



THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND WORKPLACE BULLYING ON SERVICE QUALITY

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Abstract:

Purpose: To identify the impact of transformational leadership and workplace bullying on service quality in Iraqi universities.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A questionnaire was developed to examine the relationship between the research variables. Based on a sampling method, 307 questionnaires were distributed in Iraqi universities, and the data were analyzed using SPSS V.24.

Results: The results revealed a knowledge gap regarding the nature of the relationship between transformational leadership, workplace bullying, and their impact on service quality. A statistically significant relationship between the research variables was confirmed. Therefore, the studied universities need to adopt transformational leadership and reduce workplace bullying to improve service quality.

Practical Implications: The findings can be utilized by understanding the relationship between transformational leadership, workplace bullying, and their impact on service quality, thereby increasing universities' chances of achieving their goals.

Originality/Value: This is the first study to combine the current variables (transformational leadership, workplace bullying, and service quality) into a single hypothetical model. This indicates a lack of prior research defining the relationship between these variables, whether at the level of Iraqi universities, other institutions, or in Arabic and foreign studies. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, workplace bullying, service quality, universities, reliability.



1. Research Methodology

Research Problem:

The research problem lies in understanding how transformational leadership and workplace bullying affect service quality. Although there are studies on the individual effects of transformational leadership and workplace bullying, there is a lack of research examining the interaction between these two factors and their combined impact on service quality. Based on the aforementioned problem, the current research seeks to answer the following theoretical and practical questions:

1. What is the impact of transformational leadership on the quality of services provided in institutions?
2. What is the impact of workplace bullying on service quality?

Research Objectives:

Based on the research problem and questions, the objectives can be outlined as follows:

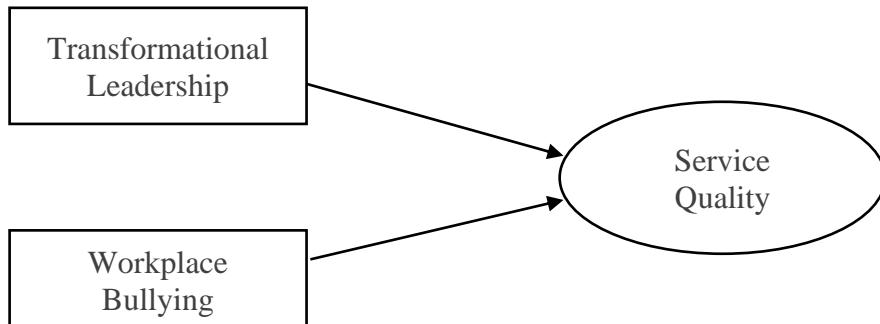
1. Develop a conceptual model of transformational leadership, workplace bullying, and service quality.
2. Determine the extent to which transformational leadership factors influence service quality.
3. Identify the negative effects of workplace bullying on service quality.
4. Identify strategies that transformational leaders can adopt to create a supportive work environment and reduce workplace bullying.

Research Hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between transformational leadership, workplace bullying, and service quality.
2. There is a statistically significant impact of transformational leadership on service quality.
3. There is a statistically significant impact of workplace bullying on service quality.

Research Hypothetical Model:

Based on the theoretical framework of transformational leadership and workplace bullying on service quality, and in light of the study's problem and objectives, a hypothetical model was designed to express the three main variables, as shown in Figure (1).





Research Sample

Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of faculty members in several Iraqi universities. Table (1) shows the characteristics of the sample.

Table (1): Sample Characteristics

Characteristics	Variables	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	188	61.2%
	Female	119	38.8%
Age	30 or younger	53	17.3%
	31-40	161	52.4%
	41-50	58	18.9%
Academic Qualification	51 or older	35	11.4%
	PhD	131	42.7%
	Master's	176	57.3%
Academic Title	Assistant Lecturer	67	21.8%
	Lecturer	68	22.2%
	Assistant Professor	63	20.5%
	Professor	109	35.5%

From Table (1), it is concluded that the respondents meet the appropriate conditions for answering the questionnaire items, leading to accurate and objective results.

Theoretical Framework

1. Service Quality

Achieving service quality stems primarily from internal service quality, which is based on customer satisfaction. It has been proven that both job satisfaction and customer satisfaction are linked to internal service quality, referred to as service antecedents. Experts have identified four main gaps:

1. The gap between customer perceptions of expectations and the service expected from the provider.
2. The gap between management's perceptions of customer expectations and the translation of these perceptions into service quality specifications.
3. The gap between translating perceptions into service quality specifications and service delivery.
4. The gap between service delivery and communication with consumers.

Service quality means there is a causal relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Umamaheswari, 2014: 713). According to Krajewski & Retizman (2005:96), it is "the internal or external customer's conviction that the product or service meets or exceeds their expectations." Service quality is described as a product-based approach that outlines the features products must have to meet customer expectations. The better the product features, the higher the quality (Aleksandra, 2017: 256). Render & Heizer (2001:190) describe it as "a set of characteristics and attributes of a product or service that affect the satisfaction of the customer's explicit and implicit needs." Etzel et al. (2001:293) define it as "intangible activities aimed at satisfying customer desires that are not necessarily related to the sale of another product or service." Kotler (2002:42) describes it as "an activity or benefit offered by one party to another without resulting in ownership. Service delivery may or may not be tied to a physical product." It is the customer's judgment about the excellence or superiority of an organization's service (Marakanon & Panjakajornsak, 2017: 25).

Dimensions of Service Quality:

Given the intangible nature of services, measuring their quality is more challenging compared to tangible goods. However, service seekers, like product seekers, retain a set of characteristics that form the basis for comparing



alternative services or implicit perceptions in the customer's mind that they cannot explicitly express. Most studies agree with Parasuraman et al. (1985) on the dimensions of service quality, which are as follows:

1. **Reliability:** The ability of the organization to deliver the promised service accurately and consistently.
2. **Responsiveness:** The willingness of staff to help customers and provide prompt service.
3. **Assurance:** The service is free from risk, doubt, or fear, often reflected in the provision of safety measures.
4. **Empathy:** The courtesy, respect, and friendliness shown by service providers to customers.
5. **Tangibles:** The physical appearance of facilities, equipment, and communication tools.

2. Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying refers to a form of violence experienced by an individual in their workplace. This phenomenon exists in many organizations worldwide and is viewed as physical or verbal threats. It can also stem from the work environment and is perpetrated by colleagues, supervisors, or managers. It is costly for companies in all aspects (Whitaker, 2012:115). It is defined as aggressive behavior repeated over time, characterized by vengeful and harsh attempts to humiliate or insult an individual or group in the workplace. Workplace bullying has numerous negative effects on professional and social life, including employees' decisions to leave their jobs, which primarily impacts the quality of products and services offered, as well as the company's reputation (Duru et al., 2017:1).

Effects of Bullying on Employees:

Workplace bullying is a serious problem in contemporary work life due to its negative impact on both employees and the workplace. It includes psychological and verbal abuse, gossip, isolation, and other negative behaviors (Neall & Tuckey, 2014:413). Studies have shown that bullying, whether in the street, workplace, or public places, has many adverse effects on individuals, causing physical and psychological health problems that reduce their efficiency, such as chronic fatigue, insomnia, and decision-making issues (Makuch et al., 2015:129).

3. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership takes a completely different intellectual approach at both macro and micro levels, representing a bottom-up (participatory) leadership style for organizations. Transformational leaders emphasize this approach by making subordinates endorse, believe in, and follow it. Subordinates view the leader's role as a manager who provides a strong link between the leader's behavior and organizational performance (Masi & Cooke, 2000:16). Transformational leadership guides and motivates subordinates toward setting goals by defining roles and professional requirements (Robbison, 2003: 223). Daft (2003:532) emphasizes that a transformational leader is someone with special abilities to achieve creativity and change. It is leadership that goes beyond providing incentives for desired performance to developing and encouraging subordinates intellectually and creatively, transforming their self-interests into a fundamental part of the organization's mission (Conger & Toegel, 2003:107). Ozaralli (2003:335) highlights the importance of transformational leadership for organizations through the following:

1. It increases subordinates' loyalty and commitment to their organizations and enhances their trust in top management.
2. It boosts subordinates' and customers' satisfaction and reduces subordinates' psychological stress.
3. It creates exceptional and influential leaders, which in turn enhances organizational performance.
4. It is positively associated with long-term management as a tool for change.

Four Behaviors of Transformational Leadership (Avilo & Bass, 2001):

1. **Intellectual Stimulation:** Encouraging creativity and innovation among subordinates.
2. **Individualized Consideration:** Paying attention to the personal needs of subordinates.
3. **Charismatic Influence:** Inspiring admiration, respect, and trust among subordinates.
4. **Inspirational Motivation:** Motivating and inspiring subordinates by giving meaning and challenge to their work.

Practical Framework

(There is a statistically significant impact of both transformational leadership and workplace bullying on service quality) Table (2) shows the paths of the main hypothesis, standardized and non-standardized estimates, standard error, critical ratio, and significance level. The table indicates a positive and statistically significant impact of transformational leadership and workplace bullying on service quality. The standardized regression coefficients for the impact of transformational leadership and workplace bullying on service quality were



(0.54 and 0.33), respectively. This means that service quality in the studied universities will change by (0.87) if transformational leadership and workplace bullying increase by one standard deviation collectively. This is supported by the significance of these paths, as shown by the critical ratio (C.R.) values in the table, which were (5.875 and 3.610), respectively, indicating significance. The model also shows that workplace bullying had the greatest impact on service quality, followed by transformational leadership. The coefficient of determination (R²) was (0.71), meaning that the two independent variables (transformational leadership and workplace bullying) collectively explain 71% of the changes in service quality. The remaining 29% is attributed to other variables not included in the study model. Thus, these results support the acceptance of the main hypothesis.

Table (2): Paths and Parameters Testing the Impact of Transformational Leadership and Workplace Bullying on Service Quality

Paths	Standardized Regression Weights	Non-Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Significance Level
Transformational Leadership → Service Quality	.335	.469	.130	3.610	***
Workplace Bullying → Service Quality	.545	.672	.114	5.875	***

RESULTS

Transformational leadership is one of the key factors contributing to improved service quality by enhancing employee performance and increasing their emotional and psychological commitment. The main mechanisms of this impact include:

1. **Employee Motivation:** Transformational leaders inspire employees to achieve personal and professional goals, enhancing their sense of meaning and purpose, which positively reflects on service quality.
2. **Service Climate Enhancement:** Transformational leadership contributes to creating a positive service climate within the organization, where employees feel supported and valued, improving their interaction with customers and increasing service quality.
3. **Employee Confidence:** Transformational leadership boosts employees' confidence in their abilities, enabling them to deliver high-quality services and better meet customer expectations.

The research also revealed that workplace bullying has a significant negative impact on service quality, affecting employees' psychological and physical well-being, which in turn affects their performance. The negative effects include:

1. **Reduced Job Performance:** Employees experiencing bullying suffer from decreased productivity and focus, impacting the quality of services provided to customers.
2. **Toxic Work Environment:** Bullying creates a toxic work environment that increases stress and anxiety levels among employees, leading to errors and a decline in service quality.
3. **Decreased Job Satisfaction:** Employees subjected to bullying lose job satisfaction, reducing their motivation to deliver high-quality services.

Transformational leadership can play a role in mitigating the effects of bullying by fostering a supportive work environment and encouraging employees to report and address bullying effectively.

The study showed that transformational leadership enhances service quality by improving the service climate and increasing employee commitment. On the other hand, workplace bullying leads to a decline in service quality due to its negative impact on employees' psychological and physical well-being.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Promote transformational leadership in institutions by training leaders in transformational leadership skills to improve service quality.
2. Implement strict policies to reduce workplace bullying and provide psychological support to affected employees.
3. Conduct further studies on the same topic in health institutions or product-based organizations, or expand the scope of the study in service-oriented institutions.

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