

# Does Leadership Style Influence Employee Sustainability



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*Employee sustainability within an organization is an area that management needs to look to develop methods for organizational growth. Leadership is a critical success factor in promoting employee sustainability practices in the Organisation. Employee sustainability is an integral part as it affects all aspects of business operations. The purpose of this paper is to investigate if there is any particular leadership style associated with sustainability of employees in the organization. This paper therefore examines the effective leadership and its impact on the longevity of the organisations. The alarming attrition rate among the nurses in the health care sector has provoked the need for this study. The significance of this study showed that within the hospital environment the leadership style may have caused any change in employee sustainability. The second area of significance is that it will add to the body of literature regarding the effects of leadership styles that are associated with actual impact on the employee sustainability within the organisation. The research methodology applied in this study developed a quantitative approach through application of questionnaire survey. To measure the dimensionality of scale factors an exploratory factor analysis is conducted. Reliability analysis is performed, Cronbach alpha test indicates that the research scales are consistent. The sample of the study employed a convenience sample from nurses in hospital / health care sector The managerial implication of the research study recommends application and adoption of sustainable leadership styles explained has the outcome of the study.*

**Keywords:** Employee Sustainability, Nurses, Leadership Styles, Subordinate Competency, Health Care Sector

## 1. Introduction

Today, organizations need to have leaders who are enlightened and responsive towards bringing in a change in the organization. All organizations needs the leader who is proficient enough to achieving organizational goals in an effective manner. Organizations around the world are increasingly concerned about the sympathetic and effective leadership. Leadership is avital variable associated with organizational performance. (Bass, 1998).

An important paradigm shift has happened in the understanding of leadership. Researchers have found a link between leadership styles and employee sustainability (Bass & Avolio, 2000). The study of organizational leadership theories discloses, among other things, the impact of leadership on employee sustainability.

### Purpose of the Study

Interest in the study of leadership and leadership styles has remained vibrant over the years. There is an abundance of literature in the management field on leadership, with each researcher trying to investigate characteristics of good leaders and identify which leadership style which is most suited to influencing employees to work.

Transformational leaders motivate followers to perform beyond expectations by defining a clear vision, inspiring commitment, and empowering followers to make decisions (Quesada, Gonzales, & Kent, 2008).

Transactional leaders define the roles and tasks required to achieve specific goals. Researchers have reported a transformational leadership style is vital to prevent employee disengagement (Attridge, 2009; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011). Transactional leaders focus on a process of exchange for motivation (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

### Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership Styles

After a wide-ranging research and contribution to the understanding of leadership, Burns (1978) and Bass (1990) introduced the notion of transformational and transactional leadership.

Many studies have been conducted on the transactional and transformational classification of leadership styles (Bambale et al., 2011; Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Kamisan and King, 2013). The need to explore the relationship among more leadership paradigms and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) in order to identify the characteristics of effective leaders as risen.

Transactional leadership is the leader-follower relationship where there is a quid-pro quo arrangement. This is where followers are rewarded for compliance with organizational goals. In corporations, this may equate to jobs, pay, and status in exchange for employee effort and performance. Transformational leaders tailor strategies to challenge their subordinates to work towards a vision, engendering a sense of organizational commitment (Bass, 1990). Barling (2014) stated that transformational leadership styles are the dominant leadership theory today, attracting more research than any other leadership theory over the past two decades.

### Problem Statement

The failure of well-known organizations can, to a great extent, be attributed to leadership behavior. They see that exposure to such negative or ineffective leadership can, at the organizational level, high turnover, result in low performance, and lack of commitment are likely outcomes; at the individual level, such leadership can lead to workplace deviance. However when employees are feel valued, their opinions are considered, and they are challenged to perform at the highest level, the outcome is to increase productivity, loyalty to the organization, and the desire to put in the extra effort to assist the organization in meeting its goals and objectives.

### Significance of the Study

The current multigenerational workforce presents an even greater challenge for leaders. In today's fast paced, technology-driven global market, a significant management issue is how to motivate employees and increase job satisfaction in order to retain a workforce that contributes optimally to the organization. Leadership strategies will need to be developed to engage the workforce in a way that maximizes performance and improves the effectiveness of operations within an organization. In the increasingly competitive global environment, it is crucial for leaders to identify the leadership style and behavior best suited to the organization, one that would lead to the successful accomplishment of goals, mission, and objectives.

## 2. Review of Literature

**Leadership Styles:** Leadership is defined as the ability to influence others to get things done. (Stogdill, 1948; Bass, 1985). Leadership researchers suggest that an effective leader should be able to communicate vision, instil belief, loyalty. The current multigenerational workforce presents an even greater challenge for leaders and lead employees' talents directly towards achieving the organizational goals.

This study focused on the transactional and transformational leadership style. Past investigation proposed the two methods of transactional-transformational leadership may be applicable in the study of phenomenological-based leadership styles (Misumi, 1985; Misumi & Peterson, 1985).

**Transactional Leadership:** Past researchers have studied on transactional leadership as the core constituent of effective leadership behaviour in organizations prior to the introduction of transformational leadership theory (House, 1977). Exchange relationship is the key element reflected by the transactional leadership. Transactional leaders demand their subordinates to agree with, accepted or complied with their request if the subordinates hope for rewards and resources or avoidance of punitive action (Burns, 1978; Podsakoff, Todor & Skov, 1982; Podsakoff, MacKenzie). This dyadic exchange process of leadership style has been linked with contingent reward and punishment behaviour and termed as transactional leader behaviour.

**Transformational Leadership:** Transformational leadership refers to leader transformation process involving individuals, group and organization. It involves creating substantive change in the attitude of employees, moral enhancement and organization direction. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) highlighted that transformational leadership "is made possible when a leader's values (internal standards) are adopted by followers thereby producing changes in the attitudes, beliefs and goals of followers".

It is no doubt that transformational leadership is of great interest of study due to its popularity and attractiveness of this leadership style found to be consistently associated with superior performance (Barling, Weber & Kelloway, 1996; Yammarino & Bass, 1990), increased morale-related outcomes. (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996), affective commitment (Barling et al, 1996), intrinsic motivation (Charbonneau, Barling & Kelloway, 2001) and trust in the leader (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Positive relationships have also been consistently reported between individual, group and organizational performance.

**Transactional leadership** is a matter of contingence in for cement of employees based on performances. It motivates followers by appealing personal desires, based on instrumental economic transactions. Transactional leaders generally use the power, bureaucracy, policy, and authority to maintain control; this style of leadership is occasionally referred to as authoritative. Previous leadership researchers (e.g. Bass, 1985; Podsakoff et al., 1990) have identified reward system, which involves leaders clarifying roles and task expectations. (Podsakoff et al., 1990). It is apparent from the previous literature that transactional leadership has an effect at both the individual and the organisational levels (Yukl, 2006). Transactional leadership represents an active form of strategic leadership that is an important ingredient for organisational effectiveness (Bass, 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1997, 2000; Waldman et al., 2001).

**Subordinates' Competence:** Competencies are factors contributing to high levels of individual performance and therefore, organizational effectiveness. Boyatzis (1982) interprets competency as "an underlying characteristic of an individual which is casually related to effective or superior performance". It is also important to point out that competence refers not to how competent employees actually are but rather to their internal feelings about how competent they seem to themselves from engaging in a work and solving problems in it. A related perspective here is the notion that competencies related to the willingness and ability of the employee to use his/her capacities in specific situations (Spencer, 1983). McClelland (1973) who saw competencies as components of performance associated with important life outcomes and as an alternative to the

traditional trait and intelligence approaches to predicting human performance. Perceived competence, which refers to the experience of feeling that one is effective in dealing with the environment (Skinner and Wellborn, 1997).

**Organizational citizenship Behaviour:** OCB is attracting academic attention due to its positive association with organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). Organ (1988) elucidates that individual behaviour that OCB is such a behaviour totally depends on personal choice and is not rewarded in an organization but it certainly affects the overall performance of an organization. The term OCB is based on Barnard's (1968) concept of willingness to cooperate and Katz and Kahn's (1978) concept of innovative and spontaneous behaviour. Research findings indicate that OCB is essential for effective functioning of organization. The study of Baker (2005) reports that the employees who inculcate OCB, make the organization successful because it has strong negative relation with counter work behaviour. This behaviour is not demanded by the organization as a part of the job's terms and conditions.

According to Bukhari (2008), OCB is the act of defending the organization when the organization is facing difficult times and encourages stakeholders to make an investment in organization.

### Psychological Contracts

It consists of employees' beliefs regarding what employers owe them and, in turn, what they owe to their employers (Lambert et al., 2003). The primary focus of the psychological contract is the employment relationship between an employee and an employer at the individual level (Guest and Conway, 2002; Ali et al., 2010). The social exchange theory suggests that the perception of employees towards psychological contracts will directly affect their organisational commitment and play a crucial role in an organisation's general performance and competitiveness (Khandelwal, 2009; Passarelli, 2011). It is found to be negatively related to a wide variety of employee workplace attitudes and behaviours (Schein, 1980; Suazo, 2009). Organisations not only expect their employees to execute their assigned tasks appropriately but also anticipate commitment from them.

### Employee Sustainability

Employee sustainability is the development of the potential and capability of the work force thereby creating a just equitable and healthy work place. Thus the challenge of ensuring sustainability among employees is by deploying engagement practices and strong effect on the job satisfaction. Thus several studies prove employee engagement, positively impact job satisfaction. Employee sustainability is a broad based concept involving social, economic and environmental parameters. This phenomenon on sustaining the employees, puts the people first and fusion the employee's wellbeing. The thought of customer satisfaction is made possible through employee satisfaction. A satisfied employee is an engaged employee. (Perrini and Tencati, 2006; Mackenzie, 2007; Epstein et al., 2010; Eccles et al., 2012).

**Industry Profile:** The health care sector is the fastest growing industry. The health care industry spends \$ 65 billion annually at present. The health care sector is \$ 40 billion functioning industry and is estimated to grow to \$280 billion by 2020. With this fast paced growth, health care sector is facing several challenges with the burden of increase in disease and poor infrastructure and man power. India is nowhere in the top globally since it is yet to address several issues.

Private hospitals are the major player in the health care system in India (Gill, 2011). There is always a perennial shortage of nurses and the hospital finds it very challenging to retain and find a replacement for the nurses whom quit. Due to high turnover of nurses there is always a delay in the service, increased work load for the existing nurses and patient dissatisfaction and increased patient complaint.

Express Healthcare (May, 2017) reported the attrition rate of nurses in India is 35-40 % percent. Studies reveal that attrition rate of nurses is high in private than government hospitals. Moreover the nurse's attrition is more in the health care sector than other professions. The reason for nurse's turnover is yet to be properly investigated because the nurses who leave do not leave their profession, they only move from one hospital to another.

## 3. Methodology

**Research Methodology: Objective of the Study:** The main aim of the research study was to explore the impact of employee engagement practices the employee sustainability among nurse in hospitals in Chennai, India. Design: The study is quantitative, and non-experimental. Population: The study population consisted of all nurses working in private hospitals in Chennai. Sampling: Hospitals were selected which were placed in and around the Chennai city. Hospitals were selected on convenience of approachability. All nurses from the selected hospitals responded to the questionnaire. The study was conducted in 2018 and data were collected for 6 months. 750 questionnaires were distributed of which 598 questionnaire were filled and returned with a response rate of 94.7 %.

**Research Gap:** To our knowledge hardly any study has been undertaken in Indian private hospitals to understand causal mechanisms that lead to employee sustainability of nurses. Hence, the study was undertaken to investigate the causal mechanisms which may help private hospitals in employee sustainability.

**Sampling:** Convenience sampling mode was adopted. The respondents were from casualty and critical care units in the hospital. Researcher also ensured that at least twenty five percent of the nursing population of the respective hospital is

covered in the survey. Data were statistically treated using SPSS program. Structural equation modelling was administered to statistically study the impact of the culture of the organisation on the employee sustainability.

**Scales:** The leadership style scale consists of the Transformational Leadership Behavior Inventory (TLI: Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Morrman & Fetter, 1990) that measures six dimensions including articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, having high performance expectations, providing individualized support and providing intellectual stimulation.

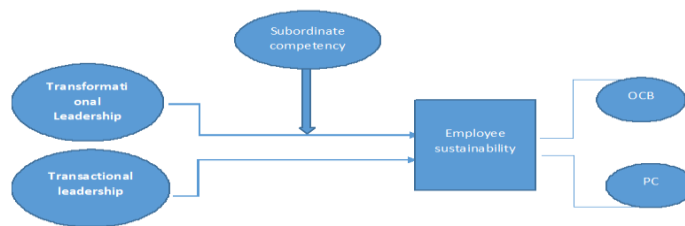
A Likert scale was used to assess the transactional leadership from Leader Reward and Punishment Behavior Questionnaire (LRPQ: Podsakoff, Todor, Grover & Huber, 1984; Podsakoff, Todor & Skov, 1982).

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)** OCB scale was measured using a 7-item scale developed by Smith, Organ and near (1983). The scale measures the compliance of OCB.

**Subordinates' Competence:** Wagner and Morse's (1975) self-reported measure of individual sense of competence was used to measure the employee's task competence in lieu of a more direct measure of competency level.

**Organizational Citizenship Behaviour.** Self-rated OCB is determined by using a scale of 24 items produced by Organ (1988). The scale has a reliability of 0.70 (Podsakoff et al., 1997) which meets recommended standards suggested by Nunnally et al. (1978) for new scales.

**Frame work of the Study**

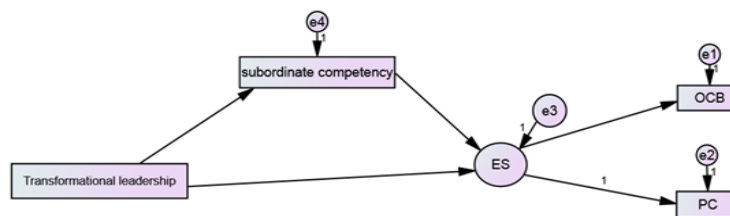


**Leadership Styles and Subordinates' Competence:** The performance of leader is dependent on his or her leadership style to influence subordinates with varied competency levels. Leaders are aware that they deal with diverse background of subordinates reporting to them. This has forced them to respond differently especially with different subordinates' competence. The importance of subordinates' competence affecting leadership style has not been researched and discussed in the theoretical and management literature. Past research found that supervisors reacted more warmly, permissively and collegially to a subordinate when the latter performed efficiently (Lowin & Craig, 1968), while initiated more formal bureaucratic procedures to less consideration for poor performers (Greene, 1975).

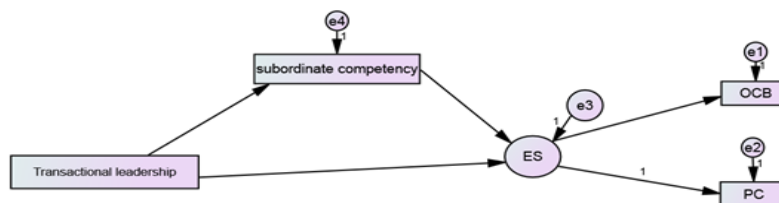
The rationale behind this is that transformational leader would want to give more latitude and support to subordinates who have high ability and perform efficiently and effectively. Dockery and Steiner's (1990) research findings suggest that subordinates' ability has effect on leadership styles. It can be conjectured then that if the subordinates' competence is high, the superior may use transformational leadership, and that when subordinates' competence is low, the superior may be expected to adopt transactional leadership style. Thus, the following hypotheses are put forward

**Hypothesis 1:** A superior exercises of transformational leadership is positively associated with subordinates' competence.

**Hypothesis 2:** A superior exercises of transactional leadership is negatively associated with subordinates' competence.



**Figure 1** Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Sustainability with Subordinate Competency as Mediator



**Figure 2** Impact of Transactional Leadership on Employee Sustainability with Subordinate Competency as Mediator

**Table 1 Model Fit CMIN**

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	9	3.475	1	.062	3.475
Saturated model	10	.000	0		
Independence model	4	442.546	6	.000	73.758

**RMR, GFI**

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.010	.996	.959	.100
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.165	.709	.515	.425

**RMSEA**

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.081	.022	.158	.161
Independence model	.349	.322	.377	.000

**Regression Weights: (Group Number 1 - Default Model)**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ES	<---	Subordinate competency	.340	.051	6.713	***
ES	<---	Transactional leadership	.466	.045	10.347	***
Subordinate competency	<---	Transactional leadership	.034	.038	.904	.366
OCB	<---	ES				
PC	<---	ES				

The structural equation modelling is a statistical tool that explains the relationship among multiple variables. With this model the leadership styles namely the transformational and transactional styles are considered as the independent variables and its impact on the employee sustainability has the dependent variable is studied in the presence of a mediator as subordinates' competency level.

In this study, the influence of leadership styles on the employee sustainability is analysed. The dependency of these variables together on employee sustainability with a mediator as subordinate's competency is represented with the help of regression weights.

Regression weights of the factors on its individual items have been depicted in the pictorial representation. The probability values shows the significance of the relationship. The regression estimate is found to be very high for the contribution of Employee sustainability on organisational citizenship behaviour and psychological contract. All the relationships are found to be significant which is seen from the table except the transactional leadership on the subordinates' competency. Similarly the regression estimate also is found to be very less. (.034).

Goodness of fit indicates how well the specified model reproduces the co-variance matrix among the indicator items. A measure of 0.9 is considered to be the fit index. This study with the goodness of fit value of 0.996 satisfies with the criteria. The least root mean residual is a better fit, for the model. In the study RMR value is 0.010 and proves fit.

**Mediating Effects of Subordinates' Competence on the Relationship between Leadership Styles and employee sustainability:** A study by MacKenzie et al. (2001) examined the effect of transformational and transactional leadership on marketing personnel's performance at an insurance company suggest that transformational leadership has higher influence on performance than transactional leadership. This finding supports the assumption that the transformational leadership, as compared to transactional leadership style, has a stronger relationship with employee sustainability.

**Contribution of this Study**

This study examines the variables in such a wide scale that involves combination of various perspectives. Moreover, a more complex model developed here is to allow for exploration of multi-interaction hypothesis. One of the contributions of this study is in the investigation of the mediating role of subordinate's competency.

**4. Conclusion**

This study revealed that transformational manager tends to use inspirational appeals, to gain subordinates' support. From a practical standpoint, the research findings suggest that when the superior has a choice in the leadership styles, he/she should

emphasize more on the transformational leadership in order to achieve greater sustainability.

Such behavior should be promoted in organization and it should offer great practical significance. Transactional leader tend to influence by reciprocating and exchange of favor, to achieve the goals. The mediating effect of subordinates' competence was investigated and shed some light on how this variable strengthen or weaken the interaction between leadership styles and employee sustainability. This study also found support for the mediation effect of subordinates' competence on the relationship between transformational leader and sustainability of employees.

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