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## THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Transformational Leadership, Occupational Stress & Organizational Politics	The stress is main issue that affects the individuals' life from each dimension like their social and professional lives. The occupational stress is employee anxieties and worries about his/her work which is basically the outcome of the various dynamic issues like the working environment, the working load and poor relationships with colleagues and immediate supervisor/leadership. Leadership is important concept whose main role is to inspire the followers/employees towards attainment of certain well-defines and clear objectives. For this purpose, the leaders use different styles to motivate their employees by considering their needs and resolving their worries at workplaces in which leadership styles (transformational and transactional) is most comprehensive package for employees' motivation and performance leading to stressless situation at workplace. The results of this study revealed that both leaders' main responsibility is to encourage followers by using their main attributes to attain institutional aims by offering the suitable and friendly environment where they can contribute freely and deliver effectively efforts and potential by eliminating the politics.
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### INTRODUCTION

The leadership is an important phenomenon that is critical for societies (cultures) which thus helps in developing the nations while it is important for organizations to ensure their survival and ultimate development. In the social context, the power structure of societies has certain dynamic and energetic individuals who operates groups to stimulate, promote, guide and influence others toward actions for the advancement of the societies. However, in the organizational context, this phenomenon (leadership) provides an overview about the leadership at individual, team and organizational levels (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasub, 2006). In this connection, the main theme behind leadership is social process that aimed to influence others in social as well as organizational contexts. Consequently, systematic

development of the dynamism behind leadership has been considered as building block for the organizational long-term development and success (Bass & Bass, 2008). Thus, the effective leadership is dynamic for both the societies and organizations in achieving their strategic objectives.

The leadership is merger of various traits and attributes that combines together to make the effective leadership. The leaders through various styles induces the moral strength and nurtures professional affiliations among workers where transactional and transformational leadership styles were widely endorsed as best styles for inspiring the workforces towards institutional objectives (Bass & Bass, 2008). The leaders over different styles encourages the workforces to realize the existence of organizations for certain well-defined purposes supported by the vision and mission of the organizations (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). The leadership is most influential phenomenon that is directly related with the institutional success and apprehensions of workforces. The main purpose of the effective leadership is to increase motivation and commitment and to reduce the fears and apprehensions of the employees at the workplaces (Qamar, Inamullah, Nseer, Hussain & Ahmad, 2016). In this linking, leadership can play important role in workforces' apprehensions over the different leadership styles.

The leadership styles gained momentum during the past decades with respect to various employees and institutional dynamic outcomes where transformational and transactional leadership styles. Transformational leadership is more popular keeping in view their active attributes about the employees' motivation to perform efficiently and to attain effectively the assigned tasks (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transactional leadership is popular by providing the different packages of rewards for employees' inspirations to achieve the assign tasks. However, effectiveness of particular styles is always based on context and situation where these leaders are functioning (Sharma & Singh, 2017). The main responsibility of leaders is to maintain trust and confidence of the employees on their leaders which in turn helps in increasing their potentials and self-esteem and reducing their apprehensions and worries about their professional affiliations (Odumeru, James & Ogbonna, 2013). The employees, apprehensions lead to higher high level of job burnout and emotional strain overwhelmed at occupational stress.

The occupational stress is the critical matter for institutions in managing the employees and leading factor for employees in managing uneasiness at workplaces. The employees who are satisfied with their working environment and their immediate leaders are likely to have advanced level of potential and elevated efforts in performing their responsibilities and in attaining their assigned tasks (Gill, Flaschner, & Shachar, 2006). The employee who are stressed due to certain issues related with the working environment and concerned leaderships are likely to have lower level of performance and decreased level of motivation therefore have reduced concentration on their work and tasks (Harms, Credé, Tynan, Leon

& Jeung, 2017). Therefore, it is the prime responsibility of leadership to consider needs and apprehensions of the employees to get desired outcomes. The employees are likely to cater undesirable situations through the intellectual capabilities (Lyons & Schneider, 2009) leading to higher level of the organizational politics and for this purpose, organizational politics has been used widely as mediator in connecting the leadership and occupational stress.

The politics within the institutions has diverse effects on the institutional performance and success since it is used to influence institutional management toward the vested interests of particular groups within institution (Ram & Prabhakar, 2010). The institutional politics is one of the main reasons for occupational stress as it confines most of the employees from their basic rights and facilitate those employees who belong towards certain influential groups (O'Connor & Morrison, 2001). The institutional politics not only affects institutional affairs, and smooth functioning but also affects the employees' expectations about the fair procedures in policies and distribution of resources in institutions. The main responsibility falls on the concerned leadership shoulders to cater to situation affected by politics and to take away employees' apprehensions (Kaya, Aydin & Ongun, 2016). The leaders through different styles try to inspire their employees by eliminating their stress and to provide them a conducive environment where there is no space for politics that may affect their expectations from the institution.

### **Problem Statement**

The leadership has been examined as significant contributor towards various individuals' and organizational outcomes in different contexts. Yet, to what extent it is accommodative in managing (increasing and decreasing) the stress in foremost objective of current study. There are certain facilitating concepts which are recommended in connecting the different styles of leadership and stress. Different leadership styles and different types of stress have been widely researched in different context including the education sector in developed, developing as well as in Pakistan's context with diverse results and consequences. Keeping in view existing trends, in contemporary research, this study also followed the same trends with clear motivation behind to conduct this study in higher education context to examine the role of certain predictors in determining criterion variables along with the supporting role of certain mediating variables.

### **Research Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>: Predictors are significantly and positively associated with criterion variable
- H<sub>2</sub>: Predictors have significant impact on the criterion variable of the study
- H<sub>3</sub>: Mediator significantly mediated the connection amid predictor and criterion

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The universities (higher education institutions) are different from the other human service organizations due to its functions, importance, standing and roles in socio-economic and

socio-academic development. The universities have inclusive chain of command under the dynamic leadership of vice chancellor and head of different department and section who are the functionaries and responsible for smooth functioning of the institutions (Haider & Sultan, 2008). On the other hand, the faculties and workforces on administrative positions are also responsible for smooth functioning of the institutional affairs. In this regard, the teachers are basic unit in university hierarchy who are not only performing teaching and learning responsibilities but also performing the role as administrators in different units of the universities (Akhter & Sharif, 2012). In this connection, the leadership role is critical in shaping teachers' behavior by motivating them towards realizing institutional standards and success in all respects.

The leadership is important phenomenon that has been considered as significant predictor for various outcomes in social and organizational contexts. In organizational context, it has been widely researched in connection to diverse outcomes variables likewise organizational efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, culture and performance (Adalberto & Ruben, 2002; Akhter & Sharif, 2012; Anam, Hassan, Khan & Fatima, 2011; Atkinson & Mackenzie, 2015). Similarly, in organizational context, leadership has been researched to various individuals related positive consequences and outcomes likewise, commitment, motivation, fairness, trust and loyalty (Brian & Biyun, 2017; Chandra & Priyono, 2016; Chen, Eberly, Chiang, Farh & Cheng, 2011) as examined widely in the diverse context with diverse values and outcomes related with individuals in organizational context.

### **Transformational Leadership**

The new facet of leadership has been recommended as transformational leadership style that attracted the researchers and organizations' attentions due to their critical attributes for inspiring the individuals/ workforces towards the achievement of desired objectives (Judge, Ronald & Piccolo, 2004). In this regard, the transformational leadership is widely recommended as best predictor for output concerning various parameters like creativity and performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transformational leadership is significant phenomenon that is used for influencing and inspiring the followers to perform assigned tasks beyond the expectations to attain assigned responsibilities. The leaders' character and values are main parameters and significant attributing aspects of transformational leadership that aims at achieving the desired outcomes in effective and efficient manners in different situations.

The transformational leaders are effective in managing institutional priorities as various studies have been conducted on this leadership style in different organizations including higher educational context (Rukmani, Ramesh & Krishnan, 2010). The main responsibility of transformational leadership is to inspire followers towards the institutional outcomes with diverse situation. The leaders arise in its peak when the institution need the critical support of leadership in managing institution complex situation where there is uncertainty

in concerned institution and when there is need to effective leadership who can manage the situations as per demands of institution (Fatma & Aini, 2015). The leaders considered the intellectual capabilities of the followers and thus assign them various responsibilities based upon their knowledge and skills with persistent inspiration to realize the desired outcomes.

### **Occupational Stress**

The occupational stress is critical for the workforces and institutions in diverse manners as it causes the lower performances on part of workforces and causes lower achievements on the part of concerned institution (Zhang, Lepine, Buckman, & Wei, 2014). The stress brings along physical and psychological problems along with anxieties, depressions and, physical fatigues and chronic angers which influences workforces' efforts and potentials towards achievement of assigned tasks and responsibilities. The institutions need to focus upon various arrangement which may help the workforces in managing the occupational stress and which may help them in improving their actual performance toward tasks' attainments (Radosław, & Adam, 2020). In this connection, the fair and lasting interaction between the employees and institutions are direly needed to share their views and apprehensions at workplaces.

The occupational stress has been examined in different contexts and diverse outcomes have been evident about the critical role towards the employees as well as institution. The stress is vital problem in organizational context as it overwhelmed at various issues related with the credibility of concerned institution and the outcomes of concerned employees in the organizational hierarchy (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001). The literature revealed that stress has significant impact of workforce, productivity, commitment and performance at workplaces as it originates from the certain uninvited outcomes and overwhelmed at the various emotions as well as health related issues. The stress is thus considered as the best predictor for lower commitment (Mark, & Smith, 2012) and lower performance level as stress at higher levels influences domestics as well as professional vives of individuals.

### **Organizational Politics**

The politics within organizations has gained continuous momentum and popularity during past few decades due to origination of various groups for certain well-defined purposes. These politics are mainly concerned about the self-serving objectives along with objectives of certain particular groups whose interests are well versed in the particular context. The politics is important phenomenon that mainly highlights attentions towards the interests of exact groups for particular purposes (Kaya, Aydin, & Ongun, 2016). The organizational politics has certain positive as well as negative consequences for organizations, however, as per the evidence from the relevant literature, the negative consequences are more than

positive outcomes. The politics has different influences on the organization outcomes like performance, efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

The politics has been evident in every organization whether the public or private however, it has been evident on larger scale in educational sector especially in higher educational institutions (Rosen, Harris, & Kacmar, 2009). The politics within educational institutions has certain undesirable influences due to its critical role in determination of politics within the organizational framework (Talat, Rehman, & Ahmed, 2013). Consequently, it is the basic responsibility of the organizations to cater to politics within the educational institutions as politics not only disturbs entire working format but also creates nepotism and favoritism in the institutions (Khuwaja, Ahmed, Abid, & Adeel, 2020). The organizational politics also culminates undesirable situations wherein the priorities of particular groups are focused and wherein the fairness remains absent in the institutional activities and functions that overwhelmed at significant outcomes.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The materials and methods denote processes and procedures for conducting the research study through the support of different tools and supported techniques. The researcher, without following proper methodological approach might not be able to attain desired objectives more comprehensively. These helps in easing the researchers in finding out the best solution for the research problems based upon the certain assumptions as assumed from the theoretical framework.

#### **Research Philosophy & Approach**

The present study is based upon existing realities with aim to explore further the existing realities in native environment to chase some objectives by applying statistical procedures, thus, positivism was used research philosophy adopted in research study. The procedures and methods used for conducting research indicated prerequisites of positivism approach therefore, positivism will be best suited philosophy in this study. The survey is the used as non-experimental research design which further recommends well-structured approach for the data collection. The survey is best approach when the researcher knows that which information is required from the respondents about the phenomena under considerations (Neuman, 2007). It is further helpful when the questions are standardized to guarantee that these questions take the same meaning for different respondents.

#### **Population and Sample**

The population and sampling are the most important component of research studies as without mentioning the proper population and sampling, the researchers may not be able to extract the desired information about measurement of research issues in particular environment. This section provides the details of population targeted, sampling technique and sample-size determination that have been considered as vital components of research

studies to conduct the research systematically. The sampling design first phase is to select the target population wherein the current study was based in examining the views of the faculty member in higher educational institutions in KP, which recommended that faculty are target population. similarly, different methods are available in existing research about drawing of sample from the large population wherein the probability and non-probability sampling are the most recommended methods.

Table 1 Formula (Sample-Size)

Formula Used	E	N (830)	Sample Size
$n = N/1 + Ne^2$	0.05	$n = 830 / (1+830 (0.0025)) = n = 269.92$	270

### Data Collection & Analysis

The researcher used different methods to conduct the study where secondary data was analyzed by analyzing views of existing researchers about the research issues under study as available through different published research articles while primary data was collected through questionnaire and thus analyzed through statistical procedure to conduct the study carefully and to find out answer of research questions more systematically (Mark & Janina, 2007). This study used various tools and techniques for analyzing data to obtain valid and accurate results and to reach conclusion of the study. In this connection, data has been analyzed in three different phases wherein in first phase, the collected data was screened for outliers, normality and multicollinearity, in second phase, constructs reliability was recognized at group and individual levels and finally, testing of hypothesized model (testing of theoretical framework through testing of hypotheses) were conducted using different statistical tools like correlation, regression, mediation and test of significance to find the feedback about the hypotheses.

### Questionnaire Design

The design and measurement of questionnaire are important component of research used for primary data collection to conduct the research studies in systematic manner. The researcher offered the approach of questionnaire for collecting the primary data from the population of study through sample. The questionnaire was adopted from the previous studies by bringing some desired changes as per requirement and context of study. For this drive, questionnaire for research variables have been adapted from existing studies like leadership styles (Bass & Avalio, 2004), occupational stress (Clark, Michel, Early & Baltes, 2014), and organizational politics (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Since, instrument was adopted from the existing research studies conducted in developed countries and there exists certain variations in context of developed and the developing countries, therefore, validity and reliability are important to ensure the accuracy, applicability and the internal consistencies of the instrument.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The presentation of results in systematic manner is an important phase in research studies in order to offer end results about the hypotheses generated from theoretical framework about interrelationships among research variables as presented through different arrows in conceptual model.

H<sub>1</sub>: Predictors are Significantly & Positively Associated with Criterion Variable

Table 2 Correlation Analysis (H<sub>1</sub>)

		TRF	ORP
Organizational Politics (ORP)	Pearson Correlation	.474**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	254	
Occupational Stress (OPS)	Pearson Correlation	.765**	.746**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	254	254

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation has been used to examine association among research variables used in this study like predicting variables (transformational) leadership styles, mediating variables (organizational politics) and criterion variable (occupational stress). The hypothesis # 1 examined association among variables through the correlation. The results show significant association among the research variables likewise, the transformational leadership and occupational stress (.765 & .000), organizational politics and occupational stress (.746 & .000). So, correlation provides sufficient information about association between predicting, mediating and criterion variables of the present study under study. Similarly, significant association is evident amid transformational & organizational politics (.474 & .000). The correlation provides significant information about association amid independent variables themselves and mediating variables themselves. The results of the correlation provide diverse significant information about association among research which was hypothesized through hypothesis # 1. As per results from correlation, hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted and substantiated. Consequently, the correlation provides significant information for moving towards the regression.

H<sub>2</sub>: Predictors have Significant Impact on Criterion Variable of study

Table 3 Regression Analysis (Model Summary) (H<sub>2</sub>)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.850a	.723	.719	.68398



Table 4 Regression Analysis (ANOVA) (H<sub>2</sub>)

Model	Squares	Sum	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	304.429		4	76.107	162.680	.000b
Residual	116.491		249	.468		
Total	420.920		253			

Table 5 Regression Analysis (Coefficients) (H<sub>2</sub>)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	SE	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.401	.233		-6.008	.000
	Transformational Leadership	.532	.058	.424	9.143	.000
	Organizational Politics	.344	.070	.262	4.941	.008

a. Predictors: Transformational, Transactional & Politics

b. Criterion: Occupational Stress

The cause-&-effect relationships among predicting, criterion and mediating variables have been examined through regression that was hypothesized through H<sub>2</sub>. Results of regression show that predictors are responsible in bringing 72% variation in criterion variable of the study. The results confirmed significant impact on criterion variable (occupational stress) over predicting variables like transformational leadership (.532 & .000) and organizational politics (.344 & .008) toward criterion variable (occupational stress). The regression results provide significant information in deciding cause-&-effect relationships among predictors, mediators and criterion variables of the study. Therefore, from results, the H<sub>2</sub> about the prediction is thus accepted.

H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational Politics significant mediates connection between transformational leadership and occupational stress.

X = Transformational Leadership, M = Organizational Politics & Y = Occupational Stress

A. First Mediation Step (a)

Table 6 Model Summary

R	R-square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6739	.4541	.5287	209.6255	1.0000	252.0000	.0000

Table 7 Coefficient of Regression

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.9605	.2256	4.2576	.0000	.5162	1.4049

Transformational Leadership	.6443	.0445	14.4785	.0000	.5567	.7320
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Independent Variable: Transformational Leadership  
 Dependent Variable: Organizational Politics

B. Second & Third Mediation Steps (b & c)

Table 8 Model Summary

R	R-square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8263	.6829	.5318	270.2143	2.0000	251.0000	.0000

Table 9 Coefficient of Regression

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-.9774	.2343	-4.1717	.0000	-1.4388	-.5160
Transformational Leadership	.6045	.0604	10.0063	.0000	.4855	.7235
Organizational Politics	.5535	.0632	8.7606	.0000	.4291	.6779

Independent Variable: Transformational Leadership & Organizational Politics  
 Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

C. Fourth Mediation Step (c)

Table 10 Model Summary

R	R-square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7654	.5859	.6917	356.5168	1.0000	252.0000	.0000

Table 11 Coefficient of Regression

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-.4457	.2581	-1.7270	.0854	-.9539	.0626
Transformational Leadership	.9612	.0509	18.8817	.0000	.8609	1.0614

Independent Variable: Transformational Leadership  
 Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

Table 12 Sobel Test

Effect	se	Z	p
.3586	.0371	4.5229	.0000

Third mediation model provides significant information about mediating role of organization politics in connecting transformational leadership and occupational stress. The outcomes

of the mediation procedure exposed results about four-steps essential process wherever first-path (a) established prediction of organizational politics (mediator) through predictor (transformational leadership style) where 45% variance is evident along with significance values concerning Beta (.6443) and p-value (.000). The third and second mediation paths recognized the significances about prediction of criterion variable (occupational stress) over the predictors (organizational politics and transformational leadership) wherein 68% change is evident besides significant Beta value (.6045) and p-values (.000) and Beta value (.5535) and p-values (.000). The third path of mediation showed 59% alteration is due to transformational leadership in occupational stress along with significant Beta (.9612) and p-values significant (.000) in mediation process.

In mediation decision, all steps of mediation offer adequate information where reduction in Beta values is evident from (.9612) in direct relationship (path c) to (.6045) in indirect relationship (b & c') and wherein mediation process remaining paths continued significant that exposed that the mediator (organizational politics) partially mediated the connection between transformational leadership and occupational stress (considered as difference between c & c'), which means that in predicting occupational stress (outcome variable), both organizational politics and transformational leadership styles are active. Mediation is confirmed by Sobel test (normal theory test), wherein level of confidence (.000 < 0.05) and total effect-size (.3586 > 0) that recognized the mediation existence. Accordingly, from mediation third model outcomes as hypothesized through (H5) is consequently accepted, based upon results and hereafter substantiated.

The cause-&-effect relationships have been hypothesized from the theoretical framework which was examined through regression to explore the effect of the predicting variables on the criterion variable of the present study. This study confirmed the significant impact of predicting variables (leadership style & organizational politics) on the criterion variable (occupational stress) which was previously explored by various researchers in the different context and which provide sufficient support to results of the present study (Harun, Zainol, Amar & Shaari, 2016; Harms, Credé, Tynan, Leon & Jeung, 2017; Lyons & Schneider, 2009; Meisler & Gadot, 2014). Literature revealed diverse result about impacts of transformational leadership style for occupational stress along with supportive role of other concepts like organizational politics.

## **CONCLUSION**

The first hypothesis was about association among the research variables like leadership styles (transformational & transactional), occupational stress, and organizational politics. The association among these variables was hypothesized and examined over correlation. The results of correlation confirmed the existence of association among research variables likewise, independent and dependent variables, independent and mediators, mediator and dependent, independent themselves and mediator themselves. However, association was

based upon the nature of research variables in order to provide the strength and direction in relationship. Based upon correlation results, the first hypothesis was thus accepted and substantiated through the results of existing research studies on similar issues in similar as well as diverse contexts with similar as well as diverse outcomes and consequences. The third hypothesis was about the mediating role of organizational politics in connecting the transformational leadership and occupational stress was hypothesized from theoretical framework. The mediation results confirmed that the organizational politics significantly mediated the relationship between occupational stress and transformational leadership through partial mediation.

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