

The Effects of Professors' Transformational Leadership on the Improvement of Chinese Students' University Satisfaction: The Mediating Effects of University Identification

Fusheng Zheng¹⁾, SangWoo Hahm²⁾

¹⁾ Ph. D Candidate, Dept. of Business, Soongsil University., 369 Sangdo-Ro, Dongjak-Gu, Seoul, Korea

²⁾ Professor, Dept. of Business, Soongsil University., 369 Sangdo-Ro, Dongjak-Gu, Seoul, Korea
E-mail: hisd83@naver.com, blood@ssu.ac.kr

Abstract

The Leaders in organization play various core roles in workers' performance and organizational performance. A leader presents a vision and a direction to enable members to achieve higher performance. Especially, transformational leadership suggests members a strong vision and influences them to have identification with the organization. Based on previous researches, transformational leadership is a close connection to identification with job and organization satisfaction. This study explains the influence of the university professors' transformational leadership on students' university satisfaction and university identification. In this study, the subjects of statistical analysis are Chinese international students studying in Korea. As a result, first, professors' transformational leadership enhanced the level of students' university satisfaction. Second, university identification had a partial mediating influence on the relationship between professors' transformational leadership and students' university satisfaction. Professors' transformational leadership had an influence on the students' identification with their universities. Through this process, students become aware of identification and more satisfied with their universities. As a result of the transformational leadership of the professor, the identification and satisfaction of the international students will be improved and they will be better able to adapt to their study life and achieve high results. The purpose of this study is to emphasize the roles of transformational leadership as a necessary leadership for the successful study abroad life of Chinese students studying in Korea today.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, university identification, university satisfaction, international student

1. INTRODUCTION

The environment which becomes to be highly competitive, organizations are looking for various new ways to accomplish a higher level of performance. Some previous researches have emphasized that transformational leadership plays a key role in achieving a higher level of organizational performance. [1-4]. Transformational leaders motivate their followers to enable them to beyond the roles specified in job contracts and focus on their higher level of order needs [5-8]. They also pay attention to each employee's development, learning and achievement needs by acting as a mentor [7-8]. Therefore, transformational leadership can be seen as a style of leadership that promotes collective awareness among the members of the organization and plays a role in

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Corresponding Author: blood@ssu.ac.kr

Tel: +82-02-828-7095

Prof., Dept. of Business, Soongsil University., 369 Sangdo-Ro, Dongjak-Gu, Seoul, Korea

helping to achieve their goals [9]. As a school is a specific organization, the leadership of professors in universities will have an important impact on students. For example, a professor's positive leadership, such as encouraging students, building self-esteem, and caring about them individually, and improving students' performance. On the other hand, however, the negative leadership will lead to low levels of academic and school satisfaction. In addition, there are many students studying abroad in the present-day society. Especially in Korea, lots of foreign students who came from China are studying abroad to achieve their goals [10]. However, due to cultural differences and lack of language skills, international students will likely suffer many difficulties and will not be satisfied with their school life and classes. Thus, a systematic solution is needed at universities in order to improve international students' school adaptation and academic performance. This study focuses on university satisfaction among Chinese international students who study in Korea and attempt to investigate the role of professors' transformational leadership as a way to improve it. As previously mentioned, transformational leaders raise the level of awareness of their subordinates about the value and importance of specific goals and make them more interested in higher-level needs. If international students perceive that a professor presents and encourages them with visions and missions, and shows high expectations and personal interest in the course of their study, they will have a higher level of awareness and needs for their studies. Thus, an international student will be motivated, involved in their school and more satisfied with the university. Furthermore, this study examined students' university identification as a possible mediator of the relationship between professors' transformational leadership and students' university satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to emphasize the roles of transformational leadership is to be necessary leadership for Chinese students' successful life in Korea and explain this impact process with students' university identification.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership theory has received extensive attention from scholars over the last 30 years and has emerged to be one of the most important leadership theories [11-12]. Transformational leaders who exercise additional influence to follower by improving their goals, change them with confidence in their abilities and raising their expectations of themselves [13]. Transformational leadership consists of four types of dimensions, which are intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and idealized influence [14-15]. Inspirational motivation refers to the behavior of presenting visions for followers and encouraging them to mobilize energy and engage in work. Individual consideration is the act of developing followers by paying attention to and satisfying their personal needs, as well as simulating and improving it. Idealized influence, also refers to charisma, is the key to being a successful transformational leader [14]. Charismatic leaders have a strong influence, earning respect and trust from followers who want to identify themselves with the leader and be the same person. Intellectual stimulation is the act by which a transformational leader stimulates followers to raise a question for existing assumptions and to solve it by using new ideas and methods.

2.2 University identification

Identification has long been recognized as having a significant impact on satisfaction, belonging, and the effectiveness of employees' jobs or organizations [16-18]. Organizational identification is defined as "a perceived oneness with an organization and experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own" [19, p:103]. This is a self-concept associated with the oneness perception of the organization, which has been conducted on the basis of the theory of social identity [20-21]. An individual's social identity is a part of one's self-concept that derives from the social group to which she/he belongs, as well as the value and emotional significance of that membership [22]. Generally, the more individuals identify with their organizations, the more effort and involve in their organization will be available [23,24]. In other words, the

high levels of organizational identification result in desirable outcomes, such as job involvement, in-role, and extra-role behaviors [25]. Based on these contents, in this study, university identification is defined as the university students' recognition for oneness with their universities, experience of the university's successes or failures as their own.

2.3 The relationship between transformational leadership and university identification

Leaders play a key role in the organization's daily routine of work, which has a significant impact on the employees' feelings, beliefs, and behaviors [26-28]. Transformational leaders motivate their followers by presenting clear vision, beliefs, and directions to their followers and influence them to achieve more than expected [5-7]. In particular, transformational leaders with idealized influence (or charisma) could transform the followers' self-concept which including personal and social identification according to organizational missions and goals [8,28]. Furthermore, charismatic-transformational leaders also can increase the followers' self-concept by emphasizing collective identities, so the behavior of followers for the group becomes self-expressive [27-28]. Therefore, transformational leaders who focus on the followers' development may enhancing the levels of followers' positive feeling to organizational members and keeping them contributing to the organization. When international students recognize professors' transformational leadership, it is expected that they will be more likely to study in the university. Furthermore, they may have a unique sense of professors, the university, and consequently will lead to university identification.

H1: Professors' transformational leadership will have a positive influence on students' university identification.

2.4 The relationship between university identification and university satisfaction

Based on the social identity theory, identification plays a key role in employees' attitude and behavior in organization [20]. In other words, as individuals become more identified with their organization, the psychological attachment to the organization becomes greater and expressed it behaviorally [29]. Some previous studies related to identification through meta-analysis have reported that identification with work-groups and organizations are associated with job involvement, job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, extra-role, and in-role behavior [25,30]. Therefore, students with higher levels of university identification will have more psychological attachment to the school, value the university, and will be more satisfied with the university by interacting positively with it.

H2: University identification will have a positive effect on students' university satisfaction.

2.5 The mediating effects of university identification

Employees who perceived a high level of organizational support would feel high levels of esteem and identified with the organization, improved their overall job satisfaction by recognizing job conditions that favor them [32]. Ultimately, a transformational leader who emphasizes the development of employees will have influence on work process, elicit collective identity, and improve organizational identification. When students are struggling in their studies, they will recognize the supportive behaviors if get help from the professor, motivated to achieve higher grades or other professors' individual considerations. On the other hands, charisma-transformational leaders also can transform the followers' self-concept which including personal and social identification according to organizational missions and goals [8,28]. Thus, as students become aware of the behavior of professors with transformational leadership, university identification is expected to improve. In addition, individuals with high levels of school identification are expected to have higher psychological attachment to the school and will be satisfied with the school by recognizing favorable study conditions.

H3: University identification will have a mediating influence between professors' transformational leadership and students' university satisfaction.

3. METHODS

3.1 Participants

This study surveyed Chinese international students in Korea. Finally, empirical analysis was conducted using 107 questionnaires. The demographic characteristics of this study are as follows. The distribution of gender, 57(53.3%) were males and 50(46.7%) were females. 12(11.2%) were in 18 to 20 years, 82(76.6%) were in 21 to 24 years, 11(10.3%) were in 25 to 28 years, and 2(1.9%) were in over 29 years. In addition, the largest number of college students were 95(88.8%), 10(9.3%) were graduate students and 2(1.9%) were others. Finally, the distribution of residence periods in Korea, 5(4.7%) were less than a year, 71(66.4%) were 1~2 years, 28(26.2%) were 3~4 years and 3(2.7%) were more than 5 years.

3.2 Measurement

In this study, professors' transformational leadership was defined as leadership that provides students with an awareness of the mission or vision of the school, enhances their abilities, and develops their potential. It is measured by [33] and consists of 20 items. A sample item included "My professors seek different perspectives when solving problems". University identification was defined as oneness with the university and as an attachment to the university that sympathizes with the successes and failures of the university. For measuring students' university identification, it is used 6 items by [19]. A sample item included "I feel uncomfortable when others criticize my school". University satisfaction was defined as the overall satisfaction with the university as a student who lives in. It is measured by [34] and consists of 8 items. A sample item included "I like being in school". All items used a Likert 7-point scale to measure.

4. ANALYSIS

To ensure the validity of each factor, firstly, this research conducted exploratory factor analysis. As a result, the factor loading valued was over .4 and three factors were extracted and named as university satisfaction, university identification and professors' transformational leadership. The Eigen-values of all variables were above 1.0 and the cumulative variance explained was 70.573%. In addition, the result of reliability analysis, the Cronbach's α of all variables were above .9(university satisfaction=.900, university identification=.907, professors' transformational leadership=.979). Therefore, it showed high reliability. See Table 1.

Table 2 shows the results of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. University satisfaction is positively related to university identification ($r=.523$, $p<.001$) and professors' transformational leadership ($r=.448$, $p<.001$). Furthermore, university identification is positively related professors' transformational leadership ($r=.548$, $p<.001$).

Table 1. The results of exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis

Exploratory factor analysis				Reliability
KMO= .921	factor			Cronbach's α
	1	2	3	
SU1	.194	.649	.365	.900
SU2	.131	.776	.314	
SU3	.158	.793	.334	
SU4	.209	.603	-.054	

SU5	-.013	.749	.056	
SU6	.291	.665	.298	
SU7	.156	.764	.135	
SU8	.234	.802	.113	
UI1	.352	.296	.661	
UI2	.269	.140	.796	
UI3	.295	.325	.717	.907
UI4	.258	.210	.808	
UI5	.334	.194	.795	
UI6	.109	.112	.749	
PTL1	.801	.179	.243	
PTL2	.820	.113	.216	
PTL3	.803	.201	.218	
PTL4	.547	.071	.147	
PTL5	.781	.264	.161	
PTL6	.781	.115	.221	
PTL7	.810	.109	.162	
PTL8	.826	.042	.181	
PTL9	.854	.017	.114	
PTL10	.867	.093	.259	
PTL11	.851	.205	.173	.979
PTL12	.799	.193	.267	
PTL13	.809	.232	.179	
PTL14	.759	.332	.213	
PTL15	.859	.225	.167	
PTL16	.851	.138	.168	
PTL17	.841	.283	.169	
PTL18	.860	.248	.138	
PTL19	.897	.139	.132	
PTL20	.860	.170	.215	
Eigen value	14.106	5.253	4.636	
Variance(%)	41.489	15.449	13.635	
cumulative variance(%)	41.489	56.938	70.573	

(SU= university satisfaction, UI= university identification, PTL= professors' transformational leadership)

Table 2. The results of descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis

	Mean	Std.Deviation	SU	UI	PTL
SU	5.329	1.125	-		
UI	5.626	1.078	.523***	-	
PTL	5.527	.981	.448***	.548***	-

***= $p < .001$, **= $p < .01$, *= $p < .05$, †= $p < .1$

(SU= university satisfaction, UI= university identification, PTL= professors' transformational leadership)

The regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. According to empirical analysis, transformational leadership had a positive effect on university satisfaction ($\beta=.448, p<.001$). University identification also had a positive effect on university satisfaction ($\beta=.523, p<.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were accepted. The mediating effect of university identification was verified in sequence. Table 3 shows the results of the mediating effect of university identification between professors' transformational leadership and students' university satisfaction. In step 1, transformational leadership showed a positive effect on students' university satisfaction ($\beta=.448, p<.001$). When professors' transformational leadership and university identification were simultaneously introduced in the step 2, the effect of professors' transformational leadership in step 2 ($\beta=.231, p<.05$) was less than the effects in step 1 ($\beta=.448, p<.001$). Also, in step 2, university identification has a significant effect on university satisfaction ($\beta=.396, p<.001$). Therefore, students' university identification was found to have a partial mediating effect between professors' transformational leadership and students' university satisfaction. The Sobel test also showed students' university identification has a significant mediating effect ($Z=3.464, p<.001$). Hence, hypothesis 3 was accepted. See Table 3.

Table 3. The results of mediating effect of university identification

	Dependent: SU						
	step 1			step 2			VIF
	β	t	sig	β	t	sig	
PTL	.448	5.135	.000	.231	2.375	.019	1.429
UI				.396	4.068	.000	1.429
R^2 (<i>Adjusted R²</i>)		.201(.193)			.310(.297)		
ΔR^2 (Δ <i>Adjusted R²</i>)		-			.109(.104)		
F		26.367***			23.412***		

***= $p<.001$, **= $p<.01$, *= $p<.05$, †= $p<.1$

(SU= university satisfaction, UI= university identification, PTL= professors' transformational leadership)

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion and implications

This research examined the role of professors' transformational leadership as a way to improve students' university satisfaction for Chinese international students in Korea and investigated the mediating role of students' identification in this process. As the results, professors' transformational leadership has a positive effect on students' university identification and university satisfaction. University identification also has a positive influence on students' university satisfaction. Furthermore, it has been shown that university identification mediates the relationship between professors' transformational leadership and students' university satisfaction. Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 were all supported. Based on these results, this study suggests the following implications. First, professors' transformational leadership is an important antecedent to improving students' university identification and university satisfaction. Therefore, professors should provide the vision to students, motivate them to achieve their academic goals, raise their learning needs through mentoring, and counseling. In addition, professors should develop the student to challenge existing estimation methods and seek new changes in learning. Second, university identification is an important variable to increase the students' university satisfaction. It suggests that universities should be able to induce students to identify the school in general terms, especially by instructing the professors' transformational leadership.

5.2 Conclusion and implications

Limitations and suggestions for future research are as follows. First, the unity of samples has limitations in the generalization. This research conducted only for Chinese international students in Korea. In the future study, it is necessary to obtain samples of international students not only from China but also from other countries in Korea. Second, this study focused only on professors' transformational leadership to improve the variable of students' university satisfaction. Future research needs to examine the various leadership styles such as authenticity leadership, ethical leadership or perceived organizational support to improve students' satisfaction with the university.

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