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**The role of employee voice in moderating the  
relationship between transformational leadership and  
employee engagement**

**Applied study in one of the governmental sector in  
Egypt**

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## **Abstract**

This paper aimed at indicating that many governmental organizations ignore the opinions and suggestions of their subordinates on important work issues because they see that their role is limited only to implementing the orders and instructions issued to them (Zakaria, (2018) . According to that this paper would provide a clear answer for the following question "To what extent does the availability of transformational leadership and its components affect the employees engagement" .The primary goal of this study is to analyze and synthesize the role of transformational leadership and its components in enhancing employees engagement. Furthermore, it showed that the employee voice moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement . This research presents a scientific framework concerning the transformational leadership and its relation to the employee engagement, so that government sector can gain great insights that enables them to provide the appropriate organizational climate that lead to serious participation of workers in work issues and problems (Panigrahy, (2018). The research findings indicated that there are a significant relationships between the four dimensions of transformational leadership (Inspirational motivation, Idealized influence, Intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) and work engagement and a significant role of employee voice in moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

## **1.Introduction**

One of the concepts that has become popular among researchers in the management literature is the concept of "employee engagement"(saks,2014). Employee engagement refers to the degree that employees are emotionally, cognitively and behaviorally engaged in the work place (cheristian,2011). Many studies have tried to understand what creates 'employee engagement'. For instance, (Babcock-Roberson& Strickland (2010) argued that leadership styles have a key role in influencing the level of employee engagement. In business world, the interests of the organization are to enhance their employees 'satisfaction, productivity and engagement, so many organizations seek to work with effective leaders who have the ability to influence the employees, understanding them, making them more engaged in the organization(Han, 2018).

Leadership is the potential to influence behavior of others. It is the capacity to influence a group towards the realization of a goal. Many researches in this field showed that the most significant type of leadership that influence employees is transformational leadership (Weller et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is one of the many styles of leadership that is usually on display in the real world (Butina, 2018). Ali (2016) states that transformational leadership style, namely charismatic, inspirational, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, has significant effect on employee job satisfaction ,and engagement . Jaiswal et al. (2017) state that there is a significant relationship between employee engagement and transformational leadership. Leaders who adopt the transformational leadership approach are better able to motivate employees to perform

beyond expectations (Moon, 2016). Through that it would be noticed that as much as the employees can express themselves freely and can share their ideas with their managers, all of that would lead to understanding the importance of employees' voice and how transformational leadership would make a transformation in the organizations by allowing employees to raise their voice and be heard rather than being silent (Kwan, P. (2020)). Indeed, these findings show that engaged employees perform well and that transformational leaders actually engage employees, little research has considered the possibility that employee voice mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement (Holland et al., 2011). This paper aimed at identifying the importance of each variable and how they affect each other. This study is an attempt to fill the gap identified by Rees et al. (2013) and contribute toward the enrichment of literature on employee voice and employee engagement as the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement will help managers of the insurance sector in Tanta to understand and control the behavior of their employees, create harmony in the workplace, and measure how employee voice moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership is defined (Eliyana, (2019)) as a leadership approach that makes change in individuals and organizations. In its ideal form, it creates effective and valuable change in the employees' behavioral. Transformational leadership has a great historical roots as it was defined firstly

by (Burns, 1978) as an interaction between leaders and their subordinates that leads to increased motivation and maturity. Both (Boston & Peterson, 2017) see that transformational leadership " depend on the ability to align means with ends, reshape institutions to achieve great humanitarian goals and moral aspirations.

Furthermore ,Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability of a leader who can understand the needs of his followers and is able to motivate his followers (Asbari, et al., 2020).

### **Characteristics of transformational leadership**

The full range of leadership introduces four dimensions of transformational leadership( Boamah, (2019).

**Individualized Consideration** – the degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs.

**Intellectual Stimulation** – the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas.

**Inspirational Motivation** – the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers.

**Idealized Influence** – ethical model behavior where moral conduct earns a necessary level of respect and trust. This can help leaders steer decision-making that works to improve the entire organization.

## **Importance of transformational leadership**

The existence of transformational leader in any organization will lead to enhancing the employees' performance and skills, and behaviors toward their organization, and empower individuals, works to develop their skills and build confidence in themselves (Hamed& Hasson, 2010).

### **2.2Employee engagement**

Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary effort into their work( Brummelhuis, 2012).Employee engagement first appeared as a concept in management theory in the 1990s, by Kahn as he was defining personal engagement as the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances". becoming widespread in management practice recently.

Truss et al (2006) define employee engagement simply as 'passion for work', while Kular et al (2008) define employee engagement as there is no ideal definition of work engagement, resulting in engagement being operational zed and subsequently measured in concerns the physical energies exerted by individuals to accomplish their roles.

Employee engagement has been classified into three main aspects ,First, The cognitive aspect of employee engagement concerns employees' beliefs about the organization, its leaders and working conditions. Second ,The emotional aspect concerns how employees feel about each of those three factors and whether they have positive or negative attitudes toward the

organization and its leaders. Third, The physical aspect of employee engagement( Christian, M.S.2011)

### **Models of work engagement**

Kahn (1990) argued a different approach needed to be taken for organizational life in which interaction between individuals is ongoing and more complicated from an emotional and psychological perspective, on the other hand , Goffman's (1961) research depend on short differences between individuals, . Kahn's research participants try to help him establish a theory focused on situations they move in and out of that require physical, cognitive, and emotional attention.

Kahn (1990) found that there were three psychological conditions related with engagement or disengagement at work: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. He argued that people asked themselves three critical questions in each basic situation: (i) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance; (ii) How safe is it to do so?; and (iii) How available am I to do so? He found that workers were more engaged at work in situations that offered them more psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, and when they were more psychologically available .

### **Employee voice**

We can consider that employee voice as a gate between transformational leadership and employee engagement so that ,we would here construct definitions about employee voice (Ruck, 2017). Kassing(2011) noticed that employee's organizational voice is a informal behavior that includes presenting ideas, feedback, and participation with management in



developing effective methods of performance, in addition to telling the truth in all organizational practices.

Garon(2012) also indicates that voice is the ability of subordinates to communicate openly with others within the work to increase job satisfaction and the quality of the final product.

### **Employee voice and employee engagement**

Employee voice which was connected with unionization and collective bargaining has developed into its meaning (Rees et al., 2013). With much evolution in the literature, the concept is presently viewed as communication of thoughts, proposition, and attitude toward a problem by the employees to higher authorities or colleagues where the intention is to improve the functioning of department or organization (Morrison, 2011;Rees et al., 2013).

Pati et al. (2010) have studied the impact of employee voice on the work attitudes of employees in the Indian context. The existing researches on the subject reveal a positive association between employee voice and other desired employee behaviors such as organizational commitment (Farndale et al., 2011), job satisfaction (Holland et al., 2011; Wood and De Menezes, 2011). Despite of being one of the four pillars of employee engagement, voice has received the least interest in the literature on engagement (PurcellRees et al. (2013) has identified a serious dearth of literature the direct relationship between employees' perception toward voice opportunities and engagement of employees in the organization. This study is an attempt to fill the gap identified by Rees et al. (2013) and contribute

toward the enrichment of literature on employee voice and employee engagement.

### **Importance of employee voice**

Perlow and Williams (2003) suggest that organizational silence results in negative emotions like resentment and anger bubble up, which can “shut down creativity” and lower down motivation, productivity and performance.

The organizational voice increases the motivation and enthusiasm of the workers to work better and increases the effectiveness and creativity in of tasks carried out by workers, as the ability of workers to freely express their ideas and points of view and their sense of evaluation and support of the organization for their efforts will raise the morale of work and positive behavior, so workers may support the change that the organization is seeking because they feel that this change will bring benefits to them (Shin, 2013).

In this paper we are aiming at understanding the impact of the four dimensions of transformational leadership on the three elements of engagement, explaining the impact of employee voice practices on different types of engagement, examining the importance of whether “employee voice” moderates between transformational leadership, and engagement. From the above discussion , we propose the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1-1</sub>:Idealized influence has a significant positive effect on the employee engagement

H<sub>1.2</sub>;Individualized considerations has a significant positive effect on the employees engagement.

H<sub>1.3</sub>:Intellectual stimulation has a significant positive effect on the employees engagement.

H<sub>1.4</sub>:Inspirational motivation has a significant positive effect on the employee engagement.

H<sub>2</sub>: The impact of employee voice as a moderating relationship between transformational leadership and its components and employee engagement.

The following Figure (1–1) explains the research hypotheses and varia

**Figure (1 – 1)**

**Research hypotheses and conceptual framework**



#### **4. Research methodology**

In this research, using the deductive methodology is more applicable because the problem is already formulated and the hypotheses are proposed accordingly. The data will be collected to define the connection between transformational leadership and employee engagement, the research process typically begins with a question that needs an answer or a problem that must be solved, hence the purpose will be exploratory and descriptive, where we will try to explain and describe the studied variables and their relationship in the government sector.

##### **Research method**

Choice of methodology is greatly influenced by the research question. (Sekaran (2016) explains that there are three frameworks namely, the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. In the earlier discussion the researchers have already referred to quantitative and qualitative data. The terms quantitative and qualitative are used widely in business and management research to differentiate both data collection techniques and data analysis procedures.

Within this paper, it refers to the way in which quantitative techniques were applied. A questionnaire will be used and distributed among a specific targeted population to collect numerical data. Such data will then be analyzed. Hence, the research will follow a quantitative approach.

##### **Research problem**

Research correlating the elements of transformational leadership to the level of employee engagement is relatively new in the organizational

leadership field and may yield prescriptive answers for leaders (Besieux,(2018).

Some studies indicated that many governmental organizations ignore the opinions and suggestions of their subordinates on important work issues because they see that their role is limited only to implementing the orders and instructions issued to them (Zakaria,. (2018) .

In order to improve the quality of work and solve the problems caused by workers' reluctance to speak and express their opinions within the work environment, it became necessary to make some fundamental changes in the leadership style followed in a way that ensures raising employees' enthusiasm, giving way to their innovative capabilities and giving them powers to adapt to contemporary circumstances and creating the feeling of job security in case of expressing their opinions and proposals (Baillien, 2018).

Transformational leadership is the most appropriate leadership style which will solve previously mentioned problems because it seeks to create a suitable climate to urge subordinates to express their opinion in order to contribute to solving work problems and issues, and to be engagement.

### **Research population and sample selection**

After the goal was defined, the sample had to be determined, the field work was a broad to cover all employee in different branches of social insurance sector at Tanta City in Egypt. The total number of employees (excluding the clerical employees) was 306 employees.

Randomly selected 160 employees as a sample for conducting this study, out of 153 responses were received. The following table indicates the size of research population and sample.

**Table (1-1)**

<b>Branch</b>	<b>Population size</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Tanta (1)	65	32
Tanta (2)	63	30
Tanta (3)	63	30
Sayarat	60	28
Mokawalt	55	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>153</b>

the previous table indicates the total number of employees in the Social Insurance in Tanta which is 306 individuals, and because the population is small, the researcher will rely on complete census method to conduct the field study by limiting it to the middle and lower level employees counted 153 individuals, and they are the ones to whom the survey forms will be directed.

Due to the importance of investigating the aspects of the research problem, the researcher conducted a pilot study in Social Insurance in Tanta through several interviews with 37 employees from different managerial

levels, these interviews provided some clues that there is a problem these clues include the following:

- i. 25 members of participants in pilot study said that they don't participate in setting work plans and significant issues, they just receive orders.
- ii. Top managers are not encouraging employees to be fairly engaged in their work.
- iii. communication channels across different subordinates and their employers in different departments of social insurance are weak as employees are discourages to speak and express themselves so, it would affect their engagement .

**4.Results**

Respondent Characteristics		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Gender	Female	99	61.9	61.9
	Male	61	38.1	38.1
	Total	160	100%	100%
Age	Less than 35	49	30.63	30.63
	35 – 50	71	44.38	44.38
	Over 50	40	25	25
	Total	160	100%	100%

Once the data has been gathered and categorized, a frequency distribution of all descriptive comments by category was made and Cronbach Alpha, Pearson correlation matrices were computed for all items in each category and the group of related questions.

Further statistics were employed in this study such as one way analysis of variance to investigate the differences between the employee in the light of their gender and age. As is pointed out by Cohen and Holliday (2017) the one-way analysis of variance is the most commonly used technique for examining the differences between two or more groups means.

#### **Distribution of research sample**

From the previous table, the researcher can concluded that the final sample of the respondent is 160 employees and practically 61.9% of employees were female and 38.1 percent were male .Also, the respondents are varied in terms of their age, where the employees' age group from 35 to 50 are the highest in response to the questionnaire. Almost 44.38% of respondents are in (35-50) age group, however the percent of the younger and older groups are 30.63% and 25% respectively.

#### **Descriptive analysis**

In view of the indicators which affect the employee engagement, the following table summarize the descriptive statistics for all responses about the transformational Leadership dimensions, the employee voices, and the work engagement.



**Table ( 1 ):**Summary of the descriptive statics

		N	Mean	Min.	Max.	Std. Deviation
	<i>W_engagement</i>	160	1.38	2	5	.787
<i>Leadership</i>	II	160	4.33	1	5	.750
	IC	160	4.48	3	5	.614
	IS	160	4.52	2	5	.614
	IM	160	4.46	2	5	.726
	<i>E_voice</i>	160	4.47	2	5	.634

This table presents the descriptive statistics for the tested variables. It can be concluded that the mean value of the *W\_engagement* is 1.38, while the mean values of the transformational Leadership variables (e.g. Idealized influence, Individualized consideration, Intellectual stimulation, and Inspirational motivation) are 4.33, 4.48, 4.52, and 4.46 respectively. On the other hand, *E\_voice* ranges from 2 to 5 with a mean value of 4.47, respectively.

### **The moderation effect of employee voice**

With the intention of testing the hypothesis of the moderation effect of the employee voice on the relationship between transformational Leadership dimensions and the work engagement, the researcher conducted the regression analysis for testing moderation effects and the results are displayed in the following Table.

Model	Un standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error			VIF
(Constant)	2.483**	1.027	2.419	.017	
Lead_cent	2.478**	2.124	1.671	.0245	3.219
E_Voice	.383*	.219	1.745	.083	5.044
Int_1	.467**	.453	1.7031	.0304	3.788
Multiple correlation coefficient	.815 <sup>a</sup>				
R Square	.734**				
Sig.	0.014				
Durbin-Watson	1.195				

As indicated from the previous table, the research states that employee voice improves the influence of the transformational leadership on the work engagement at  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ , where the interaction effect variable (e.g. *Int\_1*) is positively correlated with *W\_engagement* with coefficient of 0.467 and t-value of 1.7031 and p-value of 0.0304. Also, the leadership still positively correlated with *W\_engagement* at  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ .

## 5. Discussion

### frequency analysis of the respondents' opinions

The frequency analysis is used to examine the frequencies of the respondents' views and opinions regarding the proposed relationship

between the transformational leadership factors and the work engagement with an employee voice as a moderator variable to support such relationship. **Table (1)** summarize the percent of the respondents views toward the proposed variables.

**Table (2):** Summary of Percentages of agreement Among Respondents

Variables	% Total disagree		%Neutral	%Total agree		Total
	Very weak	Weak		Stron g	Very strong	
<b>Dependent variable (Work engagement) %</b>						
<i>W_engagement</i>	0	2.5%	11.9%	33.8%	51.9%	100%
<b>In Dependent variable (transformational leadership) %</b>						
II	0.6%	1.3%	9.4%	41.9%	46.9%	100%
IC	0	0	6.3%	39.4%	54.6%	100%
IS	0	0.6%	4.4%	37.5%	57.5%	100%
IM	0	1.9%	8.1%	32.5%	57.5%	100%
<b>Moderation variable (Employee_voice) %</b>						
<i>E_voice</i>	0	1.3%	3.8%	41.9%	53.1%	100%

As demonstrated in the previous table, the transformational leadership contains (4) main variables.

## **Descriptive analysis**

To summarize what have been concluded from the descriptive and multivariate analysis, this research aims to investigate the associative inter-relationships between transformational leadership (e.g. and employee engagement and the moderation effect of employee voice on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement (Purcell Rees et al. (2013) .

**First** ,based on the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire responses, the frequency percentage of agreement among respondents in transformational leadership construct we discovered that (II) had a total agreement of (88.8%), (IC) had (94%), (IS) had (95%) and (IM) had (90%), therefore all the transformational leadership construct have been agreed on and (IS) and (IC) were the highest of them all, this is because any leader want his company to survive and succeed should care about its employee through gives them empathy and support, keeps communication open and places challenges before the followers(Ali (2016).

**Second**, briefing the descriptive statistics of the means of the variables, the outcome were that, the mean value of the *W\_engagement* is (1.38). Regarding the transformational leadership construct we discovered that (II), (IC), (IS), (IM) had mean values of (4.33), (4.48), (4.52) (4.46) respectively.

**Third** ,briefing the results of the Mann-Whitney test and Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability analysis, the researcher concluded that, based on the Mann-Whitney there are significant differences between the male and female groups, where the value of Mann-Whitney test was (81.000).

**Fourth** ,using correlation and regression analysis to identify the determinants of work engagement and compare them with other research studies. To start with the correlation analysis, we found a positive correlation sign all the variables with each other's at significance level of (0.05).

**Finally**, as the result of the regression analysis of model (2), the researcher found that the moderation effect of the employee voice on the relationship between transformational Leadership dimensions and the work engagement should be considered when searching for the determinants of work leadership(Patti et al. (2010).

## **6 .Conclusions, recommendations and limitations**

This research study aimed at examining factors that would enhance these two variables, namely employees' engagement and employee voice. Hence to accomplish this objective, the study was developed with the concept that corporate transformational leadership practices would have significant roles in enhancing employees' engagement and ultimately their voice.

This study utilizes a quantitative approach to understanding the relationship between transformational leadership and work

engagement within the moderate role of employee voice of 160 employees at insurance sector in Tanta .The results indicate a significant positive relationships between the four dimensions of transformational leadership(e.g. Idealized influence ,Individualized consideration, Intellectual stimulation, and Inspirational motivation) and work engagement.

For the research Limitations which are possible weaknesses in the study (Ellis and Levy, 2009). The Primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of transformational leadership factors on employees' engagement ,to examine those variables we distributed the survey online and hand to hand, despite the benefits of online surveys; it cannot be used without limitations. Privacy is one concern with online surveys (Ping, (2017)). Another limitation of the study is that participation of voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time.

Building on this research's findings as well as on the reviewed literature, the thoughts of recommendations are presented below: Employee Engagement was the only engagement construct that was found to have a great influence on employees' commitment. Consequently, it is necessary for Egyptian companies to adapt, modify their strategies and tactics by which their employees' engagement level could be measured and monitored especially the emotional engagement.

Cleveland et al. (2015) stressed that organizations should treat their employees not as tangible assets, employees are not “static”, they in

the present context, expect to be engaged in the organizational working (Deeb et al., 2019). One simple way to measure this is by asking employees “how they feel towards the company and its management” with open hearts and minds. Managements could hold periodical meetings with all employees to understand what problems they are facing or worried about. This would be a main and vital source for collecting information by which workplace environment could be enhanced .Considering the assumptions which are ideas that researcher takes for granted and accepts as being true (Ellis and Levy, 2009). Online survey used in this study includes the assumptions that potential biases and interventions by the researcher will be eliminated (Althubaiti, 2016). Companies do not declare or be aware of that which led them to neglect the importance of their employees’ wellbeing, humanity and psychological condition and as a consequence they suffer from the increased level of absenteeism and inefficient productivity of their workforce. These would diminish workers’ willingness to realize the benefits of their organizations and lastly losing good competent employees, (Ferreira and de Oliveira, 2014).finally further research provided a partial answer to what may drive work engagement, However, a large percentage of variability in work engagement was not found to be predicted by transformational leadership, what other factors are antecedents to work engagement? The gab in understanding provide impetus for future research. Future research should also investigate how much individual brings to building engagement and what portion is driven by organization, applying this research not only in service sector but also in industrial sector.

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