

Transformational Leadership and Knowledge Sharing in ICT Based Organizations in Nigeria

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Abstract

There is an emerging shift in the knowledge management discourse especially as it relate to the sharing component of the construct. The thinking is that since knowledge sharing involves transfer and use of knowledge among the individuals at work, the behaviour of work members and managerial leadership disposition might impinge on the extent to which knowledge is shared. In view of this, this study examined the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in ICT based organization. The survey instrument for data generation was the questionnaire marked transformational leadership and knowledge sharing questionnaire (TRALKSQ) the data from the sample subjects were analyzed with the regressional statistical tool and a strong relationship was found between transformational leadership components of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration and tendencies in the form of transformational characteristic relates with knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration and Knowledge Sharing.

Introduction

There is an emerging revolutionary approach towards increasing the volume of knowledge available to firms against the backdrop of the heightened level of competitiveness across all sectors. Globalization as it were also provoked the need to expand knowledge frontiers as a basis for participation and be embedded within the business environment. Rhambasi (2010) has argued that knowledge is the mainstay of the 21st century organization that has a knack for innovative breakthroughs in all functional areas of organization.

The quest for knowledge by organizations especially in developed nations has attained an insatiable magnitude therefore has stimulated the discourse on knowledge management. It entails how knowledge is acquired, processed, stored and shared amongst all constituent parts of the organization (Zhalwany, 2004; Basil, 2005; Raja, 2008) Livin (2009) is of the view that though the various activities that are involved in the entire knowledge management process are as important as marked, the sharing aspect is seamlessly strategic and critical to why knowledge is sought. The utility ascribed to knowledge is inherent in the extent to which it is shared amongst all work members who in turn apply it for strategic and operational responsibilities at work. Whether tacit or explicit knowledge forms, it is invariably shared amongst all work members through distinct medium and context that promotes the means to the objectives of knowledge acquisition process.

Nonetheless, there are volumes of scholarly contributions that have argued that the sharing context is a premise for ease of transfer of knowledge from one domain to another (Wiig, 2002; Philemon, 2008). Infact, Henshel, (2009) espoused that in the age of knowledge economy, the distribution of knowledge is essentially done through improved ICT infrastructures and the structural fit of organizations. This belief had elaborately undermined the behavioural component that Jaja and Chukwuigwe (2008) suggest as key to multi organizational actions that creates in-road at goals.

Managerial support for organizational actions through leadership approaches offered undoubtedly creates a work climate that permits knowledge sharing among employees. We also know that transformational approach to managing convey such attributes that are likely to engender esprit de corps and provide a clear organizational vision that is likely to promote knowledge sharing among organizational members. Though this conceptualization is intuitive, this paper is an empirical attempt at ascertaining the link between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing practices which is a shift from techno-structural debate to behaviour oriented in ICT based firms.

ICT based firms as earlier noted should characteristically provide the infrastructure that should expectedly enhance knowledge transfer across all functional levels of the organization. All the same Lekan (2010) has observed knowledge dearth in some surveyed firms and has attributed it to the reason for poor innovative capabilities, therefore, the specific objectives of the study is to investigate the empirical relationship between the empirical referents of transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in ICT based firms in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership

The concept of leadership has attracted a broad range of debate all with a view to stressing the importance in a social context and perhaps offer refined and more goal oriented approaches that equally have concern for the human cognitive and psycho-emotive perspectives. Transformational approach to leadership as evolved by Burns (1978) showed unique characteristics that are in variance with the traditional approaches to leadership. Its theoretical corporation is reflected in leaders willingness to sacrificially give up the managerial aura that initiates authoritarian style and behaviour to a more friendly and focused way of leading. This characteristic of the transformational leadership approach are in the work of Avolio and Bass (1988) who have shown to be leading contributors in the transformational concept. They classified it within four major attributes which includes idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration. Importantly, there is concurrence in literature to these components that represents the transformational approach to leading (Krishnan, 2004; Baldoni, 2005, Bass and Riggio, 2006). These components that describe the transformational approach are characteristically drawn towards providing best managerial behaviour that will encourage the employee to offer more of his energies towards work.

Infact, Sabir et al (2011) had established a link between transformational leadership and employee commitment. The underlying factor is that transformational leaders attract employee confidence and trust therefore expresses the willingness to show affection for organizational tasks and goals. Humadia and Phadett (2011) espoused that commitment resulting from transformational characteristics of the leadership at work is an asset that facilitate realization of other organizational action for long term goals. In other words, transformational leadership provides veritable platform that act as incentive for energizing the human resource to be involved in strategic activities thereby engendering goals. For instance, the intellectual stimulation and individualized considerations components characteristically ensure that leader stimulate creativity among employees through the provision of an enabling climate and ensuring a close and cohesive relationship between the manager and employees. Fostering this climate according to Mansah (2011) promotes sharing of ideas among work members who are already imbued with the sense of confidence, trust and openness. The considered attributes of transformational leadership according to Simic (1998) are basic for organizational success especially when considered for strategic organizational actions that are drives of work goals. In this instance, this study has its primary objective (based on the aforesaid) of linking transformational leadership component with knowledge sharing which is a strategic phenomenon at goals.

Knowledge Sharing

There is huge evidence in extant literature pointing at knowledge sharing as a strategic action especially when viewed against the backdrop of knowledge itself as a strategic resource (Saqafi-nejad, 1990; Nonaka, 1991; Spender and Grant, 1996; Teece, Pisano & Sheun, 1997; Jeffrey, 2003). Indeed, this thinking has assumed a wide range of acceptance that reiterates the strength of knowledge item and the need to make it available to all organizational members. While knowledge acquisition has also been well emphasized as a resource for competitiveness, therefore the need for qualitative sharing approaches, Sagafi-nejad (1990) had observed that knowledge transfer had cluster of variables affecting knowledge transfer.

According to the author, they include the characteristics of the technology to be shared, the activities and modes through which sharing is done and organizational profiles of parties involved in the sharing process. Nasrajan (2000) had argued strongly that a major challenge in the knowledge sharing function in the knowledge management process is the technology in use for transfer and the organizational culture of promoting knowledge sharing.

El-Gonte (2005) viewed knowledge sharing as equally strategic therefore requires overhauling of micro-level inhibitions that may constitute set back for timely knowledge delivery to recipient. He had marked structure of work as a crucial factor that stands the way of knowledge transfer especially where they are characteristically mechanistic to the extent that it limits knowledge repositories within certain organizational domain.

What can be easily drawn from these positions is that knowledge sharing within the organization though has a strategic acceptance, can be spurred through realization of aggregate variables that facilitates its transfer. Infact, Ellerman et al (2001) espoused that attention should be drawn at how knowledge sharing can be better facilitated. The many thoughts drawn at knowledge sharing had however appeared not to have given consideration to what Teece (2000) referred as strategic management roles in terms of procedure or structures. Managerial roles as implied in knowledge management spectrum must be viewed with high concern as they initiate the organizational climate that best spark off the willingness to share knowledge. Nasrajan (2000) attention on organizational culture had seemingly raised attention on certain behavioural modes of organizational members especially at the managerial levels of organization that are likely to promote knowledge sharing efforts in the organization. This study has attempted to burgeon the existing body of knowledge by drawing a link between transformational approaches of managers as a basis of facilitating knowledge sharing which has been hitherto undermined therefore, we hypothesized thus:

Ho: Transformational leadership does not relate with knowledge sharing in work organizations.

Methodology

The study has considered the companies that are listed in Joint Action in ICT Development Initiative. The Initiative has in its schedule all licensed and registered ICT operating firms in Nigeria. There are 48 companies listed in the schedule and out of this, 29 of them have either Regional or Head offices in Lagos and Port Harcourt which were considered as the target population of the study. The accessible population for the study was 1614 personnel both at the management and lower levels of the organizations. We have however obtained a sample size of 313 as recommended by the Krejcie and Morgan (1978) sample size determination table. The sample subjects were however selected having had a proportionate sample across firms and eventual random sampling exercise.

Through a structured survey instrument, we obtained the data from the sample. From the 313 copies of the survey instrument administered and allowed for four (4) weeks and follow-up through e-mails and telephone calls to appointed research co-ordinators, we retrieved 221 and this represent a response rate of 70.6% which is considered significant for the study.

Measures

The transformational leadership construct was examined using the empirical referents shown in extant literature which includes inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation (). The measurement scale applied is the multifactor's leadership questionnaire (MLQ) designed by Avolio and Bass (1994) consisting of 17 items. The scale has been extensively used in contemporary behavioural leadership studies and has shown high reliability Cronbach α value of 0.88 (Gerald, 2009; Jacobson, 2011).

For knowledge sharing, the adapted measurement scale is that used by Continue (2009) in his study on knowledge management in telecommunication firms. The author had used 12 item scale in knowledge sharing and was validated in the work of Tamira (2009) with a reliability alpha value of 0.78. The scales were all based on 5 point Likert scale of Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1.

Test of Validity

Though we have adapted the measurement scales from valid scale in this study, we equally sought content validity and this was through peer review exercise in which we administered the survey instrument on experts in leadership and knowledge management consultants.

This served a reality - check on the instrument and also a means of ascertaining the true on-the-field perception of the issue raised in the instrument (Athenxa, 2008; Jamil, 2008; Kraka, 2011).

Results

Correlation between Transformational Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

The study had earlier hypothesized (apriori) a relationship between the components of transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in ICT based firms. The correlational results are shown in Table 1. The results of the correlation co-efficient analysis indicate positive relationship between the individual components of transformational leadership and knowledge sharing practices in the organizations. This means that the more there is a transformational approach to managing in the organizations, the more knowledge is shared among work members. The thinking is that there is ample opportunity and enabling work climate that permits common interaction among work members and the leaders relates closely with subordinates and guiding them appropriately.

Table 1: Hierarchical Correlation Outcomes on the Relationship between Transformational and Knowledge Sharing

Transformational Leadership Dimensions and Knowledge Sharing		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Idealized influence	1				
2.	Inspirational Motivation	0.619**	1			
3.	Intellectual Stimulation	0.495**	0.500**	1		
4.	Individualized Consideration	0.587**	0.522**	0.662**	1	
5.	Knowledge Sharing	0.516**	0.641**	0.474**	0.581**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 (1-tailed)

Table 2a: Regression Summary showing the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std Error of Estimates	F change	Sig
1	.858	.737	.731	1.039	136.509	0.000

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, Inspirational Motivation, Individual Consideration.
- b. Dependent variable: Knowledge Sharing.

Table 2b:

Coefficients

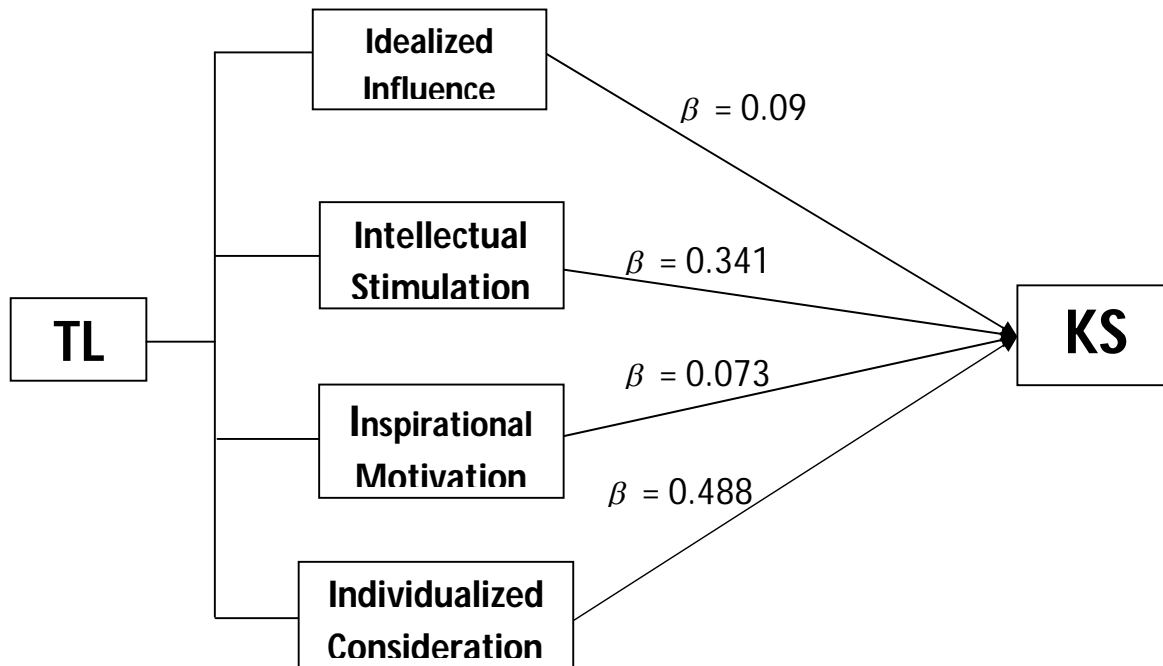
Coefficient @						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
		B	Std Error	Beta		
1.	Constant	0.827	0.113		7.297	0.004
	Idealized Influence	.006	0.031	0.09	.182	0.019
	Intellectual Stimulation	.112	0.024	0.341	4.684	0.000
	Inspirational Motivation	-.069	0.045	0.073	-1.5	0.012
	Individualized Consideration	.152	0.020	0.488	7.626	0.064

(a) Dependent variable: Knowledge Sharing

Results from the multiple regression analysis shows that transformational leadership approach relate strongly with knowledge sharing in ICT firms studied. This is indicated with R = 0.858. Further, the R² value of 0.737 implies that 73.7% of the criterion variable (knowledge sharing) is explained by the predictor variable (transformational leadership). The f value = 136.509 is also indicative of a good line on fit among the variables. The Beta weight shows that individualized consideration ($\beta = 0.341$; $t = 4.684$).

This means that when the multi collinearity of the four domain is held constant individualized consideration accounts for the weight therefore, the most important predictor of knowledge sharing.

The results has given support to our hypothesized statements in the study which generally infer that transformational leadership with its characteristics of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration relates significantly with knowledge sharing.



Model showing Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Discussion

This study primarily investigated the influence of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing practices. Knowledge has been variously reported as a strategic resource for the todays firm to remain competitive. The results of this study from the regressional outcomes are strongly indicative of the influence of organizational leadership approach to the realization of desired work goals. Leadership as it were, should ordinarily influence work members towards achieving goals (Rai and Sinha, 2003; Shirley and Yamarino, 2004). Extant literature has established a link between leadership styles and work place outcomes. This study has amplified the degree to knowledge resource can be made available to all organizational member through managerial attempt at creating a work climate that support creative practices. Jaja (2006) had argued that the new world of business requires a close knit on all functional constituent of organization through a sustained leaching practices reminiscent in the individualized consideration characteristic of transformational leaders. In this study, it is aptly shown that transformational leader through continuum one-to-one interaction they commonly share the vision and teaching one another on means of reaching goals.

The study findings corroborate the findings of Wellington (2010) concerning shifting attention to workplace behaviour as basis for knowledge sharing. We have earlier that information technology infrastructure might not provide sufficiently the climate needed to transfer and distribute acquired. We are rather convinced from the empirical result of the study that the characteristics of transformational leadership especially individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation significantly relates with the practice of knowledge sharing.

Athenxa (2008) had earlier argued that firms willing to innovate as a means for building strong competitive advantage are required to create flexible work structure that permits cross-functional level interaction. This, the author expressed that is better achieved through transformational management approach that guarantee continuous skill improvement through various learning and idea sharing platforms. From the study result, the author's position is supported with the weight of the intellectual stimulation component on knowledge sharing. This creates the link between the leader and the subordinates with a view to enhancing creativity and improving on organizational knowledge resouviior.

Conclusion/Policy Implication

This study from the on-set has the primary objective of finding out the extent to which transformational leadership approach encourages knowledge sharing in ICT based organizations, knowledge has been mentioned severally as a strategic organizational resource that must be managed for all time usage therefore it is imperative to find out what organizational dynamics are likely to encourage its availability and usage by all work members. This study had generated and analyzed data reflecting on the components of the constructs and there were profound findings that indicate a strong relationship between transformational leadership attributes of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and knowledge sharing in the studied organizations. The findings have shown dominantly that managers ability to closely relate with the workforce and creating a learning environment which intellectually stimulates the employees will ultimately encourage sharing of knowledge among members.

However, the influence of other attributes of transformational leadership is essential incentive for knowledge sharing. The findings of the study are obviously important for effectiveness as knowledge must be shared for competitive advantage both in terms of quality administrative and operational processes. The leadership climate must be encouraging enough to offer the psycho-emotional leverage that attracts willingness to share. When leaders create a one-to-one relationship as expressed by individualized consideration challenges are identified and commonly resolved in relation to work processes and the vision of the organization. From the study outcomes, it behoves managers to build capacity for innovative practices through continuous interaction and learning practices which also typify intellectual stimulation. The implication of this is that tacit knowledge which is an internalized component of employee can be triggered and converted to explicit for all purpose if an interactional climate is set.

Importantly, managers (*leaders*) should be encouraged to be transformational since it conveys such attributes that will facilitate all member inclusiveness through its attributes that will engender employee passion for sharing knowledge and achieve overall goals. It is also strategic for managers in these firms to have a conceptual shift that makes them solely rely on the information technology infrastructures without underscoring behavioural concerns.

Suggested for Further Studies

In this model we have treated knowledge sharing as a generic referent without recourse to the various sharing categorization that exist in literature. A fresh study in this direction will be important as it will provide a good insight on which of the sharing approaches will require much of behavioural dynamics for successful transfer of knowledge. Again, knowledge sharing is a singular component of the entire knowledge management construct therefore a study that aggregates all the characteristics of knowledge management which includes acquisition, refinement and storage and its link with the transformational leadership model is suggested. There are however other critical behavioural concern that will impede or support knowledge management practices that should also be explored especially as it affects other leadership approaches in work organizations.

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