The Impact of Leadership Styles on the Engagement of Cadres, Lecturers and Staff at Public Universities - Evidence from Vietnam

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Abstract

Many studies have shown that job performance and leadership are important in our society. In addition, to improve the quality of work or to improve the work efficiency is still a lot of challenges for each leader. In Vietnam, there are few specific studies on the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement such as: transformational leadership styles, business leadership styles and leadership styles. In the field of higher education, the fewer studies on these issues. A study is conducted to test the impact of leadership styles on the engagement of cadres, lecturers and staff at public universities in Vietnam. Using adjustment techniques, inspecting the scales and theoretical models representing the relationship among the influential factors. The research is based on a sample of 309 cadres, lecturers and staff currently working in universities in Vietnam and used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the relationships among the variables. The study results show that the scales of the variables: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez faire leadership, job satisfaction and organizational engagement attain the validity and reliability in the research. The study results also show transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez faire leadership are directly and indirectly affected by job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Laissez Faire Leadership, Organizational Engagement, Public Universities, Transactional Leadership

JEL Classification Code: L20, M12, M50, M51.

1. Introduction

Leadership is one of the most important factors to improve work efficiency in our social life (Ather & Sobhani, 2007; Hafeez, Rizvi, Hasnain, & Mariam, 2012). Few leaders fully understand the importance of the influence of leadership styles on the satisfaction of employees. Leadership is the main weapon of the organization. Through leadership, managers can achieve the goals, productivity and labor productivity of the organizations. The positive impact of leadership styles has a great influence on employees and revenues of the organizations. Amin (2012)

indicate the transactional leadership and transformational leadership have a positive impact on the overall job satisfaction of the lectures. In addition, the studies about leadership style, job satisfaction, organizational engagement and work efficiency of the researches: Belenio (2012), Shurbagi (2014), Joharis (2016), Jusuf, Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Mallongi, and Latief (2016) have the same results. Like other developing countries, the goal of universities in Viet Nam is to focus on researching, teaching and developing of the human resources by providing knowledge students and communities. To carry out this important function, universities in Vietnam face two major challenges, which are getting the commitment of employees, especially the academic staff and other challenges related to the have the effective leaders with necessary skills to develop the potential of employees. Therefore, this study is carried out to examine *"The impact of leadership styles on the engagement of cadres, lecturers and staff at public universities, evidence from Viet Nam"* to verify the hypothesis.

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2. Literature Review and Research Model

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is changing the vision of employees, transforming them to the organizational visions and make them become practical. In other words, the transformational process can be seen through some activities of transformational leadership such as: Attract the attentions, influence, motivate, stimulate intellectual and personally judge (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Yulk (2006) claims that applying transformational leadership can improve the work efficiency because transformational leadership develop the knowledge and potential of   the employees.

Transformational leadership brings opportunities and confidence to their subordinates to perform tasks which are suitable for their thoughts and achieve the goals of the organization. Suharto (2005) suggests that transformational leadership will bring significant positive effects to improve and enhance the mental of subordinates. The transformational leaders will notice the people who have organizational visions and missions, motivate and create new working methods for the emoloyees to work efficiently and engage with the organizations.

2.2. Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes transactions between leaders and subordinates. Bass and Avolio (1990) suggest that the characteristics of the transactional leadership consist of two aspects: contigent reward and management by exception. Contigent reward is the way that the leaders render any assistance in exchange for the subordinates' efforts to meet the expectations. Management by exception is the method that leaders monitor the deviations of the established standards and correct to achieve the organizational objectives. Yulk (2006) asserts that transactional leadership is one of the leadership styles that emphasizes on the transaction between leaders and subordinates. Transactional leadership promotes and influences to subordinates by exchanging rewards with high working efficiency. Within a transaction, subordinates are promised to be rewarded when they can complete their tasks in accordance with the agreements. In other words, leaders encourage subordinates to work. Transactional leadership can impact positively or negatively on the performance because it depends on the assessment of staff. Positive results can occur when employees evaluate transactional leadership positively and a negatively impact can occur if employees think that transactional leaders can

not be trusted because leaders break promises, are dishonest or are not transparent.

2.3. Laissez Faire Leadership

The ability of leaders depends on factors in different situations, including the preferred style of leaders. Many researchers have tested and found that laissez faire leadership is suitable and reliable to explain how to achieve effective leadership. Laissez faire leadership emphasizes the importance of focusing on personal relationship between the leaders' style and the needs of different situations and staff. Laissez faire leadership will create a positive environment where the employees and the employers feel like they are a family regardless of their positions. This leadership style is considered to be the least effective leadership. The members of this group may make plenty of requirements to their leaders, shows little collaboration and efficiency. Laissez faire leaders rarely or never guide the team members and give the decisions for the team members. Although this style may be effective when the team members are excellent in their fields or expertise, it often leads to unclear roles and lack of motivation (Belias & Koustelios, 2014).

2.4. Job Satisfaction

The term "Job satisfaction" reflects a person's attitude towards works and their organizations and can be defined as the emotional reactions of the staff to their working environment based on the differnces between the actual results and their expectations (Cann, 2014). Job satisfaction is measured by five indicators, namely: job satisfaction, working environment satisfaction, superior satisfaction, promotion policies satisfaction, salary satisfaction and colleagues satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008; Wang, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011; Khan, Nawaz, Khan, Khan, Kundi, & Yar, 2013).

2.5. Organizational Commitment

When examining the engagement of employees in an organization, it is the relative strength of each individual when they join a particular organization. In term of this, Allen and Meyer (1990) identified, the engagement of employees presents the relationship between the employees and organizations and decision to continue working in the oraanization. Similarly, Meyer and Becker (2004) identified a staff engaged with an organization is *"Work at an organization, work regularly, all day and more, protect the company's properties and trust the goals of the*

organization". This positive contribution of staff to the organization due to the organizational commiment. Research shows that individuals or organizations are negatively affected when they have low engagement and they are both beneficial when they have high engagement (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992). The commiment of the organization is connected with satisfaction, operational efficiency and adaptability of organization (Lok & Crawford, 1999; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004).

2.6. The Relationship between Leadership Styles, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Wexley and Yulk (1984) claimed that if employees who trust their leaders will have positive results for the organizations due to the leadership reflection to their employees for positive attitude to the work and the working conditions. The staff response to their leaders are often based on the characteristics of employees and the leaders. According to Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002), job satisfaction is a determinant factor of organizational commiment. Job satisfaction and organizational commiment focus on feelings and thoughts of employees towards working and their organizations. The main difference between the organizational commiment and job satisfaction is that the organizational commiment is emotional response of employees to the organizations, while job satisfaction is the response that employees have their job. Similarly, if employees are satisfied with the job, colleagues, salaries and supervision from managers, they may be more committed to the organizations. These two concepts are very important because the satisfaction and organizational commiment in working are the main determinant factors of sales, operational efficiency and productivity of employees (Opkara, 2004). The employees' organizational commiment and satisfaction often greatly contribute to the overall productivity of the organizations (Samad, 2007). Based on the description of theories stated above, the researchers suggest 4 hypotheses:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on job satisfaction (H1+)

H2: Transactional leadership has a positive impact on job satisfaction (H2+)

H3: Laissez faire leadership has a positive impact on job satisfaction (H3+)

H4: Job satisfaction has a positive impact on the organizational commiment (H4+)

2.7. Research Model
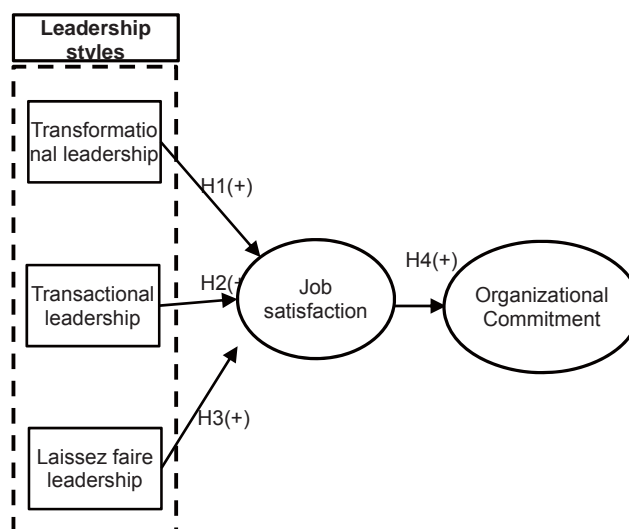
Source: The results of qualitative research team (2018).

Figure 1: Model of the impact of leadership styles on organizational commitment through job satisfaction of cadres, lecturers and staff at the public universities in Vietnam

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. Research Data

The participants in the survey are cadres, lectures and staff currently working at 15 universities in Vietnam. Using transformational leadership and transactional leadership scales of Sewang (2011), laissez faire leadership scale of Bass and Avolio (1995), job satisfaction and organizational commiment scales of Jusuf, Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Mallongi and Latief (2016).

3.2. Research Methodology

The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. The testing of the scale is conducted through the following steps: Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and testing the research model through analyzing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on the data results from AMOS (analysis of Moment structures).

4. Research Results

4.1. Representative Sample

Sample is selected by stratified sampling. In every region of Vietnam, the researchers pick 6 typical public universities:

6 universities in the North, 3 universities in the Central and 6 universities in the South. Data is collected through online survey forms in 8 weeks. 309 questionnaires are valid. Collected data is processed and have descriptive statistics as follows:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Results

Demographic feature		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	158	51.1
	Male	151	48.9
Age	Below 25 years old	5	1.6
	From 25 to below 35 years old	106	34.3
	From 35 to below 45 years old	140	45.3
	From 45 to below 55 years old	40	12.9
	Above 55 years old	18	5.8
Level of education	High school	1	0.3
	Job training school/ college	5	1.6
	University	131	42.4
	Postgraduate education	172	55.7
Job position Administrative staff	Administrative staff	59	19.1
	Cadre / manager	29	9.4
	Lecturer	221	71.5
Salary	Below 5 million VND	3	1.0
	From 5 to below 10 million VND	174	56.3
	From 10 to 15 million VND	107	34.6
	Above 15 million VND	25	8.1
Seniority at universities	Below 3 years	32	10.4
	From 3 to 5 years	48	15.5
	From 5 to 7 years	85	27.5
	From 8 to 10 years	74	23.9
	Above 10 years	70	22.7

Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018)

4.2. Pre-test of the Questionnaires

4.2.1. Cronbach's Alpha Results

Research use the scales of Sewang (2011) for 2 concepts "transformational leadership" (including 4 observed variables, encoded from TSL1 to TSL4), "transactional leadership" (Including 5 observed variables, encoded from TFL1 to TFL5); Scale "laissez faire leadership" of Bass and Avolio (1995) (Including 4 observed variable, encoded from LFL1 to LFL4); Scale of Jusuf, Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Mallongi, and Latief (2016) is used to measure 2 concepts "Job satisfaction" (including 6 observed variables, encoded from JS1 to JS6) and "organizational engagement" (Includes 7 observed variables, encoded from OC1 to OC7). When pre-test the questionnaires, tranformational leadership scale,

transactional leadership scale, laissez faire leadership scale, job satisfaction scale and organizational engagement scale all attain the reliability and are used for EFA analysis.

Table 2: Table summarizes the results tested by Cronbach's alpha scale

Scales	No. of items		Cronbach's alpha
	Before	After	
Transformational leadership	4	4	0.845
Transactional leadership	5	5	0.934
Laissez faire leadership	4	4	0.853
Job satisfaction	6	6	0.892
Organizational engagement	7	7	0.897

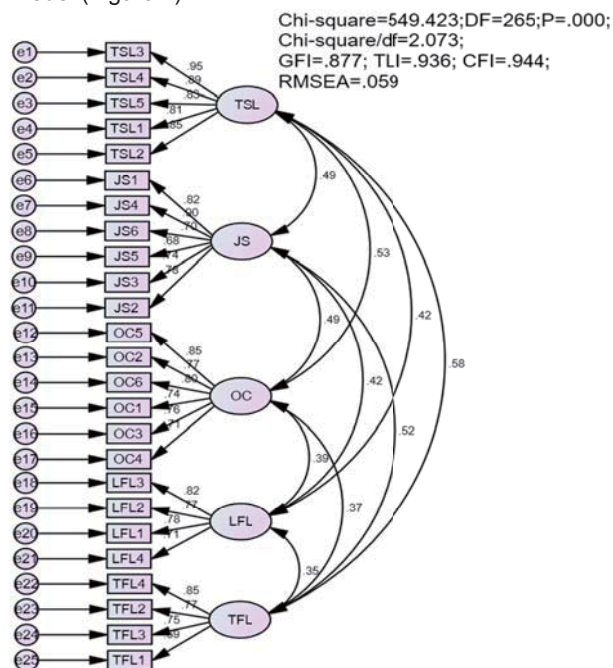*Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018)*

4.2.2. EFA Analysis Results

The results show that 5 factors are extracted explaining 64.094% (> 50%) of the variance with eigenvalue at 1.384. The observed variables are all used in the CFA analysis.

4.2.3. CFA Analysis Results

Analysis results show that Chi - squared is 549.423 with df = 265, P = 0.000. Cmin / df = 2.073 <5 meet the requirement for compatibility. TLI = 0.936> 0.9, CFI = 0.944> 0.9 and RMSEA= 0.059 <0.08 are all suitable.

CFA model (Figure 2):

Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018).

Figure 2: CFA model

Other indexes:

(1) *Convergent validity:* The coeffcients (standardized) are > 0.5, the unstandardized coeffcients are valid, so the scales attain convergent validity.

(2) *Discriminant validity:* All P-values <0.05 so the correlation coefficients of the concepts are not 1 with the reliability is 95%. Therefore, all the concepts attain discriminant validity.

(3) *Unidimensionality:* The model is consistent with the market, and there is no correlation, so it attains unidimensionality.

(4) *Reliability:* reliability test results through the following indexes: (i) composite reliability; (ii) total variance extracted and (ii) Cronbach's alpha. All the scales have composite reliability > 0.5, total variance extracted > 0.5, Cronbach's alpha > 0.5, so the scales attain reliability.

Table 3: Summary of scales testing results

Scales	No. of items	Reliability statistics		Variance extracted	Validity
		Cronbach's Alpha	Total		
Transformational leadership	4	0.845	0.850	0.587	
Transactional leadership	5	0.934	0.886	0.753	
Laissez faire leadership	4	0.853	0.799	0.570	Accepted
Job satisfaction	6	0.892	0.899	0.598	
Organizational engagement	7	0.897	0.781	0.543	

Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018)

4.3. Testing of the Theoretical Model

Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the impact of leadership styles on the engagement of cadres, lecturers and staff at public universities in Vietnam, the results in Table 4 and Figure 3 as follows:

Table 4: The results of testing the relationship among the concepts (Standardized)

Relationships	Estimation	SE	CR	P-value	Conclusion
JS <--- TFL	0.338	0.053	12.364	0.000	H1 is accepted
JS <--- TSL	0.291	0.054	13.026	0.000	H2 is accepted
JS <--- LFL	0.248	0.055	13.645	0.000	H3 is accepted
OC <--- JS	0.483	0.049	10.378	0.000	H4 is accepted

Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018)

The results shows that the relationships are statistically significant. Thus, all hypotheses are accepted. In addition, the relationships have positive correlation (standardized coefficient > 0). The study results are different from the research of Bateh and Heyliger (2014). In the research of Bateh and Heyliger (2014), the liberal leadership reduces employee satisfaction. SEM results for the standardized model:
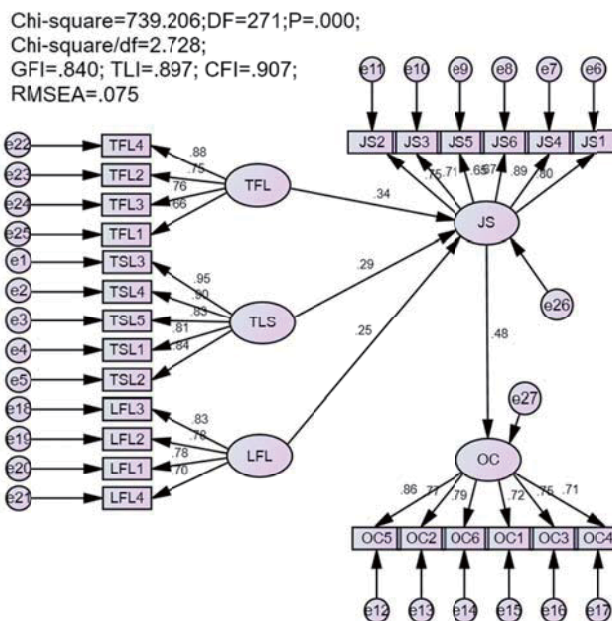
Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018)
Figure 3: SEM results for the standardized model

4.4. Estimate the Theory Model by Bootstrap

Bootstrap is the sampling with replacement, and the original sampling is the crowd (Tho & Trang, 2011). The reasearch uses bootstrap with the sample N = 1000. Deviation has no statistical significance (Table 5). Thus, we can conclude that the model attain reliability. The results are presented in Table 5 as follows:

Table 5: The estimation results with N = 1000

Parameter	SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias	Estimate	Bias	CR
JS <--- TFL	0.068	0.002	0.335	-0.003	0.002	0.338	-0.003	-1.5
JS <--- TSL	0.065	0.001	0.294	0.002	0.002	0.291	0.003	1.5
JS <--- LFL	0.068	0.002	0.246	-0.002	0.002	0.248	-0.002	-1
OC <--- JS	0.046	0.001	0.484	0.001	0.001	0.483	0.001	1

Source: Results from the data process of researchers (2018).

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Discussion

"Transformational leadership" (TFL) has a directly strongest impact on the "Job satisfaction" (JS) with β = 0338, this proves that transformational leadership is very appropriate in the educational environment, and transformational leadership is very effective in increasing satisfaction of working officers, staff and lecturers. The second strongest impact is "Transactional leadership" (TSL) with β = 0.291.

Besides, regression coefficient of "Transformational leadership" (TFL) indirectly impact on organizational engagement (OC): *transformational leadership x job satisfaction = 0163*. This shows that when other factors do not change, the transformational leadership and job satisfaction increase 1, organizational commiment increases 0.163. Regression coefficient of transactional leadership (TSL) indirectly impact on organizational engagement (OC): *transactional leadership x job satisfaction = 0.14*. This shows that when other factors do not change, the transactional leadership and job satisfaction increase 1, organizational commiment increase 0.14. Similarly, the liberal leadership and job satisfaction increase 1, organizational commiment increases 0.12

In conclusion, the research results are consistent with results of previous researches in the impact of leadership styles on organizational commiment such as: Shurbagi (2014), Bateh and Heyliger (2014), Joharis (2016), and Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Mallongi, and Latief (2016). A suitable leadership style will increase satisfaction and organizational commiment. In the research results of Suong and Thanh (2018), *"The impact of leadership style on organizational engagement of workers at Ho Chi Minh City universtiy of Foreign languages - Information technology"*, the difference is the laissez faire leadership has no impact on the satisfaction and on organizational engagement of workers at Ho Chi Minh City universtiy of Foreign languages - Information technology.

SEM results show that: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez faire leadership have a positive impact on job satisfaction. Therefore, the hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 are accepted. Job satisfaction have a positive impact on the organizational commiment so hypothesis H4 is accepted. The study results are consistent with the results of previous researches in the impact of leadership styles on organizational commiment such as: Shurbagi (2014), Bateh and Heyliger (2014), Joharis (2016), and Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Mallongi, and Latief (2016).

5.2. Implications

Transformational leadership enables lecturers to show abilities to do their job by letting them decide in the teaching methods, apply new teaching methods and choose materials. Creating opportunities for lectures to work together in the researches, draft research proposals, participate in community services, join other activities such as sports, travel. Managers or employees should be empowered or authorized to let them decide their works, set goals and try to achieve goals.

Transactional leaders should focus on increasing job satisfaction of cardes, lecturers and staff in jobs, promotion and colleagues' relationships. These may affect the way employees feel and think about their jobs. Moreover, school leaders should encourage staff, lecturers or employees to be careful, friendly and supportive to their colleagues and managers, because this will increase their job satisfaction. The schools should assess the productivity of cadres, lecturers and staff. Organizations should pay high attention to the results or productivity of lecturers and staff. It is necessary to have competitions, rewards, trade tests and skill courses for lecturers and staff.

Laissez faire leadership. Factor *"leaders let their employees have their own decision"* is very significant in this leadership style. In the academic environment, self-determination is very important. Laissez faire leadership should emphasizes the importance of focusing on personal relationship between the leaders' style and the needs of different situations and staff. Leaders must create a positive environment where the employees and the employers feel like they are a family regardless of their positions.

Job satisfaction. Leaders should pay high attention to bonus and benefits package for cadres, lecturers and staff, such as. Besides salary, organizations should have allowances and compensation to encourage lecturers to keep learning and improving their knowledge. Establish the friendly, sociable and cooperative relationships of the staff in the academic environment is not difficult. Establish an harmonious organizational culture will help members of the organization to have satisfaction and engagement with the organization. Organizations should care the material and spiritual life, create many opportunities for staff to learn and interact with each other, donate or organize voluntary activities for staff to participate in community services.

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