

Advancing Solidarity Through Transformational Leadership: Contributions Of Women Leaders In Making An Equitable And Just Society

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ABSTRACT: Leaders ignite the minds of their fellow human beings by their words and actions. Especially, leaders who are in the position of altering the life situations of people are in the forefront of empowering the people, their environments and their future. An attempt has been made to interview the leaders who have made transformational changes through their authority, leadership, values, beliefs and behavior in the lives of the common people. The research paper findings will elucidate the process of trendsetting and benchmarking by Women leaders which in turn would pave way for further progress and development of ordinary women folks in the transformation process at the grass-root level. It will also add knowledge to the scientific research community about the process of profound and radical changes brought by leaders that transformed the society to a new direction and enhancement into a completely different level of effectiveness.

Keywords: Transformation; Leader; Change; Society.

1. INTRODUCTION:

A Leader is the most sort after person by his group as he transforms the group's efforts into tangible and productive outcomes. He is also being celebrated for his ideas and actions that have positively influenced the lives of the people who are helpless. Literatures quote that there are 12 forms of leadership styles which leaders use to guide and lead people. Among the leadership styles 'Transformational Leadership' has revolutionized the organization by understanding the basic needs of their subordinates, inspiring them and motivating them to higher desires. (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Horwitz et al, 2008; Marturano & Gosling, 2008; Patiar & Mia, 2009). As a change agent, a Transformational leader focuses in bringing tangible changes in the organization by valuing human assets such as knowledge, skills and efforts. He influences his followers by shedding light on their high degree of effectiveness in whatever work they do.

A Transformational Leadership differs from Management in the following ways: A leader who intends to bring transformation does right things, involve in coaching their subordinates,

takes a hands-on approach, have a long term outlook, augment trust controlling, focus on people-centric decisions and challenges the conventional norms. On the other hand, Management of an organization attempts in doing things right, evaluates its employees, has a reactive approach towards their subordinates and has a short term perspective Bennis (2009). Particularly, transformational leaders show their concern by ascertaining on employees' individual needs with that of the organization. It is also argued that transformational leaders are spokesperson who improves trust to enhance the commitment of their subordinates and mobilize their support towards transformational leadership's vision for changing the current situation.

Furthermore, transformational leadership provides autonomy to their followers to probe new ideas and knowledge. Accordingly, it is apparent that transformational leadership can be applicable to develop learning climates. Importantly, these leaders impel learning culture by intellectual stimulation that facilitates knowledge sharing and new idea generation within organisations. Dix (2013) claims that if an organisation desires to have a culture-oriented learning, then transformational leadership seems to be a viable choice. In addition, through a review of the current literature, it is identified that the existing empirical studies have highlighted transformational leadership as an important facilitator of collaboration, trust and learning (Darling, 1990; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

Facets of Transformational Leadership:



Figure 1: The Four Facets of Transformational Leadership

The four facets of Transformational leadership elucidate the ways in which a transformational leader act and work accordingly.

Idealized Influence: The leaders, who behave in ways that are being admired, respected and trusted by their followers. Herein, the leaders develop a shared vision and improve relationships with followers by considering their needs over their own personal needs. By revealing high standards of ethical and moral conduct, these leaders are known for doing the right things and they do not use power for their personal gain. Mutual trust between their followers and leaders blooms as the leader takes risks follows a set of core values, ethics and convictions in all of his actions. This deliberately inspires the followers to build trust on the leader and subsequently the leader builds confidence on his followers. (Schieltz, M.,2019).

Individual Consideration: Transformational Leaders intend to achieve the goals of an organization by considering the individual needs of the followers. Providing opportunities or intrinsically or extrinsically motivating them builds a 'learning climate' in the organization. The genuine concern to the development of each of the subordinates is being expressed by the leader (Riggio, E. R, 2014) which in turn stimulates the followers to be more responsive and reliable.

Intellectual Stimulation: The transformational leader encourages innovative ideas and solutions from his subordinates. (Canty, 2005). Rather than being easygoing, the transformational leaders often challenge the performance of their followers. Soliciting ideas from the followers, they are also involved in the decision making process. Encouraging creativity and being innovative devoid of being critical helps the followers to identify possible solutions to the problems.

Inspirational Motivation: The leaders have the ability to inspire and motivate their followers by stating the goals of the organization in a clear and a lucid manner. They communicate the expectations and establish a commitment to the goals that have been put in place by the organization. The need for good communication skills is necessary as the messages conveyed to the group should be with precision, power and of authority (Schlietz, M., 2019).

The literatures have left the researchers with the following research questions which in turn were converted as research objectives of the study.

- How the ideas of the leaders did influence the followers that lead to transformation?
- How far the individual needs of the followers were considered that led to transformation?
- Did the leaders encourage intellectual stimulation to happen in their workplace?
- How the leaders were able to motivate their followers?
- What were the significant tangible changes that drove to transformation in the organization?
- Were the challenges detrimental in bringing in transformation?
- What are the built in support systems of the organization.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This qualitative research study has used Descriptive case study research design so as to study the experiences of real cases operating in real situations. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the 3 respondents. An interview guide was used as the tool to gather information carefully prepared to meet out the objectives of the study and the data were thematically analyzed related to the research questions of the study.

3. RESULTS:

The researchers have made an attempt to bring to limelight about 3 transformational women leaders whose contribution has transfigured their environment in a noticeable way thus bringing in societal development among the masses.

The following are a brief description of the 3 cases:

First case - Aged 50, a Professional Social Worker, working as Secretary in a State Social Welfare Board with 22 years of experiences, the respondent cherishes 'commitment in work' as her core value. As a transformational leader, she feels it's very challenging in bringing in positive change in the organization.

Second case- Aged 46, Programme Coordinator, Women Empowerment Project, 12 to 13 years of experience in the NGO sector. The respondent holds self-worth and dignified living conditions as her values and is gearing her partners of development towards it.

Case Study 3 - Aged 58, heading a self-financing institution exclusively for women for the past 20 years, she has always strived to make the college in the forefront meeting all odds. Under her leadership, the college has gained Autonomous status, placed in 150 to 200 category ranking among self-financing colleges of National Institute Ranking Framework in India.

Theme 1: Idealized Influence:

As a leader, the vision of introducing compulsory usage of digitalization from top to bottom level of planning in a phased manner made me to ensure transparency among the beneficiaries which is being clearly articulated among the subordinates thus influencing their work towards the organization's goal.

The trainings received during my adolescent stage have molded and strengthened my cause to work for my fellow mates which in turn have influenced them. The followers have witnessed my development and hence cooperate with me during my efforts

I am being celebrated for my integrity and commitment in my work. I respect my institution for believing in my potentials and in turn in I give back my time and knowledge for the development of the institution. I make clear the vision of the institution to my subordinates and motivate them to work along in achieving the same. My years of service in the institution have given me a privilege to realize the mission.

Theme 2: Individual Consideration:

Acknowledging the accomplishments of the subordinates and assigning work based on their skills and knowledge. By developing effective workplace environment, their self-development is duly considered for better outcomes.

As a transformational leader, I have identified the disadvantaged people and have worked for socio-economic freedom. SHG is one of the tools which was identified for the economic independency. About 56 types of businesses were initiated among the SHGs in considering their interest and skill set by me.

As a head of the institution, I have worked to bring in inclusiveness in all stages of education. Girls of low socio economic status are identified and supported of their education in terms of giving concession in their tuition fees and providing them scholarship too. I make it a point that any welfare programmes of the management reaches these economically disadvantaged.

Theme 3: Intellectual Stimulation:

Through Systematic planning, Implementation, Evaluation done in regular intervals organizational knowledge could be enabled.

I often place the problems before the community with whom I work with and summon upon the solutions for the problem. A holistic ideology bloomed from the community ensures community participation

As a head of the institution, I am keen in identifying the knowledge base coupled with creativity and dedication. Thus, irrespective of my teacher's experiences I partner them in

planning, analyzing, implementing and reframing the work if I found them to be suitable for the work by this way I don't discriminate people based on their caste, religion, economical class, qualification or experiences.

Theme 4: Inspirational Motivation:

As a transformational leader, I motivate my subordinates by assigning tasks in which they are skillful and delighted to work upon. By this way they feel motivated to take the work with full energy and finish it on time.

The respondent motivates the people living in the community by my words and actions and was able to inspire the grass root people and improve their socio-economic conditions thus inspiring them. My leadership has removed the shackles of gender imbalance, reduced unemployment, avoided migration, lessened dependency.

I have always motivated my colleagues by my actions. I live to what I expect from others whether its punctuality or discipline or integrity or creativity or proactiveness or being generous. I strongly believe that a leader is followed by her actions and not by her words.

Theme 5: Tangible changes made in the organization:

Capacity building of staff, management representatives of NGOs and Staff; Training on usage of Computers, Service Rules and Public Financial Management System were arranged and streamlined; Online procurement of goods were cleared for ambiguities.

Formation of 11,630 Women SHGs & Men SHG over a period of 12 years in 1254 hamlets of 3 districts of Tamil Nadu(Trichy, Karur & Perambalur), Initiated Community Houses, Monitoring the Water Shed Management project in two districts (Trichy and Karur)thus making the target villages 'water sufficient', Literacy programme to 3000 persons.

Being secular in appointments of teaching and non-teaching staff. I don't categorize people either on caste or religion or creed. I do maintain transparency in my administrative decisions by taking in concerns of the beneficiaries (teachers and students and parents). My open discussion in dealing with any issues has helped for early solutions.

Theme 6: Challenges encountered in bringing in transformation:

Delayed response from higher authorities for approval.

Negative criticisms from male, Convincing people on the advantages of each of the initiatives, Changing the conservative attitude of the banks in providing loans to SHGs.

The strenuous belief in them by the individuals is what I consider as a biggest challenge. Also, difficulties to get access to move further were also being my block. The decisions as a leader has to be approved by the college governing council too. It couldn't be a favorable decision everytime for all the stakeholders which is again a haunting challenge to me.

Theme 7: Support System:

As organizational goal and individual goals are same support system automatically arises from top to bottom.

The NGO in which I am a part was very supportive and the people who understood the change process stood by me during all adversities.

Internally, my confidence and values which I uphold are my support systems and externally at my family level my family members and at college my subordinates - Vice Principals, Deans, HODs and teachers are my first level support systems. They trust in my leadership and work along with me. It is also the students and parents who have laid their trust in the management for their higher education.

4. DISCUSSION:

The above study makes clear that the above Women leaders as respondents of the study have transformed the society by their leadership personalities. It is evident that the respondents have used their leadership to collaborate, build in trust and foster learning for their professional and personal development. The transformations that were seen and felt are being indicated under the 4 main theoretical components such as Idealized influence, Individual consideration, Inspirational motivation and Intellectual stimulation. These 4 women leaders have used their ideologies, their vision for the organization and for the subordinates / colleagues individually thus steering to be influenced by their leadership and building interpersonal relationship. (Canty, 2005). People are influenced by their ideas thus placing their trust on the leader for a transformation in their workplace. The above leaders of the study have practiced Idealized Influence component by bringing in transparency in administration, digitalized the work, exchange of knowledge, principles, beliefs and professionalism to their subordinates. When it comes to Individual Consideration, all the leaders have commonly practiced 'inclusive leadership' which has transformed the lives of many by considering their personal and professional requirements and helping them to satisfy it. This quality of the leader has earned acclaim amongst the followers to be more receptive and trustworthy to their leader. Nevertheless, these transformational leaders have always used participative approach in their decision making. They have looked upon the experience, knowledge, skills and approaches of their colleagues to the decisions they make to reach organizational goals thus portraying that the fact that they are being valued and respected for who they are. This Intellectual Stimulation component has also created a positive working environment reinstating that there is better work outcome among the employees. The Inspirational motivation component has better worked among the staff as the leaders have struck through in not being a conventional leader but to idealize, influence and inspire. The followers are recognized of their skill set and assigned work according to it. Also, posing themselves as an example to their followers to practice integrity and faith in the organization. From the in-depth interviews it is appreciable that the initiatives - capacity building programmes for staff at all levels (training on usage of computers, knowledge updation on service rules and public management system), online procurement, formation of 11,630 SHGs (Women & Men), initiated community housing, efficiently handled water shed projects leading the target villages to become water sufficient and facilitated adult literacy programmes to 3000 persons, practiced secularism which have become the culture of the organization, participative decision making have made the leaders to be recognized as 'change agents' who have deliberately contributed to collaborate, build in trust and learning within the organization Lee and Choi (2003).

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

FOR PRACTITIONERS-

- Sensitizes the leaders of organizations to practice Transformational Leadership so as to create an environment where responsibility can be shared among the colleagues, earn genuine respect, trust and admiration from the team.
- Foster innovation of what can be done and what cannot be done.
- Effective organizational culture could be developed.
- Transformational Leaders can be a change agent at the community, institution and at an organization level.

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

- Potential interactions between Transformational Leadership and Individual Performance could be explored.
- Demonstrations of Transformational Leadership and Organizational Development can be focused upon.
- A longitudinal study on the practices of a Transformational Leader that has led to Organizational Development.

6. CONCLUSION:

Hence, this study has proven to be a giant leap of how transformational leadership could scaffold positive changes by bringing in solidarity to the society in which it is practiced. Void of its apprehension, transformational leadership holds good for personal and professional development be it at a community level or at an organization level or at an institution level.

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