WHAT ABOUT UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY CONTEXT? UNRAVELING THE NATURE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING

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Abstract

We focus in this study on the relationship between transformational leadership, participative decision making with self-efficacy, job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation in public and private universities in Pakistan. In a survey study, 218 faculty members were involved from four universities. The results indicate that transformational leadership and participative decision making have a significant impact on job satisfaction of university teachers, both in public and private. The relationship with intrinsic motivation is weak and no significant link with self-efficacy could be found. These results are not in line with available research. In the discussion we focus on explanations that especially build on the particular current status of Pakistan higher education.

Key Words: Transformational Leadership, Participative Decision Making, Intrinsic Motivation, Self-Efficacy and Relationship.

1 INTRODUCTION

Like many developing countries, Pakistan struggles with its higher education. Next to public universities, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) encourages the private sector to help to fulfill the increasing demand for higher education. However, there are large differences in public and private sector universities in terms of faculty hiring, student’s evaluation and administration. Also, Pakistan higher education (HE) is struggling to adopt new requirements related to international standards, curriculum revisions, quality assurance, … [1]. This calls for a strong leadership in Pakistan higher education.

In the literature, transformational leadership is one of the dominant leadership styles [2]. According to Gmelch [3] transformational leaders create a shared vision in view of developing work performance. Available evidence shows that through participative decision making, one observes an increase in employee motivation [4, 5]. Others report the impact on self-efficacy beliefs [6] and job satisfaction [7]. Transformational leadership and the related topic of participative decision making have not been extensively studied in Pakistan. This brings us to the focus of the present study: developing a better understanding of the nature of leadership and decision making in Pakistan higher education. After describing the conceptual and theoretical base for the present study, we discuss a research design involving staff of four Pakistan universities.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Our research is driven by the following conceptual framework and hypothetical interrelations:
The original, expanded and refined version of Burn’s transformational leadership theory has been adopted in organizations since the 1980s [8]. Since the mid-1990, transformational leadership theory has been the most cited theory in leadership discussions and research [9]. Podsakoff, Mackenzie [10] present six components of transformational leadership, identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, providing individual support, and intellectual stimulation.

Building on the early research of Lewin [11] on participative decision-making (PDM), scholars started exploring different dimensions of PDM [12]. Cotton, Vollrath [13] identified six dimensions of PDM, such as participation in work decisions, consultative participation, short term participation, informal participation, employee ownership and representative participation.

According to Schuster [14] transformational leaders give up some decision-making authority to their subordinates. Empowered staff is an indicator of transformational leadership in an organization. As commented by Leithwood [9] a key goal in an educational setting is to develop and maintain a collaborative, professional culture.

2.1 The key role of self-efficacy, job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation

2.1.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy beliefs have been studied in organizational research for over decades [15-18]. Self-efficacy represents an individual’s belief in his or her capabilities to successfully accomplish a specific task or set of tasks [19]. Research emphasizes the meaning and measurement of teachers’ self-efficacy [20].

2.1.2 Job satisfaction

Locke [21] defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job and job experience. Job satisfaction can be conceptualized as an assessment of one’s job in terms of whether it allows the fulfillment of one’s important job values, which are congruent with one’s needs [22-24].

2.1.3 Intrinsic motivation

As stated above, transformational leadership and participative decision-making are linked to motivation. Snowman and Biehler [25] define motivation as the forces that account of the selection, persistence, intensity and continuation of behavior. In the context of leadership and decision making research, most authors center on intrinsic motivation [26].
2.2 Empirical evidence as to the relationship between transformational leadership, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation

Transformational leadership has shown to have a positive impact on self-efficacy (SE), [27]. Transformational leaders are able to raise the self-efficacy of followers by showing their confidence in followers and by helping them to tackle individual problems and cope with the challenges [28, 29].

There is a clear connection between transformational leadership and job satisfaction [30, 31]. Research findings support the effect on subordinates’ job satisfaction [32-36].

There is empirical evidence that transformational leader who foster organizational change and act as change agent, foster a higher level of motivation [37-39].

2.3 Empirical evidence about the relationship between participative decision making and, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation

PDM and teacher’s self-efficacy has hardly been studied in the context of higher education. Participatory decision making empowers teachers by delegating authority and responsibility to them, thus strengthening their perceptions of personal ability and fostering their belief that they can create the results they really desire [40].

Shedd [41] indicates that participation in decision making is positively associated with job satisfaction and job morale, resulting in trust in leaders, reduced stress, burnout, and reduced job conflict. Earlier research suggests that participative behavior of superiors plays a vital role in invoking intrinsic motivation [42].

2.4 Public and private sector universities

The Pakistan government took deliberate steps to push private higher education [43]. These have to adhere to quality standards in terms of teaching and administration [44]. In the literature, differences between the private and public sector are stressed. Dudovsky [45] summarizes five differences that can be linked to both leadership and decision making:

1. Differences in organizational aims
2. Differences in which stakeholders play a role and what their expectations are
3. The extent to which the organizations are scrutinized
4. The role of the external environment
5. The way staff is being motivated

Pacek [46] focused in this context on leadership differences in private and public universities:

- Differences in discretionary powers and
- Behavioral differences: differences in leadership style, decision making style and the way they motivate employees.

Both Andersen [47] and Pacek [46] stress that there is lack of empirical research about differences between private and public universities. This brings us to the focus of the present study: studying the nature of TL and PDM in Pakistan private and public universities.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

We put forward the following hypothesis: Transformational leadership and the level of participative decision making are associated with a significant positive increase in university teachers’ self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction in public and private universities of Pakistan.

A survey study was set up, involving university teachers to gather data about the research variables, next to personal background data about their job position at their university, faculty and department, their profile and job experience. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

A stratified sample was defined. Four universities – two private and two public - were selected from the 34 private and 50 public universities in Punjab province in Pakistan. From each university three faculties and five departments from each faculty and maximum 10 faculty members from each department were involved in the data collection. From a total of 489 faculty members in public and
private sector, 218 faculty members were willing to participate (45%): Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan (N=66), The Islamia University Bahawalpur (N=75), University of Central Punjab Lahore (N=37) and University of Management Technology Lahore (N=40).

Available research instruments were adopted to measure the research variables. In view of studying teacher self-efficacy, a new scale was developed.

(1) The transformational leadership inventory (TLI) developed by Podsakoff, Mackenzie [48] was used to study the perceived adoption of transformative leadership. Sample items: My leader ... (1) fosters collaboration among work groups; (2) acts without considering my feelings.

(2) To measure the extent of perceived participative decision making (PDM) from university teachers, we adapted the scale developed by Leithwood and Jantzi [49]. Sample items: (1) Leadership is broadly distributed among the staff; (2) Effective communication among staff is facilitated.

(3) Building on the guidelines of Bandura [50], a scale was developed to measure the academic self-efficacy (SE) of university teachers. Sample items: (1). Master all the subject knowledge in my domain; (2) Writing a full research article for a peer-reviewed journal.

(4) A 6-item scale of job satisfaction (JS) was used as designed by Dewitte and Cuyper [51]. Sample items: (1) I'm proud of my job; (2) My job inspires me.

(5) To measure motivation, the intrinsic motivation inventory (IMI) was used of Deci and Ryan [52]. Sample items: (1) I found the task very interesting; (2) I felt tense while doing the task.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive results

Prior to the analysis, reliability of all instruments as adopted in the present study was checked. High to very high reliability level were observed: TL .94, PDM .85, SE .91, JS .89 and IM .76. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive analysis results for all research variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Private University 1</th>
<th>University 2</th>
<th>Public University 3</th>
<th>University 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=66</td>
<td>N=75</td>
<td>N=37</td>
<td>N=40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDM</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>72.05</td>
<td>14.86</td>
<td>65.93</td>
<td>18.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aMaximum score for each scale is 10; for self-efficacy it is 100.

There are significant correlations between most research variables. The two predictor variables (TL and PDM) are highly correlated. TL and PDM are not significantly correlated with self-efficacy. The correlation analysis results indicate that regression can be successfully applied.

4.2 Path analysis

To study the complex interplay of all variables in the research model, a path analysis was carried out and a multi-group analysis to compare the models based on data from private versus public universities. We did not observe acceptable goodness-of-fit indices (CMIN=10.195, df=2, \( p < .01; RFI= .699; CFI=.94; TL=.72; \) and RMSEA=.206). The sample size seems not to be adequate to test the multi group analysis. We decided to move towards multiple regression analysis.
4.3 Regression analysis

Linear regression analyses were carried out with both transformational leadership (TL) and participative decision making (PDM) as predictor variables and SE, JS and IM as dependent variables. Transformational leadership and participative decision making explained a small proportion of variance. Two predictor variables job satisfaction $F(2, 13.18); aR^2 = 10\%$, $p < .05$, and intrinsic motivation significantly account for $F(2, 4.77); aR^2 = 34\%, p < .05$.

The amount of variance explained by transformational leadership (TL) and participative decision making (PDM) is rather small. Both predictor variables significantly account for 10.1% of the variance in job satisfaction and 3.4% in intrinsic motivation. Our hypothesis cannot be completely accepted.

4.4 Differences between public and private universities

There are clear differences in explained variance between public and private sector universities. TL and PDM explain together a higher proportion of variance in job satisfaction (32%; $F (df=2)=17.41, p< 0.5$) in private sector universities as compared to public universities (6.6%; $F (df=2)=4.87, p< 0.5$). Subsequently, intrinsic motivation has a significant $F$-value and accounts for 6.1% variance ($F (df=2)=4.46, p<.05$) in transformational leadership and participative decision making variables in the public sector. However, self-efficacy hardly has an impact in both public and private sector universities.

In table 2, we report the regression coefficients. In public sector universities a significant relationship is only found between PDM and job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. A one unit increase in PDM results in an increase of .213 in JS and of .082 in IM. In the private sector, both transformational leadership (TL) and participative decision making (PDM) have an impact on job satisfaction. An increase of one unit in TL results in an increase of .394 in JS; an increase of one unit in PDM results in an increase of .216 in JS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Intrinsic Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>-.770</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>-.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PDM</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.977</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>1.355</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PDM</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p < .05^*$

On the base of these analysis results, we can only partly accept our hypothesis. Transformational leadership and the level of participative decision making are especially, associated with a significant positive increase in university teachers' job satisfaction; both in public and private universities. Intrinsic motivation has only been found to be significantly associated with PDM in public universities. No significant association is observed between transformational leadership, participative decision making and teacher’s self-efficacy; neither in public sector nor in private sector.

5 DISCUSSION

Our findings demonstrate that transformational leadership has a strong relationship with teachers’ job satisfaction; both in public and private sector universities. This is consistent with earlier research as set up by Lowe and Kroeck [53], [54] research set up in Pakistan, Africa [55] and in a cross-cultural study involving the United States and Kenya [56].

Also, participative decision making is closely linked to job satisfaction; both in public and private sector universities. This matches research linking PDM to job satisfaction in Pakistan [57].

According to the literature, transformational leadership is positively associated with intrinsic motivation (John and Barbuto [58] [54]. Surprisingly, we cannot confirm these results; both in public and private sector. Rasheed, Aslam [59] state in this context that - in contrast to universities in developed
countries - Pakistan university teachers get less promotion opportunities, lower pay, less mobility opportunities, feedback and career development opportunities. This impacts the relationship between TL and IM.

In line with our results, also Huang, Iun [60] found a relationship between participative leadership and intrinsic motivation. But, in our study, this relationship is weak and restricted to teachers in public sector universities. The Higher Education Commission Pakistan (HEC) is trying hard developing a strong centralized system. No doubt these initiatives can invoke intrinsic motivation of teachers, but the initiatives do not start from a participative decision making point of view [59].

As to the non-significant link between PDM and IM in private universities, the market position of these universities can explain their lower tendency to adopt PDM since it would result in extra overhead time and result in higher costs. The top leadership is usually involved in policy definitions and decision making and these decisions are conveyed to the faculty members. They pay less attention to HRM practices [61].

Few authors studied self-efficacy in relation to transformational leadership and participative decision making in higher education. Our study does not corroborate available findings about the positive link between SE and transformational leadership [62, 63] and participative decision making [64]. Explanations build on the type of self-efficacy studied in the Pakistan context. We especially focused on “academic” self-efficacy. The question is whether – in the current Pakistan situation - TL and PDM sufficiently focus on this issue.

Our findings have to be discussed in relation to certain limitations. First, decision making and leadership approaches were studied on the base of survey instruments. Next to the fact that surveys build on perceptions instead of factual information, the instruments could also have been insufficiently geared to the Pakistan higher education context. The same applies to the way job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy was measured. Qualitative research set up in a preliminary phase, could have helped to determine the nature of these variables in Pakistan universities. This could help to (re)design the research instruments and frame the divergent quantitative findings. Another shortcoming of our study is the amount of teachers, departments, faculty and universities involved. Though we based the sampling on a stratification framework, this might still be insufficient to capture the population variance. Lastly, the voice of the leaders themselves was not studied. Involving heads of departments, deans and vice-chancellors could help to identify the particular nature and interpretation of leadership and decision making approaches in Pakistan universities.

REFERENCES


