

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO THERAVADHA BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY: AN ANALYTIC, APPRECIATIVE AND APPLICATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This research is a qualitative study that employs a philosophical research methodology. Its objective is to Analytic, Appreciative and Applicative the state of Transformational Leadership According to Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy. The research findings indicate that Transformational Leadership According to Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy can be applied to improve the quality of life according to the principles of the moderate postmodern paradigm. The researcher proposes a new perspective that Transformational Leadership According to Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy is suitable for application in enhancing the quality of life according to the moderate postmodern paradigm for the following key reasons: 1) Transformational Leadership According to Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy can be applied to improve individual quality of life, 2) Transformational Leadership According to Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy can be applied to improve organizational quality of life, and 3) Transformational Leadership According to Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy can be applied to improve societal quality of life.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Theravadha Buddhist Philosophy

Introduction

Is change real? This is a crucial metaphysical question that has received different answers from various prominent philosophers. Heraclitus famously stated, “No one ever steps in the same river twice,” meaning that everything is in a constant state of flux; nothing remains static or permanent (Phraphonesouk Thita (Phimmachack), 2010). In contrast, Parmenides held the opposite view, believing that “change” is an illusion (Phrathan Kongruangrath, 2020). Aristotle synthesized the ideas of Heraclitus and Parmenides, believing that “change” does exist but must be explained and understood through the concepts of substance and form (Phramaha Maghavin Purisuttamo, 2016).

Buddhist Philosophy regards change as a fundamental principle of natural law, known as “Anicca” (The Impermanence). Everything in the world is constantly changing, and nothing remains forever. Attachment to what is impermanent leads to suffering (PhramahaPharkphoom Bhaddamedhi (Sunlong), 2021). In Modern Philosophy, many philosophers believe that "change" is real, often viewed through the concepts of time and continuity. For instance, Henri

Bergson emphasized change and process as the essence of reality (Stephen Linstead and John Mullarkey, 2003).

The 21st century is an era characterized by rapid and continuous change in all aspects, including the economy, society, technology, and the environment. These changes inevitably impact organizations, which must adapt to survive and thrive in a world abundant with change. Organizations can be likened to living organisms that must continually adapt to survive and gain a competitive edge. The context of continuous change includes the frequency of changes, which, even if small in scale, can have cumulative and lasting impacts (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Because of this, leadership plays a crucial role in management. Among the various factors in management—people, money, materials, equipment, and administration—people are considered the most critical component. "Leadership" involves a leader using their knowledge, skills, intelligence, or influence to motivate or guide others to collaborate in tasks or group activities to achieve set objectives or goals (The Journal of Development Administration Research, 2020).

Change is a key focus for current leaders, often referred to as Transformational Leadership. The term "Leadership" encompasses attributes, behaviors, abilities, or processes that involve interaction or are central to group processes. It describes the ability of an individual to influence others or a group, motivate, inspire, foster desire, build trust, and empower others to achieve goals (Bass, 2008). Transformational leadership, specifically, is a process where leaders influence their colleagues and followers by elevating their efforts and capabilities, encouraging them to use their potential to a greater extent. This type of leadership helps them see the importance and value of the group's mission and vision, motivating them to prioritize the benefits of the group and society. Through this process, leaders exert influence on their colleagues (Rattikorn, 2016).

A good leader must possess qualities in personality, motivation, and knowledge and ability (Yukl, 1998). They must apply these leadership attributes appropriately to the organization's environment and context (Riaz & Haider, 2010). The Buddha stated, "When a herd of cattle crosses a river, if the lead cow goes crooked, the entire herd will follow crookedly. Likewise, in human society, if a leader behaves unjustly, the people will also behave badly, and the entire kingdom will suffer. Conversely, if the leader behaves righteously, the people will follow suit, and the entire kingdom will prosper" (Anguttara Nikaya, Catukka Nipata, 21/70/98). An essential aspect of leadership is that, besides guiding others towards progress, a leader must also lead themselves. This involves training oneself to be free from fear and anxiety, contributing to psychological stability. A leader must be the first to overcome the resistance that arises from the fear of change to guide the organization towards success (Coghlan, 1993; Duck, 1993; Pietersen, 2002).

Sutep Pongpitak (2007) describes the components of transformational leadership in four aspects: 1) Idealized Influence and Charisma : This refers to the behavior of leaders who set strong role models for their followers. When followers observe the leader's behavior, they tend to imitate it. Leaders typically exhibit high moral and ethical standards, which are recognized as correct and admirable, leading to their acceptance and emulation by others. 2) Inspirational Motivation : This involves leaders communicating high expectations to their followers and inspiring them to commit to and pursue the organization's vision. Leaders motivate their followers by encouraging them to adhere to and actively contribute to achieving the organizational vision. 3. Intellectual Stimulation : Leaders who practice intellectual stimulation encourage creativity and innovation among their followers. They create a challenging environment and support followers in experimenting with new methods or initiatives related to organizational tasks. 4. Individualized Consideration : This aspect focuses on promoting a positive working environment by being attentive to and responsive to the

individual needs of followers. In terms of Quality of Working Life, it is crucial because people are valuable resources essential to the organization. Therefore, the work environment must be conducive to employees' well-being, stability, and satisfaction, which in turn benefits both individuals and the organization.

Several Buddhist principles can promote transformational leadership, and the researcher selected these three principles based on Theravada Buddhist philosophy for the following reasons: 1) Trailak: This principle helps leaders recognize the inevitability of change and uncertainty in all things, which is crucial for driving change. It enables leaders to be non-attached to things and adaptable to varying situations. 2) Brahma Vihara Dhamma: This principle fosters good relationships between leaders and followers, creating understanding and trust, which are essential for leading change effectively. 3) Sappurisa Dhamma: This principle supports leaders in developing virtues and qualities that guide organizations or groups in a correct and efficient direction. Additionally, these principles address the research objectives and have practical applications for enhancing quality of life at individual, organizational, and societal levels. For these reasons, the researcher is interested in studying "Transformational Leadership According to Theravada Buddhist Philosophy: An Analytic, Appreciative, and Applicative Study" to interpret and apply these principles for beneficial outcomes.

Research Objective

The objective is to analyze, appreciate, and apply the state of Transformational Leadership According to Theravada Buddhist Philosophy.

Scope of the Study

Content Scope:

The research framework is focused on the conceptual understanding of transformational leadership, derived from literature related to the concept of transformational leadership, Buddhist principles that promote such leadership, and philosophical paradigms. In Chapter 2, the study reviews relevant writings on these topics. Chapters 3 and 4 will use this information for interpretation. Chapter 5 will summarize the research findings, critique the research work, and provide recommendations for future studies.

Time Scope:

The research is scheduled to be conducted from the academic year 2023–2024.

Tools Used in the Study

This research is qualitative and employs a philosophical research methodology through the process of hermeneutic interpretation. Hermeneutics, the theory and methodology of interpretation, is used to analyze and interpret philosophical and conceptual frameworks related to transformational leadership and Buddhist principles.

Summary

1. Analysis Results : The analysis found that a leader is someone who can influence others, is recognized or supported by others, plays a crucial role in decision-making, and fosters trust and faith. Transformational leadership is defined as a leader's ability to enhance quality of life at personal, organizational, and societal levels through constructive, adaptive, cooperative, and innovative change. Key attributes of transformational leadership include focusing on relationships, motivation, vision, and moral authority, as well as empowering individuals, promoting two-way communication, and prioritizing organizational benefits over personal interests.

2. Appreciate Results : The analysis of post-modern philosophical paradigms shows that applying Theravada Buddhist philosophy to transformational leadership aligns closely with the Buddha's teachings. This approach integrates Buddhist principles with leadership practices, leading to development in career advancement, virtue, and quality of life, benefiting both this world and the next. Thus, applying Theravada Buddhist philosophy in transformational leadership is suitable for improving quality of life at individual, organizational, and societal levels.

3. Application Results : Applying the principle of Trailak helps leaders accept and adapt to changes, plan for various scenarios with preparedness. Using the principle of Brahma Vihara Dhamma helps leaders build positive relationships within the organization through compassion, understanding team needs, creating a supportive environment, and fostering trust and collaboration. The principle of Sappurisa Dhamma aids leaders in understanding the causes of change, making rational decisions, predicting outcomes, self-awareness, time management, and responding effectively to change. These applications support a smooth and effective change process, enhancing leadership effectiveness and organizational cohesion.

Discussion

1. The analysis indicates that leaders who have the ability to influence others, gain recognition, support, or trust, and play crucial roles in decision-making are typically entrusted with responsibilities to guide and manage group activities toward achieving goals. This aligns with Fiedler's (1967) view that a leader is someone assigned by the group to coordinate and oversee activities related to the group's mission. Similarly, Burns (1978) describes a leader as someone who motivates followers to pursue common objectives shared by both the leader and the followers. Dejnozka (1983) defines a leader as an individual chosen or appointed to lead a group, influencing activities within the group to achieve its goals. Phortchana Manoch (2024) further explains leadership as a quality or capability to unite people towards a noble goal. Chisa Gunyaviriya, Metha Harimtepathip, and Kirti Bunchua (2020) describe leadership as attributes like mindfulness, wisdom, virtue, knowledge, and ability that draw people together towards a commendable objective. These perspectives collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of leadership, encompassing influence, coordination, motivation, and the ability to unite individuals toward a shared goal. The alignment with these theoretical frameworks highlights the complex and dynamic role of leaders in fostering effective group performance and achieving organizational objectives.

2. The analysis reveals that the post-modern middle-way philosophy, when applied to transformational leadership within the Theravada Buddhist framework, aligns closely with Buddhist teachings. This alignment is likely due to the philosophy's emphasis on improving quality of life through creativity, adaptability, cooperation, and exploration, alongside moral and ethical principles. Alignment with Moderate Postmodern Philosophy : Chisa Ganyaviriya and Sirin Ganyaviriya (2024a) identify four key ethical values of the post-modern middle-way philosophy: (1) Creativity, (2) Adaptability, (3) Cooperation, and (4) Ethical Pursuit. These values correspond well with the characteristics of transformational leadership, which fosters an environment where such qualities are essential. Metha Harimtepathip and Others (2023) discuss that self-motivation within this framework involves harnessing personal power for life improvement. This involves creative, adaptive, cooperative, and exploratory energies, aligning with the leadership qualities needed for transformational change. Chisa Ganyaviriya and Sirin Ganyaviriya (2024b)

Integration with Modern Philosophical Perspectives: Chairaj Nopchalerroj. (2022). describes the post-modern philosophy as the latest human intellectual trend aimed at enhancing quality of life. This philosophy supports creativity, adaptability, cooperation, and exploration,

using discernment as a tool for living, which is consistent with the characteristics of transformational leadership. Metha Harimtepathip (2018) notes that the goal of the middle-way philosophy is to elevate "instinctive wisdom" through creativity, adaptability, cooperation, and exploration, aligning well with the principles of transformational leadership. Sirin Ganyaviriya and Chisa Ganyaviriya (2024a) emphasize that post-modern approaches focus on business creativity, adaptability, cooperation, and exploration, which leads to innovative business practices and enhances quality of life. This perspective complements the transformational leadership approach that seeks to foster these qualities for overall well-being. The discussion underscores that integrating the post-modern middle-way philosophy with transformational leadership aligns with Buddhist principles and modern ethical perspectives. This integration supports leadership that not only drives effective change but also enhances the quality of life through ethical and creative means.

3. The analysis suggests that the application of the Three Marks of Existence (Tri-Laksana) and the Four Brahmaviharas, along with the Seven of Sappurisa dhamma), can be effectively integrated into personal, organizational, and societal leadership contexts. This integration is significant due to the principles' alignment with the nature of change, relationship-building, and moral leadership. The impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta) helps leaders acknowledge the inherent change and uncertainty in all things. This awareness is crucial for leading change, as it encourages leaders to avoid attachment and remain adaptable to evolving circumstances. This principle fosters a dynamic approach to leadership where flexibility and resilience are paramount. Four Brahmaviharas and Relationship Building: Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P. A. Payutto) (2009) defines the Four Brahmaviharas are metta (loving-kindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy), and upekkha (equanimity)—as fundamental for fostering positive relationships between leaders and followers. These qualities create an environment of mutual understanding and trust, which is essential for effective leadership and successful change management. Sirin Ganyaviriya, Chisa Ganyaviriya, and Metha Harimtepathip (2022) emphasize that leaders should embody these qualities to effectively manage and guide teams. The Brahmaviharas help leaders cultivate a supportive atmosphere, which is crucial for motivating and guiding people through change. Siripassorn Piyanantawarin, Sairoong Bubpaphan, and Somchai Srinok (2023) highlight that the Brahmaviharas lead to improved morale and efficiency in the workplace, demonstrating their relevance for leadership and organizational development. Thawatchai Trivorachai and Others (2018) stress the importance of these qualities in leadership, noting that compassion and equanimity are essential for making fair and thoughtful decisions, maintaining morale, and managing effectively. Sappurisdhamma : Chisa Ganyaviriya and Sirin Ganyaviriya (2024b)

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study on "Transformational Leadership According to Theravada Buddhist Philosophy: An Analytic, Appreciative, and Applicative Study," the focus was on interpreting the analysis, critique, and synthesis of transformational leadership based on Theravada Buddhist philosophy, with a particular emphasis on the Post-Modern Middle Way Philosophy aimed at improving quality of life. The study indicates that further research could significantly benefit both academic knowledge and practical applications. Here are some proposed areas for future research:

1. Transformational Leadership According to Theravada Buddhist Philosophy for Sustainable Development in Public Sector Organizations: Investigate how Theravada Buddhist principles can be applied to enhance leadership practices within government agencies and public sector organizations to achieve long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

2. Transformational Leadership According to Theravada Buddhist Philosophy for Sustainable Development in Private Sector Organizations: Explore the application of Theravada Buddhist principles in private sector organizations, focusing on how these principles can contribute to sustainable business practices, ethical leadership, and overall organizational success.

3. Transformational Leadership According to Theravada Buddhist Philosophy for Sustainable Development in Charitable Organizations: Examine how Theravada Buddhist philosophy can be integrated into leadership practices within non-profit and charitable organizations to promote sustainability, ethical management, and effective mission-driven leadership.

These proposed research areas aim to extend the application of Theravada Buddhist philosophy in various organizational contexts, enhancing the understanding of its impact on leadership and sustainability across different sectors.

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