

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE READINESS TO CHANGE OF PUBLIC SECTOR IN YEMEN: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed at examining the effect of Transformational Leadership style on Employee Readiness to Change. Moreover, it examined the moderating effect of Affective Commitment to change on the relationship between Transformational Leadership style and Employee Readiness to Change in the context of public sector in Yemen. A survey questionnaire was utilized for collecting data and Partial least squares structural equations modeling (PLS SEM) was used for analyzing the data. The results were based on 387 samples collected from the employees of public sector in Yemen. The results proved that Transformational Leadership style has a significant effect on Employee Readiness to Change. Furthermore, Affective Commitment to change was confirmed to be a very strong moderator on the mentioned relationships. This study is very important as it provides empirical evidence on some of the predictors of change process.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Employee Readiness to Change, Affective Commitment to change public sector, Yemen

1. INTRODUCTION

Organisational change has widely become a concern to all organisations due to its significance in improving the organisation's capability to keep pace with current changes and challenges in the business environment. The internal and external factors such as globalization, turbulent business environment, economical changes and rapid technological advancements have compelled organisations to respond to these changes effectively in order to be sustainable and competitive in the market (Gelaidan, Al-Swidi, & Mabkhot, 2016). Change is a well-known observable fact that individuals and organisations experience in each day because it is dynamic (Battilana, Gilmartin, Sengul, Pache, & Alexander, 2010). It is stated that change has become one of the

most significant challenges for organisations and leaders at all levels (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell & Liu, 2008). However, the majority of the changes initiatives are not successful as 70% of these changes fail (Vakola, 2014). The lack of strategy, lack of top management support, lack of trust, lack of ineffective communication plans, lack of change management skills, and strong resistance to change are among the obstacles of the changes initiatives' success (Vakola, Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2004).

Moreover, it is claimed that the process involved in implementing changes are sometimes difficult and could only lead to partial success (Kwahr & Lee, 2008). In most cases, employees generally might be ready to support changes unless they face difficulties (Armenakis, & Bedeian, 1999; Bernerth 2004; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). In accordance with this, Fullan (1991) proposed that the employees must be considered in favour of organizational changes. Additionally, institutions are required to acknowledge the diverse understandings, beliefs and expectations of their workers (Getzels & Guba, 1957). According to Appelbaum, St-Pierre and Glavas, (1998), strategies like the organisation's hierarchy, mission, vision, motivation, support group, and management-oriented goals are crucial and needed for successful change in an organization includes. If these factors are not well strategized, changes may not be successful due to employees' unwillingness to change. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the employees should be ready to support for change.

Tichy and Devanna (1986) stated that transformational styles of leadership can be a catalyst in a changing operation process; where leaders can develop the acceptance and awareness level of the change among their subordinates. Therefore, due to the advantages of transformational leadership, application of this type of leadership should be an important goal in organizations. Shamir, House & Arthur (1993) suggested that leaders of the organisations are required to seek higher degree of organizational commitment. When employees are confined to the objectives of the organization, they tend to perform actions toward supporting the organization, even if these activities are not really of priority (Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 1999). Additionally, when corporate perceptions are engulfed and prevailed in the organization, employees tend to accept the organization more and the outcome would be increased loyalty, commitment and decisions that support the organization's goals (Deetz et al, 1999). Therefore, developing commitment among employees is relevant for change process.

Among the other dimensions of commitment construct, the affective dimension, has been acknowledged to have the strongest association with the work outcomes (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch., & Topolnytsky, 2002). Moreover, a study conducted by Rivkin, Diestel and Schmidt (2015) concluded that affective commitment is a strong moderator on the link between day-specific self-control demands and psychological well-being in Germany organisations. Given these significant effects, there are more insights need to be revealed regarding the link

between transformational leadership, affective commitment to change and employee readiness to change. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the moderating effect of affective commitment to change on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee readiness to change in the context of public sector in Yemen.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Readiness to change

In general, readiness to change reflects organization members' intentions and attitudes towards a change and as well the organization's capability to carry out the change successfully. According to Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder, (1993), readiness to change is a cognitive precursor to resistive or supportive behavior to a change process. Scholars such as Rafferty and Simons (2006) and Susanto (2008) defined readiness as an intention, behavior, attitude, and belief in respect to the degree at which the change is required and the organizational ability to successfully implement it. According to Bernerth (2004), it is the perception of an individual about the change that indicates the readiness to change one's thought. In order to assume a positive perception about organizational change, employee should be able to first acknowledge the present state of the organization and its environment so as to understand the past and potential future goals.

According to Smith (2005), individuals are important predictors towards change because they are the ones who will either accept or reject the change. Similarly, Jones Jimmieson, and Griffiths (2005) defined readiness for change as the degree at which employees perceived the need for organizational change, which can also be interpreted as the degree to which the change is accepted. Beliefs that employees have about whether they think they will be able to implement the proposed change, whether they perceive that the intended change is suitable for the organization, whether they perceive that the leaders are committed to the intended change, and finally whether they see the proposed change as being beneficial to organizational members. These beliefs are grouped in four dimensions known as change-specific efficacy, appropriateness, management support and personal valence. This view has been employed by the current study.

Hence, it is important to examine individual's readiness at the beginning of any change plan. When employees are faced with a major organizational change, they normally go through a process of reaction in order to protect themselves from change if they thought it will harm them. The effect of change on individuals can be of different forms regardless of its type. Degree of resistance or acceptance usually depend on the kind of change, for instance, resistance to technological change is usually less than that of social change.

2.2 The Concept of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership can be viewed as “the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organisation members and building commitment for the organisation’s mission or objectives” (Yukl, 1989). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) stated that transformational leadership increases the area of effective freedom, the realms of consciousness and the area for work intention. transformational leadership motivates the followers to work for transcendental goals as opposed to immediate selfinterests and for self-actualization's achievement as opposed to safety and security (Avolio & Bass 1988; Burns,1978). According to Burns (1978) transformational leadership can be seen as a way to raise an organization’s need for change to a higher level of motivation and development. Bass (1985,1990a) identified that transformational leadership focuses on the behaviour of employees that may affect their behaviour towards the organisation as it can change the essential values, beliefs and attitudes of the subordinates.

Burns (1978) defined a transformational leader as “one or more persons engaged with others in any way that leaders and followers increase the level of motivation and morality”. Transformational leadership is concerned with the individuals needs while striving to realize common goals, whereas transactional leadership is the unification of these respective goals, values and motives in the common aim for higher goals. This style of leadership always encourages subordinates to search for new methods in carrying out their job from inspirational motivation to intellectual stimulation. The transformational leadership can be considered as a multidimensional construct that has four dimensions, namely idealized influence leadership, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

2.3 The Concept of Affective Commitment to change

According to Sheldon (1971), commitment is a positive estimation of the organization and the organizations’ goals. Commitment can be separated into two concepts; attitude and behavior (Johnston, Parasuraman, Furell & Black, 1990). It can also be viewed as a function of individual behavior and that can be transferred to become committed to the organization goal (Becker, 1960). Another viewpoint says that commitment as feeling of obligation by exerts effort towards organizational goals (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). In another perspective, commitment is seen to be an active and positive attitude towards the betterment of the organization (Johnston et al., 1990). Porter et al. (1974) classified organizational commitment into three; first is a strong acceptance and belief of organizations’ values and goals, second is the readiness to spend utmost degree of one’s energy for the betterment of the organization, and lastly is a powerful anxiousness to retain in the organization.

Specifically, commitment to change can be defined as “a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). They claimed that a force that binds an individual to this course of action can reflect (i) a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits (affective commitment to change), (ii) a recognition that there are costs associated with failure to provide support for the change (continuance commitment to change), and (iii) a sense of obligation to provide support for the change (normative commitment to change). That is, employees can feel bound to support a change because they (want to), (have to), and/or (ought to)” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) also claimed that the “core essence” of commitment must be same irrespective of the goal of that commitment. Furthermore, it is observed that the benefit of commitment in an organization is practically to ensure the achievement of the desired outcome. Meyer and Allen (1997) stressed that "commitment is arguably one of the most important factors involved in employees’ support for change initiatives". For the current study, affective commitment to change is employed as it has been reported to be the strongest dimension among the other commitment dimensions (Meyer et al., 2002).

2.4 Research Framework and Hypotheses Development

The research framework of the study is underpinned by the Lewin’s Three-Steps Change model (1951), which depends mainly on three steps. According to Lewin's model, the first step in Lewin’s change model is unfreezing which is very crucial to the to the other two steps to undergo with success change. Unfreezing, changing readiness, is to create new conception for people before beginning with change by getting old behavior eradicated first. The employees within organisations should be prepared well for the change and ideally become supporters for this change. The second step is movement or change which is associated with the change implantation process where employees adopt the new ways of operating. The third step is refreezing, which is an essential step for the change sustainability. The main objective of the study is to examine the moderating effect of affective commitment to change on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee readiness to change. The research framework of the study is displaced in Figure 1 below.

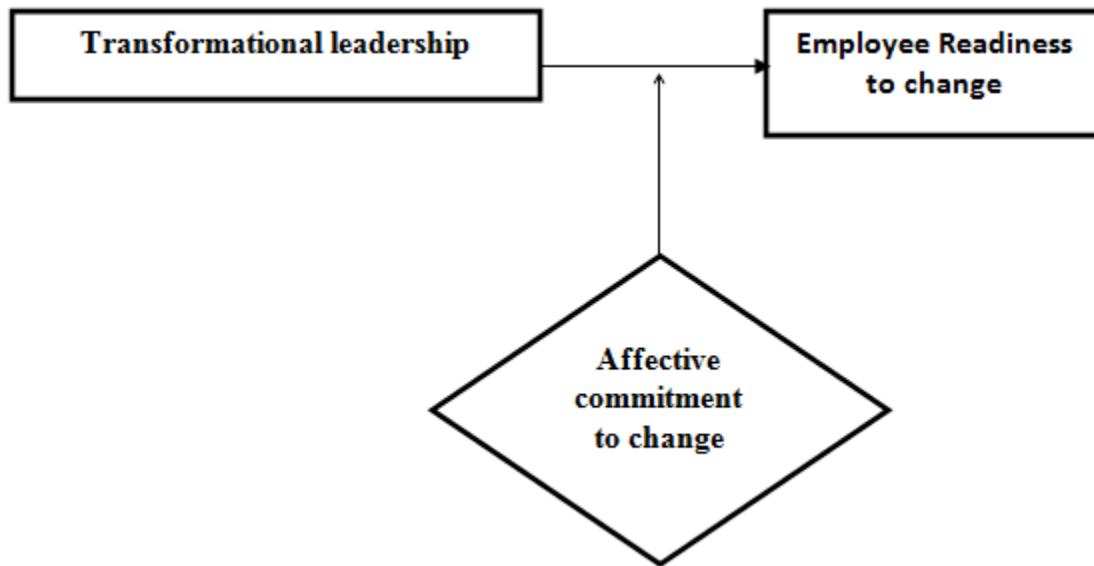


Figure 1: The research framework of the study

In general, leadership behavior is a primary factor in enhancing the attitudes of the followers towards obtaining the organizational goals (Gelaidan et al. 2016). Therefore, the role of leaders is to direct and form the attitudes of the employees to improve the performance of organisations, for example, by making them ready for the change process and inspiring them to support it. It is also argued that trust in management is a necessary condition to minimize the resistance to change among the employees (Vakola, 2014). This argument is supported by many scholars such as Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2003) and Kiefer (2005). Specifically, transformational leadership is claimed to generate positive relationships with employees (Whittington, Coker, Goodwin, Ickes, & Murray, 2009), obtain greater success in organizations comparing to other leadership styles (Johnson, 2009) and increase employees support to implement change (Herold et al., 2008). Moreover, literature revealed that only few research works examined the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee readiness to change (Gelaidan & Ahmed, 2013). Among these researches conducted by Lyons., Swindler and Offner, (2009), Reid (2011) and AL-Abrow and Mahdi Abrishamkar (2013) who concluded that transformational leadership style is a significant predictor of employee readiness to change. Thus, the following hypothesis can be suggested as follows:

H1: transformational leadership style has a significant effect on employee readiness to change.

Literature review revealed that employee commitment has been recognized as a crucial aspect of behavioral intentions to support organizational change (Fedor, Caldwell & Herold, 2006).

Specifically, AL-Abrow *et al.*, (2013) reported that commitment to change is a significant variable affecting employee readiness to change. Furthermore, some researches have indicated that there is positive relationship between the leadership styles and employee commitment to the organization (Herold *et al.*, 2008, Lo, Ramayah, Run & Voon, 2009). According to Meyer and Allen (1997), among the other commitment dimensions is affective commitment which means the employee's acknowledgment, emotional attachment, and involvement in the organisation. According to Meyer *et al.* (2002), affective commitment has more effect on *the work outcomes* than the other dimensions of commitment. Moreover, it has been found as a strong moderator on the relationship between *day-specific self-control demands* and psychological well-being. However, examining the moderating effect of affective commitment to change on the relationship between the leadership styles, including transformational and transactional leadership, and employee readiness to change still remains uncovered. Thus, the current study expects that affective commitment to change could be a moderator on the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee readiness to change in the public sector in Yemen. Thus, the hypothesis can be postulated as follow;

H2: Affective commitment to change is a moderator on the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee readiness to change

3. METHODOLOGY

To examine the research framework of the study, across-sectional design was employed which involves collecting data through a survey questionnaire only once to achieve the objectives of the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The target population of the current study was the employees in the Yemeni public sector particularly Finance Ministry, Education Ministry, Health Ministry and Public Work and Highway Ministry. The random sampling technique was used because it has the least bias and offers the most generalization, where every element has an equal chance of being selected as a subject from the population (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008). A total number of 768 questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents. Out of these 401 questionnaires, 387 questionnaires were used for the analysis. The measurements of the research framework constructs of the study were extracted from the previous studies of Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, (2007), Avolio and Bass (2004) and Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). A number of 25 questions used to measure employee readiness to change, 20 questions to measure transformational leadership style and 6 questions to measure affective commitment to change.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study followed the two-stage approach, the measurement and the structural model assessment, for evaluating the research framework of the study suggested by Valerie (2012). The measurement assessment is used to establish the construct validity and reliability while the

structural model assessment is used to evaluate the quality of the model and test the hypothesized relationships.

4.1 Measurement Model Analysis

In order to evaluate the goodness of measurement, the construct, convergent, and discriminant validity should be assessed (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011). To establish the construct, all item loadings should be higher than .70. With regard to establish the convergent validity, the values of both Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha should be higher than .70. Moreover, the values of the average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed the cutoff value of 0.50. The results displayed in Figure 2 and Table 1 confirmed the construct validity and the convergent validity establishment.

Figure 1: Items loadings and R² value

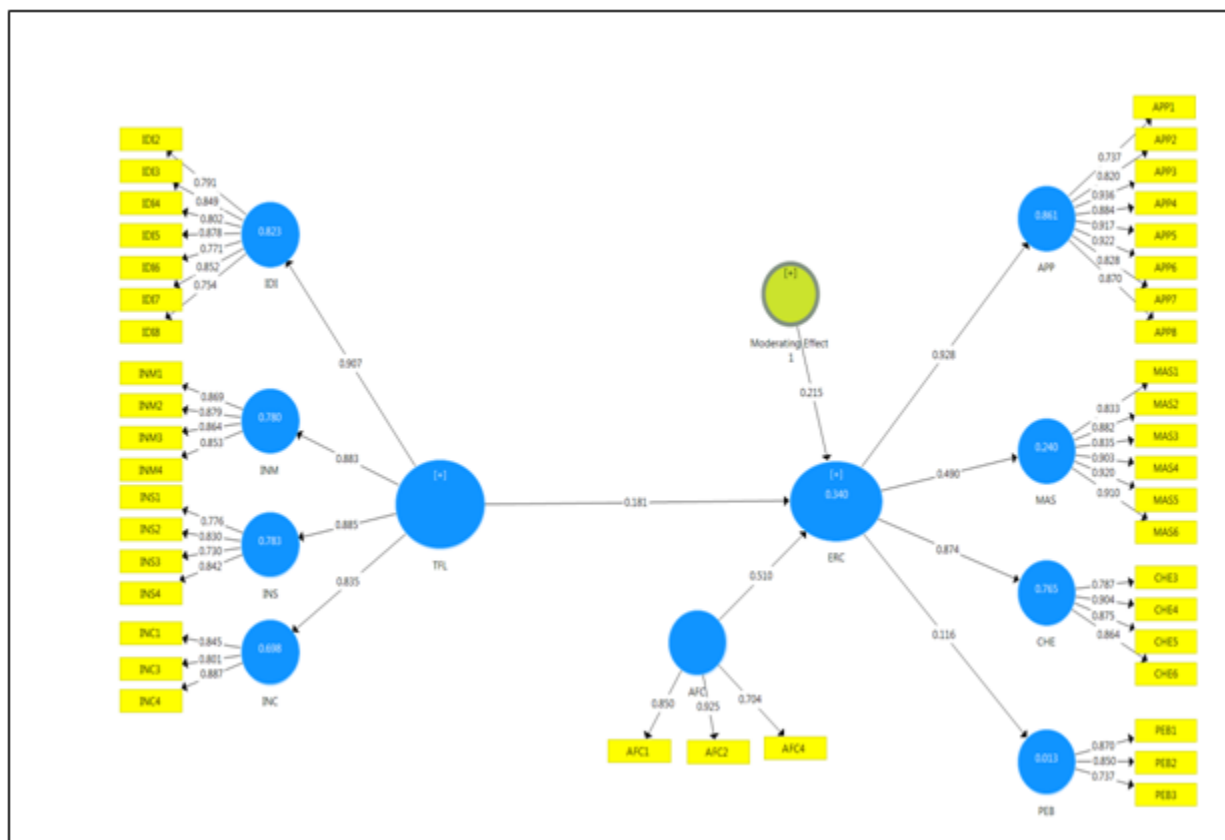


Table 1: The Content and Convergent Validity Test

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR ^a	AVE ^b
Affective Commitment	AFC1	0.850	0.779	0.869	0.691
	AFC2	0.925			
	AFC3	0.704			
Appropriateness	APP1	0.737	0.952	0.960	0.751
	APP2	0.820			
	APP3	0.936			
	APP4	0.884			
	APP5	0.917			
	APP6	0.922			
	APP7	0.828			
	APP8	0.870			
Change Efficacy	CHE3	0.787	0.880	0.918	0.737
	CHE4	0.904			
	CHE5	0.875			
	CHE6	0.864			
Idealised influence	IDI2	0.791	0.915	0.932	0.664
	IDI3	0.849			
	IDI4	0.802			
	IDI5	0.878			
	IDI6	0.771			
	IDI7	0.852			
Individualised Consideration	INC1	0.845	0.799	0.882	0.714
	INC3	0.801			
	INC4	0.887			
Inspirational Motivation	INM1	0.869	0.889	0.923	0.751
	INM2	0.879			
	INM3	0.864			
	INM4	0.853			
Intellectual Stimulation	INS1	0.776	0.806	0.873	0.633
	INS2	0.830			
	INS3	0.730			
	INS4	0.842			
	MAS1	0.833	0.942	0.954	0.776
	MAS2	0.882			
	MAS3	0.835			

Management Support	MAS4	0.903			
	MAS5	0.920			
	MAS6	0.910			
Personally Beneficial	PEB1	0.870	0.790	0.861	0.674
	PEB2	0.850			
	PEB3	0.737			

To confirm the discriminant validity, the study followed the criterion suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). It is based on comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) values of the constructs with the correlations between the constructs. As shown in table 2, the results revealed that the square root of AVE, representing the diagonal elements, was higher than all other off-diagonal elements. Therefore, it can be concluded that discriminant validity of the model is confirmed. In general, the measurement model of the current study is adequate.

Table 2: Correlation and Discriminant Validity

	AFC	APP	CHE	IDI	INC	INM	INS	MAS	PEB
AFC	0.831								
APP	0.526	0.867							
CHE	0.403	0.814	0.859						
IDI	0.130	0.187	0.140	0.815					
INC	0.006	-0.114	-0.122	0.641	0.845				
INM	0.184	0.131	0.100	0.714	0.680	0.866			
INS	0.068	-0.001	-0.033	0.694	0.782	0.747	0.796		
MAS	0.165	0.199	0.191	0.624	0.563	0.581	0.531	0.881	
PEB	-0.098	-0.029	-0.037	0.089	0.080	0.134	0.059	0.380	0.821

AFC= Affective Commitment, APP= Appropriateness, CHE= Change Efficacy, IDI= Idealised influence, INC= Individualised Consideration, INM= Inspirational Motivation, INS= Intellectual Stimulation, MAS= Management Support, PEB= Personally Beneficial.

4.2 Structural Model Analysis

The R² values, the predictive relevance of the model and the level and significance of the path coefficients were used to assess the structural model based on the recommendation of (2010), Hair *et al.* (2011) and Valerie (2012). The results in Table 4 show that the R² value of Employee

Readiness to Change is 0.34 which indicates that 34% of the variance of the Employee Readiness to Change is explained by the Transformational Leadership styles and Affective Commitment to Change. This value is considered substantial based on the criterion of Cohen (1988). The results also show that the cross-validated redundancy is greater than zero which indicates that the research framework of the study has an adequate prediction quality based on the criterion of Fornell and Cha (1994).

Table 4: Predictive Quality Indicators

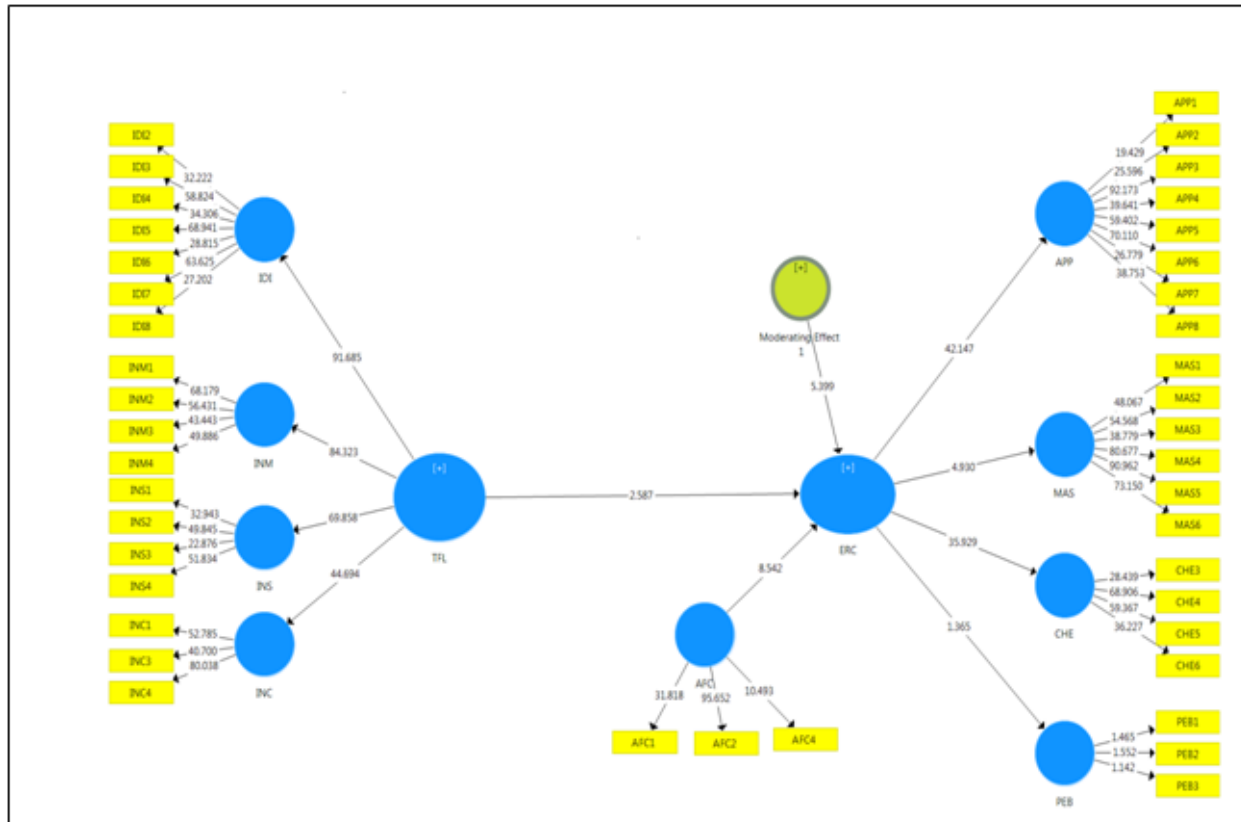
Variable	Variable Type	R square	Cross-Validated Redundancy	Cross-Validated Communality
Employee Readiness to Change	Endogenous	0.340	0.111	0.311

As depicted in Figure 3 and Table 5, the results confirmed the significant effect of Transformational Leadership styles on Employee Readiness to Change in the Yemeni public sector ($\beta = 0.340$, $t = 0.13.58177$, $p < 0.001$). They also revealed that Affective Commitment to change moderates the relationship between Employee Readiness to Change ($\beta = 0.340$, $t = 0.13.58177$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, it can be concluded that H1 and H2 are supported.

Table 5: Hypothesis testing results

No.	Hypothesis Path	Path Coefficient	T Value	P Value	Decision
H ₁	Transformational Leadership style -> Employee Readiness to Change	0.181	2.587	0.010	Supported
H ₂	Moderating Effect of Affective to change on the relationship between Transformational Leadership style and Employee Readiness to Change	0.215	5.399	0.000	Supported

Figure 3: The significance of Factor Loadings and Path Coefficient



5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study carried out to examine the effect of Transformational Leadership style and Employee Readiness to Change. It also examined the moderating effect of Affective Commitment to change on the relationship between Transformational Leadership style and Employee Readiness to Change in the context of public sector in Yemen. The findings of the study confirmed that the significant direct effect of Transformational Leadership style on Employee Readiness to Change. This result is consistent with prior research works such as Lyons, *et al* (2009), Reid (2011) and Al-Abrow *et al.* (2013). Additionally, Affective Commitment to change moderates significantly the relationship between Transformational Leadership style and Employee Readiness to Change. This indicates that the public sector officials should pay more attention to the practices of Transformational Leadership style in order to increase the readiness of employees to the change process. Affective commitment to change is also very crucial as it helps in enhancing the influence of Transformational Leadership style on Employee Readiness to Change.

This study has theoretical and practical implications contributes which can be very important for scholars and practitioners. It contributes significantly to the knowledge by examining the moderating effect of Affective Commitment to change on the relationship between Transformational Leadership style and Employee Readiness to Change. It can be considered as a guide to the officials in the public sector of Yemen as the transformational leadership and affective commitment to change found to be crucial variables affecting employee readiness to change. It can open a field for future research in the area of change management by examining affective commitment to change with other leadership styles such as transactional leadership style. Moreover, commitment to change can be used as a moderator in the relationship between leadership styles and readiness to change as well. More studies can be conducted in other contexts including other countries and industries which may provide new conclusions.

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