisfied. In the tenure of A-4 with the passive/avoided leadership style, 64% (n=70) of the faculty was satisfied.

Analysis of results acquired through survey involving MLQ and JSS, it was observed that the academic administrator with the transactional leadership style managed to acquire highest percentage of satisfied faculty compared to academic administrators with different leadership styles. It was further observed that the academic administrators with passive/avoidant leadership style managed to acquire a higher percentage in terms of faculty satisfaction compared to the academic administrators with transactional
leadership style. With regards to customer satisfaction, conformity was observed between the results acquired from MLQ and JSS surveys.

5. Limitations and Future Directions
This research although reveals an interesting correlation between leadership styles of academic administrators and faculty job satisfaction, a critical aspect of this research i.e. the evaluation of the impact of customer satisfaction on the institutional performance is still unexplored. Khalil et al [14] have discussed the impact of leadership styles of academic administrators on institutional performance. It will therefore be interesting to highlight the correlation between leadership styles, faculty job satisfaction and institutional performance. This research and its findings are based on the case study of a public sector university in South Asia. With a large number of universities in South Asia making their place in world university rankings [15], there is a strong need to extend this study to other public sector universities, semi-public sector universities and private universities of the country to draw a generally valid argument about the role of leadership in faculty job satisfaction and institutional performance.

6. Conclusions
This paper has provided a much needed insight into leadership styles and their correlation with faculty job satisfaction in higher education. Leadership styles of various academic administrators of a public sector university in a South Asian country were identified through Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Faculty job satisfaction was surveyed through both MLQ and JSS and the impact of different leadership styles adopted by the academic administrators during their tenures on the faculty job satisfaction has been studied. Besides discussing an interesting correlation between leadership styles and faculty job satisfaction, this paper has also identified future directions such as a multidirectional research involving leadership styles, faculty job satisfaction and institutional performance.

References


