

Transformational Leadership with Relation to Change Management: An Underlying Mechanism

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Abstract

In the current rapidly evolving business landscape, proficient change management is vital for organizations to stay competitive and adjust to shifting market dynamics. Transformational leadership and organizational culture are essential factors in determining the success of change initiatives. However, in Pakistan's telecommunications sector, which is experiencing rapid growth and digital transformation, the complex relationship of these variables and their impact on change management is insufficiently understood. This research fills this gap by investigating the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational culture, and change management specifically in context of telecom sector of Pakistan. A close-ended questionnaire was employed to collect the data, having 5-point Likert scale. The target respondents were the front-line and mid-level managers of the telecom sector. The SPSS software was used to calculate descriptive measures and inferential statistical analysis was run to test the hypothesis. The results are presented in tables accompanied by comprehensive discussions. The findings of the study revealed positive correlations among all variables. The results also confirmed the hypothesis that transformational leadership plays a significant and positive influence on change management practices. Moreover, it also confirms that organizational culture plays a partial mediating role between transformational leadership and change management. These insights help to know how leadership and cultural dynamics can drive effective change management in the telecom sector of Pakistan. This study offers valued acumens into the interplay between transformational leadership, organizational culture, and change management in the Pakistani telecom sector, helping organizations enhance their change management practices, improve performance, and foster sustainability in an increasingly competitive market landscape.

Keywords: transformational leadership, organizational culture, change management, Telecom sector

Change is a crucial aspect of success in today's fast-paced corporate world. Organizational leaders who anticipate and respond promptly to this shift are more likely to succeed, as resistance may lead to obsolescence. Businesses must adapt and direct change effectively. No organization is immune, particularly in light of fast technical innovation, advancements in information technology, internal and external challenges, e-business, globalization, deregulation, a rising knowledge workforce, and evolving social and demographic trends (Asikhia et al., 2021). Managing change within an organization is a complex process often involving resistance, employee disengagement, and failure to achieve goals. Kotter (1995) defines change management as a process that aids individuals and organizations in transitioning from their current state to their desired future state. Since change is not always accepted, effective leadership is essential for change management. Transformational leadership, in particular, has become recognized as a critical component in facilitating change (Alqatawenah et al., 2018). Transformational leadership enhances change management by shaping organizational culture, influencing employees' perspectives and responses to change initiatives, and improving employee performance, goal accomplishment, and overall organizational performance (Jamali et al., 2022). The organizational culture influences employee conduct, decision-making procedures, and the approval of change. Change management strategies

involves identifying the need for change, framing a coherent vision, involving stakeholders, and implementing strategies to expedite organizational transformation. (Engida et al., 2022).

By attaining employee trust, the transformational leadership can boost employee confidence and resilience, motivating them to follow the change strategy and achieve the change goals beyond prospects. (Pasamar et al., 2019; Lei et al., 2019). However, current research does not adequately address the effects of transformational leadership combined with the organizational culture on the implementing effective strategies for managing change. Furthermore, the mediating role of organizational culture has been underexplored between transformational leadership and change management, particularly from an empirical perspective (Qonitah & Sholahuddin, 2024). The absence of comprehensive studies addressing this relationship highlights the need for further research to fill this gap (Shibami et al., 2019). Hence this study intends to fill this gap by empirically investigating these relationships within the context of telecom companies in Pakistan.

Pakistan's telecommunications industry has experienced significant growth in the past decade, with 197 million subscribers in FY22 and 7.8% growth in FY23. The sector is undergoing a digital transition with 4G and 5G technologies, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. The continued investment in 5G technologies and fiber-optic infrastructure will likely to boost economic growth, e-commerce and digital inclusion. This will address the social, educational, commercial, and economic demands of the Pakistani consumers. (PTA, 2022; PACRA, 2023). The purpose of this study is to build an understanding how transformational leadership and a strong organizational culture can collaborate effectively in promoting and implementing change management in the telecom sector of Pakistan. Broadly recognized theory of Transformational leadership is used as base for building the theoretical framework of this study. (Siangchokyo et al., 2020). Since transformational leaders can align their vision and behaviors with the current culture to promote change, hence this approach lead to boosts employees level of acceptance for change, lowers the resistance, and nurtures a supportive environment for transformation. (Maisyura et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study fills the gap and adds to the present literature by exploring the impact of mediating function of organizational culture on change management within the special context of Pakistani telecom sector. The results of the research offer valued acumens for business leaders and managers who are change agents. It also proposes that transformational leadership and a positive organizational culture can play a significant role in improving employee performance.

Literature Review

Theoretical Underpinning

Burns first used the term "transformational leadership" in 1978 to describe the ideal dynamic in politics between leaders and followers. This notion was further extended by Bass in an organizational context, where he defined it as an extraordinary leadership style that inspires subordinates to meet difficult goals. This leadership style encourages subordinates to meet group objectives and improves overall work performance (Lei Xie, 2021). The concept of transformational leadership was further expanded upon by Podsakoff et al. (1996), who also introduced the notion that leaders must "transcend self-interests for the sake of the organization." Transformational leaders inspire their workforce by sacrificing personal interests for the betterment of the organization. James MacGregor Burns' 1978 book "Leadership" popularized the term "transformational leadership," emphasizing the ability of the leader to encourage and influence subordinates to accomplish exceptional results. Their research and theoretical developments have advanced our understanding of transformational leadership across various fields.

Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Change Management

AlManei et al. (2018) defined "change" as a behavioral drive of the business firms as a total, from one level to another. To bring a positive and long lasting change in the organizations the Transformational leadership is crucial for it. Leaders with transformational traits can effectively persuade employees to embrace the desired change (Nazim et al., 2014). According to Gill (2010), effective leadership is essential for successful change management. Transformational leaders are adept at recognizing the necessity for change, developing new perspectives, and coopting change (Kotter, 1995). Li et al. (2016) both studies highlighted that transformational leaders can act as

change agents that enable and implement organizational change and inspire employee change-oriented behaviors.

Transformational leaders impact employee attitudes and behaviors during change by creating a compelling vision, inspiring action, and empowering employees (Bayraktar & Jiménez, 2020). They excel at handling the human aspects of change, fostering trust, communication, and employee involvement (Hussain et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2021). On one hand the Transformational leadership drives the successful change while on the other hand it enhances civic behavior, work performance, creativity, and professional outcomes through employee involvement, trust, communication, and direct supervision (Hussain et al., 2021). Gunawana (2020) also concluded in his study that. Previous research consistently shows a positive link between transformational leadership and change management. (Islam et al., 2021 & Bagga et al., 2023). As a result of the literature on leadership and change management, the following may be deduced:

H1: Transformational leadership significantly effects the change management.

Mediating Role of Organizational Culture between Transformational Leadership and Change Management

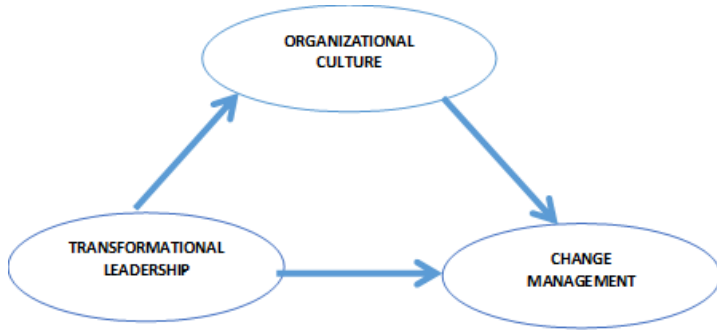
Transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in managing change and shaping organizational culture. Zen et al. (2023) in their study discussed how critical role a leader can play in building and enhancing corporate culture through effective communication of organizational values and development of supportive policies and practices. Transformational leadership aims to shift attitudes and behaviors toward a culture that embraces change (Lei et al., 2019). Transformational leaders achieve this by promoting collaboration, fostering emotions, and creating a culture of trust and mutual respect. A study conducted by Lasrado and Kassem (2020) established significantly positive relationship between these two aforementioned variables, further supporting the pivotal role of leadership in shaping organizational culture. Different cultures approach changes differently, with some emphasizing flexibility while others prioritize stability and tradition (Too et al., 2018). Kotter's eight-step model (1998) highlights the importance of integrating change into the organizational culture for successful implementation. Several researches conducted in the similar lines also have found a positive association between organizational culture and Change management. (Too et al., 2018; Bagga et al., 2022; Qonitah & Sholahuddin, 2024). Although many previous studies support the currents notion, some fails to supports or even contradict the current study (van der Voet, 2016; Adserias et al., 2017; Peng et al., 2021 & Engida et al., 2022). Despite the conflicting evidence these studies collectively emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of these variables. Nevertheless, the significant literature supports that transformative leadership is favorably associated to change management, and organizational culture. Therefore; the following has been hypothesized:

H2: Organizational culture serves as a significant intermediary in the link between transformational leadership and change management.

Conceptual Framework

Various theories and models, such as transformational leadership by James Burns and the competing value framework by Bernard and Quinn, underscore the importance of leaders inspiring and motivating their teams, fostering organizational culture, and identifying areas for cultural adaptation in effective change management. Based on empirical findings and theoretical foundations from studies like Farkas (2013), Alqatawenh (2018), Lei et al. (2021), and Bagga et al. (2022), a conceptual framework has been developed. This framework positions transformational leadership as the independent variable (IV), change management as the dependent variable (DV), and organizational culture as a mediator. The model illustrates how transformational leadership (IV) directly influences change management (DV), with organizational culture mediating this relationship.

Figure 2.1
Conceptual framework



Research Methodology

Research methodology, as defined by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) and Kumar (2018), is the framework used to collect, measure, and analyze data to address research questions. It includes decisions on study models, data gathering, respondent selection, and evaluation methods (Kumar, 2018). Scholars emphasize the importance of selecting a research methodology based on sound reasoning (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Kothari, 2004). This study employs quantitative methods, using a close-ended questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale to measure variables. This research follows a descriptive and correlational approach to test hypotheses.

Population, Sample Technique and Sample Size

The study focuses on Pakistani telecom industry employees in Peshawar, KPK, The telecom sector includes JAZZ formerly known as Mobilink, Telenor, Zong (China Mobile Pakistan Limited and Ufone. Data is collected from first-line management and middle management of different departments using a non-probability convenience sampling technique, aiming to understand the workings of the telecom companies in the region. Despite the potential limitations due to time, resources constraint and access to the population of interest, this sampling strategy was considered appropriate even though it may restrict the generalizability of the findings of this study. This research employed a quantitative approach with a survey method. Survey instruments was carefully designed to include multiple items for each construct, thereby reducing the likelihood of common method bias influencing the results. The population of the study consist of the employees of the telecom companies operating in KPK, Pakistan. The telecom sector was chosen over other industries due to its significant impact on society and economy, diverse workforce, and potential for efficient management solutions. The sample size is taken based on the table developed by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Since the population size is unknown, hence an estimated sample size of 350 was selected, and after screening and cleaning of the data which was collected through questionnaires, we left with 304 valid responses, which were analyzed using SPSS. The researchers' interference in data collection was minimal. Statistical techniques; including regression analysis, Pearson correlation, and descriptive statistics are applied to test the research hypotheses. Whereas, for mediation analysis, preachers and the Hayes model were applied. To determine whether the data was normally distributed, a normality test was performed. The skewness and kurtosis measures were considered for this purpose, and the values were found to be within the acceptable range. The data's reliability has been confirmed through the application of Cronbach's alpha. The specific Cronbach's alpha values are detailed in Table 3.

Measurement and instrumentation

For measuring independent variable i.e. "transformational leadership" the researched adopted 5 items from (Azim et al., 2019), while 12 items were adopted from (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006) to measure the dependent variable i.e. "change management". Similarly to measure the "organizational culture" 10 items were adopted from (Salehipour & Abdullah, 2018). The study included 304 participants who were surveyed using questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. The results of demographics are shown in below mentioned Table 1

Table 1.*Age of the Respondent*

Variable		Category	Frequency	Percent
Age		< 25	19	6.3
		26 - 35	131	43.1
		36 - 45	144	47.4
Education		46 - 55	10	3.3
		SSC/HSSC	15	4.9
		Bachelor	139	45.7
		Master	133	43.8
		M.Phil. /MS	17	5.6
		Sales representative	15	4.9
		First-line manager	101	33.2
Experience		Middle Manager	188	61.8
		1-5	48	15.8
		6-10	142	46.7
		11-15	92	30.3
	16-20	20	6.6	
21-25	2		7	

Table 1 summarizes demographic and professional characteristics of the participants. The majority are aged 36-45 (47.4%) and 26-35 (43.1%), with smaller percentages under 25 (6.3%) and 46-55 (3.3%). In terms of education, most have Bachelor's (45.7%) or Master's degrees (43.8%), with fewer having SSC/HSSC (4.9%). Middle managers constitute the largest job role (61.8%), followed by first line managers (33.2%) and sales representatives (4.9%). Experience-wise, the largest group has 6-10 years (46.7%), followed by 11-15 years (30.3%), 1-5 years (15.8%), 16-20 years (6.6%), and 21-25 years (0.7%)

Table 2.*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
age of the respondent	304	1.00	4.00	2.4770	.66461
education of the respondent	304	1.00	4.00	2.5000	.67974
job status of the respondent	304	1.00	3.00	2.5691	.58741
experience of the respondent	304	1.00	5.00	2.2961	.83519

Table 2 shows an average age of 2.4770, with the standard deviation of 0.66461 indicates fluctuation in age categories. Similarly, the mean education level is 2.5000, with standard deviation of 0.67974 and the average job status is 2.5691, with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.58741. While the mean experience level is 2.2961, with a large standard deviation of 0.83519 indicating significant variation within the sample.

Table 3.*Reliability and validity Statistics*

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	Average Extracted (AVE)	Variance
CM	0.835	0.867	0.618	
OC	0.874	0.897	0.637	
TL	0.766	0.789	0.589	

Table 3 indicates the reliability statistics for transformative leadership suggest a value of Cronbach Alpha of 0.766 with 5 items. This indicates that the scale used to measure transformational leadership has a rather high degree of internal consistency dependability. A Cronbach's Alpha rating of 0.766 suggests that the scale's items are reasonably consistent in assessing the same underlying

construct, even though values above 0.7 are often regarded as acceptable. Similarly, for change management the value of AVE is 0.618, while for organizational culture and transformational leadership the values of AVE are 0.637 and 0.589 respectively, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.50, indicating that more than half of the variance in the indicators are explained by the latent constructs. Hence these results demonstrate that the constructs of Change Management, Organizational Culture, and Transformational Leadership possess good reliability and validity, as indicated by their respective Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE values.

Table 4.

Correlations

	CM	OC	TL
CM	1		
OC	.627**	1	
TL	.375**	.410**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table illustrates the relationships between CM, OC, and TL. The results show moderately strong positive correlation between CM and OC ($r = 0.627, P < 0.01$), and moderate weak positive correlations between CM and TL ($r = 0.375, P < 0.01$), and between OC and TL ($r = 0.410, P < 0.01$). All correlations have been determined to be statistically significant, with p-values less than 0.01, indicating robust and meaningful associations among these variables.

Table 5.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.640 ^a	.410	.406	.44250

a. Predictors: (Constant), TL, OC

The model summary reveals that Organizational Culture and Transformational Leadership account for 41% of the variation in the dependent variable, change management. The independent variable, transformational leadership, causes 41% change in the dependent variable. This suggests that transformational leadership and organizational culture significantly impact the outcome variable.

Table 6.

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	40.991	2	20.495	104.672	.000 ^b
Residual	58.937	301	.196		
Total	99.928	303			

a. Dependent Variable: CM

The table 6 demonstrates that the regression model with variables Transformational leadership and Organizational culture accurately predicts dependent variable i.e. change management. The F-statistic of 104.672 and p-value of .000 show and dependent variable. The regression explains significantly more variance (40.991) in change management than the residual variance (58.937).

Table 7.

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.110	.191		5.806	.000
OC	.544	.046	.570	11.737	.000
TL	.131	.045	.141	2.906	.004

a. Dependent Variable: CM

Table 7 illustrates the coefficient values along with the significance and standard error values of OC and TL. It is clearly evident that both organizational culture and transformational leadership significantly predict change management. Organizational culture had a stronger impact, with a 0.570 increase per unit, compared to a 0.141 increase per unit for transformational leadership. These findings support the hypothesis that both factors play crucial roles in predicting change management outcomes.

Table 8.

*Mediation Analysis, Model Summary
Total, direct, and indirect effects of X on Y*

<i>Total effect of X on Y</i>					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.3480	.0496	7.0192	.0000	.2504	.4456
<i>Direct effect of X on Y</i>					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.1310	.0451	2.9059	.0039	.0423	.2198
<i>Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:</i>					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
OC	.2170	.0384	.1436	.2949	

The table 8 illustrates a mediational analysis mentioning the results on how OC partially mediates TL and CM. The total effect is 0.3480 with (significance P-value < 0.05), comprising a direct effect of 0.1310 and an indirect effect of 0.2170. The interval values are positive indicating that OC positively influences the relationship between TL and CM by 0.2170 units. Overall, the study confirms H2 hypothesis of the study which states that organizational culture plays a significant mediational role between TL and CM.

Discussion

The study highlights the significance of organizational culture and transformational leadership in influencing change management. Strong cultures and competent leaders enable organizations to adapt to new challenges effectively. The sample demographics show diversity in age, education, job status, and experience levels. Cronbach alpha value for transformational leadership is ($\alpha = 0.766$) for change management scale is ($\alpha = 0.835$) and for organizational culture is ($\alpha = 0.874$). Pearson's correlation shows a significant positive association between organizational culture and effective change management ($r = 0.627$, $p < 0.01$) and a moderate positive connection with transformational leadership ($r = 0.410$, $p < 0.01$). Pakistani telecom firms should promote a culture of innovation and change through open communication, employee participation, and alignment with company goals. This approach will enhance employee engagement, facilitate smooth transitions, and improve leadership development, fostering flexibility and openness to new opportunities.

Regression analysis shows that transformational leadership significantly influences change management, with a standardized coefficient $\beta = 0.141$ ($p = 0.004$), supporting Hypothesis (H1) that transformational leadership enhances change management effectiveness. The findings align with those of Zainol et al. (2021), Alqatawenah et al. (2018), Busari et al. (2020) and Putri et al. (2020). Similarly, organizational culture has a strong positive impact on change management, with a standardized coefficient $\beta = 0.570$ ($p = 0.000$), corroborating studies by Too et al. (2018) and Mikušová et al. (2023). The results suggest that Pakistani telecom companies should invest in training transformational leaders to inspire employees to embrace change. Leaders should possess qualities such as inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision, and thoughtfulness. Leadership development programs can enhance change management outcomes. Additionally, fostering a flexible organizational culture can help achieve strategic objectives and improve organizational performance.

Lastly, the results indicate that organizational has an indirect impact of 0.2170, indicating that transformational leadership influence is transferred to change management through organizational culture. Since the confidence interval (0.1436 to 0.2949) does not include zero. This

indirect influence is statistically significant, confirming Hypothesis (H2). The telecom sector in Pakistan should take advantage of this mediating function by formulating a comprehensive plan that aligns efforts for culture change with leadership development.

Conclusion

The study explores the relationship between OC, TL and CM. It emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive business culture through effective change management practices to increase employee acceptance and engagement during transitions. Transformational leadership skills are crucial for proposing and executing change initiatives. The study found that transformational leadership significantly impacts change management, particularly in Pakistan's telecom sector. The study endorsed the fact that Organizational culture can play a pivotal role in managing change, with organizational culture having a greater influence. Businesses that prioritize strong cultures and nurture transformational leaders are better equipped to navigate change and adapt to emerging challenges. The study also found that OC partially mediates TL and CM. As the telecom industry expands in Pakistan, businesses must adapt to new regulations, market dynamics, and technical developments. Efficient change management techniques are necessary to overcome barriers and capitalize on new opportunities. A strong organizational culture that prioritizes support and flexibility is essential in the competitive telecom sector, fostering innovation and employee engagement. It can also be established that TL is essential for bringing and leading the desired change and cultivating an innovative culture that inspires and motivates employees.

Limitation and Future Research Direction

The study has certain limitations include a lack of clarity regarding the long-term impacts of relationship among variables. External variables, such as market changes, regulations, and technical advancements, were not considered. Furthermore, the study was based on specific company circumstances and objectives. These limitations underscore the need for further research into the factors influencing the relationship between OC, TL and CM.

Future studies should consider mediating and moderating variables such as employee attitudes, organizational structure, and external environmental factors. Combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies can provide a comprehensive understanding of these complex interactions. Additionally, the influence of organizational structure characteristics on transformational leadership and cultural initiatives in change management effectiveness should be explored.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The research highlighting how culture mediates the process. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how organizational culture influences change implementation and aligns strategies with organizational values. The study concluded that by implementing a positive cultural values can enable companies to overcome challenges in implementing the change successfully. It is also concluded that effective communication can also act as catalyst for successful change management.

This study theoretically contributes to the change management literature and provides insights on practical implications within the special context of Pakistan telecom. Furthermore, the theoretical framework for this study widens the existing knowledge of change management via different theoretical relationship between TL and OC and its impact on change management. By developing the special abilities of transformational leadership and inculcating flexible positive culture, organizations in telecom sector can be successful in implementing the desired change. Therefore, policy-makers must focus on development of transformational leadership who can cultivate a congenial organizational culture to embrace and implement positive change in the organization's. It is also indispensable for a firm to place the positive culture as an integrated part of their strategy. In this way, businesses can encourage and implement the change effectively and efficiently.

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