“Public servants’ perception of leadership style and its impact on organizational commitment”

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PUBLIC SERVANTS' PERCEPTION OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND ITS IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Abstract

Lebanon is facing an unprecedented political and economic crisis. Consequently, the country now urgently needs more than ever committed public managers, more involved and more effective in their work responsibilities to enhance public sector performance and reduce the consequences of the crisis. Little research has been done on the role of leadership in promoting organizational commitment in the public sector in Lebanon. Thus, referring to the leadership full range theory, this study aims to investigate the association between leadership styles and organizational commitment with the mediating role of Leader-member exchange (LMX). It further aims to examine the relationships between gender, leadership style, LMX and organizational commitment in the Lebanese public context.

Data were collected via an online survey on a sample composed of 132 middle managers working in six public administrations in Lebanon. Linear and multiple regression analyses were carried out to test the direct and indirect effect of leadership styles on organizational commitment. The results indicated that both two styles of Bass are positively correlated with organizational commitment. The results also revealed a significant relationship between public servant gender and the quality of his relationship with the leader. Moreover, results showed that LMX doesn't mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment, although it partially mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and organizational commitment. This study contributes to understanding of the mechanisms of developing organizational commitment through leadership styles. It also has implications for public service recruitment and training policies.

Keywords transactional leadership, transformational leadership, laissez-faire leadership, organizational commitment, leader-member exchange, gender, public sector, Lebanon

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INTRODUCTION

In the current competitive environment, leadership and commitment are being recognized as "the key assets of high-performance organizations" (Yozgat et al., 2013 cited in Silva et al., 2019, p. 292). According to Balci (2003), employees with a high level of commitment are more productive, more loyal, handle more work responsibilities, and consequently tend to contribute more to organizational goals. They surpass their normal job requirements and further develop an organizational citizenship behaviors and positive work outcomes (Perryer et al., 2010).

Leadership can be largely defined as "the relationship between an individual and a group built around some mutual interest wherein the group behaves in a manner directed or determined by the leader" (Rehman et al., 2012, p. 1). Therefore, leadership may play a crucial role in developing organizational commitment.

Moreover, specific relations may be developed between a leader and each of his followers during the life of the organization. Leader-member exchange (LMX) can be an important theoretical perspective to examine the relationship between leadership styles and commitment. However, few researches have considered leader-member exchange as a mediator between leadership style and the development of commitment to the organization (Keskes et al., 2018; Lo et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Lebanon is facing many macroeconomic issues, social problems and many politic challenges. The country is suffering from an excessive budgetary crisis and unprecedented liquidity problems. After the 17th of October 2019 revolution, the public sector in Lebanon is more than ever at the core of political debate in the country. Public leaders were accused by the public of engaging in behaviors, which lack ethics, commitment, seriousness at work, and of aggravating consequently the financial crisis of the country. In this challenging environment, the public sector is likely to play a vital role in the economic improvement and the resolution of the financial crisis. Thus, public servants must assume more responsibilities and develop more commitment through their work in the public administration. In this context, it is important to explore the role of Lebanese public leaders in promoting organizational commitment, leading the public sector to higher organizational performance, and consequently rescuing the country from the collapse. This raises the following questions: How leadership styles could influence organizational commitment of Lebanese public servants? Which style of leadership could promote the organizational commitment of public servants? What role the quality of the relation with the leader could play in this area?

Hence, in the first part, this paper will present the concept of leadership styles according to the full range leadership theory and the concept of organizational commitment. Then, it will examine the relationship between the two concepts. Finally, it will discuss the role of the theory of leader-member exchange (LMX) as a potential mediator between leadership styles and organizational commitment. The second part, the aim of the research, presents the hypotheses and the method, followed by the result of the quantitative study, the discussion of the results and the conclusion.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership represents an essential part of research conducted in management and organizational behavior. Bass (1990) defines leadership as the ability to influence the attitudes and behaviors of individuals within a group and among group members to achieve the desired objectives. According to Robbins and Coulter (2009), leadership is a process of influencing people towards achieving individual and organizational goals.

Thus, leadership is the capacity to influence, motivate and allow others to contribute to the efficiency and success of an organization (House et al., 2002). Effective leadership, by highlighting the importance of the work accomplished by employees, positively affects motivation at work and incites individuals to perform tasks according to the leader's expectation (Fullen, 2001).

Dominant approach in leadership literature distinguishes between two styles of leadership such as transactional and transformational (Bass, 1990). Recent research considers three distinct styles of leadership, namely transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership, which has been widely studied in research (Rehman et al., 2012).

1.1. Transformational leadership

During the last 30 years, transformational leadership has been central for leadership research (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). According to Bass (1985) cited in Molines (2010, p. 4), "transformational leadership is defined as the leader's ability to transform the energies deployed by his collaborators so as to bring them to be more motivated in achieving the desired results and objectives, both individually and organizationally".

Research generally associates four dimensions with this style of leadership (Bass, 1985, 1990): inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and individualized consid-

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eration. Inspirational motivation involves articulating a vision while demonstrating optimism and confidence in the ability of a leader to achieve this vision. According to Bass (1985), inspirational motivation occurs when a leader uses his emotional abilities to influence his followers. Idealized influence (charisma) refers to the leader's ability to trigger identification and imitation behavior among subordinates. Thus, a charismatic leader commands admiration, respect and confidence (Avolio & Bass, 1995 cited in Molines, 2010, p. 6). Intellectual stimulation can be defined as the leader's ability to encourage his followers to innovate (Bass, 1985; Avolio & Bass, 1995). Thus, this dimension of transformational leadership encompasses behaviors that increase subordinates' awareness of problems and develops their capacity to solve these problems by adopting new approaches (Bass, 1985 cited in Molines, 2010). Finally, individualized consideration refers to the leader's ability to consider the individual needs of each one of his followers (Sashkin, 2004 cited in Molines, 2010). Bass (1985) cited in Molines (2010) found that individualized consideration appears when a leader develops an orientation towards his team, shows attention to his followers and responds appropriately to their personal needs. Therefore, he promotes a two-way communication with them. According to Bass (1985, 1990) cited in Molines (2010, p. 6), "transformational leaders have the particularity to go beyond relational exchanges and to motivate others to go beyond expectations, which allows them to obtain a better performance from their followers".

1.2. Transactional leadership

The transactional leadership style has been broadly examined in organizational research. This concept comes from the works of Burns (1978) who states that transactional leaders are those who motivate their followers by appealing to their own interests.

According to Bass (1985), the transactional leader clarifies to his subordinates what he expects from them, what their responsibilities are, the tasks to be accomplished and the rewards they can expect if they meet their obligations. It is based on an exchange process in which the leader rewards his followers according to their efforts and performance. According to Burns (1978), the transactional leader mostly considers how to preserve and increase the quality of performance of his followers.

Some researchers have distinguished between three types of transactional leadership: contingent rewards, management-by-exception active and management-by-exception passive (Antonakis et al., 2003). Contingent rewards refer to the leader clarifying the tasks that need to be achieved and uses rewards when good results are achieved. The management by exception is whereby the leader confirms that his followers meet predetermined standards. The management-by-exception (passive) is based on the intervention of the leader only when the problems arouse or worsen. As for the management by exception (active), it refers to leaders who continuously monitor and evaluate the work of their followers in order to guarantee that the predetermined standards are met.

1.2.1. Laissez-faire leadership

The laissez-faire leadership abdicates responsibilities and avoids making decisions (Robins, 2009). Laissez-faire is uninvolved in the work of a unit. This style represents the behaviors of leaders who "give their follower complete freedom, provide necessary materials, participate only to answer questions and avoid giving feedback" (Bartol & Martin, 1994, p. 412). They allow their followers to work in their own way, leaving them the power to make their own decisions about work without interfering.

It is difficult to defend this style of leadership or to predict a direct relationship between this style and positive work behaviors unless the followers are experts and well-motivated scientists at work.

It has been exposed what the researchers call the Full Range Leadership Model; the following section will elucidate the concept of organizational commitment and it is key role in the realization of work positive outcomes.

1.3. Organizational commitment

The concept of organizational commitment is a concept that has been widely studied and examined in the management and organizational be-

havior literature. It represents a main factor in the relationship between individuals and organizations (Rehman, 2012). According to Khurram et al. (2014), organizational commitment is considered an important and essential element that increases or strengthens the individual's attachment to his organization.

Previous research showed that committed employees play a crucial role in the organization and contribute to achieving several beneficial outcomes (Keskes et al., 2018). According to Mowday (1998) cited in Rehman et al. (2012), employees are viewed as committed to an organization if they willingly want to continue their positive association with the organization and make positive effort to achieve organizational goals. Thus, they are well prepared to put considerable effort into their work and would help to improve the effectiveness and the performance of their organization.

Several definitions have been given in the literature to the concept of organizational commitment. One of the famous definitions is that provided by Mowday et al. (1982) who presented organizational commitment as a general force leading an individual to identify himself and to commit to the organization in which he works. Furthermore, several antecedents of organizational commitment have been identified in the literature. According to pervious research, leadership styles are important predictors of organizational commitment (Asgari et al., 2008; Bass, 1985 cited in Othman et al., 2013),

Hence, how have the links between leadership styles and organizational commitment been treated in the literature?

1.3.1. Leadership and organizational commitment

Several factors have been identified in the literature as determinants of organizational commitment. However, leadership style could be one of the most important factors that promote employee organizational commitment (Webb, 2011). In fact, leaders represent the organization and they can influence employees' emotional identification with the organization, their level of organizational commitment and other positive work behaviors (Meyer et al., 1993).

Leadership theories emphasize the need for leaders to maintain relationships with those they lead in order to stimulate their involvement and therefore their commitment and retention at work (Saher et al., 2013). Thus, the relationship between leadership and commitment seems evident (Silva et al., 2017).

Previous research often associates between leadership transformational and organizational commitment. Thus, Lee (2005) demonstrated that transformational leadership style is positively correlated with organizational commitment. In fact, transformational leadership helps to increase the trust, commitment and team performance (Arnold et al., 2001). Transformational leaders motivate their followers to think critically and encourage their commitment by getting them to solve problems creatively while understanding their needs (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Moreover, Keskes et al. (2018) have found that transformational leadership is positively associated with organizational commitment since it helps the subordinates to build up a relational capital with the leaders, which makes their withdrawal from the organization very costly for them. In addition, it promotes the development of emotional relationships with leaders, which subsequently leads to the perception by the subordinates of an obligation towards the organization.

Furthermore, the relationship between transactional leadership and organizational commitment also appears in the literature. Thus, Othman et al. (2013) highlighted a positive relationship between the transactional and transformational leadership styles of top managers at public universities in Nigeria and the organizational commitment of employees. These results are consistent with those identified by Asgari et al. (2008). These authors confirmed that transactional and transformational leadership styles are equally important for the development of employees' organizational commitment and the contribution of managers to the achievement of organizational goals.

In addition, Hayward et al. (2004) have highlighted a moderate positive relationship between the "management-by-exception" dimension of transactional leadership and organizational commitment. Lee and Yu (2004) have also found that both

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styles of transformational and transactional leadership have positive relationships with the results achieved in effective organizations.

1.3.2. Leader-member exchange relationship (LMX)

The Leader-member exchange (LMX) is a relational approach to leadership that was developed by Graen and Uh-Bien (1995). The LMX goes beyond the characteristics of leaders and essentially focuses on the individual relationship between a leader and his follower. It thus adopts this dyadic relationship as its level of analysis. The LMX theory conceptualizes leadership as a process that is centered on the interactions between the leader and his followers (Yukl et al., 2009). These interactions influence the quality of the relationship with the leader. Thus, the leader maintains different relationships (of variable level of quality) with each of his subordinates. A high-quality relationship is characterized by professional respect, loyalty and affection (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

Furthermore, LMX is based on the role theory of Graen and Scandura (1987) and the social exchange theory of Blau (1964). These theories help to explain the impact of LMX relationship on the attitudes and the behaviors of subordinates at work. According to Hui et al. (2004), the leader clearly conveys role expectations to his followers, then he provides them with both tangible and intangible rewards that meet expectations, fulfilled or not. A reciprocal process is established where each party brings different resources. As Saint-Michel and Wielhorski (2011, p. 4) point out, "the expected roles of the leader and the follower are constantly negotiated" and this exact "negotiation defines the quality and maturity of the LMX relationship". Thus, the interpersonal exchanges between the leader and his followers will influence the role type that the followers will play in the organization (Saint-Michel & Wielhorski, 2011).

1.4. The mediating role of LMX between Leadership styles and organizational commitment (OC)

LMX refers to the social exchange theory, which is defined as a voluntary "reciprocation of favors" further elaborating that when one gives a favor, there is obligation to repay for this favor (Blau, 1964). In fact, leaders do not adopt the same style in their interactions with their followers and develop a different relationship with each of them. Consequently, the followers' reactions, perceptions and interpretations towards the leader's behaviors are different from each other.

As to the relation between leadership style and LMX, only few studies have examined the impact of certain behaviors and leadership styles on the quality of LMX (Yukl et al., 2009). Little attention has been paid in the literature to leadership styles as antecedents of the quality of LMX. This finding is more surprising since several recent studies have indicated that the leader's behavior plays a vital role in the quality of LMX (Dulebohn et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be concluded that the LMX theory, which has been considered as a relational approach (Graen & Uhl-bien, 1995), could be compatible with leadership behavior, which is relational in nature. Consequently, the relational behavior of leaders is positively correlated with the quality of the LMX.

Furthermore, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) found that the LMX relationship is more related to transformational leadership than to transactional leadership. In fact, the transformational leader is more able to convince his subordinates to accept an extension of their responsibilities in the organization because of his charismatic personality. Thus, the LMX relationship intensifies; the employees' motivation increases, and they exceed their own goals in favor of those of the organization. Ultimately, there is a strong correlation between transformational leadership and the LMX relationship.

As regards to the relation between LMX and organizational commitment (OC), recent research on the (LMX) theory focused more on the relationship between the quality of LMX and the positive outcomes for leaders, followers and the organization in general (Alshamasi, 2012). In fact, the quality of relationships between leaders and followers is currently considered as one of the most important factors necessary for the creation of healthy and lasting working relationships within the organizations (Wang et al., 2005).

Previous research has found that the quality of LMX contributes to the achievement of several

positive organizational outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors, work performance, job satisfaction and a stronger organizational commitment (Dulebohn et al, 2011). In fact, a good quality relationship generates positive attitudes among followers and pushes them to adopt more positive behaviors at work.

Taking these findings together, LMX can be seen as a mediator that influences the impact of leadership styles on organizational commitment. This relationship has not been much investigated in the previous research. In addition, most research on leadership has been conducted on private organizations in Western countries ((Rehman et al., 2012). Comparatively, few studies on leadership have been done in the public sector in developing countries (ElKordy, 2013; Rehman & Ali, 2012).

2. AIMS AND HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Referring to the full range leadership theory of Bass (1985, 1990), this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by two ways: firstly, by exploring the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment among managers in the Lebanese public sector; and secondly, by examining the mechanisms of development of organizational commitment through a leader-member-exchange approach. In addition, the study explores the role of female public managers and compares their leadership experiences and their organizational commitment to their male counterparts. In fact, women's equal participation and leadership create conductive environment for a better public administration and a better government[1]. During the last 20 years, the number of Lebanese women who have passed the entrance competition for leadership positions has considerably increased. Lebanese women are now playing a more active role in the public sector, although their involvement and their capacities still arouse doubts within a male dominated society.

While the general managers represent the top leadership of public sector, the heads of departments and the chief executives represent the middle management. The latter occupy "the middle land" of administrative hierarchy (Lebirhan, 2008b). They are facing the difficulty of managing front line employees, adopting strategies that motivate employees and walking in line of accomplishing the tasks assigned from top management, which could be politically sensitive (Appiah, 2016). Therefore, the middle management could play a pivot role in the restructuration inspired by the new public management. Furthermore, they are at the heart of change and tensions generated by the economic and the politics crisis affecting Lebanon. Thus, it is important to examine the perceptions of this category of public officers, the quality of their relationship with the top leadership and their organizational commitment.

Thus, based on the literature review and the context of the study, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

H1: Transformational leadership is positively correlated to the organizational commitment of Lebanese public employees.

H2: Transactional leadership is positively correlated to the organizational commitment of Lebanese public employees.

H3: The quality of the LMX relationship plays a mediating role in the positive relationship between the transformational leadership style and the organizational commitment of the employees.

H4: The quality of the LMX relationship plays a mediating role in the positive relationship between the transactional leadership style and the organizational commitment of the employees.

3. METHODS

The study adopts a quantitative approach. Data used for testing the research hypotheses was collected via an online survey. The participants

1 Gender diversity in the State: a development accelerator? Mckinsey and Company, UNDP, 2017.

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were selected from middle management working in different public administrations such as the Ministry of Finances, Economy and Trade, Public Health, Agriculture, Public Transport and court of Auditors. A randomized sample of public middle managers from the participating administrations is asked to complete a questionnaire containing a statement of confidentiality and items relating to their demographics characteristics (age, gender, education, and the tenure), their perceptions of their manager's leadership style, the quality of their relationship with their managers and their organizational commitment). A total of 132 completed questionnaires were obtained by the survey.

The questionnaire includes measures of leadership styles, leader-member exchange LMX and Organizational commitment. A shortened form of Bass's multi-factor leadership questionnaire was used in the research. The multi-factor leadership questionnaire is the most widely used instrument to measure transformational and transactional leadership in the literature (Ozaralli, 2003). The MLQ-6S includes 21 items measuring leadership behaviors. It incorporates three sub-scales of transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. Transformational leadership scale consists of 12 items, and it comprises of four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Each dimension consists of three items. Transactional leadership scale comprises six items and it regroups two dimensions: contingent reward and management by exception. Each dimension consists of three items. Laissez-faire leadership is one scale consisting of three items. The scales of leadership transformational, leadership transactional and laissez-faire leadership have a Cronbach alpha of 0.96, 0.84 and 0.6, respectively.

To measure the quality of the relationship between public managers and their superior, the multi-dimensional scale proposed by Liden and Maslyn (1998) was used. The Scale has an alpha Cronbach of 0.92. Finally, the scale developed by Mowdays et al. (1982) was used to measure organizational commitment. The scale consists of 15 items. It has a Cronbach alpha of 0.87

4. RESULTS

The data was analyzed using the latest SPSS statistical software. Pearson correlations were carried out to verify the correlations between leadership dimensions and LMX on the one hand, and on the other the correlations between leadership dimensions and organizational commitment. Multiple linear regressions were performed to examine the signification relationships in the research model.

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the profile of the demographics' characteristics of the participants. 57% of respondents were female and 43% were male. 10% of the respondents were younger than 30 years old, 44 % of the respondents were within the age brackets 30 to 40 years, 37% were between 40-50 years, and 9% were above 50 years. As for the educational level, a large percentage (51%) of respondents had master's degree, while only 2% had a baccalaureate certificate. It was revealed that eight respondents had less than five-year work experience, 28 respondents had work experience between 5 to 10 years, 25 respondents – from 10 to 15 years, 48 respondents – from 15 to 20 years, and 20 respondents had more than 20 years of work experience.

Table 1. Demographic variables

Demographic factors	Categories	Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	57	43%
	Female	75	57%
Age	< 30	13	10%
	30-40	58	44%
	40-50	49	37%
	Above 50	12	9%
Educational level	PHD	4	3%
	Master	67	51%
	BA/Bs	58	44%
	Baccalaureate	3	2%
Work experience	Less than 5 years	11	8%
	5-10 years	28	21%
	10-15 years	25	19%
	15-20 years	48	36%
	Above 20 years	20	15%

Table 2. Means and standard deviations

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Transformational leadership	3.43	1.01
Idealized influence	3.51	1.23
Inspirational motivation	3.51	1.00
Intellectual stimulation	3.37	1.09
Individualized consideration	3.34	0.95
Transactional leadership	3.45	0.86
Contingent reward	3.25	1.03
Management by exception	3.65	0.81
Laissez-faire leadership	3.31	0.86
Leader-Member Exchange – LMX	3.49	0.91
Organizational Commitment	3.32	0.66

As shown in Table 2, idealized influence (3.51) and inspirational motivation (3.51) show the highest means in transformational leadership. The management by exception shows the highest contribution to transformational leadership. The intercorrelations among the four dimensions of transformational leadership (Table 3) ranged from 0.78 to 0, 91 at $p < 0.01$.

Tables 3 and 4 show a positive correlation between transactional leadership and organizational commitment ($r = 0.612$; $p < 0.01$), as well as between transformational leadership and organizational commitment ($r = 0.616$; $p < 0.01$). Transformational leadership has a slightly higher correlation value with organizational commitment than transactional leadership. Laissez-faire leadership has a correlation less significant with OC than transformational leadership and transactional leadership ($r = 0.529$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 5 shows a significant difference between men and women when answering some of the questions (Idealized influence, Inspirational motivation, Individualized consideration, Management by exception and Leader-member exchange LMX) and not a significant difference when answering the other ones (Intellectual stimulation, Contingent reward, Laissez-faire leadership and Organizational Commitment).

Male managers interviewed seemed to maintain a better-quality relationship with their immediate superiors than female managers. They are also more aware than their female counterparts of the transformational behaviors of top leadership. Furthermore, in terms of the organizational commitment of public leaders, the results did not show a significant difference between men and women.

Table 3. Inter-correlations between study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Idealized influence	1.00								
Inspirational motivation	0.88**	1.00							
Intellectual stimulation	0.85**	0.91**	1.00						
Individualized consideration	0.78**	0.82**	0.86**	1.00					
Contingent reward	0.83**	0.89**	0.90**	0.87**	1.00				
Management by exception	0.73**	0.81**	0.72**	0.70**	0.73**	1.00			
Laissez-faire leadership	0.63**	0.66**	0.60**	0.60**	0.59**	0.70**	1.00		
Leader-member exchange LMX	0.83*	0.82**	0.82**	0.76**	0.78**	0.65**	0.61*	1.00	
Organizational Commitment	0.61*	0.57**	0.58**	0.55**	0.58**	0.55**	0.53*	0.57*	1.00

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; and *** $p < 0.00$.

Table 4. Correlations between transformational leadership, transactional leadership, LMX and OC

Pearson correlation	LMX	Organizational commitment
Transformational leadership	0.859**	**0.616****
Idealized influence	0.826**	0.608**
Inspirational motivation	0.817**	0.573**
Intellectual stimulation	0.825**	0.582**
Individualized consideration	0.763*	0.551*
Transactional leadership	0.775**	**0.612****
Contingent reward	0.779**	0.583**
Management by exception	0.647**	0.551**
Laissez-faire leadership	0.601*	**0.529***

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Table 5. Comparison between women and men's perceptions about leadership, LMX and organizational commitment

Variable	Means		*t*-test	p	Mean difference
	Men	Women			
Transformational leadership					
Idealized influence	3.842	3.262	2.830	0.005	580
Inspirational motivation	3.708	3.364	2.005	0.047	344
Intellectual stimulation	3.561	3.222	1.832	0.069	339
Individualized consideration	3.596	3.147	2.846	0.005	449
Transactional leadership					
Contingent reward	3.444	3.102	1.961	0.052	342
Management by exception	3.807	3.524	2.032	0.044	283
Laissez-faire leadership	3.462	3.191	1.846	0.067	271
Leader-member exchange	3.696	3.339	3.339	0.022	357
Organizational commitment	3.416	3.253	3.253	0.156	163

4.2. Regressions results

Linear and multiple regressions analyses were carried out to test a direct and indirect effect of leadership style on organizational commitment. Tables 6 to 10 present the results of the analysis.

The results of significance correlations in Table 3 and regression values shown in Tables 6 and 7 indicate that leadership transformational is positively related to organizational commitment ($B = 0.402$, SE = 0.045, $p < 0.01$). Only one dimension of transformational leadership, namely idealized in-

Table 6. Unstandardized coefficients for research models

Models	Direct and indirect relations	B estimate	SE
1	TransormLead à OC	0.402**	0.0045
2	TransormLeadàLMX	0.776**	0.041
3	LMXà OC	0. 414**	0.052
4	TransormLeadàLMXà OC	0.306	0.088
5	TransacLeadà OC	0.469**	0.053
6	TransacLead à LMX	0.822	0.059
7	TransacLeadà LMXà OC	0.320	0.083

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.00$.

Table 7. Model summary

Independent variable	R	*R* square	Adjusted *R*-squared	Std error of the estimate
Leadership styles	0.625	0.391	0.381	0.51544
Leadership transformational	0.616	0.380	0.375	0.51811
Leadership transactional	0.612	0.374	0.370	0.52034

Note: Dependent variable: organizational commitment.

Table 8. Regression results between the dimensions of leadership style and organizational commitment

Independent variable	Standardized beta
Idealized influence	0.334*
Inspirational motivation	0.293
Intellectual stimulation	0.180
Individualized consideration	-0.009
Contingent reward	0.188
Management by exception	0.190*
Laissez-faire leadership	0.152

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.00$.

fluence, was found to play a significant role in the contribution of leadership styles to organizational commitment (B = 0.344; $p < 0.05$) (Table 8).

Based on these results, *H1* was supported, indicating that when employees perceived more transformational leaders, they demonstrated more organizational commitment. Besides, transformational leadership is positively related to LMX (B = 0.776, SE= 0.041, $p < 0.01$). LMX is positively related to OC (B= 0.414, SE= 0.052, $p < 0.01$).

However, transformational leadership is not related to organizational commitment through LMX (B = 0.123; SE= 0.09; $p = 0.2$). As noted in Table 9, LMX doesn't mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Model 1 has a significant beta for transformational leadership ($p = 0.000$), which alone explains organizational commitment. Table 9 shows that when the supposed mediator LMX is introduced in model 4, transformational leadership still has a significant beta ($p = 0.001$), but LMX has not a significant one ($p = 0.207$). Thus, *H3* is rejected.

Results show that transactional leadership is also positively related to OC (B = 0.469; SE = 0.053; $p < 0.01$), *H2* is supported. One dimension of transactional leadership, namely management by exception, is found to have a significant impact on organizational commitment (B= 0.190, $p < 0.05$) (Table 8).

Furthermore, transformational leadership has a greater impact on organizational commitment (beta=0.227) than transactional leadership (beta =0.221).

Finally, when organizational commitment is regressed mutually on transactional leadership and LMX, Table 10 showed that LMX has a significant beta (B = 0.181, $p < 0.05$) and a significant beta for transactional leadership as well (B = 0.320, $p < 0.01$), although it was reduced in size. Thus, it can be concluded that LMX partially mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and organizational commitment. *H4* is partially accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings have indicated that LMX does not mediate the relationship between leadership transformational and organizational commitment, although it partially mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and organizational commitment.

In addition, the result revealed that both leadership styles of Bass (1990), transformational and transactional, have a direct impact on organizational commitment of Lebanese public managers. However, transformational leaders promote more than transactional leaders the organizational commitment of public managers. This is consistent with previous studies that have exhibited that transformational leaders are more effective in achieving higher commitment levels than transactional leaders (Lo et al., 2010; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003).

Table 9. Mediator effect of LMX between transformational leadership and OC

Model 4	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.842	.180		10.243	.000
TransormLead	.306	.088	.470	3.488	.001
LMX	.123	.097	.171	1.267	.207

Table 10. Mediator effect of LMX between transactional leadership and OC

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	sig
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Const	1.588	0.193		8.243	0.00
TransacLead	0.320	0.83	0.418	3.873	0.00
LMX	0.181	0.078	0.250	2.318	0.022

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Results have also shown that one dimension of transformational leadership, namely individualized influence has a strong impact on organizational commitment. This implies that charismatic leaders play a key role in developing public employees' commitment. Thus, when a public leader shows ethical behavior and represents a role model for his collaborators, he triggers imitation and identification behaviors among them (Bass, 1990). Similarly, one dimension of transactional leadership, namely management by exception, has a high significant impact on organizational commitment.

The study highlights some other results, such as the significance correlation between the gender of the manager and the quality of his relationship with his superior. In fact, male managers seemed more satisfied with their relationship with their immediate superior. Furthermore, they were more likely than the women to experience and perceive transformational behaviors of the top leaders of public organizations. These finding can be interpreted by the male nature of the Lebanese society. The perceptions of the society toward women and their capacities have slightly changed, although the number of women in public sector has considerably increased during the last 20 years. In fact, the female managers who succeeded to break the glass ceiling and occupy important leadership positions are supported by men or by the political parties to which they belong.

CONCLUSION

The perspective adopted in this study involves two leadership styles of Bass (1985), with their respective dimensions and their relationship with leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational commitment. It aims to examine the association between leadership styles and organizational commitment, with the mediating role of LMX within the Lebanese public organizations. It also investigates the impact of gender of Lebanese public managers on their perceptions of their leaders' behaviors, the quality of their relationships with their leaders and their organizational commitment.

The study has several theoretical and practical implications. Inevitably, it contributes to the increasing body of research on leadership and organizational commitment. It expands the understanding of the crucial role of leadership in developing organizational commitment. It contributes to the debate about the impact of leadership styles on OC by revealing how transactional leadership can develop the organizational commitment of employees through the quality of relations between leaders and their followers.

Furthermore, many authors have suggested that more attention should be paid to understand the mechanisms by which transformational leadership influences organizational commitment (Keskes et al., 2018). Surprisingly, the result shows that LMX does not mediate transformational leadership and LMX.

Moreover, the results of the study provide further support to the direct role of transformational leadership in contributing to organizational commitment (Elkordy, 2013; Lee, 2005). In addition, the results suggest that transformational leadership behaviors that focus more on values and principles (idealized influence) seem to be well received among the Lebanese public managers, contributing more to organizational commitment. This is in line with previous studies that revealed the role of idealized influence of leaders in engaging the collaborators and transforming their energies (Michaelis et al., 2009). These findings are particularly interesting in the public context. They give further support to the approach that insists on the spirit of public service in the public organizations (Greenleaf, 1991). According to this approach, the hierarchy is founded on the moral character of a leader, his devotion and his authenticity. Thus, public leaders should conjugate administrative efficiency, public service and ethics (Greenleaf, 1991).

Furthermore, the results are in line with previous research findings, which suggest that transformational and transactional leadership styles are both important for the development of organizational commitment (Hayward et al., 2004; Othman et al., 2013).

Finally, the results help to enrich the literature on leadership styles and organizational commitment in the Lebanese context, since little research has been done on this subject. It supports recent studies that have highlighted the role of transformational leadership in the development of commitment of employees in Arabic countries, like that of Mohamad (2012) in Egypt.

Furthermore, the study has various practical implications for the Lebanese public sector. Based on the outcomes of this study, leaders need to recognize that ethics and public services values are an important driver of organizational commitment. It highlights the importance of coaching public managers how to ensure a climate conductive to high level of commitment at work.

The findings have implications for the recruitment and training of Lebanese public managers. Human resource management needs to select public managers based on new criteria. Therefore, the interviewing process should change and include questions about transformational experiences of candidates and their relational skills. Furthermore, training interventions should place more emphasis on building transformational skills, and should develop high quality exchanges between leaders and followers in work settings. The current training programs are still focusing on theoretical courses and on the rigorous control of subordinates' work by their superiors.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Several limitations of this study need to be noted. First, the same respondents ranked organizational commitment, leadership styles and LMX, which "may yield" possible mutual sources bias in the findings. In future research, managers may be asked to rate the dyadic relationship with their followers.

Second, this study has treated organizational commitment as whole to examine the overall level of organizational commitment among Lebanese public managers. Future research should examine the relationships between the three dimensions of organizational commitment suggested by Allen and Meyer (1990) and the different dimensions of transformational and transactional leadership.

Third, future research may include large samples in order to approve some of the findings considered significant. It should also explore whether the result have generalizability beyond public sector in the Lebanese context.

Finally, future research should focus more on social demographic factors like gender and generation that explain leadership behaviors among Lebanese public managers.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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