

The link between transformational leadership and organizational development: testing the mediating role of employees' maturity

The mediating
role of
employees'
maturity

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to test the association between transformational leadership and its components and organizational development. As a second aim, this study examines the extent to which employees' maturity may mediate the link between transformational leadership and organizational development.

Design/methodology/approach – Hypotheses were tested on a sample of 248 full-time employees (58% men, 42% women) recruited by a simple random sampling method from four Iranian public organizations. Participants were asked to complete scales on transformational leadership, organizational development, and employees' maturity.

Findings – Pearson correlation analysis showed a positively significant association between transformational leadership and organizational development. Furthermore, path analysis of structural equation modeling revealed that the direct effect of transformational leadership on organizational development is significant. Additionally, the analysis supported the mediating role of employees' maturity in the link between transformational leadership and organizational development.

Originality/value – Transformational leaders may use the maturity of employees to increase their impact in the process of organizational development.

Keywords Transformational leadership, Organizational development, Employees' maturity

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In response to social and environmental demands, current organizations are rapidly updating their policies and procedures, a feature that has become a vital aspect of efficient organizations (Leonard *et al.*, 2013; Jafari and Rastegar, 2015; Cheng *et al.*, 2020). Organizational development is a purposeful and meaningful action, applying behavioral science to aid the improvement of individuals and systems by considering humans as the key role players of organizational settings (Tusi, 2003; Cumming and Mays, 2011; Jones and Brazzel, 2014; Wu and Chu, 2015; Korpiun, 2020). According to Tusi (2001), organizational development can include multiple goals including increasing trust and support between organizational members, improving the capacity to tackle organizational problems, creating a supportive environment, improving horizontal and vertical relationships, promoting job satisfaction, exploration for creative solutions to the existing barriers and making individuals more responsible. The process of organizational development



includes coordinating personal and group goals to meet organizational missions and values (Burke, 1995; Karakaya and Yilmaz, 2013; Leonard *et al.*, 2013).

The process of organizational development may simply not be operated without considering two major groups of organizational players: leaders and employees. Most contemporary studies have focused on the way leaders can influence employees (Yukl, 2008; Monga and Monga, 2016; Mukhtar *et al.*, 2020). Of those, transformational leaders appear to have a great impact on employees of companies where organizational development is needed (Hayati *et al.*, 2014). Transformational leaders are considered to be open to various ideas and suggestions, ready to support, encourage greater effort and increase commitment (Stojanovic-Aleksic, 2016). Additionally, they work with employees to identify changes that are needed, create a vision to guide the change through inspiration and motivation, encourage personal and professional development and execute change in tandem with committed members to facilitate organizational development (Warrick, 2011; Steinmann *et al.*, 2018; Yi *et al.*, 2019). As such this specific type of leadership may be able to improve organizational development through the characteristics and effects noted earlier. The extent to which the leaders may influence the level of organizational development is the first aim of conducting this study. Furthermore, the underlying mechanisms by which this impact can be demonstrated are not very well known. Considering the characteristics of these leaders, employees' maturity may be a potential factor that these leaders use to accomplish organizational goals. As the leaders can create a valuable and positive change in social and individual systems (Tafvelin *et al.*, 2014; Carter *et al.*, 2014), this may attract employees to these leaders and subsequently the employees may have greater trust in the direction they receive from their leaders. Mature employees are more likely to be open to the changes that the transformational leaders create in the organizational settings in order to make it move toward organizational development which is the second aim of this study. This argument is consistent with previous studies that suggested mediators and moderators for the association between leadership and organizational development (e.g. Monga and Monga, 2016).

A review on transformational leadership-organizational development link

Burns (1978) argued that transformational leadership is a process through which the leaders and employees lead each other to a higher level of morality and motivation, to create a commitment to the organizational missions and goals. The power of thinking, the ability to come up with new ideas and solutions and the ability to convey a better and brighter image, are characteristics of transformational leaders (Bass, 1999). Based on the model introduced by Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leaders consist of four major components including idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration. Sun *et al.* (2012) have further defined the four behavioral elements of transformational leaders as follows: *Idealized influence* which refers to self-sacrifice, responsible for one's actions, shares one's joy with their employees and demonstrates their determining role. The leader also acts as a role model for employees which includes behaviors such as making a sacrifice for the group's interest, setting a personal model and setting high moral standards. *Intellectual stimulation* by which the leader encourages employees to think and reason before taking action which showcases behaviors that increase the employees' awareness of the challenges and problems from a novel aspect. *Inspirational motivation* by which the leader raises hope among employees, clarifies the organizational lens and describes it as an achievable goal and encourages employees to increase their expectations through the ability to convey an optimistic view of the future, use emotional arguments and exhibit optimism and enthusiasm. *Individualized consideration* is defined as a leader who treats their employees as an instructor, elevates them and treats them in proportion to their competencies by providing support and clear guidelines.

Studies show that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and a progressive organization (Chou *et al.*, 2013; Choudhary and Zaheer, 2013; Sehrawat and Sharma, 2014; Birasnav, 2014; Hamstra *et al.*, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2017). This may be because transformational leaders highly prioritize both organizational goals and desires. A climate of positive change and progress is an outcome of transformational leadership, which in turn helps to develop an organization. Indeed, transformational leaders by helping employees to find the meaning and significance of their work can make them feel supported by their organization and that may provoke them to exert extra effort (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2019). According to social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) employees may compensate for the meaningful contribution of a transformational leader by putting more effort and energy into their work to fulfill the organizational goals. Thus, this leads us to formulate the first hypothesis:

H1. Transformational leadership will be positively associated with organizational development.

The potential mediating role of employees' maturity

Transformational leaders have at least two ways to develop an organization. First, to focus on mechanical factors such as processes, structure, instructions, procedure and rules. Second, is to focus on organic factors such as those that are related directly to human resources (Jones and Brazzel, 2014; Huang, 2020). The second way is the focus of this study; therefore, we are eager to test how the extent of an employees' maturity as an organic factor, may potentially contribute to organizational development, a relationship that has been sparsely studied by previous researchers.

Transformational leaders attempt to utilize transcendent beliefs including justice, honesty and pride, by improving leader-employee communication, employees' motivation and morality (Northhouse, 2012; Arokiasamy and Tat, 2020). Accordingly, they have a substantial role in changing the attitudes and motivations of their employees by facilitating changes in the organization and improving organizational development processes (Wang *et al.*, 2011). The impact of transformational leaders on employees can be further understood through the use of social exchange theory (Homans, 1958). Indeed, this theory provides a basis to explain the exchange between leaders and employees. According to this theory, transformational leaders offer a purpose that targets the higher rank intrinsic needs and transcends the short-term interests of employees (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Nohe and Hertel, 2017). In return, employees may enter into a social exchange relationship with their transformational leaders to reciprocate what they have received from the leader by engaging in the organizational development process. This shows that employees analyze the cost-benefit of entering this exchange. This is also matched with the finding that leader-member exchange (LMX) can determine organizational outcomes such as affective commitment, trust and perceived support (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Mature employees are expected to be capable of asking for challenging but reachable goals, possess motivation for achieving success and are willing to take responsibility for groups or individuals (Tong and Wang, 2010). This maturity is not only at the cognitive level and it is expected to be seen at the behavioral level where employees may take more active roles toward their organizational goals (Argyris, 1957; Amirian *et al.*, 2014; Van Els, 2018). Other aspects such as intimacy, sympathy, self-expression, mental stability, independence, mental balance, respect of emotional boundaries and accomplishing tasks of their position may also be actualized (Tong and Wang, 2010). This is consistent with previous studies (Carsten and Uhl-Bien, 2012; E Cunha *et al.*, 2013; Baker, 2007; Kelley, 1988; Blanchard *et al.*, 2009; Chaleff, 2009; Kellerman, 2013) that suggest employees' maturity may have a positive impact on developing an organization. Most previous studies suggest that such an impact, due to

maturity, is aiding an employee to cope with challenging situations, work efficiently with others, respect others' feelings and accomplish their tasks and demands. Thus, according to social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), we expect the transformational leader begins this exchange with their employees leading to developing their organization, shown in Figure 1. Therefore, the second hypothesis we are testing is:

- H2.* Employees' maturity will mediate the positive association between transformational leadership and organizational development.

Method

Sample

To test the research hypotheses, 300 full-time employees were recruited using a simple random sampling method from four public organizations located in the city of Rasht, Iran. This type of sampling allows every participant to have an equal chance of being included in the study. The sample size was also calculated using the G*Power statistical package (<https://www.psychologie.hhu.de/arbeitsgruppen/allgemeine-psychologie-und-arbeitspsychologie/gpower.html>). Of those, 248 participants (58% men, 42% women) took part in the study (response rate was approximately 83%). Considering the total number of employees at the time of sampling, our sample size was representative. Moreover, this sample size was comparable with other studies that used a similar procedure (Hayati *et al.*, 2014). According to the demographic information, 35.1% reported that they hold a bachelor degree, 3.6% reported they hold a master degree, 8.5% had a PhD degree and 52.8% had a college degree. 42.3% were employees and 57.7% were Mid-level managers. Also, 8.1% had under 10 years managerial record, 6.9% 10–20 years managerial record and 2% more than 20 years. In general, 17.7% reported that they have less than 10 years' work record, 28.2% reported that they have 10–20 years work record and 54% reported that more than 20 years of work record.

Procedure

Measures of this study included self-report scales that were provided to participants. Following Iranian research protocols, all of the research measures were presented to each human resource (HR) department of the participating organizations before the study was conducted. All of the measures and their items were checked by the HR departments before we were authorized to launch the data collection. This process took approximately 12 days. After we obtained authorization, the data collection was carried out as follows: first, the research team introduced themselves to the participants. Second, the research aims were explained to all of the participants and their questions were answered. Third, all participants were informed about their volunteer participation in this study and their right to withdraw

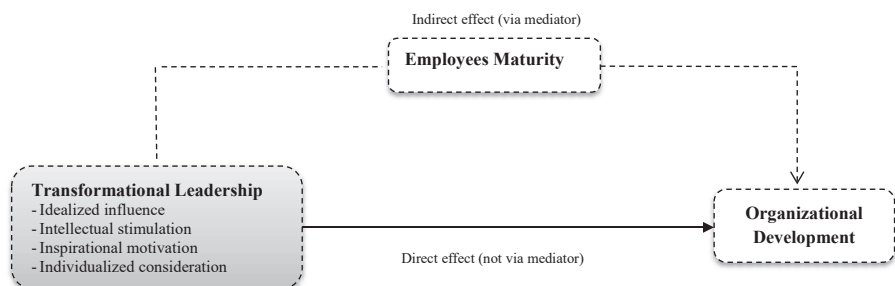


Figure 1.
A conceptual model of the direct and indirect relations between research variables

from the study at any step if they choose. They were also informed that the results of this study would only be used for research and teaching purposes. Fourth, the research team provided instructions on how to complete the research scales during a given time. The data collection procedure lasted 45 days.

The mediating role of employees' maturity

Measures

Data was collected on both demographic and research variables. Demographic information was only used to provide more contextual information to readers and they were not used or analyzed as research variables. The following scales were used:

Transformational leadership. The 20-item scale was developed by Bass and Avolio (1997). It includes four components as follows: idealized influence (8 items), intellectual stimulation (4 items), inspirational motivation (4 items) and individualized consideration (4 items). An item example for idealized influence is “my manager instills pride in the employees”, for intellectual stimulation “my manager gets others to look at problems from different angles”, for inspirational motivation “my manager talks optimistically about the future” and for individualized consideration “my manager helps others improve their abilities”. The responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). A higher score on this scale shows a higher level of transformational leadership. The reliability of the scale was reported based on Cronbach’s Alpha which was equal to 0.94.

Employees’ maturity. This scale was initially developed by Radi Afsouran et al. (2019). Scale validation was conducted as follows: first, an extensive literature review related to employees’ maturity was performed. Then, relevant items that represented the maturity of employees were extracted. Second, five academic professors with a background in organizational studies and five senior organizational experts with over 20 years of work experience reviewed and confirmed the content validity of the items. The scale was conducted on 10% of the sample in a pilot scheme in which Cronbach’s Alpha was equal to 0.88. The final version included nine items that were used for data collection. Cronbach’s Alpha of this scale on the total sample was 0.86. An item example is “I am eager to provide opportunities to learn new things and improve my skills”. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). A higher score on this scale represents a higher level of an employees’ maturity. The psychometric properties of this scale are presented in Table 1, confirmatory factor analysis in Table 2 and factor loading of items are shown in Figure 2. All items of this scale can be seen in Table A1.

Organizational development. This scale was initially developed by Radi Afsouran et al. (2019) and it includes 6 items. Scale development followed the same steps as the employees’ maturity scale. The scale in a pilot scheme had a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.90. An example is “there are proper information systems in the organization to make the right decisions”. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). A higher

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Gender	1.42	0.49	–					
2 Work Experience	18.68	8.37	–0.04	–				
3 Organizational Position	1.58	0.49	–0.21**	–0.23**	–			
4 Education level	1.69	0.90	–0.17**	0.06	0.14*	–		
5 Transformational Leadership	4.03	0.54	0.12	0.11	–0.13*	–0.05	–	
6 Employees’ maturity	4.12	0.45	0.06	0.04	–0.14*	0.01	0.57**	–
7 Organizational Development	3.57	0.58	–0.01	–0.04	–0.09	0.00	0.37**	0.41**

Note(s): * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 1. Correlation matrix between the research variables in the present study ($n = 248$)

score on the scale represents a higher level of organizational development. The psychometric properties of this scale are presented in Table 1, confirmatory factor analysis in Table 2 and factor loading of items in Figure 2. Cronbach's Alpha of the scale was equal to 0.89 in the present study. The items of this scale have been presented in Table A2.

Data analysis

IBM SPSS-22, IBM AMOS-24 and PROCESS Macro program version-2 were used to analyze data. More specifically, IBM SPSS-22 was used to calculate the means, standard deviations, internal reliability and correlations among the research variables. IBM AMOS-24 was applied to assess the factorial validity of the scale using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). To determine the common method variance Harman's one-factor model test was used and to test the mediation effect in the indirect path the structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted. Process Macro program version-2 was also used to retest and reconfirm the mediation path.

Variable	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR
Hypothesized Model (three-factor model)	236.69	149	1.58	0.04	0.96	0.02
Two-factor model (TL & ME into one factor)	645.17	169	3.81	0.10	0.79	0.03
One-factor model	1000.17	170	5.88	0.14	0.63	0.06

Note(s): TL = transformational leadership; ME = employees' maturity; OD = organizational development; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA values equal to or < 0.05 indicates good fit; RMSEA values between 0.05 and 0.08 indicates fair fit); CFI = comparative fit index (CFI values > 0.90 indicates good fit); SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR values equal to or < 0.05 indicates good fit)

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analyses ($n = 248$)

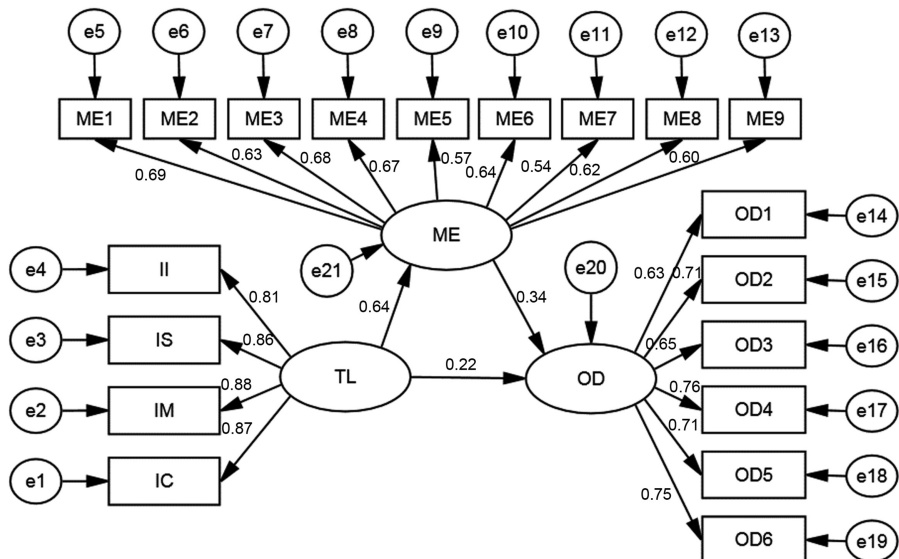


Figure 2. Path coefficients of the hypothesized relations using SEM

Results

Table 1 demonstrates the number of items, means, standard deviations and the correlation matrix between research variables in the present study. According to the Pearson correlation coefficient, transformational leadership ($r = 0.37, p < 0.01$) and employees' maturity ($r = 0.41, p < 0.01$) were positively related to organizational development. Furthermore, transformational leadership ($r = 0.57, p < 0.01$) was positively related to mature employees.

Table 1 shows that although transformational leadership has a positive association with employees' maturity and organizational development, this association is stronger between transformational leadership and employees' maturity.

Confirmatory factor analysis

To evaluate the construct validity of the key variables of the study, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) was used. The results of the three models have been displayed in Table 2. As the table shows, the model fit indexes for the model with one-factor and two-factors were not satisfactory. Only the model with three factors revealed satisfactory fit indexes ($\chi^2 = 236.69, df = 149, \chi^2/df = 1.58, RMSEA = 0.04, CFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.02$).

Therefore, as Table 2 suggests, the model with three factors was selected for further analyses.

Common method variance

Considering the data was collected from the same sources in a cross-sectional survey, the data may be subject to common method biases. To examine if common method variance can bias our results, Harman's one-factor model test was used by including the 33 items collected from the same source into one model and comparing its model fit indices with the measurement model. The results showed that the one-factor model with all self-rated items combined had a poor fit with the data set ($\chi^2 = 1754.12, df = 495, \chi^2/df = 3.54, CFI = 0.71, RMSEA = 0.10, SRMR = 0.05$). Thus, we conclude that common method variance did not have a significant effect on our data.

Test of the mediation effects of employees' maturity

According to Figure 1, transformational leadership was modeled as a predictor and organizational development as the predicted variable. Model 4 of the Process program version 2, developed by Hayes (2012), was used to test the mediation path. Employees' maturity was added as a cognitive mediator. Results were displayed in Table 3. As the table shows, transformational leadership positively predicted organizational development ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.001$), as expected. Additionally, employees' maturity positively predicted organizational development ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$). The results of the mediation analysis

Effect	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Intercept	1.08	0.31	3.41	0.000	1.825	2.529
Direct effect of transformational leadership on organizational development	0.22**	0.07	2.87	0.004	0.0680	0.3648
Direct effect of employees' maturity on organizational development	0.38**	0.08	4.29	0.000	0.2084	0.5620
Indirect effect of transformational leadership on organizational development	0.19**	0.04	—	0.000	0.1095	0.2773
<i>R</i> ²	$R = 0.445; R^2 = 0.198; F(2, 245) = 30.33, p < 0.0000$					

Note(s): * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.
Regression results
(standardized
coefficients) of direct
and indirect
paths ($n = 248$)

showed that employees' maturity did mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational development ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.05$).

Further analyses were performed to measure the extent to which the employees' maturity may play a similar mediating role in the link between the four components of transformational leadership and organizational development. These effects have been reported in Table 4.

Table 4 demonstrates the extent to which employees' maturity can mediate the association between four components of transformational leadership and organizational development. As the table shows, employees' maturity mediated all the four indirect paths. However, the indirect effects were found to be higher for intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation.

Further analysis

Additionally, the same results using structural equation modeling were tested and replicated. Figure 2 presents the path coefficients yielded by SEM for the overall research model. Results of the path analysis revealed that transformational leadership was positively related to employees' maturity ($\beta = 0.64, p < 0.01$). Also, employees' maturity was positively associated with organizational development ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.01$). In the indirect path, with the presence of employees' maturity, the path coefficients between transformational leadership and organizational development decreased ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$), indicating a partial mediation effect. These results provide initial support for the mediating role of employees' maturity in the transformational leadership–organizational development linkage specified in hypothesis 2.

To further examine the proposed mediation effect, bootstrapping procedures were conducted using Monte Carlo simulation techniques (Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Preacher et al., 2010). With 2000 replications, the result showed that the indirect effect of transformational leadership on organizational development via employees' maturity was 0.21, with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval of [0.095, 0.348], which does not include zero. Therefore, the mediating effect of mature employees proposed in hypothesis 2 was accepted and received support.

Discussion

According to organizational development theory, leaders play a crucial role in the organizational development process (Leonard et al., 2013; Lemcke, 2021). Transformational leaders can influence employees and motivate them to put more effort into work and help them to understand the purpose of organizational development programs. While not all employees may follow leaders with a transformational leadership style and there is a lack of clarity as to how mature employees may communicate or interact with a transformational leader. We can suggest two potential scenarios. First, the existence of mature employees in an organization

Table 4. Regression results (standardized coefficients) of indirect paths between transformational leadership components and organizational development ($n = 248$)

Effect	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Indirect path of idealized influence on organizational development	0.16**	0.03	Sig	0.1002	0.2380
Indirect effect of intellectual stimulation on organizational development	0.17**	0.04	Sig	0.1113	0.2496
Indirect effect of inspirational motivation on organizational development	0.17**	0.04	Sig	0.1065	0.2542
Indirect effect of individualized consideration on organizational development	0.16**	0.04	Sig	0.0988	0.2378

Note(s): * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.001$

may facilitate the process of reaching organizational goals and subsequently facilitate organizational development. Second, mature employees because of their cognitive and behavioral functions may disobey transformational leaders as they may find the leader inept (based on their personal opinions) or deem organizational goals as useless to accomplish. This is consistent with social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) that employees mostly use a cost-benefit analysis to get involved in a productive exchange with their employer.

Demonstrated by the findings, there is a positive significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational development. This revealed that in the target organization there was a general fit between the leadership style and the extent to which the organization could be developed. These results provide further empirical evidence for previous studies yet provide a unique contribution as the sample is from a middle eastern country where the context and culture may be different compared to previous studies (Chou *et al.*, 2013; Choudhary and Zaheer, 2013; Sehwat and Sharma, 2014; Birasnav, 2014; Lewis *et al.*, 2017; Hamstra *et al.*, 2011; Dickson *et al.*, 2011). This matches with the premise that transformational leaders strongly support and pursue organizational development and they encourage employees to accomplish them.

As for the second aim of this study, our findings support that the maturity of employees can be a potential organic factor that facilitates the development of the organization. Very few studies have examined the extent to which the employees' maturity can influence this link. According to the findings, we can state that transformational leaders through mature employees can make positive changes within an organization. A possible explanation may be that mature employees may better perceive the benefits a transformational leader presents them to reach the organizational goals. Another explanation could be that the mature employees can enter into a productive and win-win exchange with their leader. In other words, mature employees can authentically treat and apply their capacities better to use the opportunities they are offered (Harzer and Ruch, 2012a; Littman-Ovadia and Davidovitch, 2010). This may also facilitate the role of transformational leaders in influencing employees (Harzer and Ruch, 2012b; Page and Vella- Brodrick, 2009; Dutton *et al.*, 2010).

Theoretical implication

Previous studies have shown that transformational leaders influence organizational development and this effect does not seem to be context-specific. As the role of employees' maturity has not been considered enough in organizational development activities, the results can enrich the relevant literature in terms of adding a new cognitive mediator to the current theoretical models. There are three potential ways that we suggest future studies to further develop the current literature. First to test the role of demographic information such as gender, education level, age and work record. Second, what specific outcomes (individual or organizational outcomes) may be mediated more by employees' maturity. Third, the supervisors, heads of departments and top managers were involved in the evaluation process of employees' maturity. This study also expands the role of social exchange theory in explaining the extent to which and how transformational leaders influence both employees' maturity and organizational development. Thus, this study provides more evidence-based findings to apply this theory for studying the potential mediators of this link in the future.

Practical implications

The results can help organizational managers to enhance the quantity and quality of the organizational development process. Unlike other leadership styles, what is exchanged between a transformational leader and an employee is not a tangible outcome. This means that a leader exchanges a valuable meaning or a valuable purpose and an employee reciprocates it with visible (i.e. measurable performance) or invisible (i.e. being committed to

leader) outputs. This exchange means that employees can perceive the advantages that the transformation leaders are sharing with them and they can respond to what is shared with them. In this step, employees are assumed to act based on cost-benefit analysis. If this exchange is beneficial for them then they likely get involved and we can expect to see more reciprocal organizational behaviors such as previously mentioned constructs (e.g. improved performance, more organizational commitment and trust). If not, then they may not get involved in this exchange with the leader and no change can be expected. Thus, a transformational leader should be aware of the way a given employee can be encouraged to get involved in such an exchange. A possible way may be using a reward system that can maximize the benefit of an employee during the analysis of the cost-benefit ratio. For a long-term collaboration, transformational leaders need to take care of this ratio in their exchange with the employees. A second implication may be related to the process of transition of maturity. By presenting values to employees, a transformational leader may drive employees to be mature regarding their organizational goals. A mature employee could be an individual that follows the transformational leader in terms of attitude and performance to fulfill organizational goals. This maturity can be transitioned from a leader to an employee when a leader attempts to show employees how to set a goal, how to set professional attitudes, how to work together, how to stay persistent and how to make decisions that reduce gaps between where they are and where they should be. In other words, maturity may be transferred from a leader to an employee over time. A third implication may be that organizational managers can track the maturity of their employees. Employees with higher maturity may be encouraged to work closely and on more challenging goals with a transformational leader as they are expected to contribute more to organizational development. In contrast, employees low on maturity may be asked to attend specific workshops or programs before they are engaged in challenging and sensitive organizational missions or goals. This grouping can be made based on the extent to which employees' acts and attitudes are similar to a transformational leader.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, the study was based on a cross-sectional research design, which may limit the testing of the mediating effects over time. This is because organizational development is a variable that may be influenced by various factors. Second, recruitment of employees came from public organizations in Iran which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other samples and organizations. Third, findings may be biased by the social desirability of respondents, which is common when studies include self-report scales with the freedom to choose an answer based on what the participant thinks may please the research team members. Fourth, in this study, the construct of employees' maturity measured the maturity of employees in general. Thus, we did not separate the employees' maturity based on its potential components (e.g. cognitive, affective and behavioral).

Conclusion

Transformational leadership is associated directly and indirectly (through employees' maturity) with organizational development. As findings suggest, transformational leaders and their subordinates may be willing to exchange visible and non-visible work-related values with each other. This exchange is anticipated to move toward positive impacts on organizational development, when employees find it beneficial to get involved in this exchange. In addition, employees' maturity may play an important mediating role in this process. Mature employees more likely are expected to get involved in this exchange if they perceive what they are offered, including working climate, workplace values and the ratio of cost-benefit, are fair and beneficial. Therefore, mature employees can be considered as efficient organizational players to transformational leaders to fulfill their organizational goals.

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Appendix

Table A1.
Final English version
of the items in the
employees' maturity scale

Items	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Always
I am a hardworking, serious and responsible individual					
I am eager to provide opportunities to learn new things and improve my skills					
In general, I have had an acceptable performance in the organization					
I am an effectiveness and valuable person in the organization					
I have a philosophy and logical reasons to live					
I am an optimistic and hopeful person					
I can intimately communicate with others, even strangers					
I plan all my activities before I begin them					
I analyze all aspects that impress my decisions. That is way, I usually make right decisions					

Table A2.
Final English version
of the items in
organizational development scale

Items	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Always
Legalism and discipline are a common belief in the internal and external environment of the organization improving performance and reducing wastage					
The organization using creativity and innovation has the power to make changes on its environment					
Organizational culture is human-oriented and supportive for both employees and clients					
There are proper information systems in the organization for making right and logical decisions					
The organization's operational process has shortened the gap between making a decision and implementing the decision					
There is a consistency between mission, goal and structure in the organization					

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