LEADERSHIP STYLES FACILITATING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

In this knowledge-based era, human resources are considered as the most important organizational capital and the main factor of success and excellence. One of the most important factors affecting the maintenance and development of this valuable capital is organizational commitment. Among the various factors that affect the development of organizational commitment, this paper discusses the role of leadership in improving organizational commitment of employees. To this end, the effect of three styles of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership on a variety of organizational commitments (affective, normative and continuous) has been investigated. Methodology used is descriptive and correlational. Statistical population consists of 805 managers and experts in a government agency in Tehran from whom 223 subjects have been selected using random sampling. Collected data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling. Results of this study suggest that leadership style of managers has a significant effect on organizational commitment; so that the transformational and transactional leadership style have positive effect on organizational

commitment but this effect is negative when talking about laissez-faire leadership. On this basis, suggestions are offered to managers to increase organizational commitment of their subordinate employees by developing their leadership style.

Keywords: Organizational commitment, Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the environment of organizations has become more dynamic and challenging than ever before (Kanter, 1995). In such environments, employees with skills and competence, motivation and commitment are considered as the main factor of creating competitive advantage for organizations (Oldtrich, 1998). Indeed, human resources are the most valuable resources of an organization. No organization cannot maximize its own performance unless each employee is committed to the goals of the organization and work effectively and efficiently (Gunnigle et al, 1971). Leave of human resources and professionals in particular can cause irreversible harm to the organization. Thus, paying attention to the organizational commitment of employees is of the main priorities of today's most successful organizations in the world. Measures such as payment based on performance, employee performance management, policies of establishing job security, the creation of relationships with employees and customers, understanding their needs and expectations, paying attention to the long-term planning, reducing strict rules and bureaucrats in organizations, establishing mental and spiritual security for employees and attention to their welfare issues are among the most important factors that are effective in an amount of organizational productivity and lead to the creation of the commitment of employees.

The most important of these factors that can provide necessary conditions to increase productivity of human resources, is the existence of successful and effective leaders and managers in transforming conditions (Saatchi's, 2004). There is a relationship between negative effects of leadership and the lack of employees' commitment, which includes absence and changes of working practices and employees' commitment is positively correlated with organizational consequences and results such as job satisfaction, motivation, or paying attention (Bennett & Durkin, 2000).

Therefore, in this study the effect of leadership on improving organizational commitment of employees has been reviewed and those leadership styles that are more effective in his regard have been studied.

With a little care in evolution trends of the human resources management, we will easily realize that an attention to the man in the world of management and organization has been traditionally considered by management experts(Abtahi, 2005). The position of organization not only depends on how to exploit the capabilities of the human capital of the organization, but also on how to stimulate the employees' commitment towards the organization by its leaders (Nijhof and colleagues, 1998). Committed employees have accepted organizational values due to taking responsibilities for their activities and performance. High level of commitment to the organization can reduce absence of employees and increase their job satisfaction and performance. These positive advantages of committed employees are considered as an important factor in the utility and efficiency of the organization (Buttigieg & Iverson, 1998).

In government agencies, as well as many other organizations, the human factor is the most important element of the organization and it functions have a huge effect on the success and efficiency of the organization. Organizational commitment of employees in such organizations like any other organization is important and effective in their performance. In addition to this special nature of the tasks and missions of employees in government agencies makes the importance of organizational commitment be much more decisive in the quality of their performance. On the other hand, the turnover or voluntary mobility of employees can also cause abundant and sometimes irreparable damages to these organizations. Hence, improving organizational commitment of employees in such organizations is one of the fundamental challenges and principal tasks of managers. However, empirical research conducted on the factors influencing the development of organizational commitment of employees in government agencies still do not have enough richness.

According to the effect that leadership has on the behaviors and attitudes of employees in the organization (Robbins, p.218, 2001), it seems leadership can have significant effect on improving organizational commitment of employees in these organizations.

Accordingly, the purpose of the study is investigating the issue that how and to what extends leadership can influence maintenance and improvement of organizational commitment among employees. To this end, the effect of leadership style on organizational commitment will be discussed initially and then the relationship between the three main leadership styles (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) and three types of organizational commitment of employees(affective, normative and continuous) will be checked and there will be recommendations to improve organizational commitment of employees in governmental organizations through the development of leadership styles of their managers by recognizing those styles improving organizational commitment.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A) Leadership

The leadership is the process of social influence in which a leader creates voluntary participation of employees in order to achieve organizational goals (Rezaiian, 2012). The quality of this influence is described based on the behaviors and the inherent characteristics of the leader, followers' perceptions and the context in which it occurs. Leaders create a culture and their basic role is to influence others in a way that they eagerly follow a pre-determined targets. Leadership style is defined as the behavior of leader in orienting group activities dealing with common goals (Gerber et al. 1996). Bass (1990) describes three known leadership styles in one of the categories of leadership styles: transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership.

1) Transformational leadership: These leaders believe in the importance of creating common organizational values and goals among followers and encourage them to go beyond their personal interests and work for the interests of the organization. The followers of such leaders may develop their work based on their willingness. Such leaders care about the concerns of each of employees and try to reinforce confidence in them and consider the development of growth needs of the people (Avolio et al., 1994).

2) Transactional leadership style: This leadership theory has been established based on social learning theories and social interaction that shows the bilateral nature of leadership (Deluga, 1990). This leadership style may induce the rational amount of the partnership, loyalty, commitment and performance among followers by providing contingency rewards. Transactional leadership makes use of satisfying the needs of as the lower level needs same as primary needs to create motivation. These leaders express which reward for what kind of behavior and what level of performance will be presented (Bass et al., 1994).

3) Laissez-faire leadership style: Deluga (1990) introduces these leadership behaviors as very passive ones and in fact sign of the absence of leadership. This leadership style is also known as management based on exceptions. In this case, leader considers only negative and destructive behaviors of followers and applies corrective measures only when followers could not achieve defined goals (Bass, 1990).

B) Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment represents the power which makes an individual to stay with organization and tries to achieve organizational goals longingly.The person who has a high organizational commitment would stay in the organization and accept its goals; he would show more efforts and devotions to achieve those goals (Gholi pour, 2011). Porter (1974) states three

characteristics for organizational commitment: a strong belief in accepting the organizational aims and values, willingness to work hard for the benefit of the organization, and tendency to stay with the organization. In many researches conducted on this subject, a three-component model of organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991) has been used (Gholi pour, 2011):

1. Affective commitment: this type of employee commitment to the organization refers to their sense of oneness with the organization and their active presence in the organization. Employees, who have a great sense of commitment, would stay with organization because they are interested in organization, missions, tasks and its features.

2. Continuous commitment: Unlike affective commitment that includes emotional dependency, the continuous commitment reflects and calculates the benefits of staying versus leaving the organization. This theory expresses that people would stay with the organization for a long time; they begin to collect capital and leaving the organization led them to have more damages. These investments include time, job efforts and specific organizational skills and greater costs of leaving organization would prevent them from looking for an alternative job.

3. Normative commitment: normative commitment explains a sense of commitment to continue working and employment. Employees, who have a high normative commitment, feel that organization has spent more time and costs for their education and progress; so they commit themselves to stay with the organization and compensate all these for the organization.

Theoretical framework of research

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
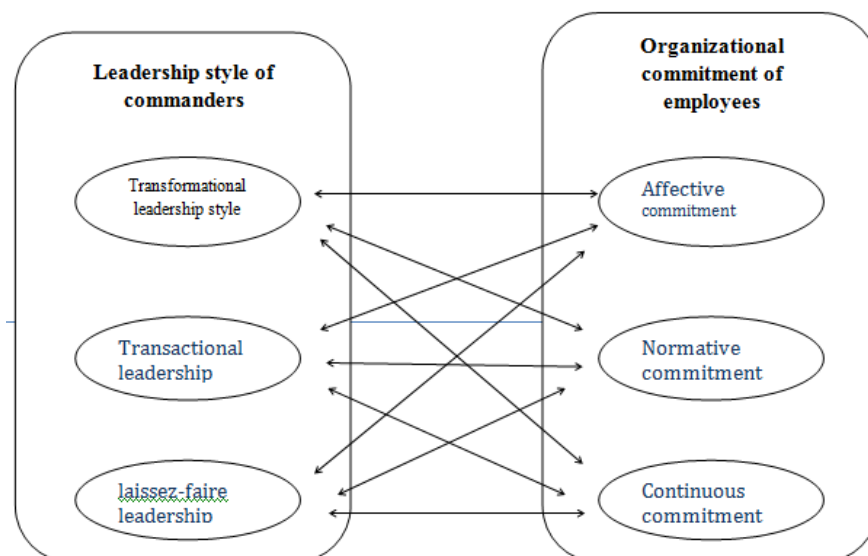
Research Objectives

1. Studying the effect of leadership in improving organizational commitment;

2. Studying the relationship between each of leadership styles with each type of organizational commitment;

3. Providing the suggested strategies in order to enhance organizational commitment of employees with the development of leadership styles used by managers.

Research Hypotheses

According to what mentioned above and conceptual model of research about the relationship between leadership styles of managers and organizational commitment of employees, the main hypothesis and sub-hypotheses of this research include:

The main hypothesis: leadership style of manager has a significant effect on organizational commitment of employees.

Sub- hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment.

2. There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and continuous commitment.

3. There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and normative commitment.

4. There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and affective commitment.

5. There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and continuous commitment.

6. There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and normative commitment.

7. There is a significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and affective commitment.

8. There is a significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and continuous commitment.

9. There is a significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and normative commitment.

METHODOLOGY

This research is an applied one in terms of objectives; because its findings can be used to develop organizational commitment. According to data collection, this research is a descriptive survey; because it tries to obtain required information about status quo of sample using

questionnaire. Also it is cross-sectional in terms of time concept and quantitative in terms of data type.

Statistical population and sample

The studied population in this research consists of 805 managers and experts in a government agency in Tehran. In this study, the random sampling method has been used. The number of samples based on a sampling formula includes 223 subjects.

Data collection tools

In this study, the multi-factorial leadership questionnaire (MLQ) has been used to evaluate a variety of leadership styles based on 5-point Likert scale. In this questionnaire, the reliability of questions about transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leaderships has been reported by Ackerman et al. (2000) using Cronbach's alpha coefficients as 944%, 736%,803% , respectively. Bass and Avilio (1997) have confirmed the validity of this questionnaire. To assess the level of organizational commitment among employees, OCQ questionnaire was used. Allen & Meyer (1990) have expressed the reliability of affective, continuous and normative commitment as .87, .75 and .79, respectively. Mowday et al (1979) have also confirmed the internal validity of this questionnaire.

Analytical approach

In this research, in order to analyze obtained data and study the main hypothesis of research, structural equation modeling was used, and to check the sub-hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The main hypothesis analysis

To verify the existence and the effect of leadership style on organizational commitment of employees, structural equation modeling was used. In structural equation modeling, the relationship between types of latent traits is studied and those traits have been extracted according to the theory and collected data (Kalantari, 2010). After modeling, in order to assess its validity, the specific indicators were including: ratio of chi square to degree of freedom which should be less than 3, the amount of root mean square error of approximation should be less than .08 and P-value should be less than .05 and modified fit index should be greater than .9..

To determine the significance of the effect of leadership style on organizational commitment, significance model was used and in order to assess the quality and extent of this

effect, standard model was used. About the significance of the numbers obtained, it can be said that since testing hypotheses is done at .95 of confidence level, those numbers will be significant if not between 1.96 and -1.96.This means that if the number places between 1.96 and -1.96, it will be insignificant. Figure 2 shows the significance of effect of leadership style on organizational commitment.

Figure 2. Model of leadership styles effect on organizational commitment in significance mode
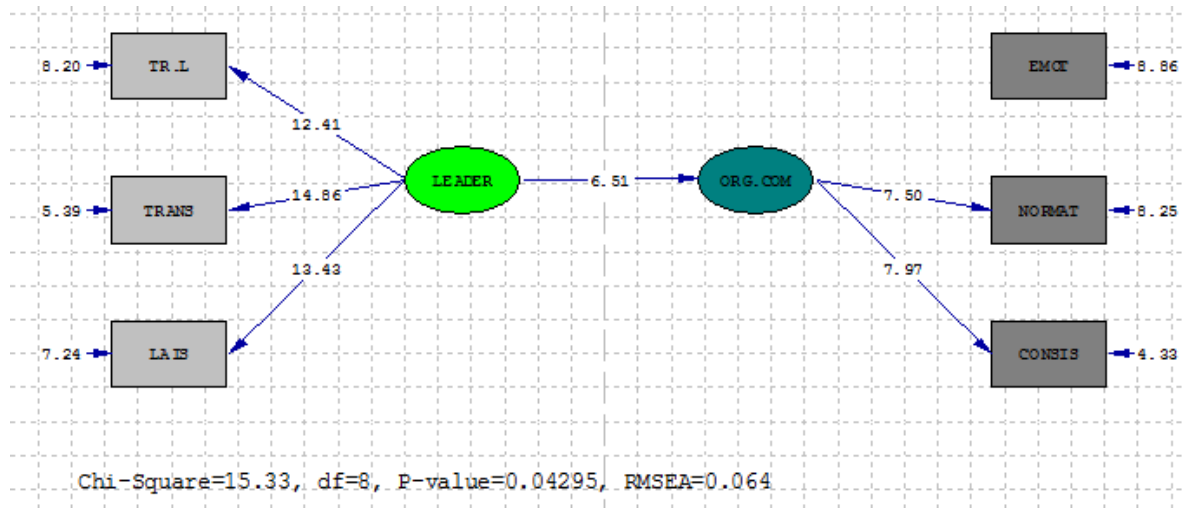
Based on the indicators presented in table 3 below, fitness of model can be judged.

Table 1. Fitness indicators of leadership styles effect on organizational commitment

Indicators	Allowable amount	Obtained numbers	Results
Ratio of chi square to degree of freedom	χ^2/df<3	2.94	Suitable fitness
P-value	P <0.05	.002	Suitable fitness
RMSEA	0/08< RMSEA<0.05	.064	Suitable fitness
GFI	Higher than .9	.92	Suitable fitness
AGFI	Higher than .9	.94	Suitable fitness
CFI	Higher than .9	.91	Suitable fitness

The fitness indicators of model show the appropriateness of measurement model for related variables; because ratio of chi square to degree of freedom is equal to 2.94 and less than 3, RMSEA (i.e. equal to .064) is less than .08 and P-value) .04294(is less than .05.Also based on this model, the effect of leadership style on employees' organizational commitment equals to

6.51 and greater than 1.96 and shows the significance of leadership style effect on organizational commitment of employees. With using standard model, the extent of this effect can be evaluated (main hypothesis).

Figure 3. Model of leadership styles effect on organizational commitment in standard mode

Chi-Square=15.33, df=8, P-value=0.04295, RMSEA=0.064
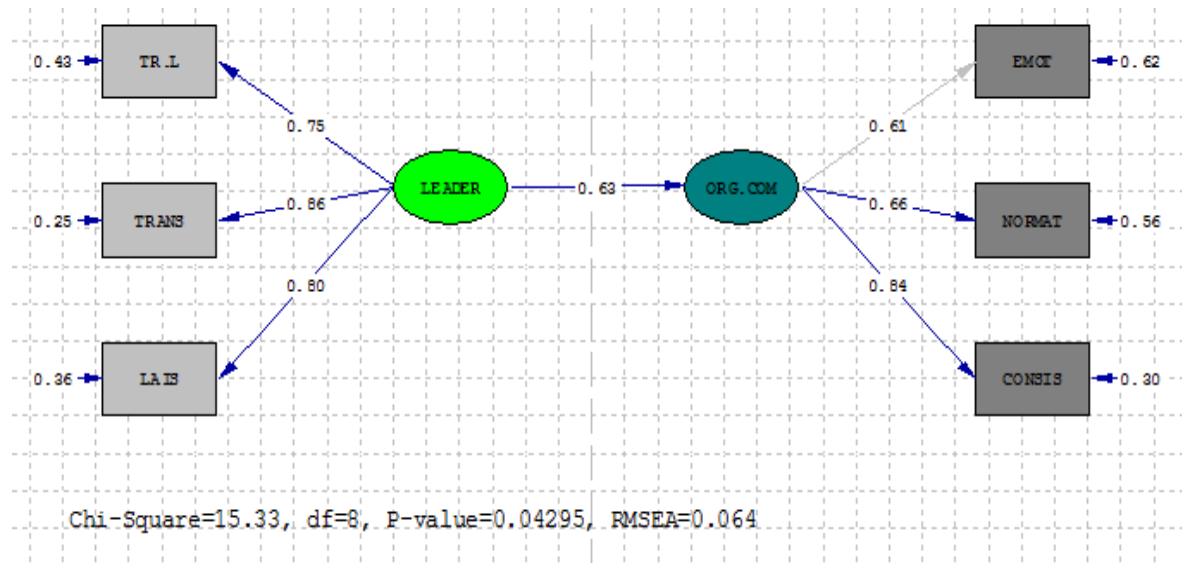
The significance graph showed the effect of leadership style on organizational commitment is significant. In standard mode, the graph also shows that leadership styles explains 63 percent of changes in organizational commitment of employees. Consequently, the main hypothesis of this study-significant and positive effect of leadership styles on organizational commitment are approved.

Test of sub hypotheses

After approval of determining effect of leadership style on organizational commitment, the quality and extent of the relationship between each leadership style, and a variety of organizational commitment (sub-hypotheses) will be discussed; to this end, correlation coefficient test was used and the results were shown in table 2. Given that this study was conducted at 95 per cent of confidence level, if the significance level is greater than 5% then the null hypothesis will be accepted and this means the existence of a significant relationship between these variables will be rejected and unless it will be confirmed. The results obtained from the data analysis data are presented in table 2 and in this regard, the analysis and conclusions are done.

Table 2. Results of testing sub-hypotheses (the correlation between leadership styles and types of organizational commitment)

Hypothesis	Relationship between	Correlation coefficient	Significance number(sig)	Result of studying relationship
1	Transformational leadership and affective commitment	.435	.012	significant and positive
2	Transformational leadership and continuous commitment	.175	.003	significant and positive
3	Transformational leadership and normative commitment	.256	.007	significant and positive
4	Transactional leadership and affective commitment	.09	.235	Disapproval
5	Transactional leadership and continuous commitment	.479	.028	significant and positive
6	Transactional leadership and normative commitment	.27	.036	significant and positive
7	laissez-faire leadership and affective commitment	-.312	.001	significant and negative
8	laissez-faire leadership and continuous commitment	-.102	.197	Disapproval
9	laissez-faire leadership and normative commitment	-.15	.047	significant and negative

According to the results presented in table 2,the significance of the relationship between predicted relations in hypotheses (except transactional leadership and affective commitment, laissez-faire leadership and continuous commitment) were confirmed. The relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and continuous and normative commitments was negative and

significant and the rest of relationships were positive and significant. This means the improvement in the status quo of each of these dimensions could help to further develop toward a learning organization. There was the highest positive relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment.

Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between three relationship styles (transformational leadership, transactional and laissez-faire leaderships) and a variety of organizational commitments of employees (affective, continuous, and normative). Overall effect of leadership style on organizational commitment was done by structural equation modeling and relationships of each of leadership styles and a variety of organizational commitments was done with Pearson correlation coefficient. Results of statistical analysis of data show that leadership style has a significant and positive effect on organizational commitment. Based on these findings, there has often been a significant relationship between leadership styles and a variety of organizational commitments; although this relationship is not strong enough in some cases. These findings of research have been consistent with research conducted by Kent et al (2001). In this section, we discuss the quality of relationship between each of these three types of leadership styles and organizational commitment of employees. Also, these results are consistent with the research done by Shamir et al (1993) that demonstrates those leaders who have the transactional leadership styles, in contrast with the leaders, who have laissez-faire leadership, are more effective in achieving higher level of organizational commitment.

These findings show that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership style consisting of the creation of the trust, induction of a common vision, encouragement of creation and emphasis on progress, and organizational commitment. Although this style of leadership is related positively with all three types of organizational commitment, this relationship is about much more about affective commitment. This positive relationship can be explained sue to psychological and emotional nature of this type of leadership style and organizational commitment. Positive relationship between transformational leadership and normative commitment of employees is justifiable this way that such leaders care about concerns and development of the growth needs of each personand this behavior of managers leads to enhance employee commitment. Even though the significant and positive relationship between transformational leadership and continuous commitment was very weak, it can be justified this way that these leaders lead people to grow and this is a motivation for people to stay with organization.

Accordingly, results suggest that transactional leadership are positively and significantly related o continuous and normative commitments but this correlation has not been confirmed about affective commitment yet. This positive correlation between transactional leadership and continuous commitment of employees is because the emphasis of such leaders on offering rewards and bonuses commensurate with performance of employees would ensure their mutual interests and as a result individuals would stay with organization in order to achieve and maintain interests and managers comply with them.

Positive relationship between this leadership style and normative commitment is because of situations that managers can offer to provide benefits and expectations conditionally, result in strengthening their sense of responsibility toward manager and organization and stay with organization based on the principle of mutual compensation in order to compensate their achievements.

Based on the provided analysis, relationship between laissez-faire leadership and all three types of organizational commitments has been negative, although a significant negative relationship between this leadership style and continuous commitment has not been confirmed yet. This is negative because when a manager does not pay attention about conditions, demands and problems of his employees, does not have inspiring and provocative behavior for them , and does not care about their development and will not have effective influence on people and consequently, the successive failure to achieve organizational and individual goals and meeting no benefits and demands of individuals and organization lead to their mutual dissatisfaction from each other and falling in destructive cycles. In such circumstances, the forced relocation or voluntary departure will not be unexpected.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the positive effect of transformational and transactional styles of leadership on organizational commitment, managers will be able to use more of principles of these styles of leadership, increase level of organizational commitment of their employees. Those organizations that want their employees to have more organizational commitment, should provide comprehensive training to their managers in order to encourage behaviors such as trust creation, induction of a common vision, encouragement of creativity, emphasis on personal development, and achieving organizational and individual achievements and benefits. Such managers can play a key role in the development of organizational commitment of their employees. They should show their commitment toward their employees by providing the context of development and growth of employees and strengthening motivations associated with the excellence of organization.

It is also suggested that managers promote organizational values and favorable attitude toward organization among their employees to make them have a more sense of belonging to their organizations and stay with the organization. Because they want it this way themselves; in this regard, their affective commitment to organization will be increased.

Since there is a significant and positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment, managers should apply this leadership style more especially in areas to which committed employees have a desirable performance. With the implementation of programs that encourage managers to develop transformational leadership styles, organization can be able to promote the level of employees' commitment. This effect will be much more about professionals. Because professionals and experts will gain their rewards more from superior internal standards and inner satisfaction of their own performance than exterior incentives. The main motivational factor for professionals is to have tremendous job and feel individual and professional growth and development.

And finally, given the transactional leadership style also can promote organizational commitment of employees, it is recommended that managers try more to meet interests and expectations of their employees and provide better facilities and conditions for their employees. Because man is a rational creature, and if he finds out that his interests would be satisfied enough in organization, the chance of his displacement will be less.

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