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## **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, COMPETENCIES, SELF-CONTROL, AND PERFORMANCE AS A FUNCTION OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

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This chapter concerns the relationship between the transformational leadership of superiors and competencies of managers in banking organizations, and the role of self-control as a moderating variable of the relationship between competencies and performance, in case of service (banking) organizations that in particular are perceived to be functioning under a *weak* work culture. Leadership as it is and the Transformational Leadership in particular is considered as a key variable affecting performance in organizations by several contemporary researchers. While leadership has a direction-giving and coordinating role, the importance of certain characteristics of the subordinates cannot be undermined in making the leader's efforts succeed. The competency of the subordinates is one such variable. Further, the competencies of the role incumbents are likely to contribute to the performance. However, self-control i.e., the ability to keep emotions under control and to restrain negative actions when tempted, faced with opposition or hostility from others, or working under conditions of stress, is likely to enhance the positive impact of competencies on performance. Thus the variables in the study were: (a) transformational leadership of superiors, (b) competencies, and (c) performance. The contextual framework however, was provided by the variable of (d) culture.

## Transformational Leadership

Significant attention has recently been given to the theories related to transformational leadership (e. g., Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Bass, 1997, 1998). The concept of transformational leadership was first highlighted in a comprehensive manner by Burns (1978). Burns (1978, p. 3) noted a qualitative distinction between transactional and transformational political leaders. In transactional leadership, leader - follower relationships are based on a series of exchanges or bargains between leaders and followers. According to Burns, the transformational leaders recognize the need for a potential follower but go further, seeking to satisfy higher needs, in terms of Maslow's (1954) need-hierarchy to engage the full person of the follower. Transforming leadership results in mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. Bass (1997, 1998) has contributed a great deal to the evolution of the theory and understanding the ramification of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership includes charisma (providing a vision and a sense of mission, and raising followers' self-expectations), intellectual stimulation (helping employees emphasize rational solutions, and challenge old assumptions), and individualized consideration (developing employees and coaching). Howell and Avolio (1993) note that leaders described as *transformational*, concentrate their efforts on longer term goals; place value and emphasis on developing a vision; change or align systems to accommodate their vision rather than work within existing systems; and *coach followers to take on greater responsibility for their own development, as well as the development of others. These leaders are often described by the followers as inspirational* (italic added). Such leaders frequently display transactional leadership behavior as well (pp. 891-892). Bass (1997) maintained that transformational leadership is more effective and satisfying than just constructive transactions and constructive transactions are more effective and satisfying than corrective ones. Apparently, the transformational leadership has been found to be an important variety of leadership functions.

## The Concept of Competence and Competencies

According to Reber (1985, p. 137) competence means ability to perform some task or accomplish something. The suggested synonyms of

competence include ability, capability, capacity, efficiency, proficiency, competency, skill, expertise etc. (McLeod, 1986, p. 88). The concept of competence in its commonsense meaning includes a satisfactory degree of ability to perform certain implied kind of tasks. Researchers and theorists have long been pointing out that there is a tendency or need in human beings to explore, and to produce effects over the environment (e.g., Berlyne, 1950). White (1959) postulated "effectance motivation" to mean that there is a biological drive or urge in all human beings to influence and to master their environments. This effectance motivation, according to White (1959, 1963), is manifested in exploration, curiosity, mastery, and the seeking of an optimum level of stimulation. The significance of effectance motivation is to develop an individual's competence. As available research literature indicated, little research on job competence has been conducted. Wagner and Morse (1975) probably for the first time attempted to study competence on a managerial sample. They have constructed a paper pencil scale of "sense of competence." Some researchers have shown their interest in competence in work or job context (Boyatzis, 1982; Hill, 1984). Hill (1984) postulated that competence is the ability to get things done.

### **Competency**

Competency is defined as *that underlying characteristic of an individual, which is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job or situation*. Competency characteristics that differentiate superior from average role incumbents may include (a) cross-cultural sensitivity, i.e. the ability to hear what people from different cultures are really saying or meaning, and to predict how they will react, (b) positive expectations of others, and (c) speed in learning political networks. Competencies may be divided into two categories. First, the *threshold competencies*, which are the essential characteristics, and second, the *differentiating competencies*, i.e. the factors that distinguish superior from average performers. There could be five types of competency characteristics in the main. They are the following: motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skill.

Out of these five, the skill and the knowledge may be regarded as belonging to the surface of the people and are more visible, whereas the self-concept, traits, and motives are relatively hidden and could be more difficult to access and develop. Hence, skill and knowledge competencies

may be more amenable to training attempts and may be relatively easy to develop. Although the skill and knowledge competencies may be viewed as belonging to the surface, nevertheless it would be fair to treat them also as belonging to the *differentiating* rather than the threshold competency category. Further, since skills and knowledge can be task-specific, these would vary from one to the other task domain. An implication of such conceptualization is that skill and knowledge-based competencies may lose their potency if the role incumbent changes the task domain.

The present research endeavor is concerned with the competency aspects in banking organizations, which falls in the category of service organizations. A dominant feature of such organizations and of the personnel belonging to those is a requirement of customer service orientation. The components of such orientations may include the following: (a) helping and service orientation, (b) focus on the client's needs, (c) partnering the client, (d) end user focus, (e) attention to client satisfaction, (f) seeking information about the real, underlying needs of the clients, beyond those expressed initially, and matching these to available or customized services, and (g) taking personal responsibility for correcting customer service problems, and correcting problems promptly and un-defensively.

The "Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report for America 2000" (1991) took a serious look at the America's cotemporary economy and dominant trends on the work scenario and anticipated changes in the jobs. One of the anticipated changes was a massive shift from manufacturing jobs to service jobs. The SCANS report came out with what amounts to a national competency model for U. S. workers. The globalization of the world economy and dynamic market and socio-political forces, however, gave a thrust to the competency considerations worldwide, and a realization seems to have dawned upon many a behavioral science scholar and practitioner that there is a need to think in terms of competency model in almost every part of the globe. The cross-cultural similarities and differences need to be spelled out more clearly based on the strength of research data. The present work is a humble attempt in this direction. Taking a cue from the SCANS recommendation for developing competencies, the following five competencies were considered for inclusion in the present study: (a) *Resources*: identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources; (b) *Interpersonal*: works with others; (c) *Information*: acquires and uses information; (d) *Systems*:

understands complex relationships; and (e) *Technology*: works with a variety of technologies.

### **Self-control**

According to Thoresen and Mahoney (1974), a person displays self-control when, in the relative absence of immediate external constraints, he engages in behavior whose previous probability has been less than that of alternatively available behaviors. Self-control may be said to include the following major characteristics: (a) the existence of two or more response alternatives, (b) different consequences for the alternatives, and usually (c) the maintenance of self-controlling actions by longer-term external consequences (Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974).

Emotional self-control can be viewed as a kind of trait that comes under the category of more complex "consistent responses to the situations." Self-control is the ability to keep emotions under control and to restrain negative actions when tempted, when faced with opposition or hostility from others, or when working under conditions of stress (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, p. 78). These trait competencies are characteristics of successful managers (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, p. 10). Self-control is critical to human service workers as they face crisis, angry or upset clients, and temptations to become personally involved with the clients. Self-control may be thought of as a combination of: *stamina, resistance to stress, staying calm, and being not easily provoked*; and the common behavioral indicators may include: *not being impulsive, resisting temptation to inappropriate involvements, remaining calm in stressful situations, finding acceptable outlets for stress, and responding constructively to problems even under stress* (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, pp.79-80). McCallum (2000) posits that Alfred Lord Tennyson has never been thought of as a management guru. It is a pity since executives can learn much from this leading Victorian poet. Tennyson's 1832 poem *Oenone*, in particular, offers insight. In just 2 lines, the poet captures the essence of leading an enterprise successfully: Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, These three alone lead life to sovereign power. With very few exceptions, leaders of organizations that get into serious trouble lack one or more of what have come to be called Tennyson's "trinity of excellence." Executives would do well to occasionally consider what this trinity has to do with their jobs.

## Method

### *Participants and Setting*

The study was conducted in two of the states of north India. Two hundred and sixty one middle managerial level officers from 63 branches of the five major nationalized (public sector) banks responded to the questionnaires. The respondents were all male, having a bachelor's degree or above, in terms of educational qualification.

**The setting.** Data were collected from the banking organizations. The banks are the special cases of service organizations. The banking system touches the lives of millions and has to be inspired by larger social purpose and has to serve national priorities and objectives. Sinha (1990) observed that banking organizations are vital to the economy and are strategic in nature. Historically, they are urban in origin and purely commercial in purpose. In a rapidly developing country that has predominantly agricultural and rural considerations to take care of, the banking organizations have to shift from commercial to social banking and from class to mass banking. This means that they need to be more open to the surrounding socio-cultural milieu than the manufacturing organizations. And yet, the banking organizations must guard their commercial interests in order to remain viable. The work culture thus depends on how effectively the management copes with the confluence of the two forces. In spite of the professed and aspired excellence in almost all the aspects of the possible banking services, for most common customers, particularly the salaried and the fixed income group of customers, the banking function in India remains limited to savings bank operations and occasional fixed term deposit transactions, which is carried out most routinely and also reasonably efficiently in most banks. However, exceptions apart, specialized services such as loans, foreign exchange, money transfers, computerized banking, credit card operations etc. cannot be compared with world-class banking standards and most middle-class consumers may not feel as satisfied with the quality of services rendered by most banks as of now. Since the major initiative taken in 1949 in the form of the Banking Regulation Act (1949), the banking sector has undergone rapid expansion and growth compared to the starting point. However, the impressive expansions and achievements could not cover the areas of deficiencies. The banks were probably carried away by the heat of their expansion and

growth. There was a sense of affluence which probably distracted them from paying due attention to developing a work culture which may be conducive to good housekeeping, work ethics, and customer services. The customer services and efficiency in the nationalized banks have been "disappointing and left much to be desired" (*Banks Since Nationalization*, 1981, p. 49). In the last two decades, employee relations in banks have been marked by frequent branch level work stoppage, adoption of restrictive practices, union supremacy, employee apathy, alienation, and distrust between management and unions, employees indiscipline, chaotic work environment, archaic delays, unfriendliness and in some cases hostility at the counters (Bhide & Khandelwal (1986, p. 36). Obviously, the work culture in banking organizations has grown soft and thus allows free play of all kinds of extraneous forces (Sinha, 1990, p. 144). However, of late there has been a realization among some of the banking organizations, especially in face of the presence of banks of foreign origin on the native soil and the customers' attraction toward them on account of better service and facilities. Consequently, some of the higher ranking officials may be seen making efforts toward better banking at *their* bank units or branches. Unfortunately, such officials occupy transferable positions and are likely to get transferred within a period mostly of three years making the top-down effect rather volatile.

### Measures

Data were collected on five variables in the main, namely, Transformational Leadership, Competencies, Self-control, Performance (Effectiveness), and Culture. It was decided to use the instruments that have already been used in the some form at least once before in the Indian setting in some documented study.

**Transformational leadership questionnaire** was taken from Singh and Bhandarkar (1990, p. 22) consisting of 31 items. This was adapted to generate scores on a 5-point scale. The one used by Singh and Bhandarkar requires the respondents to choose the seven dominant qualities out of 31. For assessment of the transformational leadership, the respondents gave their ratings of their immediate superior in the hierarchy.



**Organizational culture questionnaire.** The organizational work culture was attempted to be measured along two dimensions, (a) Soft versus Synergetic culture, as well as on (b) *Weak* versus *Strong* aspect of Organizational Work Culture. The soft versus synergetic work culture measure was based on Sinha (1990), and Rai (2000). The Soft versus Synergetic culture measure consisted of 40 items with a 5-point response category mapping the following eight attributes of the *synergetic* work culture (Table 1).

Table 1

*Eight Attributes of the Soft and Synergetic Work Cultures*

<b>SOFT WORK CULTURE (Work is secondary)</b>	<b>SYNERGETIC WORK CULTURE (Work is primary)</b>
Employees do not tend to work hard	Employees tend to work hard
Employees do not feel positive affect for work	Employees do feel positive affect for work
Employees do not derive satisfaction from their job	Employees do derive satisfaction from their job
Employees do not locate work at the center of their life space	Employees do locate work at the center of their life space
Employees are not quite clear about their roles	Employees are rather clear about their roles
Employees come late to their office	Employees come to their office on time
Employees leave early	Employees do not normally leave early
Employees take time off during working hours to do their personal work, such as visiting friends and relatives, or to look after their family problems	Employees normally do not take time off during working hours to do their personal work, such as visiting friends and relatives, or to look after their family problems

**Strong versus weak culture.** Strong cultures are those in which core values are intensely held and widely shared (Wiener, 1988). The respondents were asked the following two questions with respect to each of the 40 items mapping the eight attributes of the Synergetic Work Culture: (a) *to what extent this value is intensely held*, and (b) *to what extent are they widely shared*, in the organization? Responses were obtained on a 5-point *percentage scale* (20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, and more than 80% - up to almost 100%). The responses on these two items were summed. Possible score range was 2-10 for each item, and 80-400 for the total scale. The Median split on scores of the two dimensions of culture was expected to generate a 2 X 2 classification of work culture, as depicted in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2

*A Possible 2 X 2 Classification of the Work Culture*

	SOFT WORK CULTURE (Work is secondary)	SYNERGETIC WORK CULTURE (Work is primary)
WEAK CULTURE (The core values are not intensely held and there is greater individual differences in sharing those)	SOFT-WEAK	<b>SYNERGETIC-WEAK (considered as "strong" for the present purposes) *</b>
STRONG CULTURE (The core values are intensely held and widely shared)	<b>SOFT-STRONG (considered as "weak" for pre- sent purposes)*</b>	SYNERGETIC- STRONG

Here it may be noted that this was the ideal classificatory scheme. However, the reality was found to be different than the ideal. The explorations revealed that the available domain of data collection supported only two of the possible four cells, shown with an asterisk, i.e., Soft-Strong, and Synergetic-Weak. The further analyses are based on data conceptually belonging to one of these two cells (soft-strong) only. Henceforth, we will call Soft-Strong as *Weak*, and Synergetic-Weak as *Strong*.

Table 3

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Results with Transformational Leadership Predicting Competencies in the "Weak" Work Culture*

<b>Transformational Leadership Dimensions</b>	<b><math>\beta</math> Weights and <math>R^2</math></b>		<b>Competencies Dimensions</b>
<i>Work Appreciation, Confidence, and Trust.</i>	$\beta = 0.47$	$R^2 = .21$	Resources Competencies
<i>Empowering Attitude.</i>	$\beta = 0.62$	$R^2 = .38$	Interpersonal Competencies
<i>Composed, Risk Taking and Efficient Leadership</i>	$\beta = -0.41$	$R^2 = .48$	
<i>Work Appreciation, Confidence, and Trust.</i>	$\beta = 0.36$	$R^2 = .57$	
<i>Formal-Objective Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.44$	$R^2 = .66$	
<i>Protective and Supportive (care and concern).</i>	$\beta = 0.36$	$R^2 = .77$	
<i>Empowering Attitude.</i>	$\beta = 0.47$	$R^2 = .21$	Information Competencies
<i>Learning Oriented and Participative Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.32$	$R^2 = .30$	
<i>Composed, Risk Taking and Efficient Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.43$	$R^2 = .40$	
<i>Capable and Participative Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.29$	$R^2 = .45$	

<i>Learning Oriented and Participative Leadership.</i>	$\beta = 0.48$	$R^2 = .22$	Systems Competencies
<i>Empowering Attitude.</i>	$\beta = 0.34$	$R^2 = .32$	
<i>Composed, Risk Taking and Efficient Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.42$	$R^2 = .42$	
<i>Work Appreciation, Confidence, and Trust.</i>	$\beta = 0.35$	$R^2 = .49$	
<i>Capable and Participative Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.33$	$R^2 = .56$	
<i>Formal-Objective Leadership.</i>	$\beta = 0.18$	$R^2 = .57$	

<i>Composed, Risk Taking and Efficient Leadership.</i>	$\beta = 0.44$	$R^2 = .19$	Technology Competencies
<i>Learning Oriented and Participative Leadership.</i>	$\beta = 0.28$	$R^2 = .25$	
<i>Formal-Objective Leadership.</i>	$\beta = -0.33$	$R^2 = .31$	
<i>Empowering Attitude.</i>	$\beta = 0.27$	$R^2 = .35$	

Also it may be noted that since at present the main interest lies in the "weak" work culture, the further analyses are based on responses only from one hundred and twenty-five respondents who belonged to organizational units with soft-strong work cultures (considered as "weak" for present purposes).

**Competency.** The competency measure was adapted from the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1991). It covers five dimensions, namely *Resources*, *Interpersonal*, *Information*, *Systems*, and *Technology*, with 4, 5, 3, 3, and 3 underlying dimensions respectively, giving rise to a total of eighteen dimensions, which were measured through a corresponding 18-item questionnaire with 5-point response categories.

**Self-control.** The self-control measure was adapted from Spencer, Jr., and Spencer (1993). It has an 8-point scoring scheme corresponding to the eight statements representing various magnitudes of self-control.

**Personal effectiveness.** The effectiveness at the individual level was purported to be mapped in terms of the Personal Effectiveness. The concerned questionnaire had 14 items with 5-point response categories, constructed by Sinha (1992). This instrument has been used by associates of the first author in earlier studies, and had shown good results (e. g., Srivastava, 1996; Rai, 2000). Respondents' own ratings were obtained on the measures of competencies, self-control, and effectiveness.

## Results and Conclusion

The analyses were done using regression analysis. It may be noted before proceeding further that since in the present report the main interest lies in the "weak" work culture, the further analyses are based on responses only from one hundred and twenty-five respondents who belonged to the organizational units with soft-strong work cultures (considered as "weak" for present purposes). Table 3 shows that some of the dimensions of the transformational leadership of superiors turned out to be good predictors of specific competencies. These dimensions may need to be fostered. However, some of the leadership dimensions were the negative predictors of some of the competencies nearly as well. Hence care may be exercised when the superiors are attempting to enhance a specific competency in the subordinates.

Table 4  
*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Results with Competencies Predicting Performance (Personal Effectiveness) in Weak Culture*

<i>Competencies Dimensions</i>	<i><math>\beta</math> weights and <math>R^2</math></i>	<i>Personal Effectiveness Dimensions</i>
<b>Interpersonal.</b> Works with others	$\beta = 0.53$ $R^2 = .32$	<b>Effective Dealing with Individuals</b>
<b>Resources.</b> Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources	$\beta = 0.17$ $R^2 = .34$	

<i>Competencies Dimensions</i>	<i><math>\beta</math> weights and <math>R^2</math></i>	<i>Personal Effectiveness Dimensions</i>
<b>Interpersonal.</b> Works with others	$\beta = 0.47$ $R^2 = .26$	<b>Effective Dealing with Group</b>
<b>Resources.</b> Identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources	$\beta = 0.20$ $R^2 = .30$	

<i>Competencies Dimensions</i>	<i><math>\beta</math> weights and <math>R^2</math></i>	<i>Personal Effectiveness Dimensions</i>
<b>Information.</b> Acquires and uses information	$\beta = 0.26$ $R^2 = .24$	<b>Effective Dealing with Environment</b>
<b>Systems.</b> Understands complex interrelationships	$R^2 = .35$	
<b>Technology.</b> Works with a variety of technologies	$\beta = 0.25$ $R^2 = .40$	
<b>Resources.</b> Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources	$\beta = 0.19$ $R^2 = .43$	

Table 4 shows that interpersonal and resources competencies may enhance effective dealing with the individuals as well as with groups. This points to the importance of these two specific competencies, which must be fostered in weak organizations. *Work Appreciation, Confidence and Trust; Empowering Attitude; and Protective and Supportive (care and concern)* dimensions of transformational leadership (Table 3) may help in this connection. Information, systems, technology, and resources competencies are important for effective dealing with environment, which is an

important concern for the banking organizations. The transformational leadership dimensions *Empowering Attitude; Learning Oriented and Participative Leadership; Work Appreciation, Confidence, and Trust; Formal-Objective Leadership*; and *Composed, Risk Taking and Efficient Leadership* may be helpful in this regard.

The results showed that when the culture is "weak" (Soft-Strong) the contribution of Leadership to Competencies is *rather good*. The contribution of Competencies to the dimensions of Personal Effectiveness was also found to be good. Additionally, all the dimensions of competencies showing significant predictive results for Personal Effectiveness also showed a significant increase in the beta weights when Self-control was entered as an interaction term (moderator variable) together with Competencies (Competencies X Self-control), in the regression equation for Personal Effectiveness as criterion. Hence it may be inferred that self-control together with competencies may be an important ingredient for enhancing effectiveness.

### ***The Insights***

The results may lead to the following insights: Leadership in general and Transformational Leadership in particular appears to be a key variable related to certain competencies of the subordinate role incumbents, especially in "weak" cultures. While leadership might have a direction giving and coordinating role, the importance of certain characteristics of the subordinates cannot be undermined in making the leader's efforts succeed. The competency of the subordinates is one such variable. Further, the competencies of the role incumbents are likely to contribute to the performance. However, self-control i.e., the ability to keep emotions under control and to restrain negative actions when tempted, faced with opposition or hostility from others, or working under conditions of stress, is likely to enhance the positive impact of competencies on performance. These lead us to think in favor of training for competencies and self-control of the role incumbents, for better organizational functioning. If possible, an attempt may also be made to enhance the transformational aspects of the leadership style. This may especially be required for weak cultures.

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