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PAPER

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Follower Work Engagement and the Moderating Role of Follower Characteristics

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Work engagement is the positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption which is vital for an organization to gain a competitive advantage through its workforce. The leadership style is one of the determinants which can influence the work engagement level of the follower. Therefore, this study examines the effect of transformational leadership on follower work engagement in the manufacturing industry.

Transformational leadership is the inspirational leadership aimed at motivating subordinates to achieve organizational goals while at the same time emphasizing the importance of subordinate well-being and need for fulfillment. Transformational leadership was measured through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration of the leader toward the follower. Further, the study examines whether the relationship between transformational leadership and follower work engagement is moderated by follower characteristics.

Data were collected from 342 followers in the manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka using a self-administered questionnaire. Transformational leadership was assessed using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Form 5X) while the work engagement was assessed using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Furthermore, follower characteristics were measured using the scale that was adapted from the scale developed by Dvir and Shamir (2003). The simple regression analysis was used to test the significance of the impact of transformational leadership on follower work engagement and the moderated multiple regression analysis was used to test the moderating effect of follower characteristics on this relationship. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership on work engagement of followers of manufacturing industry and the follower characteristics moderate the positive relationship between these two variables. Thus, when follower characteristics are more positive, transformational leadership has a more positive effect on follower work engagement. The implications of the findings and possible directions for future research are discussed.