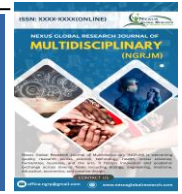




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Research Article

Transformational Leadership in a Globalizing Hospitality and Tourism Sector: Evidence from Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study extends transformational leadership practices in Nepal's hospitality and tourism sector within a globalizing business environment, with particular emphasis on employee commitment, engagement, and service-related outcomes. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates quantitative survey data collected from 314 employees across hospitality and tourism organizations with qualitative insights to capture contextual influences. Descriptive and reliability analyses reveal that transformational leadership behaviors are present to a moderate-to-high extent, with performance-oriented and nurturing leadership dimensions emerging as most prominent. Employee commitment and engagement demonstrate a strong overall profile, driven primarily by emotional attachment and a sense of belonging, while motivation and involvement exhibit comparatively moderate levels. Qualitative findings highlight the influential role of cultural norms, hierarchical structures, and globalization-related pressures in shaping leadership practices and employee experiences. The results suggest an associative pathway in which transformational leadership is linked to employee commitment and engagement, which in turn relate to perceived organizational and service outcomes. The study contributes to hospitality leadership literature by emphasizing the importance of culturally sensitive leadership approaches and offers practical insights for enhancing employee engagement and service performance in developing tourism economies.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Hospitality and tourism, Employee commitment, Employee engagement, Service quality, Nepal.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism business is in a very dynamic and competitive business environment in the world system, where internationalization is rampant, customers are becoming more sophisticated, technological shock is disrupting business, and the quest to do business in the service industry and organizational performance is exerting strong pressure on the service industry. Hospitality and tourism, unlike capital-intensive industries, are essentially people-based service systems, whose behavioral aspects, such as employee behavior, emotional labor and discretionary effort hold a conclusive role to play in customer experiences and

organizational success (Angelo and Vladimir, 1992; Martin and Lundberg, 1992). Leadership has therefore become an important strategic asset to hospitality organizations that want to stay competitive and strong in the global market, which has been growing increasingly globally.

Globalization has significantly changed the structural and managerial realities of hospitality and tourism businesses. The growth in cross-border travel, investment and international service quality has also raised the competition levels and made organizations vulnerable to a diverse cultural workforce and customers (Pearce and Robinson, 2011; Jokinen, 2005a). Leaders must now be expected not just to take charge of operational

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efficiencies but also to motivate workers, build on flexibility and align organizational values and new global demands (Jokinen, 2005b). The conventional modes of leadership based on command-and-control oriented and transactional exchange are becoming increasingly perceived as weak in managing these complexities, especially in industries and contexts characterized by lots of service where innovation, flexibility and employee involvement are critical (Bourgeois, 1980; Dittmer and Griffin, 1993).

Transformational leadership has emerged as one of the models in the modern research of leadership that is appropriate in the dynamic and people-oriented organizational setting. In transformational leadership, there are aspects of visionary influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration that allow leaders to enhance motivation among the followers, reconcile individual and organizational interests and promote commitments that are not just based on the contract (Avolio and Bass, 1988; Bass and Riggio, 2006). In contrast to transactional leadership that aims at monitoring performance and rewarding employees based on contingencies, transformational leadership is aimed at establishing meaning and psychological identification with the organization, which is especially important in the hospitality and tourism industry, where attitudes of employees can directly impact on the quality of service and customer satisfaction.

The hospitality and tourism market has become highly competitive in recent years, with the increase of customer demand and expectations along with the rapid changes caused by the digitalization process and international service standards. These dynamics have become a driving force in making leadership more strategic in service-based organizations, where the attitudes of employees, emotional labor, and discretionary effort have a direct role in determining the quality of service and performance of the organization. Recent research in hospitality underlines that styles of leadership that could enable motivation, engagement, and psychological attachment to employees are the key factors that may help maintain competitiveness within such unstable settings (Karatepe et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). As a result, transformational leadership has been given a new academic focus as people-oriented leadership, particularly appropriate to the labor-intensive and customer-facing aspect of hospitality and tourism organizations.

Empirical evidence on the positive effects of transformational leadership on the performance of employees and the organization is strong. Evidence It has been meta-analytically proven that transformational leadership is invariably linked with superior employee performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and citizenship behavior regardless of industry and cultural conditions (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002; Wang et al., 2011a; Wang et al., 2011b). Trust, empowerment and psychological engagement usually mediate these effects which adds to the importance of leadership in developing both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Boerner et al., 2007; Tajeddini, 2010). These results highlight the topicality of transformational leadership as the strategic process to improve the effectiveness of the workforce within service-based markets.

These conclusions are further supported by the hospitality specific scholarship. As the empirical research carried out in hotel and tourism settings has shown, transformational leadership produces a positive impact on employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and well-being (Budur and Demir, 2019; Abdulla et al., 2020; Vargas-Sevalle et al., 2020a). Indicatively, in their research on the hotel industry in Oman, Abdulla et al. (2020) established that transformational leadership is a significant factor that promotes the performance of employees because it helps in motivating and engaging them. Likewise, Top et al. (2020) established that job satisfaction mediates the connection between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in a hotel environment and underlines the indirect mechanisms in which leadership influences service outcomes. All these studies put transformational leadership as a fundamental contributor to sustainable performance in hospitality and tourism organizations.

In spite of the high rates of its validation, leadership scholars warn that one should not presuppose the universal effectiveness of transformational leadership, forgetting about cultural and contextual factors. Cultural values, norms and institutional structures construct and interpret leadership behaviors in a way that may influence the relationships between leaders and the followers and the outcomes of an organization (Yukl, 1999; Mhatre and Riggio, 2014). Although the attributes of the

transformational leadership can be largely accepted in most cultures, its implementation and performance might differ based on society attributes like collectivism, power distance, and normative strength (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002; Wang et al., 2011a). Relational sensitivity, moral authority, and respect to social structures may be more effective leadership practices in collectivist and hierarchical societies, instead of depending on pure participation and individualism.

Such cultural aspects are especially relevant in Nepal, one of the countries that has the hospitality and tourism industry as one of the most crucial in the growth of the national economy and the generation of jobs. The socio-cultural context in which the tourism industry of Nepal functions is based on collectivist values, high respect to hierarchy and strong social norms in the country, but at the same time, there is growing exposure to global market forces. Nepalese hospitality businesses have to match regional destinations and international expectations of service delivery, usually with conditions of infrastructural limitations, skill disparity among the workforce, and management capacity limitations (Angelo and Vladimir, 1992; Pearce and Robinson, 2011). Such issues enhance the significance of leadership strategies that would compromise cultural sensitivity and innovation, empowerment, and performance orientation.

Whereas there is a lot of literature on transformational leadership in the hospitality and tourism industry across the globe, the evidence in Nepal is sparse and scattered. The current studies in the developing tourism economies tend to be descriptive analysis-based or generalized theories on leadership, providing limited information about the impact of transformational leadership behaviors in relation to employee commitment and engagement in culturally specific settings and institutionally bound conditions. Besides, there are not many studies that use mixed method designs that combine quantitative measurement with qualitative information to reflect on the complexity of the leadership dynamics in this situation. This dearth of evidence based on context limits the capability of managers and policymakers to come up with effective leadership development strategies that fit the Nepal hospitality and tourism industry.

To address such gaps, the current research analyses the topic of leadership within a globalizing hospitality and tourism business setting, with

reference to the impact of transformational leadership behaviors in the Nepalese context. Based on the known theory of leadership and the research materials in the field of hospitality management, the research examines the relevance of the key dimensions of transformational leadership, such as performance-oriented behavior, openness and nurturing, personal engagement, self-confidence, and a non-traditional approach, to the commitment and engagement of the employees. Through the mixed-methods approach, the study offers both empirically based and culture-conscious findings that project hospitality leadership research to a national context that is under-researched. The results have theoretical value in placing transformational leadership within the framework of developing the tourism economy and have practical implications affecting managers and politicians in the hospitality and tourism sector in Nepal interested in increasing organizational competitiveness, sustainability of the workforce, and service quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human resources are an important factor that determines organizational performance and competitiveness, as the hospitality and tourism industry is essentially a service-based, labor-intensive industry. In contrast to manufacturing or technology-oriented industries, hospitality organizations are largely dependent on frontline employees, whose workload is to provide a steady quality of service, handle customer relationships, and make the stay with the guests unforgettable. Consequently, leadership has been identified to be one of the most important contributors to employee attitudes, behavior and service delivery in hospitality and tourism settings (Angelo and Vladimir, 1992; Martin and Lundberg, 1992). The original studies in hospitality management were mostly oriented to hierarchical control, efficiency in operations and standardized procedures, which is one of the traditional managerial paradigms in service organizations (Dittmer and Griffin, 1993). Nevertheless, growing globalization, the tightening of competition, and rising demands of customers have revealed the limitations of such practices and increased the necessity of more flexible and human-oriented types of leadership (Bourgeois, 1980; Pearce and Robinson, 2011).

Transformational leadership has become one of the most relevant models of how leaders can inspire employees to perform at their best and how they can

improve the effectiveness of organizations within the larger literature on leadership. Transformational leadership is the approach to leadership exemplified by Bass and others, that is the style of leadership where followers go beyond self-interests, internalize the goals of the organization and perform at higher levels than expected due to the influence of the leader who demonstrates vision, inspiration, intellectual interest and personalized attention (Avolio and Bass, 1988; Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership, in contrast to transactional leadership, is focused on purpose, moral influence, and personal development, whereas its counterpart, transactional leadership, is preoccupied with getting tasks done and rewarding them contingently. These attributes are especially applicable in the hospitality and tourism organizations where employee discretion, emotional labor, and engagement are decisive factors in service delivery (Mhatre and Riggio, 2014).

It has been concluded that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with several important employee outcomes, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, engagement, and performance, as evidenced in numerous empirical studies. The meta-analytic literature is a strong source of evidence that transformational leadership can contribute to the followers' performance at any level and at any standard, which is mostly achieved as a result of psychological processes, such as trust, empowerment, and identification with the organization (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002; Wang et al., 2011a; Wang et al., 2011b). These results indicate that transformational leadership leads to a working environment where employees feel appreciated, inspired, and emotionally attached to their organization and thus enhances the likelihood of putting in discretionary effort.

The recent findings of hospitality and tourism research only reflect the importance of transformational leadership in the process of influencing the attitude of employees and the service-related performance. Empirical research in the hotel and tourism industry shows that transformational leadership increases employee engagement, organizational commitment, and performance of services through trust, empowerment, and psychological involvement (Karatepe et al., 2023; Luu, 2023). Specifically, transformational leaders are depicted to enhance

significant employment and emotional endeavor among workers, which are vital in maintaining service standards in labor-intensive hospitality organizations. These results demonstrate the applicability of transformational leadership in modern hospitality workplaces that are characterized by the high level of customer contact and growing complexity of the services.

The applicability of transformational leadership in the service environment as described by hospitality-specific studies, also confirms this fact. Empirical literature in hotel and tourism contexts always indicates that transformational leadership has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction, commitment to an organization, performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and well-being (Budur and Demir, 2019; Abdulla et al., 2020; Vargas-Sevalle et al., 2020a). As an example, one study by Abdulla et al. (2020) on the performance of the Sultanate of Oman hotels revealed that transformational leadership contributes greatly to improving the performance of employees by reinforcing motivation and engagement. Likewise, studies of hotel organizations show that transformational leadership indirectly affects the service results with the help of job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior among the employees, showing the significance of psychological and attitudinal processes in describing leadership impacts (Top et al., 2020). These studies cumulatively support the perception that transformational leadership is very applicable in the hospitality context, which involves a high level of customer contact and variability of services.

The commitment and the engagement of employees are largely identified as important mediating variables between leadership behaviors, organizational, and service outcomes. Organizational commitment shows how emotionally attached and loyal employees are to the organization, whereas engagement is a positive and satisfying work-related state of vigor, dedication and involvement. Employees who believe and are active are more apt to offer high-quality service and show active problem-solving skills in hospitality and tourism organizations as well as contribute towards the performance of the organization (Boerner et al., 2007; Tajeddini, 2010). According to previous research, transformational leadership leads to improved employee commitment and engagement through the beneficial climate, promotion of

personal growth, and harmony among individual objectives and organizational values. Such psychological conditions, in their turn, lead to higher quality of service and to better employee performance, especially in service-heavy environments where frontline behavior has a direct impact on customer satisfaction.

In addition to individual-level processes, leadership performance is influenced by the larger cultural and institutional environments. The studies on cross-cultural leadership underline the fact that a set of values, norms, and expectations that shape society interprets the behavior of leaders and defines the relationships between the leader and followers as well as the dynamics within the organization (Yukl, 1999; Mhatre and Riggio, 2014). Although the transformational attributes of leadership are considered as positive in most cultures, their implementation and performance may be culturally different because of the cultural features of collectivism, power distance, and the normative power. Relational sensitivity, moral authority, and respect for an established social structure are often the determinants of effective leadership in collectivist and hierarchical societies, and not necessarily participative or individualistic methods.

The recent cross-cultural leadership literature has focused on the idea that the attributes of transformational leadership are widely appreciated; however, their efficacy is determined by social conventions and institutionalization. Research carried out in collectivist and high power-distance societies suggests that the effectiveness of leadership is frequently based on the balance between performance-oriented and nurturing and relational approaches instead of focusing on a participatory or decentralized strategy only (Rockstuhl and Ng, 2023; Chaudhry and Javed, 2024). In hospitality organizations that work in an emerging tourism economy, leaders have to balance the requirements of the world services with hierarchies and social norms that are embedded in culture and can limit the adoption of non-traditional leadership practices.

Such cultural aspects are especially topical in Nepal, where hospitality and tourism organizations have their activities in the framework of a socio-cultural context that is predetermined by collectivist values, respect towards hierarchies, as well as by strong social and religious norms. Meanwhile, the tourism industry in Nepal is becoming more receptive to

international competition, service quality and customer demands. The resulting dictum of this dual pressure is a complicated leadership situation where managers must strike a balance between cultural sensitivity and innovation, empowerment, and performance orientation (Angelo and Vladimir, 1992; Jokinen, 2005b). Despite the increased significance of leadership in the hospitality and tourism industry of Nepal, there is a paucity of empirical studies about transformational leadership in the context of this industry.

The literature in the emerging tourism economies is usually descriptive or does not pay much attention to the issue of operational challenges and thus does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership behaviors affect employee commitment, engagement and organizational performance under certain cultural contexts. In addition, numerous studies on hospitality leadership focus on straightforward direct correlations between leadership and performance outcomes without directly modeling the mediating factor of commitment and engagement of employees and cultural context being an interpretive prism. The existence of this gap constrains theoretical progress as well as practical suggestions to managers and policymakers who aim to improve leadership efficacy in culturally varied and resource constrained tourism settings.

To address these gaps, the current study expands the prevailing knowledge in the field of leadership and hospitality to analyze the connections between transformational leadership, employee commitment and engagement, and organizational and service performance in the Nepalese hospitality and tourism industry. The paper enriches the current body of literature and offers contextually specific perspective on the workforce motivation, service quality, and organizational sustainability through leadership processes in a globalizing tourism economy by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data and situating leadership processes within the cultural context of the organization. According to the examined literature, the current research defines the concept of transformational leadership as a multidimensional construct that has determined the level of employee commitment and engagement which are essential in organizational and service performance in hospitality settings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design used by this study was a mixed-methods research design because it sought to study leadership within a globalizing hospitality and tourism business environment with specific reference to transformational leadership in the Nepalese setting. The complexity of leadership phenomena as culturally based, perceptual, and behavioral at the same time is what made a mixed-method approach suitable. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods facilitated the in-depth analysis of leadership behaviors, level of commitment and engagement among employees and contextual cultural factors, thus making the results more robust and interpretive.

Research Design

The research design was an exploratory explanatory mixed-method study that incorporated qualitative interview data and quantitative survey data. The quantitative part of the research was to study perceptions of the employees regarding transformational leadership behaviors and levels of commitment and engagement, whereas the qualitative part of the research was to elaborate on the aspects of leadership, cultural forces, and industry-specific issues. It was cross-sectional, i.e., it captured perceptions and experiences at one point in time in a range of hospitality and tourism organizations in Nepal.

Study Context and Population

The research was done in the hospitality and tourism industry in Nepal, which comprises hotels, resorts, restaurants, tour operators, travel agencies and service related organizations. This industry was chosen because it is a labor-intensive market, where globalization is turning out to be more apparent, and where the role in the national economy growth becomes more significant. The sample population has included managers, supervisors, and operating personnel working in the tourism and hospitality institutions of the major tourism destinations in Nepal.

Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

Participants who possessed the experience and knowledge of the leadership practices in the hospitality and tourism industry were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Such a strategy was also important in that respondents would be able to offer well-informed views concerning the leadership

practices, employee engagement, and organizational practices. In the case of the quantitative survey, a valid response of 314 was achieved, which is deemed sufficient in descriptive and reliability analysis of hospitality management study. In the qualitative aspect, key informant interviews were carried out on the selected managers and senior employees to provide in-depth information on the issue of leadership, cultural dynamics, and globalization related problems.

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Data Collection

Structured questionnaires were used in primary quantitative research to collect data in hospitality and tourism organizations by using the questionnaire to employees and managers. The questionnaire used the five-point Likert scale, where 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Transformational leadership was conceptualized by the five dimensions based on the literature and fit the Nepalese context where they were conceptualized as performance-oriented behavior, openness and nurturing behavior, personal touch, conviction in self, and non-traditional leadership approach. Overall, these leadership dimensions were measured by using 28 items, and it also included items to measure employee commitment and engagement.

Qualitative Data Collection

The data collection was performed using semi-structured interviews and a few observations in the field. The interviewing questions were based on the leadership styles most common in the industry, the perceived effects of transformational leadership, the cultural factor in leadership behavior, and issues posed by globalization. The interviews were flexible in acquiring data because the participants were allowed to expound on their experiences without losing the main themes. Secondary sources such as policy documents, industry reports and academic literature were also consulted to assist in the contextual interpretation.

Measurement Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the quantitative measurement scales. Reliability coefficients of the dimensions of transformational leadership ranged between 0.78 and 0.88 with the overall alpha value of 0.90, which indicated good and excellent reliability. The

questionnaire was developed with a lot of literature review and consultation of the experts as far as content validity was concerned. The qualitative aspect increased the construct validity through contextualization and triangulated quantitative trends with the accounts of the participants.

Data Analysis Techniques

SPSS 25 was used to analyze quantitative data. The descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were calculated to summarize the perceptions of the respondents towards leadership behaviors and employee commitment and engagement. Before the interpretation was done, a reliability analysis was conducted. Since the study was exploratory, the quantitative analysis was not based on causation, but on descriptive tendencies.

The thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Field notes and interview transcripts were coded, and common themes were identified in terms of leadership styles, cultural context, globalization challenges and organizational practices. Themes were cyclically narrowed and conceptualized concerning the conceptual framework. The use of the contextual analysis approach was to incorporate cultural and institutional variables unique to Nepal.

Triangulation

Triangulation methodology was used by incorporating the quantitative survey results with the qualitative information. Differences and similarities between the two sources of data were analyzed to make the findings more credible and reliable. This triangulated methodology made it possible to see the transformational leadership practices and their implications in the Nepalese hospitality and tourism industry in a more subtle way.

Ethical Considerations

The study had a focus on ethical principles. The respondents were selected voluntarily, and all respondents were given informed consent before the data collection. The report on findings included guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and no personal information was shared. Cultural norms and professional ethics were observed during the

study to prevent possible damage to the participants and organizations.

Methodological Limitations

There are several drawbacks that are to be noted. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow the determination of causality of the observed relationships. Second, the attention to Nepal restricts the extrapolation of the results to other cultures and countries. Third, the use of self-reported data can cause bias in response. Lastly, cultural context is also not modeled statistically as a moderator, although it is incorporated interpretively. These are some of the limits that were keenly taken into consideration in the interpretation of results and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the empirical findings of the study by integrating quantitative survey results with qualitative insights, in line with the mixed-methods design and the proposed conceptual framework. The results are interpreted within the context of Nepal's hospitality and tourism sector and discussed in relation to existing leadership and hospitality management literature.

RESULTS

Respondent Profile

The analysis of the valid questionnaires was conducted on 314 of them. The respondents were a diverse group of individuals who work in the hospitality and tourism industry and comprised operational workers, supervisors, and managers of hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and tour operations at the largest tourism destinations in Nepal. The wide range of the respondents also guaranteed that the perceptions of the leadership practices were representative of the various levels in the organization. The demographic profiles of the

respondents are summarized in Table 1, showing sufficient representation in terms of gender, age, education, and work experience.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

S.N.	Demographic Profile	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	25-35 Yrs	15	28.70
		35-45 Yrs	63	40.10
		45-55 Yrs	30	19.10
		55 Yrs +	6	4.50
2.	Gender	Male	217	60.97
		Female	137	39.03
3.	Academic Qualification	Master's Degree	218	62.10
		M. Phil.	113	31.92
		PhD	23	6.49
4.	Designation	Line Agency	42	13.38
		Staff Agency	272	86.62
5.	Work Experience	0-1 Yrs	13	3.67
		1-5 Yrs	24	6.77
		5-10 Yrs	36	10.16
		10-15 Yrs	172	48.68
		15 Yrs +	109	30.79

The table reveals the demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, gender, qualification, job degeneration and work experience.

Reliability of Measurement Scales

The alpha of the measurement tools was used to measure the consistency of the measurement tools.

Table 2 indicates that all the dimensions of leadership and employee commitment and engagement scale are acceptable to high reliability as indicated by an alpha of between 0.78 to 0.88; scale reliability of 0.90. These values are greater than the recommended value of 0.70, which validates the appropriateness of the scales to be used in further analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Confirmation for the Variables of the Study

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha Test
Performance-oriented and Behavior	6	0.78
Openness and Nurturing Behavior	7	0.84
Personal Touch	5	0.86
Conviction in self	5	0.88
Non-traditional	5	0.82
Overall	28	0.90

Descriptive Results of Transformational Leadership Dimensions

Descriptive statistics were used to assess respondents' perceptions of transformational

leadership behaviors within their organizations. The mean scores for the five leadership dimensions are presented in Tables 3 and visually summarized in Figure 1.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of transformational leadership dimensions

Leadership Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
Performance-Oriented Behavior	4.08	0.6
Openness & Nurturing Behavior	4.04	0.79
Personal Touch	3.97	0.72
Conviction in Self	3.97	0.84
Non-Traditional Leadership	3.97	0.84

Note: Mean scores are based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

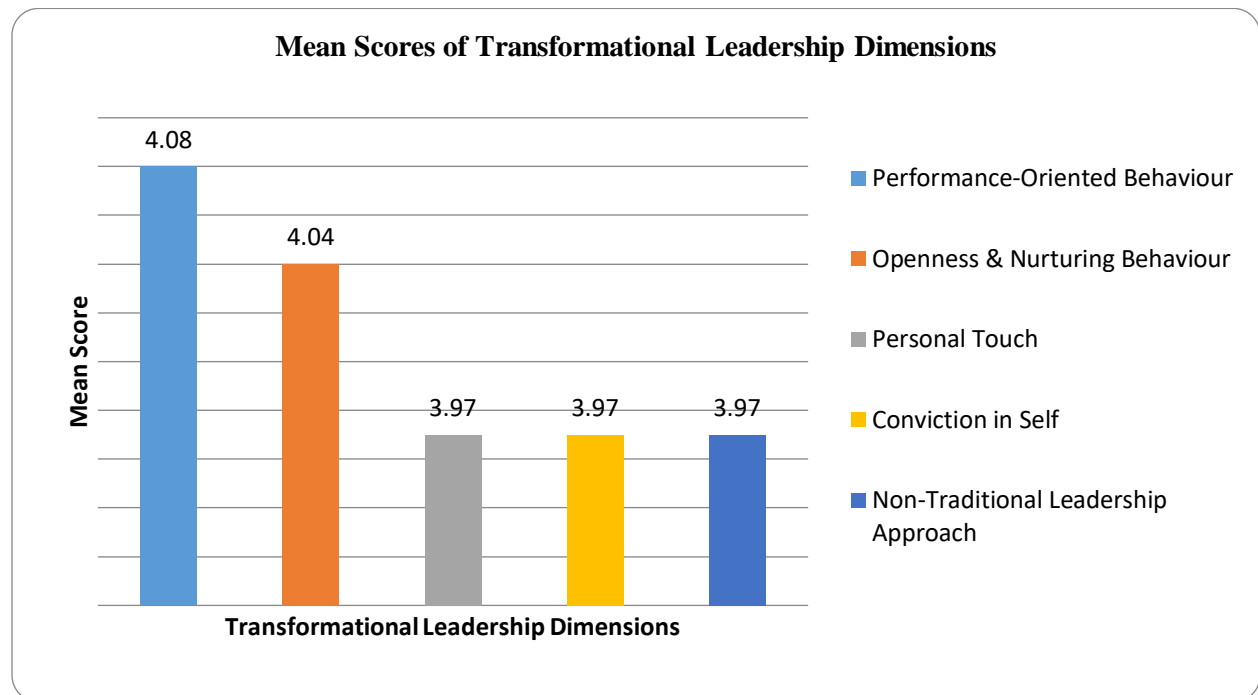


Figure 1: Mean scores of key transformational leadership dimensions in the hospitality and tourism sector

In general, the findings show that the transformational leadership practices in Nepalese hospitality and tourism organizations are moderately high. The mean score of performance-oriented behavior registered the greatest score ($M = 4.08$) and this indicates that leaders place a lot of emphasis on achievement of goals, discipline at work, and performance norms. There was also a high level of openness and nurturing behavior ($M = 4.04$), which means that leaders are seen as supportive, approachable and concerned with employee development.

Personal touch, belief in self, and non-conventional leadership style dimension had comparable mean scores ($M = 3.97$). These findings indicate that though leaders exhibit personal concern and confidence, non-traditional and innovative leadership practices are weak. This trend can represent organizational structures and cultural aspects that prefer pre-established practices and leadership based on authority rather than experimentation and consensus decision-making.

Employee Commitment and Engagement

The overall profile of employee commitment and engagement was found to be high, as it had a composite index of 4.01 on a five-point Likert scale (Table 4), which implied that the employee attitudes were generally positive in terms of satisfaction in the investigated hospitality and tourism companies. Emotional attachment was the highest in the list of indicators ($M = 4.12$), then there was a sense of belonging ($M = 4.05$), which indicated that the employees feel close to their organizations and they strongly associate themselves with their workplace communities. However, in comparison to motivation and involvement, which are also positive but with a relatively smaller mean ($M = 3.86$), it is possible that the active engagement of employees and their discretionary effort is even more prone to the limitations in the organization and leadership-related factors. This trend implies that despite an established affective commitment, there might be unbalanced avenues of further engagement and empowerment. Some services that are service-oriented like hospitality and tourism, where employee responsiveness and initiative have a direct impact on service quality, leadership practices may be vital in converting commitment into improved organizational and service outcomes.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and composite index of employee commitment and engagement

Indicator	Mean	Weight	Weighted Score
Emotional attachment	4.12	0.33	1.36
Sense of belonging	4.05	0.33	1.34
Motivation and involvement	3.86	0.34	1.31
Composite commitment and engagement index			4.01

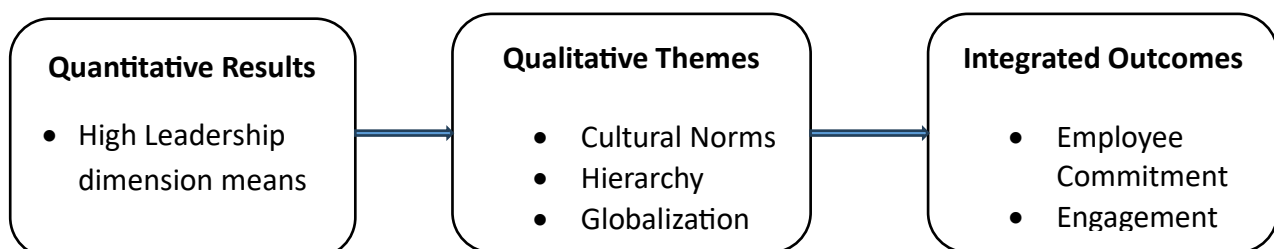
Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis gave more information on the dynamics of leadership and situational factors. There were four dominant themes of interviews and observations.

To begin with, leadership was always reported as one of the main sources of motivation and guidance. According to the participants, leaders with clarity of expectations, the ability to acknowledge hard work, and guidance play a positive role in employee morale and commitment. Second, cultural norms and hierarchical order were cited as the factors that determined leadership practices. The authority and seniority were greatly respected and usually

restricted open communication and participatory leadership, especially at the lower levels of the organization.

Third, service quality was closely related to employee engagement. The participants mentioned that engaged employees were more proactive, customer-focused focused and were ready to exceed formal job expectations. Lastly, there were the pressures that were related to globalization, such as competition, international standards of services, and online customer feedback. These pressures were perceived to be adding pressure on leadership and augmenting the demands of adaptive and people-focused leadership practices.

**Figure 2: Integrated results triangulation framework**

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings is illustrated in Figure 2, which demonstrates how leadership perceptions and contextual themes jointly contribute to employee commitment, engagement, and service quality outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The conclusions of the present research provide subtle information regarding the application of transformational leadership among the hospitality and tourism industry in Nepal and its significance in influencing the attitudes of employees and the organizational performance. The findings suggest

that transformational leadership behaviors are at a significant level with the most significant focus on performance-oriented and nurturing leadership behaviors. These dimensions had the greatest mean scores, which indicated that the leaders in the sector are more concerned with the attainment of goals and interpersonal support and direction at the same time. This balance is particularly the most essential when it comes to the hospitality setting, where the quality of service is directly proportional to employee motivation, responsiveness, and emotional labor.

The dominance of performance-based, nurturing types of leadership behaviors aligns with the

previous studies in the hospitality industry that focus on the fact that efficient leaders of service-oriented organizations are characterized by an ability to integrate both task-related and relational sensitivity (Budur and Demir, 2019; Abdulla et al., 2020). With support and direction by the leadership, employees have higher chances of internalizing the organizational goals and standards of service provision. The result supports the relevance of the transformational leadership theory to hospitality establishments with high staff-customer interaction and variability in operations.

Conversely, the non-traditional leadership behaviors showed relatively lower means as this shows that innovative, highly participatory, or unorthodox leadership practices are less common. This trend is an indication of the effects of the socio-cultural environment in Nepal, in which the organizational behavior is dictated by collectivism, respect to the hierarchy, and observance of conventional norms. Cross-cultural leadership literature indicates that transformational leadership is widely applicable but limited in its manifestations because of institutional and cultural requirements that might dishearten risk-taking and decentralization of decision-making (Yukl, 1999; Mhatre and Riggio, 2014). In this regard, stability and coordination seem to be found more favorable than experimentation in leadership effectiveness.

The outcome of leadership practices became very critical in terms of employee commitment and engagement. The composite commitment and engagement index (4.01) shows that there is a somewhat good attitudinal base among the employees. It is worth noting that emotional attachment and sense of belonging have a high mean value as compared to motivation and involvement, implying that employees may be loyal and attached to their organizations despite their comparatively moderate active engagement and discretionary effort. This distinction is significant, with affective commitment helping to retain employees and maintain the service quality, whereas motivation and engagement are more susceptible to the practices of empowerment, recognition, and participatory leadership.

This trend is consistent with the literature that mentions employee commitment and engagement as the most important approaches that can relate leadership behaviors with organizational

performance in hospitality organizations (Boerner et al., 2007; Tajeddini, 2010; Top et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the comparatively lower scores on motivation and involvement parameters indicate that leadership practices are not as comprehensive as tapping fully into the potential service delivery and innovation of employees. This gap might need to be filled with leadership development programs that promote more autonomy, involvement, and the use of skills within culturally acceptable limits.

Qualitative results also put these findings into the context of how hierarchy, cultural norms, and globalization have impacted the effectiveness of leadership. Transformational leadership behaviors are mostly appreciated behaviors, though their practice is mediated by structures and social expectations of the organization. The participants pointed out that the hierarchical decision-making process tends to suppress free discussion and employee involvement, which can restrict further involvement even with a high level of affective commitment. Meanwhile, the pressures of globalization, in the form of international service standards, digital platforms, and increased competition, are increasing leadership pressures and revealing the constraints of traditional management strategies.

The combined results support an associative pathway and not a causal model whereby transformational leadership is correlated with employee commitment and engagement, which are further correlated with perceived organizational and service outcomes. Cultural context is an interpretive and influential power, and not a statistically validated moderator. This interpretation fits the explanatory mixed methods design of the research and does not overemphasize cause-and-effect relationships.

In general, the work contributes to the body of hospitality leadership literature with its ability to show that transformational leadership can still be applicable in the developing tourism economies, though it has to be implemented in culturally respectful manners to help increase employee engagement and service delivery to the maximum. Hospitality organizations in Nepal can be better equipped to react to challenges brought about by globalization by focusing on leadership practices that enhance emotional attachment and slowly

increase avenues to involvement as well as empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The paper has discussed transformational leadership in the globalizing business environment of hospitality and tourism and specifically in the Nepalese context. Based on a mixed-method research design, the paper makes available empirically based results on the association between dimensions of transformational leadership and employee commitment and engagement, as well as how cultural and contextual factors influence this attitudinal result.

The result shows that transformational leadership practices can be found at moderate and high levels in Nepalese hospitality and tourism organizations. There are strong performance and nurturing behavior exhibited by leaders, which may indicate that the leader focuses on goal accomplishment coupled with a caring attitude. Such leadership qualities are especially applicable in-service organizations where employee motivation, emotional labor, and responsiveness determine the quality of service and organizational performance directly. Nevertheless, the comparatively less high rate of non-traditional leadership behaviors speaks of the persistence of hierarchical structure and cultural norms that might have limited participatory decision-making and innovation.

Leadership practices were found to bring about employee commitment and engagement as key results. The composite commitment and engagement index depicts that the affective basis among the workers is high, as it is emotionally propelled by attachment and a sense of belonging. Simultaneously, relatively reduced motivation and engagement imply that, whereas employees are loyal and feel a sense of belonging to their organizations, the possibility of even more engagement and discretionary performance might be lopsided. This difference highlights the significance of such leadership practices as continuity of relational attachment, which extend to include empowerment and engagement.

Qualitative results also underline that the leadership excellence in the hospitality and tourism industry in Nepal cannot be comprehended in isolation from the culture and institutions. The values of collectivism, the respect for hierarchy, and the set of social norms

influence the way in which leadership behaviors are performed and understood. Simultaneously, more globalization (in the form of global service standards, competition pressure and digital platforms) has compounded leadership issues and the pressure on adaptability and service delivery.

Overall, the paper summarizes that transformational leadership is a topical and useful leadership style in the hospitality and tourism industry in Nepal, and its application in the country is subject to cultural considerations. Allowing both performance orientation and nurturing support with a gradual increase of employee involvement, leaders may reinforce commitment, engagement, and organizational/service performance in an ever-growing, competitive global world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having presented the study findings, it is proposed that there are some practical and policy-based recommendations to the hospitality and tourism organizations, leadership practitioners, and policymakers in Nepal.

To begin with, hospitality and tourism organizations ought to invest in leadership development initiatives that focus on transformational leadership capabilities, especially performance-based goal orientation, interpersonal support, as well as ethical role models. Training programs must be culturally oriented and respectful of the fact that some cultures have hierarchical orientations but should be convinced to embrace more empowering and inclusive approaches.

Second, managers are to pay attention to the enhancement of motivation and engagement among the employees because these aspects demonstrated comparatively low scores in contrast to emotional attachment and belonging. Relevant action plans could be participative decision making, recognition, skill training and systematic employee representation. These efforts will be useful in turning into high affective commitment to greater degrees of proactive involvement and service innovation.

Third, the context-sensitive practices of empowerment ought to be embraced by the organization, whereby autonomy and accountability may gradually be expanded within the limits set by the cultural norms. Instead of radical transitions to the completely decentralized models of leadership,

gradual empowerment, which fits the organizational culture, can be even more efficient in maintaining engagement and performance.

Fourth, policymakers and industry associations are expected to promote sector-wide leadership capacity building, especially to small and medium hospitality businesses that might not have formal management training. The best leadership practices can be distributed throughout the industry via collaborative

programs between academic institutions, tourism boards as well as professional associations.

Lastly, future studies can take on this research by utilizing longitudinal and causal research designs to determine how leadership practices affect people and companies in the long term. The comparative research of various cultural and regional backgrounds in South Asia would also contribute to the knowledge of how transformational leadership works in various tourism economies.

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