

## IMPACT OF FOLLOWERS' SELF- EXPANSION ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWER'S IDENTITY

Ponmythili Muppidathi\* Dr. R. Magesh\*\*

\*Assistant Professor, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai.

\*\*Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, College of Engineering, Anna University, Chennai.

### Abstract

*Transformational leaders motivate their followers towards the transcendental goals and for higher level of self-actualization for the better benefit of larger group instead of working towards self-interest. The transformational leadership behavior affects the followers' identification with the leader or the group. The process and the mechanism involved in the transformational leadership by which the followers' self-concept can be changed might be explained through self-expansion theory. Self-expansion is a process that occurs in close relationships, where one person will include another into his or her concept of the self. Self-expansion theory explains and describes the change to people's identities, resources, and perspectives that occur in relationships. Followers look forward for opportunity to expand their self when they feel that the potential self is better than the present self. So when transformational leader's behavior makes the followers to believe that their self is expanded towards betterment, other goals can be achieved. This paper gives the conceptual framework of the mediating effect of followers' self-expansion on the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' self-concept.*

### Introduction

For more than three decades, there is accruing literature that proves the influential form of leadership is transformational leadership. This affects the performance highly both in the individual level and organizational level (e.g. Barling, Weber & Kelloway. 1996). However, the underline process involved in transformational leadership, which exerts influence on the followers and ultimately on their performance is yet to be discovered. Identification place a vital role in the influence process of leadership, again how to get followers identified with the leader or the group they belong for giving best outcome is another question to be solved.

Shamir, House & Arthur (1993) in their self-concept based theory suggested that transformational leadership affects the self-concept of the followers. This change in the self-concept makes the follower to be identified with the leader or with the group they belong to. This self-concept can be changed in the follower only when they accept the leader as their leader and include him or her into their self. This can be explained by self-expansion theory. Individuals tend to expand their self and include people into their self when they find that their potential self is better than the present self. In this expansion process, they can expand by including their partner's resource, or perspectives or identities.

When any transformational leaders behavior prime the self-expansion of followers these change in self-concepts can happen.

### Transformational Leadership

Leadership has both lower and higher order changes in subordinates. When leadership involves in simple exchange process between the leader and follower, this brings lower order changes in the followers. In transactional leadership, this exchange process happens, where the need of the follower is met when their performance is as contracted with the leader (Hollander, 1978). Here, for the successful completion of the bargain, leader uses power towards the subordinates. However, James MacGregore Burns (1978) suggests higher order changes in followers are possible, and this can be achieved by transformational leadership.

Transforming leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation." The two concepts "transactional leadership" and "transformational leadership" were established by Burns. The followers were motivated towards transcendental goals and towards self-actualizing needs instead of simple transaction. This particular style of leadership creates significant change in organizations and the follower's life. This not only changes the values and perceptions but also the expectations and the aspirations of the employees. Which is in contrast with the transactional leadership, it is not based on "give and take" relationship.

According to Bass (1985) transformational leader are the one who motivates followers to do more than they are expected to do initially. The transformational leaders make the followers to transcend their self-interests for the good of the collective and its goals. Inspire and make the followers to meet higher order needs (Bass, 1985, p.20). By transforming the followers' beliefs and attitudes, the transformational leaders motivate their followers to perform beyond expectations. The morale of the

followers are uplifted in transformational leadership while the transactional leaders cater to the immediate self-interest of the followers.

### **Transformational Leadership Versus Transactional Leadership**

To meet own self-interests leader and follower get into an exchange relationship this kind of relationship refers to transactional leadership. In this, kind of leadership followers are well informed about the reward they will receive and what is expected out of them. This is form of contingent reward. This takes the form of active management-by-exception where the leader will be monitoring the follower's performance and take the corrective actions when the followers fail. Sometimes it may be a passive leadership, where passive management-by exception is followed. In passive management-by-exception the leader waits till the problem arise and take corrective action after the problem has come.

In transformational leadership, the leader motivates the follower to move beyond their self-interest through his or her leadership behaviors. The transformational leadership behaviors are categorized into idealized influence (charisma), inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. Through these factors leaders motivates the followers to transcend their self-interested goals for the larger good. This makes the followers to get more concerned about well-being of other, the organization, and society. This leadership style broadens and changes the interest of the followers, create awareness, and bring in the acceptance on the purpose or mission of the larger group.

Bass built the model for transformational leadership around four behavioral components:

**Idealized Influence** – Provides a role model for high ethical behavior, instills pride, gains respect and trust.

**Inspirational Motivation** – The degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task on hand.

**Intellectual Stimulation** – The degree, to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. They nurture and develop people who think independently. For such a leader, learning is a value and sees opportunities to learn from unexpected situations. The followers ask questions, think deeply about things, and figure out better ways to execute their tasks.

**Individualized Consideration** – The degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. The leader gives empathy and support, keeps communication open, and places challenges before the followers. This also encompasses the need for respect and celebrates the individual contribution that each follower can make to the team. The followers have a will and aspirations for self-development and have intrinsic motivation for their tasks.

Transformational leadership has spread already in all sectors of western societies, including governmental organizations. An extensive study is going on in this area.

### **Self-Expansion**

Self-expansion is a process that occurs in close relationships, an expansion of the self occurs where one person will include another into their Self-concept (Aron & Aron, 1986). The boundaries between the self and a partner blurs in a close relationship. Moreover, this expansion of self-goes beyond observed similarity and other connections between the self and others. When it is said that the self is extended or expanded it means that the boundaries of the self is redrawn. The content of the self will be more aligned towards being a good representative of a groups or the relationship they belong.

The change in people's identity and the perspectives that occurs in a relationship can be explained by self-expansion theory. For people to feel satisfied with their lives the sense of self-expansion has to happen throughout their life. People experience self-expansion other than their close relationship when they come through spirituality, creativity and when they come to interaction with valued objects. People enjoy the feeling of self-expansion and as a result, people try to look forward for self-expansion opportunities. Relationship with others is one of the most common ways people choose to expand their self-concept. In relationships, people have different distance from each other. One may feel distant from one relationship or can feel very close with another relationship. When the sense of closeness leads towards oneness this is called psychological overlap. This psychological overlap for a person will vary for different relationship. The self-expansion model states that it is a process where other person's resources, perspectives, and identities were included in the self of the partner in close relationship (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron, Aron, & Norman, 2001). The inclusion of others into the self or expanding one's self is characterized by overlapping of the selves. Each individual has access to included self's resource in addition to his or her own resource, and both included and expanded selves bound to protect both his or her own resource plus the other's (Aron & Aron, 2000).

**The resource aspect of inclusion of others into the self** is very important to understand from motivational point of view. When a person perceives another person's resources as one's own, the rewards or costs incurred by another person is also experienced as one's own (reward or loss) to some extent. Thus, this analysis says that one's response towards the achievement or loss of the close partner will be similar to an extent as if they have achieved or lost. Eg, when a family member wins a reward all the other family members get the joy as if they themselves have won the reward.

**The perspective aspect of inclusion** is experiencing the world (consciously or unconsciously) from the included self's point of view to some extent. This leads to attributional and cognitive biases with regard to the included self. This gives a cognitive support for the actions by the included self.

**The identity aspect of inclusion** refers to the inclusion of the features that distinguishes a person from others. This can be traits, memories or any other features that identifies a person in the social or physical space. Sometimes one might get easily confused their own traits and memories with their included self is an example to understand this model.

According to Aron & Aron there involves a process in the way people include others into their self. The process of inclusion of resource, perspective, and identities of other person into the self are as follows.

**Step 1:** People generally include the other person into their self mainly to include the other person's resource (usually this not done consciously).

**Step 2:** In the process of forming of the relationship, partners make sure each other's resource readily available for one another.

**Step 3:** There by it leads to the cognition recognition that the other person's resources are included in the self.

**Step 4:** This leads towards including the perspectives and identities of other person into the self.

**Step 5:** Further, the ongoing reciprocal process strengthens the conscious and unconscious experience of including others into the self. This in turn leads back to step 2.

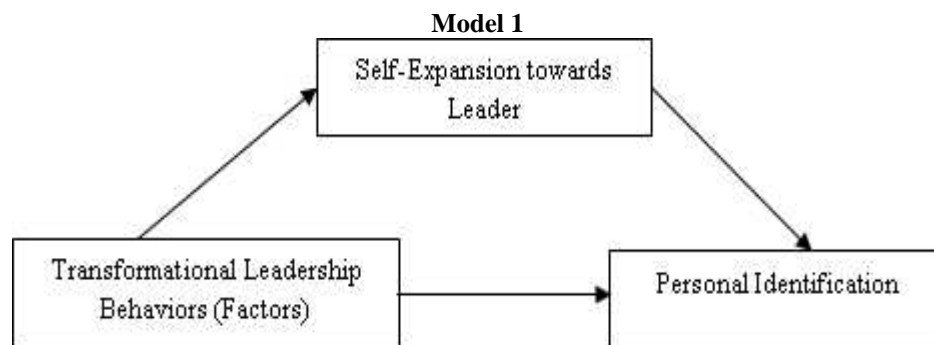
In addition to the above steps, there is another possible way that people might consider perspectives or identities more important over the resource in those cases these above steps can be bypassed.

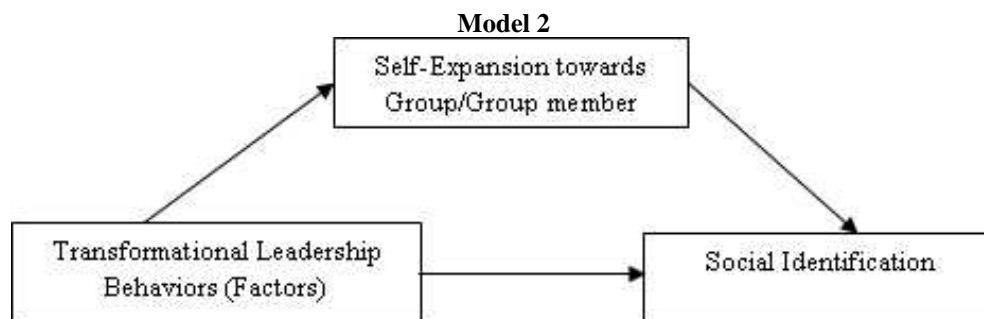
To put it in short, the motivation for self-expansion stems from at least four areas of interest unique to human beings: physical and social influence, cognitive complexity, social and bodily identity, and an awareness of humans' position (Aron & Aron, 1986).

### Self-Concept

The self-concept of individuals cannot be combined together it has many dimension. This self-concept may vary from individual to individual i.e their identities. The importance of identities in the self-concept has considerable prominence in researches today.

Self-concept is an individual's collection of beliefs about themselves. This can be categorized into – 1) personal level and 2) social level. At the personal level, it is believed that each human being is unique from one another based on traits, beliefs, and skills. This is called personal identity. At the social level, individual like to derive their identity from being a part or member of a particular social group. The individuals are part of a social group because of emotional significance and values they carry along with the group. This is called social identity (Tajfel, 1982).





### Transformational Leadership and Self-Expansion

The above description explains that self-expansion is a process that occurs in close relationships, where one person includes other person into his or her self-concept (Aron & Aron, 1986). The main component of leadership involves relationship closeness. The self-expansion plays a vital role as it provides the basis for the existence of trust that in turn leads to relational distance or psychological overlap. Day (2001) as described in leadership development the followers have to expand their self and include their leader that will help them to develop in a way to solve problems and work towards goals in a self-motivated way. Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) suggested that the process of leader influencing over followers happens through the behaviors of the leader, which affects the self-concept of the followers. For the development of leadership, self-development of both leader and followers should happen where self-expansion is the precursor.

The desire for expanding self, origins with the motive to increase the physical and social resource, perspective, and identities that might help towards achieving ones goal (Aron et al., 2001, p, 478). The process of self-expansion begins with a comparison of the current self to the potential self. If the potential self represents some improvement on the present self, one will be motivated to expand his or her self to include others (Aron & Aron, 1986, p. 23). If a person anticipates that he or she can gather new resources, knowledge, or skill by expanding the self by include others, the individual would more likely to include another into their self as a result it will result in greater self-efficacy and an enhanced sense of self (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006).

### Transformational Leadership, Followers' Self-Expansion and Personal Identification with Leader

The transformational behavior of the leaders brings in identification process among the followers. In the influencing dynamics of leadership, Identification process plays an important role. The followers tend to change their self-concept towards either personal identification with the leader or social identification with the work unit based on the behavior of the leader. The followers tend to be dependent on the leader more when they tend to identify more with the leader whereas when the followers identify themselves socially with the work unit when they are empowered (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). In both the personal and social identity, the followers expanded themselves by including the leader into the self and included the group members in to the selves respectively. The followers found that the potential self is better than the present self that motivated them towards including the perspectives and identities of the leader or fellow group member, which help them to transcend their self-interests for the good of the collective and its goals.

Tesser, Millar, & Moore (1988) found that individuals likely to feel personal pride for the achievement of the person included in their self, as if the achievement were their own. However, this happens when it does not create a negative social comparison.

Self-expansion comes as a precursor for personal identification. When an individual foresees a potential better self than the present self, they tend to expand and include the other person and of course, this is not a conscious process. When an individual sees his or her leader exhibits, more of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation behavior they tend to expand themselves and include their leader into their self as these behaviors of the leaders will lead to a better potential self. According to Kark and Shamir (2002) that transformational behaviors - individualized consideration and intellectual stimulations of the leader prime the followers' personal identification. Before even the self-concept of the follower changes towards the personal identification, the individual has to foresee a better potential self by including the leader into their self. This can be primed by transformational leadership behaviors.

Following to the argument it can be stated that to make the followers to identify with the leader, the leader has to exhibit intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration towards their follower which will make the followers to expand their self and include their leader as they could see better potential self. Thus, this leads towards the preposition that self-expansion

of the followers will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership behavior of the leader and the follower's personal identification with the leader.

**Proposition 1:** Self-expansion towards the leader mediates the relationship between the transformational leadership factors and the follower's personal identification with the leader.

**Proposition 1a:** Transformational leadership behaviors affect the follower's self-expansion towards the leader positively.

**Proposition 1b:** Transformational leadership behaviors affect the follower's personal identification with the leader positively.

### **Transformational Leadership, Followers' Self-Expansion and Social Identification with the Group**

Self-expansion does not restrict itself with individual level. This may occur at levels also i.e within groups. The same process as described for two individuals can be applied for multiple individuals and groups. Researches on group dynamics has suggested that each group members of a group likely to take the pride of success when to group succeed to the self than to other group members. Thus, in this case the group members self-expand to include the group. Therefore, the group's success is one's own success. However, when a group fails members of the group owns less responsibility to the self than to other group members (Mullen & Riordan, 1988; Schlenker & Miller, 1977). Better example will be the victory of Indian cricket team, when the team wins people take the pride as though they themselves have won the reward. Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild (2002) shown that individuals from in-groups self-exhibited less pleasure when outperformed their fellow member in the same group. Likewise, individuals showed less displeasure when another member outperforms other members of the in-group. This outcome feeling of either less pleasure or less displeasure is an indication of expanded self, where the individual includes groups as a part of himself or herself.

The individuals expand their self to include a group when transformational leaders increase the importance of the social identity. When transformational leaders highlight the importance of being a member of a unit and underline the identity of the unit by emphasizing its uniqueness and highlights how it is distinguished from other units (Shamir et al., 1998) the self-concept of the individuals changes towards identifying themselves with the group. This happened because when highlights, uniqueness and benefits of the group is brought to the individuals by transformational leader through his or her idealized influence and inspirational motivational behavior, the followers sees a better potential self by including the group into their self.

From the above argument it can be stated that to make the followers to identify themselves with the group, the leader has to emphasize common ground, stressing shared values and ideology, connecting the followers' personal goal with the group's interest through his or her idealized influence and inspirational motivational behaviors. These shared values and ideologies and the link between the personal goals with the group goal will make the individuals to self-expand and include the group into their self. Thus, this leads towards the preposition that self-expansion of the followers will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership behavior of the leader and the follower's social identification with the group.

**Proposition 2:** Self-expansion towards the group/group members mediates the relationship between the transformational leadership factors and the follower's social identification with the group.

**Proposition 2a:** Transformational leadership behaviors affect the follower's self-expansion towards the group/group members positively.

**Proposition 2b:** Transformational leadership behaviors affect the follower's social identification with the group positively.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper it is said the transformational leadership behaviors of the leader makes the followers to expand their self in including both leaders and the group they belong to as they could see a better potential self. It is suggested that the leaders affects the followers self through their leadership behavior. The self of the followers can be expanded only to include the leader or the group and its members or both leader and group. This can be done by specific behavior of the leader. Thus, either the personal identification or social identification can be brought into a follower only through expanding of self when they feel there is a potential better self. As a suggestion when an organization is looking for their employees to better identify him or her with the team or group or if the organization wants their employees to be, more dependent on the leaders it can be affected through the self-expansion of the followers. To affect this self-expansion towards leader or group the



transformational leader has to choose the right behavior so that personal or social identification of the followers can be achieved.

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