

The Impact of the Transactional Leadership Style on Employees` Job Satisfaction Through The Mediating Role of Communication Competence in Private Universities of Syria

Mohamed Kateb¹, Prof. K.Ramanathan²

Ph.D. (Management), Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Cyber Jaya, Malaysia¹

Lecturer, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Cyber Jaya, Malaysia²

Abstract: *prior literature has documented the importance of the transactional leadership and communication competence of the leaders and their relationship with employees` job satisfaction. However, there was a lack of leader insight regarding this relationship in the context of higher education in Syria and very few literatures had discussed the issues. The objective of this study was to examine the mediating role of communication competence on the relationship between transactional leadership and the job satisfaction of the employees in Syrian private universities. The quantitative method was used in data collection. A random sampling technique was conducted which comprised of 283 faculty members and staff from seven private universities in Syria. A total of three different sets of instruments were used, namely Multifactor leadership (MLQ), Communicative Competence Scale (CCS) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). PLS-SEM technique was used to analyze the direct and indirect relationships between the variables in this study. The results of the study indicated that there was a significant relationship between transactional leadership and communication competence. The results show that there was a significant relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. Findings had revealed that the indirect effect of transactional leadership on job satisfaction through communication competence.*

Keywords: *Transactional leadership, Communication competence, Job satisfaction.*

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I. Introduction

Most Universities across the world are undergoing changes that are considered profound through huge growth in a competitive atmosphere. At present they are facing a number of new challenges such as economic transformation, globalization, a growth in science and technology and these in turn do have an impact on organizational goals. According to Hashim and Yazdanifard (2014) communication between a leader and the employees are very important as it is the basic essence to have a positive environment in the workplace. By having certain leadership and communication competencies, a leader should be able to adapt his/her communication skills and leadership styles to achieve organizational goals and objectives. At the individual level, leaders who are able to influence, motivate and direct employees will often be rewarded by loyalty and performance of their employees (Mosadegh and Yarmohammadian, 2006).

In relation to term job satisfaction, the successful effectiveness of the organization is influenced by the job satisfaction of subordinates which can be attributed partly to the leader of the organization. According to Lipham (1981) the leadership styles of the head of the institution does effect teacher`s job satisfaction. In addition, Chen (2008) found that leaders do have an effect on employee satisfaction. Meanwhile, Job satisfaction is a very consistent way to measure the organization`s performance and hence the job satisfaction of the employees is effective (Robbins and Judge, 2009). Employees are usually happier and satisfied with leaders when they are ready to listen, communicate effectively and support the employees in their efforts. In educational settings teacher satisfaction is very important.

Academic institutions such as universities are socially complex organizations with cultures that are distinctive. In higher education and scientific research, effective leadership is necessary to the success of the university (Bass, 1985). Therefore, heads of higher education, such as Academic leaders and deans, need to be aware of and understand the fact that leadership styles, communication and job satisfaction are significant factors in their trials to achieve the organization goals. Academic heads such as Presidents and leaders often lead the transformation of their university. As administrative leaders of the university, these deans and supervisors often need to sustain an academic environment and take up the responsibility of encouraging research. They are involved in program development and must maintain excellence in teaching while encouraging active collaboration throughout the university (Land, 2003).

there is a huge number of researches that focus on leadership styles as well as communication. However, not many of these studies focus on studies related to communication and leadership styles in terms of higher educational contexts. Many of these studies focus on leadership styles that are academic as well as faculty job satisfaction in relation to countries in the west. In addition, there is insufficient literature discussing leadership practices and communication competence of academic leaders and supervisors and employee`s job satisfaction in relation to various universities in the Syria. The current study was an attempt to determine the influence of transactional leadership and communication competence of the deans or supervisors of colleges and departments in relation to employee job satisfaction.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Transactional Leadership Style

Burns (1978) developed the model of transactional leadership. Burns (1978) noted that transactional leadership occurs "when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things; thus, the two parties can transact profits and services with each other". Later, Bass (1985) built on and clarified the work of Burns and developed transactional leadership model. Transactional leadership is "a term used to examine the interactions between leaders and followers, all of whom agree with, accept or comply with the leader in exchange for praise, rewards and resources or simply the avoidance of disciplinary action" (Bass, Jung, Avolio and Berson, 2003). In addition, Bass and Riggio (2006) proposed that transactional leadership involves the leader rewarding the followers when the performance of the followers has reached up to the expected level. Employees simply work and give out outputs with a specific return expected. Den et al. (1997) as well as Aarons (2006) argued that a transactional leader provides a tangible or intangible benefit to an employee in exchange for service.

According to Bass (1985), transactional leaders motivate employees to produce the desired results by explaining the target that employees must achieved, showing employees how to achieve the target, clarifying the performance evaluation, providing feedback on job outcomes, and providing contingent rewards. if employees met the target. The transactional leader concentrates on meeting goals and who complete the task will be rewarded. Research has shown that the agreement of the reward is the rule by which the actions follow (Aarons, 2006 and Bass, 1999).

Transactional models appear to be better suited for situations in which focusing on the key purposes of the organization and on assisting people in recognizing what needs to be done in order to meet set outcomes or objectives. It is particularly useful in contexts where the parameters are relatively static, clearly defined and controlled, and when conformity rather than creativity are valued (Hallinger, 2004; Huber and West, 2002). The academic leaders have a required outcome that they are looking for. The outcome becomes the only interest of the leader while the followers also have a required reward that they are expecting. Effort is put into work so that the reward may be realized (Boerner et al., 2007).

2.2 Communication Competence

There are numerous definitions of communication competence over the years. Cupach and Spitzberg (1983) pointed out disagreements between researchers in defining communication competence. Wiemann (1977) provides a comprehensive definition of communicative competence "It is the ability of an interacting member to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he (she) may successfully accomplish his (her) own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his (her) fellow interacting members within the constraints of the situation".

Communication competence is not just understanding proper communication skills but also the ability to apply and adapt that knowledge when certain situations may emerge unexpected. (Cooley and Roach, 1984). In the simplest terms, the goal of communication is to "develop a commonness of meaning between sender and receiver" (Hawkins and Preston, 1981). Furthermore, Gibson and Hodgetts (1996) stated that "Communication is the process of delivering or receiving a message from one person to another person, either directly or indirectly, in writing, verbal and non verbal language". Researchers interested in communication found that communication competence is an important element in successful business, marriage, adaptation in life, and social interaction (Powers and Lowry, 1984). Communication competencies are believed to be among the most central qualifications in the workforce (Curtis et al., 1989; Hawkins and Fillion, 1999).

This section of the present study was inspired by prior researches that suggested communication between supervisor and subordinates influenced employee satisfaction (Jablin, 1979; Madlock, 2008). However, the current study focuses on communication competence and it is concerned with the dynamics of whether employee job satisfaction and transactional leadership style are influenced by the communication competence of their leaders. It is also meant to show if a leader`s communication competence behavior patterns in the university related to transactional leadership style and employee job satisfaction.

However, competent leaders are those who understand the skills and abilities that set them apart from others and whenever there is an opportunity, apply them in day to day affairs for achievements. Further, they are empowered to win the respect and cooperation of colleagues and staff member which facilitate them expand their ability to complete their tasks and help other to achieve their goals. Subsequently, It can be said that one factor of the long term success of the entire organization depends on the quality of competencies honed by its leaders.

2.3 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an attitude that relates to overall attitudes towards life, or life satisfaction (Illies et al.,2009). Job satisfaction is the amount of positive overall feelings that individuals have towards their jobs (Peerbhai, 2005). According to Perie and Bojer (1997), Job satisfaction is an affective reaction to an individual's work situation or an overall feeling about one's job or career as it relates to specific facets of the job or career like compensation, autonomy, and co workers. Armstrong (2010) also draws the attention that job satisfaction refers to the attitudes and feelings people have about their work.This implies that positive and favorable attitudes towards the job indicate job satisfaction while negative and unfavorable attitudes towards the job indicate job dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction defined by Robbin, Millett and Marsh (2004) as individual attitude towards his or her job. This summarizes the fact that a person who has a positive attitude towards his/her job with pleasant feelings is highly satisfied compared to the person who displays a negative attitude with unpleasant feelings towards the job.

According to Al Shuaibi (2013), Job satisfaction as a workplace issue has received considerable interest and attention amongst practitioners and researchers. Job Satisfaction is usually treated as a collection of feelings or affective responses associated with the job situation, or simply how employee feel about different Characteristics of their jobs (Spector, 1997). Leaders must pay a lot of attention to job satisfaction becauseof Studies showed that unsatisfied employees will leave the organization,It is a demonstrated fact that satisfied employees will be healthier and Job satisfaction is beyond just working for an organization and will have effects on the personal life of employees (Shafiabadi and Khalaj, 2010).The satisfied workers will be more productive and remain with the organization longer, whereas dissatisfied workers will be less productive and are more inclined to quit (Sarker, Crossman and Chinmeteeptuck, 2003). Satisfied employees are absent less, show less job stress, stay at work longer, and make positive contributions to their organizations (Griffin, 2004). Furthermore, King (1970) indicated a positive relationship between employee satisfaction and productivity.

In the present study, job satisfaction is divided into two factors intrinsic and extrinsic and their relationship with leadership styles through the mediating effect of communication competence were examined. It is common for researchers to separate different facets of job satisfaction into intrinsic and extrinsic factors in which for instance pay is considered extrinsic while recognition is intrinsic (Judge and Klinger, 2007).

III. The Relationship Between the Variables and Hypothesis Development

The result of most previous studies has proved the relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. Saleem (2015) investigated the relationship which was found between transactional leadership style as well as instructors job satisfaction and the results clearly revealed significant as well as negative relationships which appeared between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. Taleghaniet al.,(2010) indicated there is a relationship that is found between transactional leadership and subordinates job satisfaction. These research studies found that transactional leadership was highly related in terms of job satisfaction. In another study, the result of Ahmad et al. (2013) indicated "that there is a significant and clear relationship that is seen between transactional leadership and job satisfaction".

Limsila and Ogunlana (2008) found transactional leadership influence job satisfaction. Based on some studies, leadership plays a significant and important role in employees' job satisfaction. It was found that transactional leadership style has an effect on job satisfaction in terms of the highest effect. Hashim and Yazdanifard (2014) conducted a "study with a purpose to investigate the impact of transactional leadership style on the employees job satisfaction. After analyzing the data, the transactional leadership style has positive relationship on the employees' job satisfaction. Rewards and benefits shows a huge impact on employees job satisfaction". They added that "transactional leadership style influenced on job satisfaction by a range of few factors which can boost the positive vibe of an employee instantly".

In a study by Yavirach (2012) investigated the influence of transformational as well as transactional leadership behavior on employees job satisfaction along with organizational commitment. The findings of surveys indicated that followers' job satisfaction did have an effect through transactional leadership. From the description above, the researcher proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and employees` jobsatisfaction.

Empirical studies have proved that superior employee communication is an important factor that influences job satisfaction at the workplace. The way in which an employee perceives a leader or supervisor's behavior can influence job satisfaction in a positive or negative way. Research carried out earlier has reported that supportive downward communication from managers was moderately to strongly relate to subordinate job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Gaertner, 2000).

Infante and Gordon (1989) in their study supported the significance of communication between leaders and subordinates in discovering the impact of job satisfaction on employees. In fact, one study found that communication behaviours alone accounted for more than 60 per cent of the variance in employee job satisfaction (Goldhaber et al., 1978). Edy (2009) argued that communication is a factor that affects job satisfaction. This researcher states that communication between supervisors subordinate is an important influence in achieving job satisfaction at the workplace. Research study by Sharbrough et al. (2006) demonstrated positive relationships were indicated between a leader's use of motivational language and how well they were perceived in terms of effectiveness, communication competence that resulted in job and communication satisfaction.

The relationship between an employee and the supervisor is a very important aspect at the workplace. Therefore, a leader or academic head that uses friendliness and non-verbal immediacy to open communication lines is generally ready for positive feedback and can expect a high rate of job satisfaction from a subordinate. However, a superior who is antisocial and unfriendly who is not willing to communicate will generally get a lot of negative feedback and there will be a very low rate of job satisfaction from their employees at the workplace (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). Moreover, the open communication between the leader and the employee is very important in the workplace. When the leaders use specific behaviors of communication and care about the employee's opinion, then they will be motivated to do better and become satisfied in their job.

improving communication competence among supervisors and leaders can help maintain and enhance human resources, who are the main resources of today's organizations. The results of leaders being seen as competent communicators may lead to increased satisfaction of their subordinates ultimately resulting in greater productivity as mentioned by Gruneberg (1979). His research suggested that satisfied employees will perform at higher levels than dissatisfied workers. Based on the prior research findings, communication competence of leaders and supervisors appears to have influence on subordinates' job satisfaction as well as positive relationship which in turn increase employee performance and productivity. From the description above, the researcher proposed the following hypothesis:

H 2: There is a significant relationship between a leader's communication competence and employee job satisfaction.

Jurado et al. (2006) also investigated the link between communication theory and the transactional leadership style. Kyoungjo et al (1991) investigated the relationships between leader-subordinate interpersonal communication and subordinate satisfaction in conjunction with leadership. Flauto (1999) also emphasized that communication competence is a prerequisite for effective leadership, as he found in his study that each of the leadership dimensions, was highly correlated with communication competency. A recent research of Penley et al (1991) showed that the higher performing managers will exhibit, the higher levels of communication skills will be revealed. Schultz (1980) found that individuals' use of communication behaviors, as perceived by their work group, predicted their emergence as leaders. The use of subordinate ratings of six communication variables allowed the investigator to predict which members of a classroom work group would emerge as either task or social emotional leaders. The relationship between transactional leadership style and communication Competence has received restricted consideration by business and communication scholars alike.

According to Holladay and Coombs (1993), leadership is a behavior enacted through communication. Specifically, Holladay and Coombs suggested that communication shapes the perceptions of a leader's charisma, and communication can be divided into the content of the leader's messages and the presentation of those messages. Similarly, messages sent by leaders are considered to contain both affective and cognitive strategies (Hall and Lord, 1995), and when leaders effectively communicate their vision, they win the confidence of followers, which in turn aids in communication satisfaction between the leader and follower (Pavitt, 1999).

Communication is required for the leader as well as the organization to be efficient and effective (Zilhoglu, 1996). Rallis ve Goldring (2000) in their study found that the leadership roles of school managers have a positive effect on their collaboration skills and communication competency. Flauto (1999) studied on a typology or taxonomy of communication competence, in which he noted that leadership, is a social process involving a relationship between individuals. This relationship is enacted through communication.

The transactional leaders have strong communicative capability which enables them to articulate a clear and vivid vision and to display desirable relational behaviors in order to stay connected with their followers. Barge (1994) asserts that, "the key to more complex leadership behavior and more adaptability to

new situation is good communication skills". In a leadership context, "doing leadership" entails competent communicative performance which, by influencing others, results in acceptable outcomes for the organization (transactional/task-oriented goal), and which maintains harmony within the team or community of practice (relational/people-oriented goal). (Holmes, Schnurr, Chan and Chiles, 2002).

From the description above, the researcher proposed the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and communication competence.

The result of most previous studies have proved the relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction.

Fernandes and Awamleh, (2004) in their study, confirmed that the transactional leadership style of managers is related to job satisfaction and will boost employees` job satisfaction. Barnett et al. (2005) found a strong relationship between transactional leadership and teacher job satisfaction in secondary education. The very fact that transactional leaders are connected with their subordinates will ensure that the employees are more motivated and satisfied. Furthermore, the morale of the employees gets a boost.

Previous studies have proved the relationship between communication competence and job satisfaction. Research conducted by Berman and Hellweg`s (1989) found that supervisor communication competence was related to employee satisfaction. Their findings seemed to suggest a positive relationship which was found between a supervisor`s usage of motivational language and a display of communication competence which resulted in employees` job satisfaction. Siburian (2013) found there is an important correlation that is clearly seen between interpersonal communication as well as instructors job satisfaction with regard to teachers in high school. In some other research studies, (Falcione et al., 1977; Infante&Gorden, 1979) indicated a strong relationship which was found between supervisors` communicator competence interms of employees job satisfaction. In another study, Madlock (2006) found that there was a positive relationship which could be seen between the supervisors` communication competence as well as subordinates job satisfaction.

The link between transactional leadership style and communication Competence has received limited attention by business and communication scholars alike. According to Holladay and Coombs (1993), leadership is a behavior enacted through communication. Specifically, Holladay and Coombs suggested that communication shapes the perceptions of a leader`s charisma, and communication can be divided into the content of the leader`s messages and the presentation of those messages. Similarly, messages sent by leaders are considered to contain both affective and cognitive strategies (Hall and Lord, 1995), and when leaders effectively communicate their vision, they win the confidence of followers, which in turn aids in communication satisfaction between the leader and follower (Pavitt, 1999). From the description above, the researcher proposed the following hypothesis:

H 4: Communication Competence has mediation effects on the relationship between the Transformational Leadership Style and employees` Job Satisfaction in universities.

From the description above, we can describe the research model as follows:

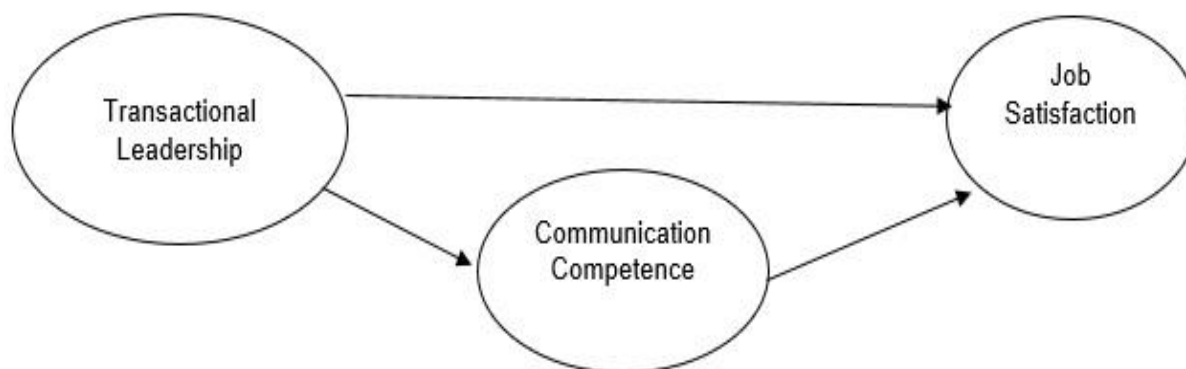


Figure 1. Framework

IV. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design: This study used a quantitative research method to collect data from the respondents using three instruments which comprises of four sections. The use of quantitative methodology in educational research can be very useful when trying to determine whether or not a claim is true or false. Often times quantitative

research is specific, unbiased and objective as researchers are not closely attached to the study environment (Creswell, 2005; Gay and Airasian, 2000).

4.2 Population: The population of the study was faculty members and staff from various colleges particularly concentrating on a random set of private universities of Syria. The researcher excluded leaders, supervisors and deans because this study was concerned with an investigation of their leadership style and communication competence, so the respondents were only faculty and staff. The employee`s rating of their leaders` leadership styles and communication competence would be more valid than the leaders` self rating.

4.3 Sampling Design: Nine private universities were selected from three different cities in Syria (Damascus , Aleppo , Homs) by using simple random sampling technique to give the universities equal chance of being included as a sample. These seven private universities represent different regional and socioeconomic background characteristics. The study follows Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table for determining sample size; the total targeted population size was 966 possible participants. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population size of 966, the sample size should be around 283 participants.

V. Results and Discussion

The results of the study show that first transactional leadership Style affects communication competence with $R^2 = 0.127$, path coefficient $\beta = 0.285$, and $Q^2 = 0.065$. second transactional leadership Style affects job satisfaction with $R^2 = 0.454$, path coefficient $\beta = 0.155$, and $Q^2 = 0.299$. third communication competence affects job satisfaction with $R^2 = 0.454$, path coefficient $\beta = 0.450$, and $Q^2 = 0.299$. This study assessed the mediating role of communication competence between transactional leadership and job satisfaction in the PLS path model. The product of the coefficient approach using the bootstrapping re-sampling method has been used to examine the significance of the indirect effect (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

In this study, there are 4 hypotheses tested and based on the results of test. The results showed that all the hypotheses are supported by the data.

Table 1. The Hypothesis Test of Research Model

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	T-Value	Result
H1	There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and employees` job satisfaction.	3.375	Supported
H2	There is a significant relationship between a leader`s communication competence and employee job satisfaction.	6.769	Supported
H3	There is a significant relationship between transactional leadership and communication competence.	4.638	Supported
H4	Communication Competence has mediation effects on the relationship between the Transactional Leadership Style and employees` Job Satisfaction in universities.	2.215	Supported

The result of testing the hypothesis found that:

Hypothesis 1: The first hypothesis was supported and accepted. The first hypothesis predicted that transactional leadership style will positively influence employee job satisfaction in private Syrian universities.

Hypothesis 2: The second hypothesis was supported and accepted. The second hypothesis predicted that communication competence will positively influence employee job satisfaction in private Syrian universities.

Hypothesis 3: The third hypothesis was supported and accepted. The third hypothesis predicted that transactional leadership style will positively influence communication competence in private Syrian universities.

Hypothesis 4: The fourth hypothesis was supported and accepted. The fourth hypothesis predicted that communication competence will positively mediate the impact of transactional leadership style on employee job satisfaction in private Syrian universities.

VI. Conclusion

This study had examined the relationship between transactional leadership style and job satisfaction amongst the employees, also the relationship between transactional leadership style and communication competence and the relationship between communication competence of leaders and employees job satisfaction. In addition, this study investigated influence of transactional leadership style on job satisfaction through the mediating effect of communication competence in Syrian private universities. The problem classified by this study was the lack of models developed to investigate the links between leadership styles, communication competence and job satisfaction among private universities in developing countries, like Syria.

The primary goal of every organization should be to improve its effectiveness. Two approaches to improving the overall effectiveness of an organization is to increase the effectiveness of the leader and to

enhance job satisfaction levels of employees. Since transactional leadership style and communication competence are conceived as the essence of organizational behaviour, it has been suggested that one of the best ways to improve organizational effectiveness is to improve a leader's transactional leadership style and communication competence. Employees are one of the most important assets for an organization.

In conclusion, this study was successful in making a significant contribution to the existing literature by further exploring the impact of transactional leadership style and on job satisfaction through communication competence by empirical analysis. It is to be noted that using transactional leadership style and appropriate and effective communication competence should lead to increased job satisfaction among employees.

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