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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE AMONG WORKERS; A CASE STUDY: BIRJAND  
INDUSTRIAL PARK**

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**ABSTRACT**

Transformational leadership as a common style among managers plays a key role in solving organizational and behavioral problems such as organizational silence. The relationship between this leadership style and organizational silence highlights the effectiveness of transformational leadership on this problem. The purpose of this study is to fill the gaps on these variables and examine the effect of transformational leadership and its components including intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence and individualized consideration on organizational silence. The questionnaires used for this study included Bass and Avolio (2000) questionnaire for transformational leadership and a researcher-made questionnaire for organizational silence. Data was analyzed by SPSS software. Coefficients of Pearson correlations showed significant positive correlations between transformational leadership and organizational silence (0.47), between organizational silence and idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and inspirational motivation (0.343, 0.54, 0.205 and 0.443, respectively). These findings can be used to modify current transformational leadership and help leaders creating an ideal organizational environment.

**Keywords: Idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, organizational silence, transformational leadership**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Most managers use discursive leadership style followed by participative, directive, and situational styles [1]. New leadership styles, like transformational leadership style, are not highlighted despite modern changing society and the need for these styles [2]. Silence is under influence of many organizational features. These features include decision-making processes, cultural management processes and staff perceptions of the factors influencing silence. According to the findings of some studies conducted on human resource management, leadership styles and power sources are determining factors in the formation of attitudes in organizational behaviors such as organizational silence, organizational climate and organizational effectiveness. Extensive research in this area has followed by many achievements. While increasing knowledge of management on the determinants of organizational behavior such as organizational silence, these achievements facilitates their task in guidance and leadership in accordance with circumstances and promotion of efficient human resources in order to achieve organizational goals [3]. In Iran, especially in the area of small businesses, transformational management is a vital solution; managers are required to use

this style. Silence phenomenon is observed in all organizational units. Industrial parks are a well-distributed community composed of various industries managed by different management styles; therefore, the target population provides reliable and valid results which are generalizable to other similar cases. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership style and types of organizational silence. The results determine the level of components and the significant relationship of transformational leadership with organizational silence. Undoubtedly, transformational leadership is a new management style in which the leader is responsible to solve internal and external problems. This style has its own characteristics and components by which the leader can lead the organization to success and progress and solve the problems [4]. Organizational silence is one of the common problems in modern organizations; the leader is responsible for control and correction of organizational silence [5]. This study identifies and measures the components of transformational leadership style and types of silence existing in industries to examine a relationship which help leaders to measure the extent of those

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components in their organizations. This contributes leaders to eliminate the organizational silence by modifying their performance and increase or decrease the level of transformational leadership.

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Leadership literature is voluminous. Many of these entries confuse the reader; in some cases, they are contradictory. To find a way out of this chaos, four approaches are selected to indicate the factors which a leader needs to be effective. The first can make a person to be a leader in the world and do things that other people cannot do (leadership traits approach). The second is based on the attempt to introduce the leader in terms of leadership behaviors (leadership behavioral approach). Either approaches begin with a false start, because they overestimate leadership. The third approach is situational by which the shortcomings of previous theories of leadership are outlined and various studies conducted on leadership are presented. Recently, their personality traits have been considered once again, but from another perspective. Now, researchers try to find personality traits of charismatic leaders. In the following, the advantages and disadvantages of four approaches are presented. Transformational leadership dates back to the sixteenth century, when the

research was done on the Prince by Machiavelli. Machiavelli studied the characteristics and behaviors of leaders to develop leadership theory in the feudal England. The leader directs and supports others' leadership to achieve balanced goals. Early in this century, Max Weber presented a definition of leadership similar to Machiavelli's. He considered leadership as a source of influence on others. Personality traits of Weber are called charisma. Charisma refers to a divine talent with power over others involving trust and loyalty. Charisma exactly depends on the influence and motivation of followers and their vision, which is one of the key elements of transformational leadership. Other theorists, such as Avolio and Bass defined charisma as an essential ingredient for transformational leadership [6]. In many contemporary organizations, employees refuse to express their ideas and concerns on organizational problems; this collective phenomenon is called organizational silence. When a system reinforces the climate of silence, diverse views, opinions and preferences and goals of the organization may not encourage expression; hence, the system starts a process in which it cannot realize its goals and do not tend to learn from experiences. In fact, this system is caught in a way that the negative

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effects of silence will be intensified on organizational decision-making and change processes. This study measures transformational leadership based on items such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation. Computational method of items is evaluated by a questionnaire. Transformational leadership questionnaire of Bass and Avolio derived from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is measured by 20 items. The questionnaire is scored on a five-point Likert scale in four dimensions: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. The reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed in several studies.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Arnold et al (2001) evaluated transformational leadership and iron cage as good predictors of trust, commitment and efficiency of employees. The results showed a significant relationship between transformational leadership style and trust, commitment and efficiency. Yu et al (2002) examined the effects of transformational leadership on commitment to changes of teachers in Hong Kong. They found a significant positive relationship between

transformational leadership and commitment; moreover, transformational leadership predicted 10.7% of variance in organizational commitment. It is noteworthy that vision, as a component of transformational leadership, had the highest correlation with commitment. In a similar study, Rafferty et al (2004) found a positive significant relationship between vision and commitment. Jijcell et al (2003) evaluated the effects of transformational leadership and commitment and efforts of teachers. Their results showed that components of transformational leadership influenced the commitment and significant efforts of teachers. This study also revealed that vision significantly influenced the mental stimulation of followers. Pillay et al (2004) evaluated transformational leadership, self-sufficiency, group cohesion, commitment and performance on 303 firefighting staffs. They showed that transformational leadership both influenced self-sufficiency and group cohesion and promoted commitment and performance of followers. Fullern et al (1997) evaluated leadership style and job satisfaction of American workers. They found a significant positive relationship between both transformational and transactional styles and job satisfaction. Anfors and Pernekert (1997) empirically examined the effects of

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transformational and transactional leadership styles on organizational effectiveness of 23 Swedish employees. Their analysis showed a weak relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and organizational effectiveness. They also concluded that departments with high levels of transformational and transactional leaderships did not lead to high level of organizational effectiveness; instead, different results were obtained for types of cultures and organizations. Barbvto et al (2000) studied the behaviors of transformational leadership and work approach on 56 leaders and 234 followers in America. They found a positive relationship between components of transformational leadership and motivation of followers. Amirkabiri et al (2006) examined the relationship between transformational and transactional leaderships and organizational commitment of employees. Their findings indicate a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Ardalan (1991) examined relation-oriented and task-oriented leaderships in Tehran. The findings indicate a significant difference between management styles of principals and between management styles of educational zones. Another finding was that the prevailing management style of

male and female managers was relation-oriented considering the fact that female principals were more likely to use relation-oriented leadership.

### **Conceptual Model and Variables**

The conceptual model evaluates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence; this model is adopted from MLQ test developed by Bass (1989). The independent variable is transformational leadership in four components including idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, which is measured in relation to organizational silence. The dependent variable is organizational silence in three items including defensive silence, obedient silence and altruistic silence. Demographic variables are evaluated as components of the sample, in relation to the relationship between the two variables.

Independent variables are free to choose their own values (Azarand Momeni, 2008) and researchers evaluate their effects on other variables. Here, the independent variable is transformational leadership. The dependent variable obtains its values in respect to independent variable [7]. Here, the dependent variable is organizational silence. Demographic variables include age,

education, work experience and employment status and their effects are evaluated on other variables.

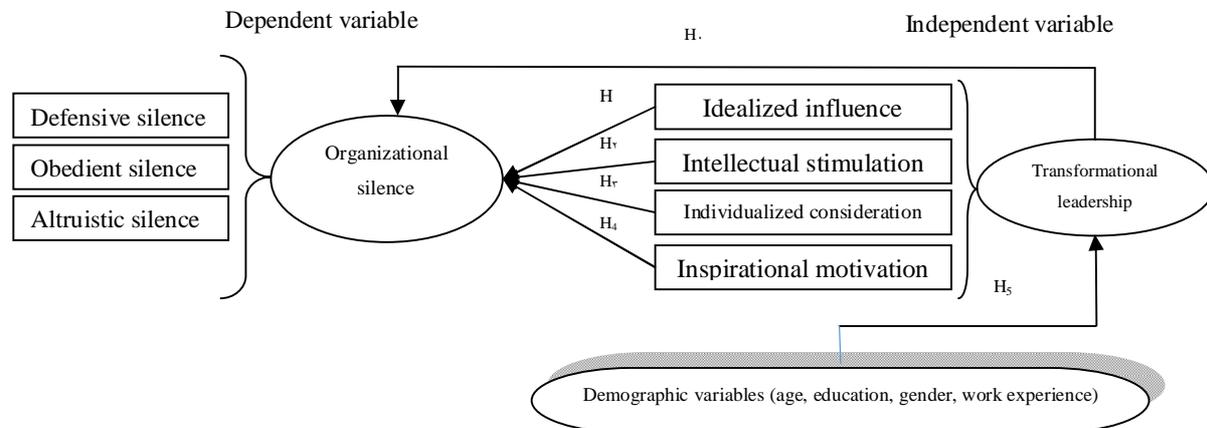


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Table 1: variables

Scale	Role	Type	Factors
Interval	Independent	Quantitative	Idealized influence
Interval	Independent	Quantitative	Intellectual stimulation
Interval	Independent	Quantitative	Individualized consideration
Interval	Independent	Quantitative	Inspirational motivation
Interval	Dependent	Quantitative	Organizational silence
-	Demographic variables	Quantitative	Age
Ordinal	Demographic variables	Quantitative	Education
-	Demographic variables	Quantitative	Work experience
Nominal	Demographic variables	Qualitative	Sex

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study evaluates the items of transformational leadership and its relationship with types of silences existing in industries of the Birjand Industrial Park. The purpose of this study is to describe the properties of a reality in an objective, realistic and regular manner. The author does not manipulate the data; instead, it reports the status quo. Therefore, this study is a descriptive research, because its findings can be used to increase the quality of management and modify the structures of industrial units. Therefore, it is an applied

research. This study examines the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence; hence, this study is a correlational research [8].

**Population, Territory and Sampling**

The target population includes all people, objects, events and conditions of which sample is taken and results of statistical and descriptive analysis are generalized to the population [9]. In Iran, industrial plants usually work in a geographical area due to urban structural, economic and environmental reasons. The studied population, here, include 1591 employees of

127 factories in the Birjand Industrial Park (37 active, 44 semi-active and the remaining inactive). Sample refers to a number of people, objects and events of a population randomly selected from that population [9]. The sample size should be large enough to match the results with the results of the same study in the population where the sample is selected. The sample size of this study is 310 official employees and contract workers in factories located in the Birjand Industrial Park. Given that the population size is known, the sample size is calculated by Corcoran formula.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p q N}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2 p q} \quad (1)$$

In this study, there is no difference between factories and industrial and manufacturing units. Therefore, the single-stage cluster random sampling is used in which similar industrial units are considered as a cluster. Then, questionnaires are distributed randomly among units and industries of each cluster.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive and analytic methods are used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics only extracts and describes the main features of data. Analytic statistics analyzes the relationships between variables and data [10]. Different descriptive methods including

distribution tables, charts, concentration and dispersion of indices are used to describe data and observations. The structural equations model is used for final analysis. SPSS software is used for data analysis.

### RESULTS

The main hypothesis of this study examines the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence of employees. To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Table 2 lists the results. As the table shows, the correlation between these two variables is equivalent to  $R=0.470$  in  $p=0.000$ , which is less than the maximum acceptable value (0.01) and thus  $p=0.05$ ; therefore, the main hypothesis is confirmed and null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence of employees in Birjand Industrial Park. The Pearson coefficient ranges from 0.3 and 0.5; therefore, the correlation is average.

The first hypothesis of this study examines the relationship between idealized influence and organizational silence of employees. To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Table 3 lists the results. As the table shows, the correlation between these two variables is equivalent to  $R=0.343$  in  $p=0.000$ , which is less than the maximum

acceptable value (0.01) and thus  $p=0.05$ ; therefore, the first hypothesis is confirmed. Thus, there is a significant relationship between idealized influence and organizational silence of employees in Birjand Industrial Park. The Pearson coefficient ranges from 0.3 and 0.5; therefore, the correlation is average.

The second hypothesis of this study examines the relationship between intellectual stimulation and organizational silence of employees. To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Table 4 lists the results. As the table shows, the correlation between these two variables is equivalent to  $R=0.540$  in  $p=0.000$ , which is less than the maximum acceptable value (0.01) and thus  $p=0.05$ ; therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed. Thus, there is a significant relationship between intellectual stimulation and organizational silence of employees in Birjand Industrial Park. The Pearson coefficient is  $>0.5$ ; therefore, the correlation is strong.

The third hypothesis of this study examines the relationship between individualized consideration and organizational silence of employees. To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Table 5 lists

the results. As the table shows, the correlation between these two variables is equivalent to  $R=0.205$  in  $p=0.000$ , which is less than the maximum acceptable value (0.01) and thus  $p=0.05$ ; therefore, the third hypothesis is confirmed. Thus, there is a significant relationship between individualized consideration and organizational silence of employees in Birjand Industrial Park. The Pearson coefficient ranges from 0.1 to 0.3; therefore, the correlation is weak.

The fourth hypothesis of this study examines the relationship between inspirational motivation and organizational silence of employees. To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Table 6 lists the results. As the table shows, the correlation between these two variables is equivalent to  $R=0.443$  in  $p=0.000$ , which is less than the maximum acceptable value (0.01) and thus  $p=0.05$ ; therefore, the fourth hypothesis is confirmed. Thus, there is a significant relationship between inspirational motivation and organizational silence of employees in Birjand Industrial Park. The Pearson coefficient ranges from 0.3 to 0.5; therefore, the correlation is average.

Table 2: Pearson correlation for the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence

Description	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation	Credit
Transformational leadership	3.98	0.753122	0.470	0.000
Organizational silence	3.35	0.918647		

Table 3: Pearson correlation for the relationship between idealized influence and organizational silence

Description	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation	Credit
Transformational leadership	3.8491	0.66950	0.343	0.000
Organizational silence	3.35	0.918647		

Table 4: Pearson correlation for the relationship between intellectual stimulation and organizational silence

Description	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation	Credit
Intellectual stimulation	3.8187	0.69138	0.540	0.000
Organizational silence	3.35	0.918647		

Table 5: Pearson correlation for the relationship between individualized consideration and organizational silence

Description	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation	Credit
Individualized consideration	3.85308	0.95974	0.205	0.000
Organizational silence	3.35	0.918647		

Table 6: Pearson correlation for the relationship between inspirational motivation and organizational silence

Description	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation	Credit
Inspirational motivation	3.9468	0.82091	0.443	0.000
Organizational silence	3.35	0.918647		

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results found a significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence ( $R = 0.470$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), between idealized influence and organizational silence ( $R = 0.343$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), between intellectual stimulation and organizational silence ( $R = 0.540$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), between individualized consideration and organizational silence ( $R = 0.205$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), and between inspirational motivation and organizational silence ( $R = 0.443$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) of workers in the Birjand Industrial Park. This is consistent with Arnold et al (2001) who examined the relationship between transformational leadership and iron cage and trust, commitment and team efficiency of employees. It can be concluded that transformational leadership can both direct and control a problem like organizational silence and improve and modify other factors related to organizational culture and

behavior. Yu et al examined the effect of transformational leadership on commitment to change; their results suggest a positive significant relationship between these variables. Therefore, teachers are more committed when the transformational leadership moves toward positive. Similar studies with similar findings were conducted by researchers like Jijcell et al (2003), Pillay et al (2004), Fullern et al (1997), Amirkabiri et al (2006), [11]. Anfors and Pernekert (1997) examined the effect of transformational and transactional leadership on organizational effectiveness; they found a weak relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and organizational effectiveness. On the contrary, Ghalei (1994) found a significant relationship between leadership style of managers and their effectiveness. Compared to the present study, transformational leadership is not the only key to solve problems despite the

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significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational silence. Using a mere leadership style, the organization will not be able to induce idealized phenomena, eliminate organizational silence and maximize effectiveness, because the growth of transformational leadership will lead to the growth of organizational silence and prevent effectiveness.

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