

**The Role of Transformational and Transactional Leadership in Contextual Performance**

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### Abstract

Transformational and transactional leadership have been investigated in scores of studies. The value of task performance has long been emphasized but in recent times increasing attention is invested on discretionary and interpersonally oriented job behaviours referred to as contextual performance. This study examines the role of transformational and transactional leadership in contextual performance: Interpersonal facilitation and job dedication. Data was collected from 138 leader-follower dyads from multinational organizations in India. Results indicate that transactional leadership explains job dedication better than transformational leadership. The ignored aspect of transactional leadership is discussed suggesting its efficacy in certain cases. Implications for theory and practice of leadership and contextual performance are discussed, and future research directions offered.

*Key words:* transformational leadership, transactional leadership, contextual performance, interpersonal facilitation, job dedication.

### **The Role of Transformational and Transactional Leadership in Contextual Performance**

Since the advent of modern age, corporate world has experienced profound and far reaching transformation than ever. Change and crisis have become the norms for many organizations (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2001). Fundamental shifts caused by dynamic environment had dramatic impact on organizations, presenting new challenges for leaders (see Kielson, 1996; Abramson, 1997; Hesselbein, Goldsmith & Bechard, 1996). Competition and uncertainty have increased pressure on managers to improve productivity without diluting quality. Leadership literature laid greater emphasis on leaders' accountability, integrity and responsibility to something larger than self-interest (Sellers, 2002). Transformational leadership has been identified as one such powerful source of effective leadership in variety of organizational contexts (Bass, 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1997; Gaspar, 1992; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Patterson, Fuller, Kester, & Stringer, 1995). Transformational leadership is generally portrayed as an ideal solution for every problem while other forms of leadership (i.e. transactional and laissez-faire) are considered inferior in comparison. This study explores the utility of transformational leadership in comparison to transactional leadership in relation to contextual performance.

#### **Leadership and Performance**

In today's work context of team based management, employees are required to coordinate with others and perform work activities extending beyond their job descriptions to meet their job requirements. These contextual behaviours (referred to as Contextual Performance) are vital for the success of organization as they minimize disruptive emotional responses while facilitating enhanced communication and social interaction (Borman, 1978; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Arvey & Murphy, 1998). Borman and Motowidlo (1993) identified features distinguishing contextual

performance from task related performance. The term ‘task performance’ on the other hand is associated with role prescribed behaviours distinct to specific jobs that contribute directly or indirectly to an organization’s technical core (Boreman & Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). Contextual performance includes extra-role behaviours supporting broader social and psychological environments encompassing the technical core of the organization, which are not explicitly included in the formal job responsibilities and obligations (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Contextual performance encompasses behaviours such as voluntarily helping co-workers who are lagging behind, acting in ways that maintain good working relationships, or investing extra effort for the timely completion of a task etc.

Many empirical studies have established the distinction between task performance and contextual performance (e.g. Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Borman, White & Dorsey, 1995; Conway, 1996, 1999; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Contextual performance is found to influence the work context in making it more pleasant and supportive resulting in increased job satisfaction of employees (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). These findings are consistent with Borman and Motowidlo’s (1993) proposition that contextual performance is an important and organizationally relevant behavioural typology supporting the social and psychological context encompassing task performance. This differentiation also led to questions like ‘do we need some special supervision in case of contextual performance?’ or ‘would there be any difference in leadership style leading people on contextual performance?’

The two most popular leadership styles in terms of their crucial role in follower performance are transformational and transactional. Burns (1978) distinguished between two types of leadership–

transactional and transforming leadership [subsequently referred to as transformational leadership by researchers]. Transactional leadership involves exchange of benefits based on current values and motivation of both the leader and followers, and the relationship is thus restricted to such exchange of valued outcomes. Transformational leaders on the other hand inspire followers with a vision of future, appeal to higher ideals and motives of the followers, moving and changing existing structures towards new possibilities (Tucker & Russel, 2004). Transformational leaders command the admiration and trust of followers who are willing to expend exceptional effort in translating the vision into reality (Ozaralli, 2003).

Bass (1985) built upon the idea of Burns (1978) and provided a more expanded and refined version of transformational leadership, giving more attention to the needs of followers. Transformational leadership is found to be positively related with work outcomes including organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler & Shi, 2004), satisfaction with the leader and perceived effectiveness (Avolio, Waldman & Einstein, 1988; Bass, Waldman, Avolio & Bebb, 1987; Bycio, Hackett & Allen, 1995; Hater & Bass, 1988; Waldman, Bass & Einstein, 1987).

Transactional interaction reflects a relationship based on exchange of valued ends – political, economic or emotional – while transforming concerns a relationship which raises the motivation, morality, and ethical aspirations of leader and follower. Hence they both serve different purposes and both are relevant to different contexts. Bass argued that transformational and transactional leadership are distinct but not mutually exclusive, the best leaders represent those who are both transformational and transactional, but both the types symbolize different characteristics contrary to Burns' (1978) explanation.

The central features of contextual activities are common to many or all jobs, though their peripheral details vary in accordance with varying job environments. Unlike task performance, the major source of variation in contextual performance is not proficiency in carrying out task activities, but the volition and predisposition (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual performance behaviours are better predicted by volitional variables related to individual differences in motivational characteristics and predisposition variables represented by personality characteristics. Considerable evidence shows that contextual performance may be a valuable addition to job performance criteria used in personnel selection (Borman et al., 1995; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Employees also learn about the types of behaviours that are rewarded by supervisors and adapt their behaviour in ways that are positively reinforced (Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit, 1997). Contextual performance is found to enhance employees' job satisfaction, employee commitment and improve retention (Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1997). Hence another challenge of today's leader is in managing contextual performance of their subordinates.

The construct of contextual performance includes both interpersonal elements like maintaining good working relationships and cooperating with others, and volitional or motivational elements such as persisting in the face of adversity and volunteering to perform additional tasks (Borman, & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo, & Van Scotter, 1994). Literature on other areas like personnel selection (Borman, White, & Dorsey, 1995; Campbell, McHenry, & Wise, 1990), occupational stress (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986), and organizational citizenship behaviour (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1991; Smith, Organ & Near, 1983) have also maintained this distinction of interpersonal and motivational elements. This distinction is preserved by Van

Scotter and Motowidlo (1996) who defined the construct of contextual performance in terms of two separate facets called *interpersonal facilitation* and *job dedication*.

Interpersonal facilitation comprises of a range of interpersonal acts that help maintain the interpersonal and social context necessary to support effective task performance. Job dedication concerns self-disciplined behaviours like following the rules, working hard, and taking initiative to solve problems at work (Van Scotter & Mottowidlo, 1996). The most important effects of transformational leadership should be on followers' extra-role performance (Graham, 1988), "over and above mechanical compliance with routine directives of the organization" (Katz & Kanh, 1978, p.528) rather than on in-role performance. Bass, (1985) included three types of transformational behaviours: Idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, subsequently including inspirational motivation as the fourth dimension:

- 1) *Idealized influence*: Follower attributions about the leader and specific leader behaviors that reflect leaders' values and beliefs, their sense of mission and purpose, and their ethical and moral orientation. This dimension of leadership induces a shift in the self-interest of followers toward larger interest for greater good.
- 2) *Inspirational motivation*: The degree to which leader articulates a vision appealing and inspiring to followers. Such leaders set high standards challenging the followers, while communicating optimism about future goal attainment and providing meaning.
- 3) *Intellectual stimulation*: The degree to which leader questions status quo, challenges followers' assumptions by appealing to their intellect, solicits their ideas for innovative solutions to problems.
- 4) *Individualized consideration*: The degree to which leader provides customized socio-

emotional support to each of the followers while developing and empowering them through coaching and counseling.

### **Hypotheses**

Transformational leadership focuses on empowerment of the followers. 'Idealized influence' component, for example, guides followers to enact over and above their self-interests and work for others as well. The four components of transformational leadership, hence, were found to be associated with collectivism (Jung, Bass & Sosik, 1995). Moreover, transformational leaders inspire their followers to view their work as more important and self-congruent, which positively affects their job attitudes and performance (Bono & Judge, 2003). We believe that this would also affect their co-operation and attitude towards their peers.

Transformational leaders also affect their followers' emotional intelligence elements like empathy and social skills (Megerian & Sosik, 1997) through its four dimensions. This eventually improves followers' relational skills in terms of their attitudes and behaviour towards their co-workers. On this theoretical grounding, we believe that transformational leadership will actually help in enhancing interpersonal facilitation due to its focus on subordinate development and long term vision. Hence we propose that:

*Hypothesis 1a: Idealized influence will have positive relationship with interpersonal facilitation.*

*Hypothesis 1b: Inspirational motivation will have positive relationship with interpersonal facilitation.*



*Hypothesis 1c: Intellectual stimulation will have positive relationship with interpersonal facilitation.*

*Hypothesis 1d: Individualized consideration will have positive relationship with interpersonal facilitation.*

On the other side there are occasions in organizations when such development of subordinates is not possible. On the contrary focus on task performance becomes important in order that efficiency is not compromised. The other type of contextual behaviour – job dedication – focuses on this aspect. *Job dedication* concerns self-disciplined behaviours like following the rules, working hard, and taking initiative to solve problems at work (Van Scotter & Mottowidlo, 1996). Job dedication is the motivational foundation for job performance that drives people to act with deliberate intent to promote the best interests of organization. In this context the requisite leadership style is also different. Bass (1985) posited that transformational leaders arouse and transform the attitudes, beliefs and motives of followers to a higher level, acting as change agents, which is a long process and might not be appropriate for situations where fast responses are required. Transactional leaders, in contrast, focus on exchange relationships based on organizational objectives. While transformational leadership results in identification of followers with the leader's needs, the transactional leader offers followers something they need in exchange for what the leader expects (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

The transactional leadership dimension consists of the following three factors (Bass, 1990):

- 1) *Contingent reward*: Economic and emotional exchanges of valued outcomes and rewards. Leader clarifies expectations from followers while establishing the rewards exchanged for meeting these expectations (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

- 2) *Management-by-exception active*: The extent to which leader monitors followers' deviation from norms, providing corrective action. Management-by-exception active is a negative transaction similar to contingent reward in terms of focusing on outcomes. The leader actively watches for, and acts on, mistakes, deviations or errors.
- 3) *Management by exception-passive*: Passive leaders take corrective action only when subordinates deviate from expectations or fail to meet goals. Transactional leadership that relies heavily on passive management by exception is a prescription for mediocrity (Bass, 1990). As noted by Howell and Avolio (1993), the difference between *management by exception—active* and *management by exception—passive* lies in the timing of the leader's intervention. Active leaders monitor follower behaviour, anticipate problems, and take corrective actions before the behaviour creates serious problems. Passive leaders wait until the behaviour creates problems before taking action.

Contingent reward dimension is most effective of all the transactional leadership dimensions as revealed in the meta-analysis of Lowe et al., (1996) which showed that this dimension is distinguishable from zero. In their full range leadership model, Bass and Avolio (1994) viewed management by exception- passive and laissez-faire leadership as ineffective. Management by exception-passive focuses on negative aspects and therefore may not influence individuals to perform their tasks effectively. Based on effective exchange of mutually valued outcomes, we propose that both contingent reward and management by exception-active provide the required environment to subordinates as they focus on task requirements without interfering too much with subordinate's personal needs. Hence we hypothesise:

*Hypothesis 2a: Contingent Reward will be positively related to job dedication.*

*Hypothesis 2b: Management by exception—active will be positively related to job dedication.*

## **Methods**

Data for this study was collected from a large technology based multinational organization located at Bangalore which is active in India for over two decades, serving global clients in more than 120 countries including *Fortune* 500 companies with approximately 1,77,000 people. We collected data from 138 dyads of supervisors and subordinates using two separate questionnaires in hard copy form which were filled in individually and confidentially by a boss and subordinate pair. The boss and subordinate questionnaires of a given pair were coded to indicate the pair number and were stapled together pair-wise.

The supervisors/managers were asked to complete the survey containing scales to measure their immediate subordinate's contextual performance [interpersonal facilitation and job dedication]. The subordinates were asked to complete the survey with scales measuring: Transformational leadership of the boss (4 dimensions); Transactional leadership of the boss (3 dimensions).

## **Measures**

### **Leadership dimensions**

Two subscales from the latest version of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire [MLQ 5x-Short] developed, revised and validated by Bass and Avolio (1995, 2004) measuring transformational and transactional leadership, was used for this study. The questionnaire has 20 items for measuring four components of transformational leadership – Idealized Influence [II],

Inspirational Motivation [IM], Intellectual Stimulation [IS], and Individualized Consideration [IC]. The questionnaire has 12 items measuring three components of transactional leadership – Contingent Reward [CR], Management-by-Exception-Active [MEA], and Management-by-Exception-Passive [MEP].

The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients reported in this study ranged between .67 and .75 for the sub dimensions of transformational leadership, and transactional leadership.

### **Contextual Performance**

Contextual performance was measured using a 15-item instrument developed by Motowidlo and Van Scotter (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996) which captures the two facets of contextual performance – Job Dedication and Interpersonal Facilitation. Supervisors rated their subordinates on a 5-point scale. Items measuring Job Dedication dimension of contextual performance illustrate effort, initiative, persistence and self-discipline. For all the items, the response format was 1, “not at all likely” to 5 “extremely likely”. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for both the subscales are .76 and .79.

### **Control Variable**

Two variables: education and work experience were controlled in the study. They might have influenced contextual performance, especially the interpersonal facilitation due to the presence of social aspect in it. Moreover, skills, work habits and knowledge affect contextual performance in many work related situations (Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit, 1997) and therefore we control for individual’s education and work experience to analyse the main effects.

Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypotheses in-order to control for some variables and

see the specific effect of other variables.

## Results

Table 1 summarizes means, standard deviations, and bi-variate correlations among the study variables.

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We started with regressing control variables on both the outcome variables: interpersonal facilitation and Job dedication. None of the variable significantly explained variance in the outcome variables.

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We got support only for hypothesis 2b. Table 2 presents the results of significant relationship between management by exception and job dedication. In the model we first controlled for contingent reward due to co-linearity with management by exception-active.

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For other results (Table 3), individualized consideration ( $b = .141$ , n.s.), intellectual stimulation ( $b = .129$ , n.s.), idealized influence ( $b = .210$ , n.s.) and inspirational motivation ( $b = .141$ , n.s.) did not show any significant relationship with interpersonal facilitation.

## Discussion

Results of the present study provide a very different picture with adequate support for transactional leadership. Transformational leadership shadowed other forms of leadership for long receiving all the applause for its relationship with positive individual and organizational outcome variables; however it does not explain many of subordinate behaviours. We are not of the opinion that transformational leadership is not important; rather the characteristics of transformational leaders make them irreplaceable in many cases. For example evidence shows that leader prototypes have transformational characteristics in every country (Bass, 1985: 154; House & Aditya, 1997; Lord & Emrich, 2001). Some traits of leaders are generalizable across cultures and many transformational leadership attributes are found to be universal (Den Hartog et al., 1999), while some of its core attributes are claimed to be common to all cultures (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). On the other hand transactional leadership might be very much culture specific due to cultural exchange norms. Our study emphasises that in certain cases transactional leadership may be beneficial in terms of achieving organizational goals. For instance many a time jobs may not require empowerment of individuals and in such cases transactional leadership may be the answer (Hargis, Watt & Piotrowski, 2011).

In the scenario of contextual performance and leadership effectiveness, follower is another potential area to provide better understanding of unexplained variance in leadership process (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999; Lord & Brown, 2004). Leadership literature has not adequately addressed the underlying processes through which transformational leaders motivate followers (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). Several authors (e.g. Bass, 1990, 1998; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Pillai & Meindl, 1998) suggested that transformational leadership may be more effective for

some followers than for others, and follower characteristics could be important moderator of the effects of transformational leadership on follower work engagement and/or performance. Considerable evidence suggests that the extent of followers' response to transformational or charismatic leadership is determined by their traits, characteristics and values (e.g., De Vries, Roe, & Taillieu, 2002; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). A study by Zhu, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2009) showed that follower characteristics moderate the positive relationship between transformational leadership and follower work engagement. Even in this study, follower characteristics might provide the missing link between transformational leadership and interpersonal facilitation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

An important strength of this study is that results pertaining to leadership and contextual performance variables may not be susceptible to common method variance. Both leadership and contextual performance variables are measured by surveying the subordinate and the boss, which avoided the problem of common-method variance. However, the study is not free from limitations.

An important weakness of this study is the cross-sectional design, which does not allow for examination of causal relationships. The use of correlation design does not answer the question of causality between the leadership factors and the outcome variables.

Participation in the study was voluntary and so there might be some self-selection bias. Data for this study was collected only from an organization situated in one city in India, and the sample consisted of well-educated employees. The generalizability and external validity of results are therefore limited.

This study included only the MLQ dimensions of transactional and transformational leadership of Bass and associates, and therefore limited the possibility of getting a totally different factor structure underlying transactional and transformational leadership in the Indian context.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Several areas for future research are important. The most visible aspect now seems to be the importance of transactional leadership on task performance and other outcome variables. This has been ignored lately with all the focus shifted only to transformational leadership. Specific fit for each type of leadership need to be researched.

Another potential area is longitudinal research which may assess causal relationships. Future studies may include other emerging variables of importance like perceived organizational support and variables relevant in the Indian cultural context (Sinha, 1997). Efforts should be made to identify leadership dimensions in the Indian context (Krishnan & Srinivas, 1998), instead of applying the MLQ dimensions of transactional and transformational leadership of Bass and associates (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1995). Some culture-specific items like those on nurturant-task leadership could also be included.

Recent studies highlight the unique attributes and approaches of Indian companies popularly termed as 'The India Way' catapulting Indian companies towards sustainable growth and societal progress (Cappelli, Singh, Singh & Useem, 2010a). This approach was found to distinctly differ from the U.S. business model and the 'India Way' has opened up a new paradigm of looking at leadership and organizations (Cappelli, Singh, Singh & Useem, 2010b). Future research from this perspective may provide useful insights on leadership specific to Indian context on one side and offer pragmatic solutions to the problems of western business world on the other.



Future research also needs to carefully examine the culture specific dimensions of contextual performance relevant to Indian context and their impact on other managerial decisions (e.g., reward allocation and compensation decisions, promotion, training, termination, and reduction in force). Despite growing interest in citizenship-like behaviours, a review of literature reveals nearly thirty potentially different forms of citizenship behaviours indicating lack of consensus on the dimensionality of the construct. Future research may focus on integrating these different perspectives to identify a unifying construct reflecting universally valid construct of contextual performance.

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*Appendix A***TABLE 1****Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Experience	43.88	30.64										
2. Education	15.60	5.00	.329**									
3. Idealized Influence	10.75	3.22	.150	.038	(.69)							
4. Inspirational Motivation	11.39	2.99	.156	.110	.746**	(.73)						
5. Intellectual Stimulation	10.62	2.93	.094	.090	.699**	.639**	(.70)					
6. Individual Consideration	10.20	3.23	.159	.159	.731**	.585**	.699**	(.68)				
7. Contingent reward	10.69	3.22	.095	.095	.735**	.724**	.693**	.633**	(.72)			
8. Management by exception-active	10.53	2.93	.120	.120	.479**	.500**	.420**	.385**	.485**	(.73)		
9. Job Dedication	11.74	11.74	.020	-.015	.152	.062	.125	.144	.148	.184*	(.74)	
10. Interpersonal Facilitation	21.50	2.97	.009	.050	.198	.092	.153	.142	.168	.142	.600**	(.79)

a-Internal consistency reliabilities appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

b- \* p < .05  
 \*\* p < .01

c- n: 138 for each variable

*Appendix B***TABLE 2****Results of Regression Analysis**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Job Dedication</b>		
	<b>b</b>	<b>s.e</b>	<b>t</b>
Education	-0.38	.070	-.550
Experience	-.05	.020	-.221
Contingent Reward	.092	.116	.799
Management by exception-Active	.245*	.112	2.198

\* p &lt; .05

*Appendix C***TABLE 3****Results of Regression Analysis**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Interpersonal Facilitation</b>		
	<b>b</b>	<b>s.e</b>	<b>t</b>
Education	-.01	.05	-.36
Experience	.01	.00	.64
Intellectual stimulation	.12	.30	1.3
Individual consideration	.14	.20	.42
Idealized Influence	.21	.15	.59
Inspirational Motivation	.14	.11	1.03