

Full Length Research Paper

Relationship between leadership behaviors and task performance: The mediation role of job satisfaction and the moderation role of social distance

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Accepted 13 September, 2010

The aims of this study were to investigate the relationship between transformational, transactional leadership and task performance and to clarify the mediating effects of job satisfaction. Besides, we examined the effects of the moderating effects of social distance on transformational, transactional leadership and job satisfaction. Two hundred and sixty six employees from 43 electronic companies in Taiwan participated in this study. The results showed that transformational and transactional leadership had a significant positive relationship with task performance. Job satisfaction was a mediator of the relationship between transformational, transactional leadership and task performance. Finally, we found that social distance had negative moderating effects: When the degree of social distance was high, the positive relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction was weaker; on the other hand, when the degree of social distance was low, the negative relationship between transactional leadership style and task performance was stronger. But social distance did not have significant moderating effects on transformational leadership.

Key words: Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, job satisfaction, task performance social distance.

INTRODUCTION

Almost every organization faces speedy changes in reduced product life cycles, globalization, and technology that initiate modern day competition (Mumford and Gustafson, 1988). Organizations have to deal with much confusion as change is a constant dynamic (Berquist, 1993). Kotter (1990) stated that changes in the workplace require more leadership for organizational employees and stakeholders (Kotter, 1990). Employees' work behaviors are crucial to organizational success in rapidly changing economic environments (Frese and Fay, 2001; Crant, 2000). A number of studies have examined various intervening processes through which leadership effects are ultimately realized in terms of performance outcomes (Liao and Chuang, 2007; Schaubroeck, Lam and Cha, 2007; Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang and Chen, 2005; Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia,

2004; Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson, 2003; Bono and Judge, 2003; Kark, Shamir, and Chen, 2003). Furthermore, two meta-analyses have been invested into understanding that leadership relates to work attitudes, behavior, and performance at both the individual and the organizational level (Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio, 2002; Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam, 1996). However, the mechanisms and processes by which leaders exert their influence on their followers' motivation and performance have not been adequately addressed in previous literature (Bono and Judge, 2003; Kark and Shamir, 2002; Lord, Brown, and Feiberg, 1999; Yukl, 1998).

Clearly, there is a need for greater attention for the understanding of the mechanisms and processes through which transformational and transactional leadership influences work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and task performance in order to develop a more complete understanding of the inner workings while discussing transformational leadership (Bass, 1999). One contextual variable, which potential importance, which the

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literature has under explored, is leader-follower distance (Collinson, 2005). Antonakis and Atwater (2002) contended that, although overlooked within leadership research, distance was a key contextual factor and, thus, a defining element of the leadership influences the process. Further, they defined leader-follower distance in terms of three independent dimensions: physical distance, social distance, and the amount of interaction between leader and follower. Shamir (1995) conducted an exploratory study and discovered that followers perceived some traits and behaviors of close and distant charismatic leaders differently. In a similar vein, Yagil (1998) found that followers attributed different charismatic qualities to close and distant leaders. However, very few studies examine the influences of leader-follower distance caused by power, authority, status, and social standing.

The goals of this study are twofold. First of all, we set out to examine the mediating role of followers' job satisfaction on the relationships between leadership behaviors and task performance. Second, we explored the moderating role of social distance (that is, how power, authority, and rank made distance between leaders and followers) on the positive relationship between leadership behaviors and job satisfaction in the Taiwanese electronics companies. We hypothesized that with high social distance between leader and follower, the relation between leadership and job satisfaction was weaker compared with low social distance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership behaviors: Transformational and transactional leadership

An extensive body of research in organizational behavior has focused on identifying the leadership styles of supervisors that could enhance work performance (Bass, 1990; House and Aditya, 1997). This study applies the "Full-range Leadership Theory" as conceptualized by Bass (1985) and developed by Avolio and Bass (1991). They distinguish three major types of leadership behaviors: transformational, transactional leadership and laissez-faire, our study was focus heavily on the transformational and transactional leadership.

Transformational leaders have charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration of employees (Bass and Avolio, 2000; Bass, 1999).

Bass's (1985) conception of transactional leadership emphasizes two factors: contingent reward and management-by-exception. Contingent reward refers to the efforts made by the leader to clarify expectations so that followers will understand what they need to do in order to receive rewards. Management-by-exception is a less active approach to leadership that essentially informs followers of job expectations, but resists further involvement with the follower unless the follower's actual

performance significantly varies from those expectations.

Bass and Avolio (1994) compared transformational leadership with transactional contingent reward leadership and passive leadership. Transactional contingent reward occurs when leaders assign a secure agreement on what needs to be done and what rewards followers can expect if they fulfill the agreement. Transformational leadership style usually generates higher performance than transactional leadership (Bass and Avolio, 2000).

The relationship between leadership behaviors and task performance

Leadership affects a wide array of work behaviors, including followers' motivation, self-efficacy, creativity, coping with stress (Bass, 2006). It also predicts crucial work-related outcomes such as task performance (DeGroot, Kiker and Cross, 2000).

Transformational leaders enhance the self-concept of followers and encourage followers' personal and collective identification with the goals and objectives of both the leaders' and the organizations (Shamir et al., 1993). Skilled transformational leaders have the ability to support and educate employees, while challenging them to stretch themselves in order to do their jobs and encourage the employees in their efforts to promote job aims and goals (Eran, 2007). Inspirational motivation is defined as the degree to which leaders articulate an appealing vision and behave in ways that motivate those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Intellectual stimulation is defined as the degree to which leaders stimulate their followers' effort to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways (Bass et al., 2003). Therefore, transformational leaders use inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation to encourage followers in their efforts to promote task performance.

Transactional leadership occurs when a leader exchanges something of economic, political, or psychological value with a follower. These exchanges are based on the leader identifying performance requirements and clarifying the conditions under which rewards are available for meeting these requirements and transactional behaviors can accomplish the leader's goals and also satisfy the interests of the followers (Whittington et al., 2009). Transactional leadership behavior engages followers in an agreement that specifies the followers' performance expectations and the consequences for meeting those expectations. When followers are confident about their specific role expectations, they may be more likely to go beyond the formal performance (Organ, 1988).

Although transformational and transactional leadership are two different leadership behaviors, they both serve the same function to engage followers into their work and

generate task performance.

The mediating role of job satisfaction between leadership behaviors and task performance

Many theoretical and empirical studies have demonstrated the leadership is an important factor that might be affecting both followers' job satisfaction (Nielsen et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 1999; Ugboro and Obeng, 2000) and performance (Parry, 2003; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Pillai et al., 1999; Geyer and Steyrer, 1998; Lowe et al., 1996). Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and job experience (Locke, 1976). Transformational leaders exhibit idealized influence, arouse inspirational motivation, provide intellectual stimulation, and treat followers with individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999). Transformational leadership affects organizational outcomes by determining leadership behaviors and functions, such as charisma, vision, intellectual stimulus, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985; Podsakoff et al., 1997). Bass (2006) pointed that leaders who are inspirational and show commitment to organization, who challenge their followers to think and provide resource (input), and who show genuine concern for followers have satisfied followers such as job satisfaction.

Locke and Latham (1990) showed when employees have challenging and specific goals, suitable task strategies, and clear linkages between performance and the rewards they desire, high levels of performance will result. Because effective transactional leaders clarify the performance expectations they hold for their followers, and these followers can be expected to perform well. Previous studies have also shown transactional could be positively related to followers' commitment, satisfaction, and performance (Bycio, Hackett, and Allen, 1995; Podsakoff, Todor, Grover and Huber, 1984; Hunt and Schuler, 1976).

According to social exchange theory, when employees feel satisfied with their jobs, they reciprocate with positive behavior to benefit the organization (Organ and Ryan, 1995). Bateman and Organ (1983) suggested that employees with a high degree of satisfaction can dedicate their efforts and display behavior beneficial to organizations. Dissatisfied workers are likely to be absent from work and perform at a lower level.

Based on the above arguments, we hypothesize that:

H_{1a}: Followers' job satisfaction mediates positively the relationship between transformational leadership and task performance.

H_{1b}: Followers' job satisfaction mediates positively the relationship between transactional leadership and task performance.

Social distance as a moderator between leadership behaviors and job satisfaction

Napier and Ferris (1993) identified three aspects of distance between leaders and followers: physical, structural, and psychological. A number of authors had argued that physical distance may negatively affect how well leaders would be able to work with their followers due to a potential reduction in the quality of interactions between leaders and followers (Bass, 1998; Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999; Yagil, 1998; Bass and Avolio, 1990). Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) found that transformational leadership at closer levels produced significantly higher follower performance than transformational leadership at a distance.

We generally psychological distance equate to social distance (Napier and Ferris, 1993). Antonakis and Atwater (2002) defined social distance in the leadership domain as perceived differences in status, rank, authority, social standing, and power, which affect the degree of intimacy and social contact that develop between followers and their leader.

Shamir (1995) pointed out that the relationship between socially close and distant leaders is important because of determining the level at leader's outcomes. Dvir and Shamir (2003) ever argued that the difference in the information followers was about their distance and close leaders may contribute to the differential impact of leadership on followers. Leaders would have few opportunities not only to build relationships but also to communicate with followers, and this might result an effect of follower's performance because of high social distance between leaders and followers.

Based on the above arguments, we expect that social distance might have a negative impact on job satisfaction.

H_{2a}: Social distance will negatively moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction when social distance is low rather than high.

H_{2b}: Social distance will negatively moderate the relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction when social distance is low rather than high.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and procedure

The participants for this research were from 43 electronics companies and included both engineers and administrative staff. Participants in this study were voluntary, and were given a written guarantee by the authors that their individual responses would be confidential. A total of 307 questionnaires were sent to the respondents with envelopes provided by the authors. The returned rate was 90%, with the result of completed data for 266 participants. The sample totally consisted of 135 male and 131 female, with an average age of 31.74 years old. The educational level of the sample was predominantly university graduates or MA graduates, accounting for 72.9 and 18.0% respectively. The average of

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social distance	2.98	0.59	(0.805)				
2. Transformational leadership	3.60	0.65	-0.20**	(0.929)			
3. Transactional leadership	3.27	0.51	-0.22**	0.78**	(0.702)		
4. Job satisfaction	3.31	0.53	-0.24**	0.58**	0.50**	(0.647)	
5. Task performance	3.23	0.62	-0.29**	0.58**	0.47**	0.71**	(0.778)

** $p < 0.01$; (Parenthesis shows alpha reliability values of variables).

organizational tenure was 5.7years

Instruments

Leadership behaviors

This study adopted 32 items from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5x to measure transformational and transactional leadership, transformational leadership included idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; transactional leadership including contingent rewards and management by exception active (Bass and Avolio, 1997). The transformational leadership questionnaire CFA was acceptable ($\chi^2 = 13.463$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.019$, $RMSEA = 0.08$, $GFI = 0.981$, $AGFI = 0.944$, $CFI = 0.993$, $IFI = 0.986$, $NFI = 0.989$, Standardized RMR = 0.008, Cronbach's alpha = 0.929), and transactional leadership was also acceptable ($\chi^2 = 12.78$, $df = 5$, $RMSEA = 0.077$, $GFI = 0.981$, $AGFI = 0.943$, $CFI = 0.972$, $IFI = 0.972$, $NFI = 0.955$, Standardized RMR = 0.029, Cronbach's alpha = 0.702)

Job satisfaction

This study adopted 5 items developed by Janssen and Van (2004) to measure job satisfaction (sample item: All in all, the chance your job gives you to do what you are best at). With response options of 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 represents neither disagree nor agree, 4 represents agree, 5 represents strongly agree ($\chi^2 = 17.582$, $df = 5$, $RMSEA = 0.097$, $GFI = 0.975$, $AGFI = 0.924$, $CFI = 0.928$, $IFI = 0.93$, $NFI = 0.905$, Standardized RMR = 0.032, Cronbach's alpha = 0.647)

Task performance

We used 4 items developed by Cammann et al. (1983) to measure of task performance (I perform on my profession well). With response options of 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 represents neither disagree nor agree, 4 represents agree, 5 represents strongly agree. ($\chi^2 = 2.031$, $df = 2$, $RMSEA = 0.008$, $GFI = 0.996$, $AGFI = 0.981$, $CFI = 0.92$, $IFI = 0.91$, $NFI = 0.993$, Standardized RMR = 0.011, Cronbach's alpha = 0.778).

Social distance

According to the definition of Antonakis and Atwater (2002), social distance in the leadership domain could be described as perceived differences in status, rank, authority, social standing, and power that affect the degree of intimacy and social contact that developed between followers and their leaders to develop 4 items. (Sample item: I feel distance because of leaders' authority). The ratings were

completed on five-point Likert Scale with 1 represents very far, 2 represents far, 3 represents neither far nor close, 4 represents close, and 5 represents very close). ($\chi^2 = 12.832$, $df = 2$, $RMSEA = 0.143$, $GFI = 0.978$, $AGFI = 0.89$, $CFI = 0.969$, $IFI = 0.97$, $NFI = 0.964$, Standardized RMR = 0.022, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.805$),

RESULTS

The results of the SPSS 12.0 analysis of the hypothesis test with the correlations, hierarchical regression for the mediating and moderating variables in this study are presented in this section.

Table 1 presented the means, standard deviations and correlations of the research variables. As shown, task performance was correlated with transformational leadership, transactional leadership and social distance ($\gamma = 0.58$, 0.47 and -0.29 , $p < 0.01$). The result also showed the task performance had a positive relationship with transformational leadership, transactional leadership but had a negative relationship with social distance. Moreover, job satisfaction had a positive relationship with transformational leadership, transactional leadership ($\gamma = 0.58$ and 0.50 , $p < 0.01$) but had a negative relationship with social distance ($\gamma = -0.24$, $p < 0.01$).

Tables 2 and 3 presented that hierarchical regression analysis result. Transformational leadership and transactional leadership significantly effects task performance ($\beta = 0.583$, and 0.475 , $p < 0.001$). In sum, the greater transformational leadership and transactional leadership, the more willing employees were to display task performance.

In testing the mediating effects, the three-step regression procedure, as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), was used to determine whether or not job satisfaction is a mediating variable of the relationship between transformational leadership, transactional leadership and task performance. To support for mediation, the following conditions must hold: (1) The independent variable (transformational leadership and transactional leadership) affects the mediating variable (job satisfaction); (2) The independent variable (transformational leadership and transactional leadership) affects the dependent variable (task performance); and (3) After the inclusion of the mediating variable (job satisfaction) into the second regression equation of the previous step, the regression

Table 2. Regression analyses of job satisfaction mediating transformational leadership on task performance.

Step	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	Adjusted R ²
1	Transformational leadership	Job satisfaction	0.585***	0.340
2	Transformational leadership	Task performance	0.583***	0.337
3	Transformational leadership	Task performance	0.252***	0.546
	Job satisfaction		0.565***	

***p<0.001.

Table 3. Regression analyses of job satisfaction mediating transactional leadership on task performance.

Step	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	Adjusted R ²
1	Transactional leadership	Job satisfaction	0.496***	0.234
2	Transactional leadership	Task performance	0.475***	0.223
3	Transactional leadership	Task performance	0.161**	0.524
	Job satisfaction		0.632***	

p<0.01; *p<0.001; standardized regression coefficients are reported.

coefficient of the independent variable (transformational leadership and transactional leadership) is lower than the regression coefficient of the previous step, and there is a significant relationship between the mediating variable (job satisfaction) and task performance.

Step 1 in Table 2 show transformational leadership and job satisfaction had a significant relationship ($\beta=0.585$, $p<0.001$).

Step 2, A significant relationship was found between transformational leadership and task performance ($\beta=0.583$, $p<0.001$).

In step 3, when job satisfaction (the mediation) was included to the above regression model, and job satisfaction had a significant positive relationship with task performance ($\beta=0.565$, $p<0.001$), and the regression coefficient of transformational leadership and task performance reduced from 0.583 to 0.252 ($p<0.001$).

This demonstrated that job satisfaction was mediating variable of the relationship between transformational leadership and task performance. Hypothesis 1a was supported.

Similarly, as seen in Table 3, job satisfaction was a mediating variable of the relationship between transactional leadership and task performance (β reduced from 0.469 to 0.161 $p<0.01$). Hypothesis 1b was supported.

To test our moderation effect, we used hierarchical stepwise regression following the regression procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). First, we entered transformational leadership and social distance. In step 2 we entered the cross-product term representing the anticipated moderation effect.

The changes in R² (ΔR^2) at each step and that the standardized regression coefficients are presented in

Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, the social distance would moderate the transformational leadership and job satisfaction relationship, was not significant ($\beta=-0.071$, $p>0.05$). Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

We also tested the moderation of social distance between transactional leadership and job satisfaction.

We found very different result about moderation effect on transactional leadership.

As shown in Table 5, that the social distance would moderate the transactional leadership and job satisfaction relationship, was significant ($\beta=-0.127$, $p<0.05$). Hypothesis 2b was supported.

To further interpret the interaction effect among that selected variables, we followed the procedure that recommended by Cohen et al. (2003), to create two simple regressions of dependant variables (job satisfaction) on independent variable(transactional leadership), and then given conditional values form the degree of social distance (mean ± 1 S.D.).

As shown in Figure 1, followers and leaders with high transactional leadership relationships would have higher job satisfaction when followers have low social distance with leaders.

On the contrast, followers and leaders with high transactional leadership relationships would have lower job satisfaction when followers had higher social distance with leaders.

DISCUSSION

The major goals of this study were to clarify the

Table 4. Results of regression analyses of social distance moderating transformational leadership on job satisfaction.

Variable	Job satisfaction			VIF
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Gender	0.10	0.06	0.06	1.06
Age	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	1.05
Social distance		-0.14 ***	-0.13 ***	1.07
Transformational leadership		0.55 ***	0.55 ***	1.06
Transformational leadership * social distance			-0.07	1.03
ΔR^2	0.01	0.35	0.00	
R^2	0.01	0.36	0.37	
Adjusted R^2	0.00	0.35	0.36	
F	1.32	71.93***	1.80	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; Notes: standardized regression coefficients are reported.

Table 5. Results of regression analyses of social distance moderating transactional leadership on job satisfaction.

Variable	Job satisfaction			VIF
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Gender	0.097	0.082	0.076	1.06
Age	-0.013	-0.012	-0.002	1.05
Transactional leadership		0.457***	0.458***	1.06
Social distance		0.153**	-0.127*	1.11
Transactional leadership * social Distance			-0.127*	1.05
ΔR^2	0.01	0.02	0.02	
R^2	0.01	0.27	0.29	
Adjusted R^2	0.00	0.26	0.27	
F	1.32 ***	7.86 **	5.53 *	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; Notes: standardized regression coefficients are reported.

relationships between leadership and task performance as well as to investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction on leadership and task performance relationship. Besides, we also examined the moderating role of social distance on the leadership and job satisfaction. Transformational and transactional leadership were found to have significant positive relationship with task performance. The relationship between transformational leadership and task performance was higher than the relationship between transactional leadership and task performance.

The findings of the significant effect on transformational and transactional leadership was consistent with the research result of Li and Hung (2009), Ruggieri (2009), Yang (2009) and Shen and Chen (2007) The greater transformational and transactional leadership an employee perceived, the more likely it was that an employee would display task performance. The β value of transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.583$) was higher than transactional leadership ($\beta = 0.475$). Transformational leaders effected employees to display more task performance than transactional leaders do.

Moreover, this study used job satisfaction as the role of mediator between leadership and task performance. The results showed that job satisfaction was a mediating variable in the relationship between transformational, transactional leadership and task performance. This demonstrated that leadership is a critical position. It triggers employees to fulfill job satisfaction, and in turn caused them to display task performance.

Another goal was to examine that social distance moderates the relationship between leadership and followers' outcomes (job satisfaction and task performance). The results were not consistent with our expectation, and the social distance was not moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.

But social distance moderated significantly the relationship between transactional leadership and task performance. Our explanation for this finding was that transactional leadership involved a social exchange process where the leader clarified what the followers must do as their part of a transaction (complete the task successfully) to receive a reward or to avoid a of

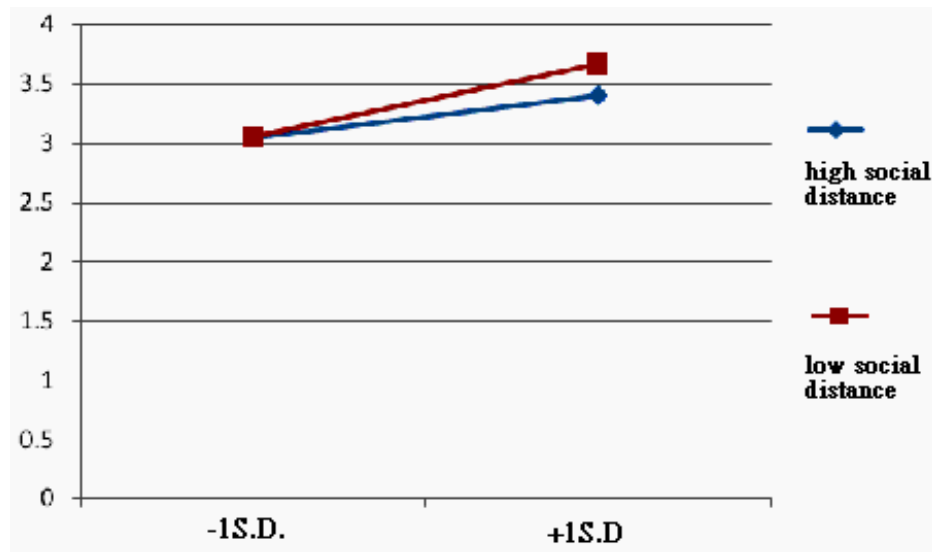


Figure 1. Moderating role of social distance on transactional leadership and job satisfaction.

punishment (satisfaction of the followers' needs) that might be contingent on the fulfillment of the transaction (satisfying the leader's needs), including contingent reward, active management and passive management (Bass and Avolio, 1997; 1994; Avolio and Bass, 1995; Bass, 1990). Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) reported that trust between followers and close leaders is higher than between followers and distant leaders because close leaders have more opportunities to interact directly, establish personal contact, and build relationships. They also found that transformational leadership at closer levels produced significantly higher follower performance than transformational leadership at a distance.

According to social exchange of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, supervisors should select material or non-material resources to make exchange with subordinates (Liden et al., 1997). Managers may also share or withhold valuable information when interacting with subordinates, or may choose to engage in mentoring or other socio-emotional interactions (Graen and Scandura, 1987; Graen, Liden, and Hoel, 1982). Similarly, subordinates may also offer resources that were valued by managers, such as by making an extra effort, displaying greater resolution to performing their supervisors' goals, or by demonstrating greater organizational commitment (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Transactional leadership was a behavior that satisfies the job need of followers.

Dvir and Shamir (2003) argued that the difference in the information followers have about their distant and close leaders may contribute to the different impact of leadership on followers. Shamir (1995) contended that physically close leaders have a greater opportunity to show individualized consideration, sensitivity to followers' needs, and support for the development of employees.

Transactional leadership was influenced by social distance because transactional leaders built their leader-member exchanges based on the distance between them and their followers. Nevertheless, transformational leaders sincerely devote themselves to the followers and inspire their followers to perform; therefore, social distance did not moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction or job performance. Bass and Avolio (2000) pointed that transformational leadership style usually generates higher performance than transactional leadership. Transformational leadership is not affected by contingency, space or human factors; its influence is far more reaching than transactional leadership.

Conclusion

The present study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field of leadership and task performance by providing support for the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of social distance in the relationship between the leadership behaviors and followers' task performance. The present study also demonstrates that transformational leaders effect followers to display more task performance than transactional leaders do.

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