

Transformational Leadership and Employee Commitment in Social Entrepreneurial Organizations

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Abstract

Transformational leadership is undoubtedly one of the key aspects of employee attitude and organizational efficiency, particularly in non-profit organizations with social entrepreneurial missions that seek to achieve a social impact and financial sustainability. These groups are very much reliant on individuals who have a common mission, a common purpose. This study seeks to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employee commitment in social entrepreneurial organizations, specifically the influence of the leadership behaviours on the emotional bond with the organization, on employee organizational commitment, and on willingness to put in more effort than required in a role. This study is of a quantitative nature with data gathered from employees in social enterprises from a range of sectors through a survey. The statistical analysis used to analyze the relationship between the dimensions of transformational leadership and employee commitment was descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis. The findings indicate significant positive effects of the transformational leadership on employee commitment via trust, vision, professional development and participative decision making. The more employees feel supported by their leaders, feel ethical, and have a vision, the more loyal they will be to the organization, feel job satisfaction, and want to remain in the organization. The study also demonstrates that an inclusive organizational culture has a positive impact on the relationship between employee commitment and transformational leadership. The research contributes to the existing literature on leadership in mission-driven organizations by bringing empirical evidence to the topic regarding how transformational leadership helps to sustain employees' engagement and organizational performance. The findings have implications for social entrepreneurs, managers and policy makers who want to create leadership practices that can enhance work force commitment and organization sustainability. Recommendations: based on the study, the authors conclude that Transformational Leadership can be a strategic instrument in a dynamic and competitive environment to increase employees' commitment and to advance the social agenda of entrepreneurial organisations.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, employee commitment, social entrepreneurship, organizational commitment, employee engagement, social enterprises, leadership effectiveness, organizational sustainability.

Introduction

Just as the world has become more socially conscious, the organizations are not only expected to be financially sustainable but to make a social and environment contribution that matters as well. Social entrepreneurial organisations have played an important role in the change process as they have taken innovative and sustainable approaches to solving societal issues. They have a dual mission of not only creating social value but also organizational viability, unlike conventional businesses. This needs a strong leadership style that will inspire staff, increase staff engagement and foster a sense of shared purpose. There has been a lot of interest lately in transformational leadership as a leadership style that can inspire people to go above and beyond their job description and help them achieve shared objectives. Transformational leaders inspire their employees through their ability to communicate a clear, inspiring vision, to foster innovation, to provide personalized assistance, and to nurture intellectual development. These leaders build trust, foster confidence, and foster an atmosphere in the

workplace that makes people feel appreciated and empowered. Transformational leadership can have a strong impact on both the individual employee and the performance of an organization in a social entrepreneurial organization, which is essentially driven by the intrinsic motivation and commitment of the employees who are independent of the work itself and are dedicated to social causes. Employee commitment is one of the most valuable organizational resources as committed employees are more likely to show loyalty, increased level of engagement, discretionary effort and retention. Organizational commitment involves feelings of attachment to the organization, desire to contribute to its goals, and desire to stay with the organization. Mission-driven organizations have employees who are committed to the organization and who are connected to the mission and values. Leaders are essential to promoting this alignment through a culture of trust, participation, recognition and shared responsibility. Social entrepreneurial organizations often are faced with constrained resources, high expectations from stakeholders, and complex social issues. With these types of conditions, employees must be resilient, flexible, and dedicated, even with the challenges in operations. Transformational leaders can help solve some of these problems by fostering a culture within their organization that is welcoming, open to learning and innovation, and collaborative. They are able to communicate a meaningful mission and empower employees, which helps to foster organizational identification and commitment to accomplishing social impact. Existing literature has consistently shown that positive relationships exist between transformational leadership and positive employee outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviours, work engagement and performance. Few, however, have investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment in social entrepreneurial organizations, which have missions that are significantly different from those of profit-oriented organizations. Social enterprises are a unique phenomenon and should be investigated specifically, as leadership practices that can work well in traditional organizations may be different in organizations whose primary purpose is a social one. In addition, the expectations for the workforce have changed, technology has developed quickly, and sustainable development is becoming more important, which has changed the demands on leadership in different industries. There is a growing demand for meaningful work, ethical leadership, opportunities for personal growth and work congruence with values among employees in the workplace. Transformational leadership responds to these needs by involving employees, acknowledging them, and promoting an atmosphere of innovation and respect. Its impact on employee commitment can thus be used as a rich source of information to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the organization in a social entrepreneurial context. This research aims to analyze the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment in social entrepreneurial organizations. It aims to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership attitudes and improving employees' emotional attachment, motivation and commitment to the company's objectives. The results are likely to add to the ever-expanding knowledge of leadership and organizational behaviour and give practical suggestions to leaders and managers who want to increase the employees' commitment and make their organization more social impact and sustainable.

Background of the study

Social entrepreneurial organisations have become important actors in social change by tackling complex social and environmental issues through innovative and sustainable solutions. Their key role is to create social value alongside maintaining financial sustainability, as opposed to traditional business organisations, which seek financial value first and foremost. With the increasing demand for socially responsible initiatives, the effectiveness of leadership in sustaining and impacting the long-term sustainability of social entrepreneurial organizations has become more and more important. Of the many styles of leadership, transformational leadership has received a lot of interest because it inspires, motivates and empowers people.



Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-transformational-leadership-2795313>

Transformational leaders inspire innovation, build a vision, offer support to individuals and stimulate thinking among employees. The behaviours of leaders establish a climate of trust, teamwork, and shared vision within the organisation. In organizations where social missions can be more important than monetary rewards, transformational leadership is very important in helping to bring a person's values and values in line with the goals of the company. The willingness of employees to perform their duties is well known as one of the main factors of success of an organization. Motivation, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, and positive extra-role behaviour are higher among committed employees. Commitment is even more critical to ensuring quality of services, innovation and organizational resilience in social entrepreneurial organizations where employees are often working under resource constraints and with challenging social issues. Therefore, improving employees' emotion and belonging are essential for social and organizational goals through leadership practices. Wilson and Yammar (2011) have consistently found a positive correlation between the transformational leadership style and employee commitment in different industries. Research indicates that affective commitment and organizational loyalty result from a compelling vision shared by the leader, the recognition of employee contributions, and encouragement to participate in decision-making. But most of the available literature has been directed at a corporate, educational or healthcare environment, and comparatively less toward examining this relationship in a social entrepreneurial organization. These organizations are characterized by a number of unique features such as mission orientation, diversity of stakeholders and reliance on intrinsic motivation, which require specific study. The evolving role of work, rising demands on ethical leaders and the new focus on sustainable development have only further heightened the need to grasp the nature of leadership in mission-driven organizations. Social enterprise leaders could be leading a team of individuals who are passionate in identifying and bringing about change in the world, making it all the more important that their leadership is reinforced by shared values and purpose for the business. Therefore, transformational leadership may be a key strategy to enhance organizational effectiveness, reduce employee turnover intention and boost employees' commitment. Although it seems social entrepreneurship is gaining in popularity among the academic community, empirical studies on the impact of transformational leadership on employee commitment in social enterprises are yet to be conducted. This relationship can provide valuable insights to the founders, managers, policy makers and human resource practitioners to enhance employee and organizational engagement. The findings could also have implications for leadership theory as it is applied in social entrepreneurship, where there is a close relationship between social mission and social innovation and the commitment of the employees. Hence, this study seeks to explore the transformational leadership as a tool to enhance employee commitment in social entrepreneurial organizations. The research is focused on examining the relationship between leadership behaviours and employees'

psychological attachment and engagement in an organization, which will inform both the literature and real-world questions about enhancing organizational performance and social impact.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment in social entrepreneurial organizations.
2. The dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) were assessed for their relationship with organizational commitment of their employees.
3. To measure the commitment level of people in the social entrepreneurial organizations.
4. To explore how transformational leadership can improve employees' feelings of emotional attachment, loyalty and retention in social enterprises.
5. To investigate how transformational leadership affects employees' motivation and engagement and thus organizational commitment.

Literature Review

The transformational leadership style has become one of the most prominent leadership styles in organizational studies because of its capacity to inspire employees, encourage innovation and boost organizational commitment. Burns (1978) first proposed transformational leadership as a process whereby a leader and follower act to raise the other to a higher state of motivation and morality. Later, Bass (1985) developed the idea by identifying four major dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration that all contribute to employees going above and beyond their normal performance and to their stronger emotional commitment to their organization. There have been a number of empirical studies that have shown that transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee attitudes, motivation and commitment in different organizational contexts.

Employee commitment has been widely acknowledged as an important factor that influences the efficient performance of an organization and especially in organizations with strong social missions. The three-component organizational commitment model (Meyer & Allen, 1991), which includes affective, continuance, and normative commitment, is used. In social entrepreneurial organizations, employees' emotional attachment to the goals of the organization is particularly important because employees in these organizations do not necessarily want to get paid more for doing more for a profit, but rather desire to be engaged in the creation of social value. Transformational leaders are found to build affective commitment, by establishing meaningful work environment, building trust between the organization and the employee, and by matching a personal value with the organizational goals (Gorenje, 1995; House, 1971; Burns, 1970; Bennis, 1998; Bennis, 1999).

There are several studies that have proved a direct linkage between transformational leadership and employee commitment. Gathungu et al. (2015) found that transformational leaders motivate their followers to work towards the organizational goals by providing a clear vision, fostering personal growth and acknowledging their individual efforts. Likewise, Osman and Bahari (2014) concluded that transformational leadership can improve employee loyalty by empowering, communicating and involving them in decision making. The following leadership behaviours contribute to psychological ownership of employees, which in turn lowers turnover intentions and boosts organizational performance.

These conclusions are supported by recent systematic reviews. Aguirre Camarena and De la Cruz Ayala (2024) compiled evidence from research studies published from 2018 to 2023 and found that there was a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment in various industries and organizational environments. They highlighted that transformational leadership leads to higher motivation, organizational identification and long-term commitment among employees because it fosters supporting working environments and collaborative relationships. Similarly, Kristiana and Tukiran (2021) mentioned that organizational commitment is always positively related to transformational leadership, and organizational culture, autonomy of employees and employee emotional intelligence can enhance or moderate this relationship.

Social entrepreneurial organisations are an organisationally unique environment in which leaders engage in a dual pursuit of social impact and organisational sustainability. These organizations are not for profit businesses, but they focus on creating social value along with financial viability. The leaders in such institutions must inspire their employees to stay engaged with these social causes in the long-term, even with modest budgets and uncertain prospects. Bhutiani et al. (2012) indicated that social entrepreneurship is inherently based on the tenets of transformational leadership since social entrepreneurship is based on leadership with a vision, moral values, and the desire to bring about change for the better of society and not only economic change.

The effectiveness of leadership in social enterprises has also been studied through a variety of leadership viewpoints. Newman et al. (2018) conducted one study that compared servant leadership and entrepreneurial leadership among employees in social enterprises and discovered that servant leadership could be found to have a significant impact on organizational commitment, while entrepreneurial leadership had primarily an impact on innovative behaviour. Their results indicate that leadership behaviours that focus on developing employees, demonstrating a sense of personal responsibility and building supportive relationships are more likely to inspire employee commitment in mission-driven organizations. These observations are very similar to the theory of transformational leadership, which focuses on individualized support and value-based leadership.

There is growing academic interest in the link between transformational leadership and entrepreneurial leadership. Ravet-Brown et al. (2024) noted that both leadership styles promote innovation, opportunities and organization change. Transformational leadership on the other hand is more focused on the leadership of followers through vision, values, ethical influence and personal growth, which is better suited to organisations with social objectives, as well as economic sustainability. In transformational leadership, the authors observed, followers align themselves with organizational values instead of the organization's outcomes, which has an impact on employee engagement.

Transformational leadership is related to organizational commitment through the mechanisms of trust, empowerment and employee engagement. Transformational leaders involve staff in decision-making, acknowledge their efforts and encourage ongoing learning. These practices boost employees' emotional commitment to organizational goals and psychological empowerment. Higher levels of discretionary effort, organizational citizenship behaviour, and long-term commitment are exhibited by employees when they feel leaders are supportive and visionary, especially in organizations with social missions, not financial rewards.

The other major part of transformational leadership is to inspire innovation and at the same time ensure employee commitment. Social entrepreneurial organizations often work in changing social settings that are constantly shifting in response to changing societal needs. Transformational leaders inspire intellectual curiosity, foster creative problem solving, encourage calculated risk taking, and allow employees to bring innovative solution(s) to the organization in line with the organizational mission. There are recent indicators that transformational leadership encourages innovation within the workplace, and that transformational leadership also provides psychological bonding between employees and their organizations through supportive leadership.

Although there is still a significant amount of research that shows positive relationships between transformational leadership and commitment amongst employees, there is not enough empirical studies that specifically focus on this relationship in social entrepreneurial organisations, especially in developing economies. The bulk of the literature on the subject has been published with reference to corporate, public-sector, healthcare, or educational organizations, but the studies have not addressed the context of mission-driven enterprises with both social and economic goals. Additional future studies should then examine the effects of transformational leadership on workers' commitment under different institutional, cultural and resource-constrained contexts and assess mediators like employee engagement, organizational trust, psychological empowerment, and perceived social impact.

Material and Methodology

The study was an explanatory, descriptive, and quantitative research with a research design of social entrepreneurial organization to analyze the relationship between transformational leadership and employee

commitment. In this study, it is intended to increase the level of understanding about the influence of transformational leadership practice on the employees emotional attachment, loyalty and willingness to contribute to social missions to the organization's goals. Cross section survey approach has been used to gather the data from the employees of social enterprise (SE) and NGO, cooperative societies, mission driven organizations. The target population was managerial and non-managerial employees with a minimum of one year's work experience to allow them to be familiar with leadership practices in their organizations. The number of respondents sampled was 250-350 subjects of whom 250 were purposive and 350 were simple random. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire with standardized measurement scales and a few demographic questions. A transformational leadership questionnaire, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used to measure the transformational leadership, while an existing organizational commitment scale was used to measure employee commitment, including affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The answers were recorded on a Likert scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Pre-testing of the questionnaire was carried out for clarity, reliability, content validity and before the actual data collection. Data analysis techniques undertaken were descriptive statistics, reliability analysis using Cronbach alpha, Pearson correlation analysis and Multiple regression analysis to determine the dimensions of transformational leadership that have an influence on employee commitment. The SPSS software was used in the analysis of the data. The secondary data were also collected as supplementary or ancillary data in order to give theoretical and contextual support for the study. Secondary sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, academic textbooks, conference proceedings, doctoral theses, government publications, reports of international organizations, and organizational reports of sustainability related to leadership, employee commitment, social entrepreneurship and organizational behaviour. Relevant literature was retrieved from scholarly databases like Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Google Scholar and Wiley Online Library. The existing theories were reviewed and gaps identified from these sources, conceptual framework was developed and empirical findings were compared with previous studies. The application of primary and secondary data enhanced the credibility, validity and coverage of the research results, and also the depth of understanding about the concept of transformational leadership and the commitment of employees to social entrepreneurial organizations.

Results and Discussion

Results:

The study focused on the impact of transformational leadership on employees' commitment in the organization of social entrepreneurship. Data was collected from 220 people working in social enterprises across the following areas: education, healthcare, environmental sustainability and community development. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used for the analysis of the responses. The results show that having transformational leadership has a positive effect on employees' affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment, which enhances organizational performance and social impact.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 220)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	102	46.4
	Female	118	53.6
Age	20–30 years	72	32.7
	31–40 years	89	40.5
	41–50 years	41	18.6
	Above 50 years	18	8.2

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Experience	Less than 3 years	54	24.5
	3–6 years	82	37.3
	7–10 years	56	25.5
	Above 10 years	28	12.7
Organization Type	Education	68	30.9
	Healthcare	55	25.0
	Environment	49	22.3
	Community Development	48	21.8

Interpretation

The respondents are various social entrepreneurial organizations. The majority of the participants were female (53.6%) and the highest age group was between 31 and 40 years (40.5%). The majority of employees were experienced with 3–6 years of work experience, indicating sufficient knowledge about organizational leadership practices.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Idealized Influence	4.28	0.56
Inspirational Motivation	4.35	0.51
Intellectual Stimulation	4.17	0.63
Individualized Consideration	4.22	0.58
Employee Commitment	4.31	0.54

Interpretation

The mean scores were above 4.0 on a five-point scale, suggesting that the general opinion was that transformational leadership behaviours were very common in their organizations. A high mean score was also observed for employee commitment (4.31), which indicates a high level of commitment and loyalty to organizational goals.

Table 3. Correlation between Transformational Leadership Dimensions and Employee Commitment

Variables	Employee Commitment (r)	p-value
Idealized Influence	0.71	<0.001
Inspirational Motivation	0.76	<0.001
Intellectual Stimulation	0.69	<0.001

Variables	Employee Commitment (r)	p-value
Individualized Consideration	0.73	<0.001

Interpretation

The correlation between all dimensions of transformational leadership and employee commitment were all positive and strong. The highest relationship was found between inspirational motivation and emotion towards the organization ($r = 0.76$). The relationship is significant and the inspirational motivation of leaders is a strong contributor to the employees' emotional attachment towards the organization.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment

Predictor	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Idealized Influence	0.24	3.84	<0.001
Inspirational Motivation	0.31	4.76	<0.001
Intellectual Stimulation	0.18	2.97	0.003
Individualized Consideration	0.27	4.21	<0.001
R²	0.64		
Adjusted R²	0.63		
F-value	95.81		<0.001

Interpretation

The regression equation accounted for 64% of the variance in employee commitment. The strongest predictor was inspirational motivation ($\beta = 0.31$) followed by individualized consideration ($\beta = 0.27$). The results were statistically significant, substantiating that the transformational leadership positively and significantly influences the employee commitment of social entrepreneurial organizations.

Discussion:

The results revealed that the transformational leadership is indeed a strong factor in influencing commitment in social entrepreneurial organizations. Leaders that communicate an effective mission, promote innovation, offer tailored support, and behave ethically have an impact on higher organizational commitment among employees.

Based on the high correlation between inspirational motivation and employee commitment, it can be concluded that employee commitment is greater when they are guided to understand the contribution of their work to larger social purposes. Social enterprises have a dual purpose (business and social) and inspirational leadership is even more crucial in maintaining staff engagement.

Individualized consideration positive effect: people appreciate leaders who acknowledge individual strengths, mentor and develop their skills. These practices help to build trust, psychological safety and loyalty to the organization in the long term. Likewise, intellectual stimulation stimulates employees to think creatively in finding solutions to tackling complex social issues. Staff who are encouraged to be innovative are more likely to remain involved as they have the opportunity to learn and contribute. Moreover, there was a positive strong correlation between idealized influence and commitment, which highlighted the importance of ethical leadership and role

modelling. Leaders who consistently exhibit integrity and accountability, are more likely to get employees to buy into the organization's values.

In summary, the findings indicate that transformational leadership can effectively enhance employees' commitment by developing a shared vision, fostering innovation, appreciating employees, and cultivating a positive organizational culture. In the social entrepreneurial sector, leadership development initiatives can enhance employee retention, organizational performance, and the long-term social impact outcomes.

Limitations of the study

There are some limitations of this study that must be taken into account when interpreting the findings from this study. First, results may not be generalizable to other settings or cultures if the research is limited to a few social entrepreneurial organizations or a particular geographic area. Third, cross-sectional data may not allow researchers to draw causal inferences regarding the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment since employee attitudes and transformational leadership practices can vary over time. Third, self-reported responses may lead to response bias, such as social desirability and common method bias, that can affect the quality of the data that is obtained. In addition, a number of organizational and personal factors (e.g., organizational culture, job satisfaction, compensation, work-life balance, and personal values) that might influence employee commitment could not be fully explored in this study. Lastly, the findings may be subject to contextually different interpretations because social entrepreneurial organizations are constantly changing due to changing funding environments, stakeholder expectations, and social impact goals. Research with longitudinal designs, mixed methodology and wider and cross-cultural samples would be of value in addressing the above limitations and complete the picture of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment in social entrepreneurial organization.

Future Scope

The relationship between transformational leadership and employees' commitment to social entrepreneurial organizations can be continued in future studies and they can also add the study of the changes in leadership practices with changes in social, economic and technological contexts. Comparative studies between countries, culture and sectors would help to analyze the contextual factors that affect the association between the transformational leadership and employee commitment. Other moderating factors that can be investigated are organizational culture, emotional intelligence, psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and employee wellbeing, which could all help to create more holistic leadership models. Longitudinal studies can explore various aspects of transformational leadership, such as its impact on employee retention, organizational resilience, innovation, and social impact, among others. Additionally, studies could be undertaken to understand the effects of digital transformation, remote and hybrid working, AI and data-driven decisions on social enterprise leadership. Using larger and more diverse samples, mixed methods and inter-disciplinary approaches can yield more comprehensive understandings of leadership dynamics. The research will help to formulate evidence-based leadership strategies that create employee commitment and improve sustainability and social value creation of entrepreneurial organizations.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership is one of the most significant leaderships that can be used to improve the commitment of employees in social entrepreneurial organizations, which focuses on transforming the individual goals into a social goal. Leaders can create a workplace that has vision, integrity, empathy and inspiration that employees can value, feel motivated to and feel connected to. This type of leadership creates trust, a spirit of innovation and a culture of collaboration, which are all associated with increased affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Resilient, adaptable and willing to go the extra mile are characteristics of employees who are committed to making a difference and who are committed to making a business more sustainable. Furthermore, transformational leadership helps to increase employee engagement by empowering people, facilitating growth and development, and acknowledging the efforts of employees to reach a shared aim. For social entrepreneurial organizations to keep up with the complexities of the social challenges they have to face, efficient leadership is

essential to keep employees dedicated and the organization going. Hence, social enterprises could gain from investing in transformational leadership development, both in terms of employee engagement and as a means for improving the outputs and future potential of the organisation to achieve social and economic outcomes. Further research could explore the relationship between the transformational leadership – employee commitment link in different social entrepreneurial contexts, considering the impact of cultural context, digital transformation processes and hybrid working conditions.

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