
DRIVERS AND ENABLERS OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT: STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

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Abstract

HEI in India is plagued by many problems, one of the most noticeable being the high rate of attrition and turnover. While several factors account for turnover, one of the reasons for most employees is the lack of identification and belongingness with their institutions. The affection, however, does not evolve in a day and requires perennial nurturing from transformational leaders. Transformational Leaders pervade a feeling of belongingness among employees for their organization through transcendence of employees' personal interests for organizational interests. The relationship between Transformational Leaders and Affective Commitment, though, is not necessarily linear or direct and can be better understood through identification of mediating variables. The present study assumes that perception of followers about characteristics of their job (JC) is the key psychological instrument in explaining relation between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Affective Commitment(AC).

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Affective Commitment, Job Characteristics, SEM, Higher Educational Institutions.*

1 Introduction

HEI in India is plagued by many problems, one of the most noticeable being the high rate of attrition and turnover. Though, researchers have expressed complication in predicting and explaining employee turnover (Barrick et al. 2013), one of the reasons of turnover for most employees is the lack of identification and belongingness with their institutions. Commitment; especially voluntary commitment; is the feeling of cohesion, belongingness and involvement with organization. It is the force that binds an employee to his/her organization with zeal and zest and contribute to the prosperity of the organization (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Voluntary commitment is the essence of organizational commitment. Conceptualized by Kantler (1968) as attitudinal commitment; it was rechristened as affective commitment by Meyer and Allen (1984), The affection, however, does not evolve in a day and requires intense and persistence nurturing

in the right direction. This necessitates the need for TL to address the issue and deliver results. TL in an organization inspires employees to engage in behaviors having positive outcomes for the work, worker as well as workplace. TL pervades a feeling of belongingness among employees for their organization through transcendence of employees' personal interests for organizational interests (Avolio et al 2003). The relationship between TL and AC, though, is not necessarily linear or direct. The mechanism of the relation can be better understood through identification of mediating variables. While there are many mediating variables that have been studied by researchers, motivational job characteristics is one variable that has been suggested by the most. However, there is a dearth of studies in HEIs on the role of Job Characteristics in explaining the relation between TL and AC. Moreover, the study is too scant in the context of HEI, India. This research gap is the key motivation for the present study in which perception of followers about motivational characteristics of their job has been identified as the key psychological instrument in explaining relation between TL and AC (Gillet & Vandenberghe 2014).

This paper comprises seven sections. Following this introduction is a brief synopsis of the literature on TL, AC and JC. ... The next section outlines the research methodology followed by result analysis, discussion, practical implications and limitations.

2 Theoretical foundation and Hypotheses formulation

The present study is founded on social exchange theory of Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005). The basic tenet of the theory says that the relationship between two entities rests on the cost benefit analysis. If a person perceives that he has got something valuable from other, he yearns to return something valuable to the other. This study also assumes that employees perceive attractive JC as valuable gifts, and yearn to pay the gratitude through AC. Attractive work conditions facilitate satisfaction of the psychological needs of employees and create commitment towards the organization (Meyer and Maltin, 2010).

2.1 Transformational Leadership (TL)

TL has been one of the most researched topics in the field of organizational research since the inception of the concept by Burns (1978). While there is a plethora of studies on the impact of

TL on organizational variables, there is only a limited documentation on the antecedents of TL. Antecedents of TL has been classified in two categories: internal antecedents and external antecedents (Boyan,1988; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader (2004) identified leaders' personal variables dispositions, cognitive capacities, personality orientation, motives and values, social appraisal skills, problem-solving competencies and general or domain-specific expertise as Internal antecedents and situational or contextual variables in which leaders work with their staff's characteristics as external antecedents such as collaborative cultures and organizational fairness. So far as consequences are concerned, TL has founded to be related to many organizational variables such as emotional intelligence (Barling *et al.*, 2000), task performance (Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006), organizational citizenship behaviors (Lam and O'Higgins, 2012), team performance (Dionne et al. 2004; Zhang et al. 2011) team innovation (Eisenbeiss et al. 2008), , job satisfaction (Hater and Bass, 1988), motivation (Amabile, 1997;), organizational commitment (Avolio et al. 2004), performance (Wang et al. 2011), creativity (Minh-Duc, L. and Huu-Lam, N. 2019), trust (Bartram and Casimir, 2007)etc.

2.2 Affective Commitment(AC)

AC is an employee's "identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer & Allen (1991) described AC as the relation of an employee with his/her organization. Initially, O'Reilly et al. (1991) proposed three dimensions of OC: compliance, identification and internalization. Meyer and Allen (1991) redesigned this classification proposing three types of OC: (i) continuance commitment (ii) normative commitment and (iii) affective commitment. In comparison to continuance and normative commitment that are characterized by transaction, obligation or compulsion; AC has been found to be most beneficial to the organizations as it is based on voluntary desire (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Researchers have cited the most studied antecedents of AC as job satisfaction (Gunlu et al., 2010) ; empowerment (Kim et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2007), job stress; and cultural variables (Pathardikar and Sahur, 2011). On the other hand, most frequent studied impact of AC on outcome variables have been found to be turnover intention , job satisfaction (Gunlu et al., 2010; Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006), organizational performance (Natarjan, 2011; Payne and Huffman, 2005).

2.3 Relationship between TL andAC

There is no dearth of literature showing a positive and significant relationship of TL with AC (Kaskes et al , 2018; Leung , 2008; Kane et al. 2012). The role of TL in enhancing employee's AC has been posited and demonstrated by researchers across the globe (Ashkanasy&Tse, 2000; Bass and Riggio, 2006). Emergence of AC is inspired by transformational leaders who appeal emotionally and creates a dynamic vision that affects employees' AC (Emery and Barker, 2007, Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011). Personal recognition and individualized consideration develop a feeling of paying back to the organization through commitment towards the organization (Rafferty and Griffin 2004, Aquino and Bommer, 2003). From the above literature, it is found that the study and understanding of TL is needed to better understand AC of employees towards organization. Accordingly, therefore the first hypothesis has been posited as:

H1: TL relates positively with AC.

2.4 Job Characteristics(JC)

JC combine various aspects of the job, such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (Fried and Ferris, 1987). It can be conceptualized as consisting of three dimensions - motivational, socio-technical and contextual (Morgeson et al., 2003). The Model of JC by Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976, and 1980) provides a framework for identifying how job outcomes are affected by JC and recommends that high motivation, satisfaction and performance are related with enhanced or intricate jobs (Clegg and Spencer, 2007). By adopting the JC model, organizations are able to promote positive attitudes amid employees (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Researchers have studied the impact of JC on performance, satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, commitment and efficiency (Hackman and Oldham, 1976, Fried and Ferris, 1987; Hackman and Lawler, 1971, Häusser et al., 2010); OC (Park and Rainey, 2007; Nijhof et al., 1998; Podsakoff et al., 1996; Purvanova et al., 2006).

2.5 The mediating role of JC

In the past, researchers have identified a range of channels through which TL enhances AC such as job-related tasks and goals (Bono & Judge, 2003), psychological empowerment, collective capability (Walumbwa et al., 2004), diversified tasks (Korek et al., 2010), and work climate (Korek et al., 2010). The present study posits that motivational JC mediates between TL and AC believing employees develop perceptions and make opinions about JC by using the motivational information from environment (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). Motivational JC has a significant impact on the behavior of organizational member's work settings (Robertson, 1994). Cropanzano & Mitchell, (2005), in their social exchange theory propounded that valuable JC can be exchanged with AC. TLs create meaningful work and affect followers' commitment (Bass, 1985). However, the perception of the presence of core characteristics in the job is more vital than the job itself as these characteristics are constructed by the leaders instead of taken per se by the employees. A TL influences the understanding of such environment using persuasive communication and ideological elucidation (Shamir, House and Arthur, 1993) implanting a logic of rationality and usefulness (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). Thus, by adjusting the structural characters of one's work, leaders can make them realize the meaningfulness in the job. Transformational leaders influence followers' observations of MJC, resulting in enhanced job performance, job satisfaction and consequently organization commitment (Piccolo and Colquitt 2006). Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006 have also posited that Motivational JC (decision-making autonomy, task variety, and feedback from job) make jobs enriched. Job autonomy, task variety and feedback from job are the major motivational characteristics that have been found as having significant relationship with OC (Taylor and Westover, 2011). Therefore in the context of this study, the relationship between TL and OC has been proposed to be mediated by Motivational JC (Job Autonomy, Task Variety and Feedback from the job) leading to the development of following hypotheses:

H2a: Job Autonomy mediates the relationship between TL and AC.

H2b: Task Characteristics mediates the relationship between TL and AC.

H2c: Feedback from the job mediates the relationship between TL and AC.

Hypothesized Model

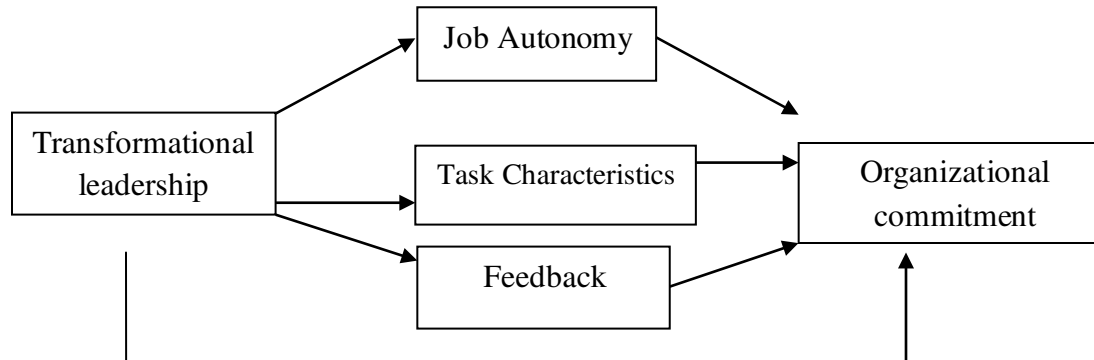


Figure 1: The model of the study

3 Method

3.1 Sample and Procedures

The population of the data includes employees working in HEI, North India. The sample inclusion criteria were employees working for a minimum of five years in the present organization. Data collection for the present study was done in 2019 using stratified random sampling method. Due permission was taken from the Directors of various institutions with the assurance that the data will be kept confidential and will be utilized only for the present research work. Self-administered questionnaire was then mailed to 750 employees of 32 institutions which had granted the permission. 457 responses (response rate 47.6 %) were returned. Finally, 400 responses were used for further analyses after repudiating incomplete responses. Detail profile of the responses are given in **table1**.

Table 1: Respondents Profile

	Particular	Frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	197	49.25 %
	Female	203	50.75 %
Age	25 to 35 years	132	33 %
	35 to 45 years	158	39.5 %
	45 to 55 years	78	19.5 %
	55 and above	32	8 %
	Post Graduate	176	44 %

Education	Doctorate	212	53 %
	Post Doctorate	12	3 %
	Total	400	100 %

3.2 Measures

TL was assessed on a 07-item questionnaire used from the study of Carless et al. (2000). Sample items include “fosters trust, involvement and co-operation among team members” etc. AC was measured on 8 items used from the study of Allen and Mayer. (1990) e.g. “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”. Further, for the assessment of JC, the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) scale (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) consisting of 10 items was used. Three subscales of WDQ were taken: decision making autonomy (three items, $\alpha = .87$; e.g., “The job provides me with significant autonomy in making decisions”), feedback from job (three items, $\alpha = .88$; e.g. The work activities themselves provide direct and clear information about the effectiveness (e.g., quality and quantity) of my job performance.), and task identity (four items, $\alpha = .85$; e.g.; “The job involves completing a piece of work that has an obvious beginning and end.”).

3.3 Analytical Approach

Serial Mediation analysis was used for Hypothesis testing in the present study using Hayes (2013) approach. Hayes’ approach suggests that the presence of significant indirect effect signifies mediation. Further, presence of significant direct effect indicates partial mediation and absence of significant direct effect indicates total mediation.

Dimensionality of TL, JA, TV, FR and OC were examined using CFA. Necessary statistics such as χ^2/df ratio, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), PClose and SRMR were used to assess the model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Finally, the proposed hypotheses were tested with the help of path analysis using AMOS 21.0.

4 Result

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for each construct are presented in **Table-2**. The positive values of skewness and kurtosis confirms the normal distribution of the data (Schutz, R. W., Gessaroli, M. E., & Singer, R., 1993). Values are indicative of absence of multicollinearity (VIF below 5) and autocorrelation (Ringle et al., 2015). Further, Cronbach alpha coefficient of all the constructs are greater than 0.7 confirming high reliability.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation					
	Statistic	Statistic	TL	DMA	TA	FJ	VIF	ALPHA
TL	2.915	1.306					1.996	.891

DM	2.945	1.336	0.732				1.982	.777
A								
TA	2.968	1.300	0.705	0.705			2.13	.806
FJ	2.952	1.303	0.669	0.670	0.641		2.025	.820
AC	2.933	1.320	0.754	0.753	0.727	0.703	NA	.953

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The statistics such as $\chi^2 (265) = 212.477, p < .001, \chi^2/ df = 0.802, CFI = 0.987, SRMR = 0.022, RMSEA = 0.031, PClose = 0.992$ indicates an excellent model fit. (Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, W., Anderson, 2010). The composite reliabilities of the constructs were 0.777 (DMA), 0.806 (TA), 0.820 (FJ), 0.953 (OC) and 0.891 (TL). Further, it is evident from the values of CR, AVE, MSV and MaxR(H) given in **Table-3** that there is no violation in the condition of convergent validity or discriminant validity (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson,2010).

Table 3: Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	AC	TL	TA	FJ	DMA
AC	0.969	0.798	0.637	0.97	0.893				
TL	0.967	0.805	0.61	0.967	0.781** *	0.897			
TA	0.938	0.79	0.583	0.939	0.763** *	0.738** *	0.889		
FJ	0.927	0.81	0.533	0.929	0.730** *	0.704** *	0.683** *	0.9	
DMA	0.922	0.798	0.637	0.924	0.798** *	0.774** *	0.755** *	0.722** *	0.893

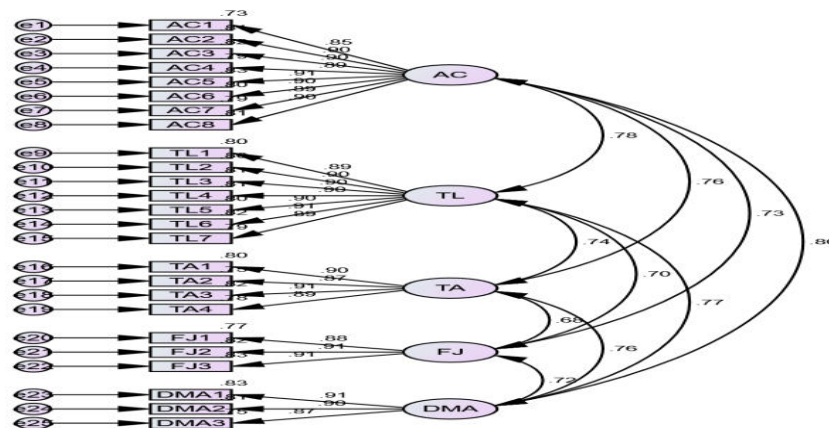


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

4.3 Hypothesis Analysis

As the structural model fit of the data were found excellent [$\chi^2(269)=337.331, p<.001, \chi^2/df$

= 1.254, CFI = 0.994, SRMR = 0.050, RMSEA = 0.025, PClose = 0.989]; the proposed hypotheses were tested with path analysis (**Tables 4 and 5**).

Hypothesis 1 presumed significant positive relation between TL and AC. The standardized beta value of 0.307 ($t= 4.651, p\text{-value} < 0.001$) indicates the significant association between TL and AC. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 4: Path analysis

Hypothesis	B value	t-value	Conclusion
TL --- >AC	0.307	4.651***	Hypothesis 1 accepted

Sign *** $p<0.001$

Table 5: Mediation analysis

Hypothesis	B value (Direct)	B value (Indirect)	B value (Total)	Conclusion
TL -> DMA->AC	.124	0.336***	0.460***	H2a accepted (Complete mediation)
TL -> TA->AC	.124	0.243***	0.367***	H2b accepted (Complete mediation)
TL -> FJ->AC	.124	0.189***	0.313***	H2c accepted (Complete mediation)

Sign *** $p<0.001$,

Table 5 shows the results for Hypothesis 2a, 2b and 2c which assumed that DMA, TA and FJ mediates the relationship between TL and AC. It is pertinent to reckon the condition of mediation. First, the relation between independent and dependent variable must be significant. Second, the indirect effect must be significant. Third, the direct effect can be significant (partial mediation) or insignificant (total/complete mediation). Having established the first condition through acceptance of first hypothesis, third column in **table 5** shows the indirect effect (relation between TL and AC through DMA; relation between TL and AC through TA and relation between TL and AC through FJ). Each indirect path is found to be significant (path $ab= 0.336***, 0.243***$ and $0.189***$ respectively). The presence of significant indirect path confirms the Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c that has postulated that DMA, TA and FJ mediates the relationship between TL and AC. Further, the direct effect (path $c'=.124$) is not significant. Thus, as depicted in Figure 3 condition of complete mediation is established.

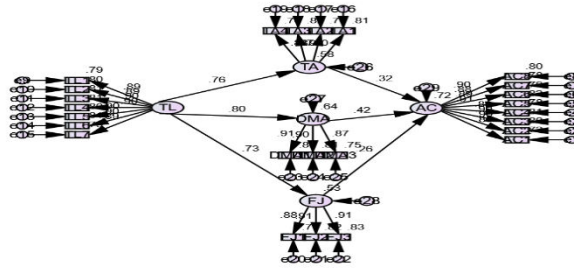


Figure 3: Path Analysis

Validation of all Hypotheses leads us to conclude that there is a strong association between TL & AC but the relation is not linear and direct albeit all the motivational characteristics of JC completely mediate the relationship between TL and AC.

5. Discussion

The study proposed four hypotheses and all were supported by the results. H1 proposed that TL relates positively with AC. The shift in transactional learning, uncertain political and economic scenario, cut throat competition, and financial constraints has changed higher education (Gibb, 2011; Fornes, Rocco & Wollard, 2008). The only competitive advantage that can assure success of HEIs in modern time is committed workforce (Alvino, 2014). Attraction, cultivation and retention of talented employees with commitment are therefore of prime importance. (Aguirre, Post, & Hewlett, 2009; Clifton, 2014). An institution with employees having identification and involvement with its goal and purpose clearly emerges as prosperous in the long run. The result implies that transformational leaders possess the ability to increase the attachment of employees to their organization and motivating them to stay and work together. Thus, first proposition was supported by the result. This finding is consistent with the finding of Keskes *et al.* (2018). Further, according to our findings, the impact of TL on AC is completely mediated by the motivational characteristics of the job such as task variety, feedback of result and job autonomy. TL restructure the job instilling a feeling among employees that they are responsible for their own performance, are accomplishing something worthwhile, are receiving direct and timely feedback of their performance, have the opportunity for personal growth and development and acquiring new skills. Fascinating tasks increases the involvement, belongingness and commitment of employees alleviating their intention to quit and contributing to the survival, growth and prosperity of the institution. Thus, second proposition (H2a, H2b, H2c) was also validated. This is in consistent with findings of Bacha, E (2014), Yousef (2000), Trang *et al* (2013) and Von Bonsdorff *et al.* (2014). Thus, it can be inferred that leaders can

positively influence level of AC within the employees by making the job meaningful to them characterized by JA, TV andFR.

6. Implications

The findings of this research have theoretical as well as practical contributions. Theoretically, this study enhances the understanding about the impact of TL on AC explaining the mechanism through which the relationship works. Further, this study indicates that the impact of TL on AC is nonlinear and can be explained more emphatically in the presence of Motivational JC. Thus, organizations need to recognize the importance of motivational JC. The findings of the theory also offer practical insight for managers, administrators and practitioners in developing voluntary commitment of their employees. The findings imply that maintaining JC in transformational leadership not only enhances employees' performance but also helps organizations in the form of increased affective commitment. Leaders with bare transformational behaviors andnot motivational jobs can influence followers for normative commitment only. Accordingly, organizations should provide opportunities through motivational JC to enhance affective commitment. Similarly, it is advisable that organizations offer job autonomy, task characteristics and regular feedback and opportunities for further self-development. This will not only help institutions get dedicated and committed workforce to render their service for long but also will reduce the cost on recruitment, selection, training and switching.

7. Limitations and FutureScope

Despite every possible endeavor by the researchers there are some limitations that merits attention. First, the causality in the finding cannot be completely explained owing to the cross-sectional research design used in the study. In future research, longitudinal research design could be used. Second, the study has employed convenience sampling due to the limitation of human and financial resources. In future, random sampling can be used to increase the credibility of findings. Third, the study might contain some common method biasness as only one method of data collection was used. Future research might gather data using various methods to keep biasness at bay. Further, the data have been collected from Indian HEI only. Data sets from other countries may increase universality of the conclusion. Finally, only motivational JC has been taken as the mediator. Further research may include other serial or parallel mediators for greater breadth from both practical and theoretical perspectives.

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