



## Relationship of Leadership and Learning Organizations: An empirical study in Select Academic Libraries of J&K

Umar Mufeed  
Ajaz Akbar Mir

### Abstract

**Purpose:** *The paper is aimed to study the relationship between transformational leadership and learning organization practices in academic libraries of select universities of J&K. The purpose of the study is to analyze the perception of university library staff towards the existing transformational leadership practices prevailing in the libraries. Moreover, the present study also aims to examine the perception of library staff towards the learning organization practices.*

**Methodology:** *The sample respondents in this study comprise of 166 library staff taken from the five universities of J&K. The selection of respondents was based on simple random sampling. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.*

**Findings:** *There is a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and learning organization practices in academic libraries. It is stressed that transformation leadership and learning organization practices in academic libraries need to be further strengthened which would lead in creating a competitive and quality work environment.*

**Research implications:** *The study suggests that steps aimed at building leadership behaviour and learning organization atmosphere must take the relationship between transformational leadership and learning organization into perspective for better performance and functioning of academic libraries.*

**Keywords:** *Academic libraries; Learning organization; Leadership; Transformational leadership*

**Paper type:** *Research*

### Introduction

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century the academic institutions and other organizations are facing tremendous challenges in making themselves more adaptive, effective and competent in facing complex and turbulent environment. The success and failure of institutions lie in how much they are proactive in managing and addressing the issues that confront them. The organizations need to adopt appropriate and adequate measures in order to cope with change. It calls for adopting features of learning organizations which focus on making organizations and institutions adaptive to changes in the environment. Learning organizations play a pivotal role in transforming itself and to continuously innovate and facilitate all of its members towards achieving individual as well as organizational goals (Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell, 1991). Academic libraries are no exception to this, the dynamics and nature of academic library keeps on changing due to new trends in research and

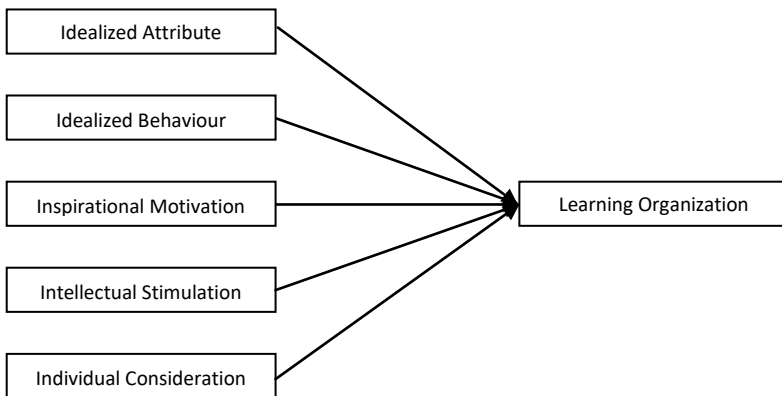
development, improvements in accessibility of information, new digital formats and communication of technologies, expectations of delivering quality library services, and growth of inter-disciplinary research (**Jurow, 1990; Renaud & Murray, 2003; Travica, 1999; Winston & Dunkley, 2002**). Academic libraries are expected to perform those functions and operations that yield better results and have wider applicability and acceptance among universities in general and stakeholders in particular. **Ferguson and Metz (2003)** point that it is very vital for academic libraries to undergo fundamental rethinking and redesign of their activities, library roles, services and operations which they render so as to keep with fast changing technological innovations. Academic libraries play a crucial role in dissemination of knowledge and information among students, faculty, researchers and other information seekers. Academic libraries are considered as an important pillar of institutional development and nation building. They are quite sensitive in sustaining and maintaining the institutional fabric of universities and other academic institutions. Academic librarians have an uphill task to strive hard to become learning organizations which meets expectations of academic community, copes up with fast changing environment, and continuously innovates to deliver performance to meets world library standards. The past literature on library and information science suggests that if academic libraries develop as learning organizations, they can innovate, excel and perform better and can cope with change very effectively (**Chen, 2006; Kim & Abbas, 2010; Neal, 2011**). It has been realized that the sole purpose of learning organizations is to abstain from using traditional practices of doing tasks and to keep on innovating and coping up with change so as to survive in this complex environment. It calls for library leadership to play a very active role and become change agents in transforming and shaping the academic libraries. The success factor of academic libraries lies in its leadership. **Iannuzzi (1992)** feels that it requires developing collaborations, supporting the services and maintaining infrastructure for performing operations that meets global standards. Library leadership is very critical to the functioning of library operations as it affects its effectiveness and role in the academic institution and its adaptability to new functions and initiatives. Library leadership need to develop strategies and devise mechanism and to articulate the vision and mission among the library staff so that each and every individual cherishes the same and collaborates with each other in order to sustain the excellence of academic libraries. Keeping this in view, the present study is an attempt aimed to examine the relationship of learning organization and leadership in academic libraries.

## Review of Literature

**Senge (1990)** was one of the pioneers to work in the area of learning organizations and has opined that learning organizations focus on creating organizations where people's aspirations are set free, where knowledge is shared, where individuals collectively work together and learn to produce desired results and where new and rational thinking and ideas are nurtured. **Garvin (1993)** opines that *"learning organization is skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights"*. Past research studies point out that learning organizations have a positive relationship with academic libraries as they help in bringing out best in their staff by increasing their capability in identifying new opportunities, understanding new concepts and in strengthening their creativity to innovate and cope with change (**Chen, 2006; Hsiao & Chang, 2011; Neal, 2011**). In the past academic libraries used to maintain status quo and were reactive to environment changes, but now trends in library and information science have forced libraries to adopt pro-active strategy, be problem solvers and take appropriate measures and steps in order to sustain library professionalism (**Dixon, 2000; Goble 1997**). **Riggs (1997)** also is of the opinion that with the changes that are expected to take place in academic institutions, libraries will become more creative and innovative. **Lee (1993)** observes that if library leadership wants to enhance effectiveness, achieve excellence and to ensure survival then it must collaborate with its staff to cope with change. Library leadership must focus on developing learning organization where people can learn to express their views, where knowledge can be shared, where behavior is modified to understand new ideas and explore new opportunities. University librarian must be active and effective in providing support, direction and vision for the overall development and progress of library. He/she should ensure collective partnership from all his library staff and should be a guide and facilitator in anticipating change and in promoting sound learning culture. **Cargill and Webb (1988)** assert that library leadership must integrate and unite people from all departments and should inspire and encourage them to participate in the decision making and problem solving processes. It has been widely accepted by many researchers that library leadership is critical for the survival and success of libraries. **Mullins and Linehan (2005)** view that changes in technology, growing expectations of information seekers, increasing turbulence and information based society have forced to have vibrant and effective leadership for the success of libraries. A library as an institution needs a sound and dynamic leaders who can transform it to achieve new heights and can also navigate it to face change and uncertainty. **Shoaf (2004)** opine that due to the changes in the library environment, effective

leaders are needed with talents and capability as they can maneuver resources for the good of academic community instead of traditional leadership. It calls for role of transformational leaders who can make libraries adaptive to changes and complexities. Transformational leaders have the vision for the institution and can guide their followers to pursue common objective in pursuit of institutional goals. Previous studies on leadership and library and information science highlight that transformational leadership can play active role in managing crisis and can effectively cope with uncertainty (Düren, 2013; Hicks and Givens, 2013; Mavrinac, 2005). A learning organization can innovate, face uncertainty, transform, excel and thrive, provided it has the backing and support of transformational leaders who can overcome difficulties with maturity and competence.

**Fig 1: Theoretical framework of Transformational Leadership and Learning Organization**



### Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between transformational leadership practices and learning organization
- To analyze the perception of library staff towards transformational leadership practices
- To study the perception of library staff towards learning organization practices prevailing in select academic libraries
- To suggest measures for improving the leadership practices and learning organization practices in academic libraries of sample select universities.

### Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis has been formulated for the present study:

- H<sub>0</sub>: There is a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership practices and learning organization

### Research Methodology

The population of the study consists of employees of academic libraries of five select universities of Jammu & Kashmir. i.e. *University of Jammu; University of Kashmir; Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST); Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGBSU) and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU)*. The sample respondents (166) comprised of library assistants and supporting staff. In the present study a questionnaire was used to collect data. The selection of universities was based on convenience sampling. To measure leadership, MLQ - 5X questionnaire developed by **Bass and Avalio (1995)** comprised 20 items of transformational leadership across five dimensions was used. For measuring learning organization practices, learning organization theory developed by **Senge (1990)** was used. Out of the total 166 sample respondents, only 137 respondents returned the questionnaire, with a response rate of 82.53%. Moreover, nine questionnaires returned were found outliers and not suitable for final analysis purpose. Thus, the final analysis was done on only 128 questionnaires. The reliability coefficient of the research instrument variables varied from 0.72 to 0.84. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; Section A, containing information of respondents and Section B comprising of items on transformational leadership and learning organization. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS 20.0. Version. Descriptive statistics was used to study the employee's perception with respect to transformational leadership and learning organization practices and also to explain the profile of respondents of present study. Inferential statistics such as *Pearson correlation* was employed for hypothesis testing.

### Data Analysis and Findings

#### Perception of library staff towards transformational leadership practices

Overall perception of library staff towards transformational leadership practices was found favourable with overall mean score and % mean score of 3.58 and 64.50%, respectively. Moreover, the highest perception among dimensions of transformational leadership was found in *inspirational motivation* with mean score of 3.64 and % mean score of 66.00%, i.e. employees show highest satisfaction with this dimension. It was followed by *idealized attribute* with mean score of 3.61 and % mean score of 65.25%; *intellectual stimulation* (3.59, 64.75%); *idealized*

behavior (3.54, 63.50%) while as the least satisfaction was found in *individual consideration* with mean score of 3.52 and % mean score of 63.00% (Table 1).

**Table 1: Perception of library staff towards transformational leadership practices (N=128)**

| Dimension                          | Mean Score  | Std. Deviation | %Mean Score  |
|------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| Idealized Attribute                | 3.61        | 0.82           | 65.25        |
| Idealized Behaviour                | 3.54        | 0.86           | 63.50        |
| Inspirational Motivation           | 3.64        | 0.73           | 66.00        |
| Intellectual Stimulation           | 3.59        | 0.75           | 64.75        |
| Individual Consideration           | 3.52        | 0.80           | 63.00        |
| <b>Transformational Leadership</b> | <b>3.58</b> | <b>0.79</b>    | <b>64.50</b> |

### Perception of library staff towards learning organization practices

An overall perception of library staff towards learning organization practices was found favourable with overall mean score and % mean score of 3.71 and 67.75%, respectively. Moreover, the highest perception among dimensions of learning organization was found in *team learning* with mean score of 3.78 and % mean score of 69.75% i.e. employees show highest satisfaction with this dimension. It was followed by *systems thinking* with mean score of 3.75 and % mean score of 68.75%; *mental models* (3.72, 68.00%); *shared vision* (3.69, 67.25%) while as the least satisfaction was found towards *personal mastery* with mean score of 3.63 and % mean score of 65.75% (Table 2).

**Table 2: Perception of library staff towards learning organization practices (N=128)**

| Dimension                    | Mean Score  | Std. Deviation | % Mean Score |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| Personal Mastery             | 3.63        | 0.77           | 65.75        |
| Mental Models                | 3.72        | 0.75           | 68.00        |
| Shared Vision                | 3.69        | 0.79           | 67.25        |
| Team Learning                | 3.78        | 0.81           | 69.50        |
| Systems Thinking             | 3.75        | 0.72           | 68.75        |
| <b>Learning Organization</b> | <b>3.71</b> | <b>0.76</b>    | <b>67.75</b> |

### Relationship between transformational leadership and learning organization

There is a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and learning organization in academic libraries. It depicts that the more we exhibit transformational leadership in academic libraries,

the more it will result in creating favorable learning organization. Therefore, our hypothesis is supported since correlation between transformational leadership practices and learning organization was found positive and statistically significant ( $r=.556, p=0.000$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Relationship between transformational leadership and learning organization**

|                                    |                     | Learning Organization |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Transformational Leadership</b> | Pearson Correlation | .556**                |
|                                    | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                  |
|                                    | N                   | 166                   |

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

### Correlation between transformational leadership practices and learning organization

Correlations were determined between transformational leadership practices and overall learning organization. All the dimensions of transformational leadership depict positive and significant relationship with respect to learning organization. The most positive relationship was found in case of *inspirational motivation* ( $r=.344, p=0.000$ ), *individual consideration* showed  $r=.344, p=0.000$ . It was followed by *idealized behavior* ( $r=.323, p=0.000$ ) and *idealized attribute* ( $r=.308, p=0.000$ ). The least positive and significant relation was found in *intellectual stimulation* ( $r=.297, p=0.000$ ). All the correlations were statistically significant (Table 4).

**Table 4: Correlation between transformational leadership practices and learning organization**

| Transformational Leadership Practices |                     | Learning Organization |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Idealized Attribute                   | Pearson Correlation | .308**                |
|                                       | Sig. level          | 0.000                 |
| Idealized Behaviour                   | Pearson Correlation | .323**                |
|                                       | Sig. level          | 0.000                 |
| Inspirational Motivation              | Pearson Correlation | .365**                |
|                                       | Sig. level          | 0.000                 |
| Intellectual Stimulation              | Pearson Correlation | .297**                |
|                                       | Sig. level          | 0.000                 |
| Individual Consideration              | Pearson Correlation | .344**                |
|                                       | Sig. level          | 0.000                 |

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

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The number of male staff was 97 (58.43%) while the percentage of female staff was 69 amounting to 41.57%. Similarly, on the basis of experience, those who had less than 10 years of work experience comprised 28.32% of respondents and those who had more than 20 years of experience comprised 33.73% of respondents. With respect to age of respondents, those who had age up to 35 years comprised of 39 (23.50%) respondents, while as those in the age range of 35- 50 comprised of 69 respondents (41.56%) (Table 5).

**Table 5: Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=166)**

| Factor                     | Frequency | %Age  |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Gender</b>              |           |       |
| Male                       | 97        | 58.43 |
| Female                     | 69        | 41.57 |
| <b>Experience</b>          |           |       |
| Upto 10 Years              | 47        | 28.32 |
| 10 Years to 20 Years       | 63        | 37.95 |
| 20 Years and Above         | 56        | 33.73 |
| <b>Age</b>                 |           |       |
| Upto 35 Years              | 39        | 23.50 |
| 35 Years above to 50 Years | 58        | 34.94 |
| 50 Years and Above         | 69        | 41.56 |

### Conclusion and Suggestions

There exists a relationship between transformational leadership practices and learning organization. The results show that there exists a favourable perception of library staff towards transformational leadership practices. Moreover, employees show positive response with respect to learning organization approach. There is still a scope to strengthen transformational leadership of academic libraries for gaining popularity and relevance in the world academic institutions.

Transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in making institutions more competitive and capable in facing complex and turbulent environment. The 21<sup>st</sup> century demands institutions to transform knowledge and information which is accessible and result oriented to all the stakeholders. Academic libraries are at the forefront in creating environment which is favourable and yet competitive in facing global knowledge world. Due to the rapid changes in the present knowledge world and the professional environment of libraries the functioning of



academic library activities has been affected. In this scenario, learning organization is a very suitable approach in dealing with change and uncertainty. The concept of learning organization can only become effective and successful if leadership of academic libraries provides adequate facilities to their staff in implementing strategies and measures that yield better performance and results. A learning organization needs a leader who can inspire their followers to work and cooperate and make them adaptable in responding to change and in achieving desired goals and outcomes. It calls leadership of academic libraries to articulate a vision among its staff and exhibit a philosophy on which academic libraries stand so that competence of professional librarianship is attained and excellence of academic library is sustained.

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### Corresponding author

**Ajaz Akbar Mir** can be contacted at: mirajaz78@yahoo.co.in

### Author Biographies

**Umar Mufeed** is a research scholar in the Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir and is pursuing his Ph.D programme in the area of Academic leadership and Institution Building. He has one year of

teaching experience and has published 5 research papers in national and international journals. He has presented 8 research papers in national and international conferences within and outside state. He has contributed 3 chapters in the edited books of national and international repute. He can be reached at [umar.mufeed08@gmail.com](mailto:umar.mufeed08@gmail.com)

**Ajaz Akbar Mir** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir. He has over 10 years of teaching and research experience and has published over 20 research papers in national and international journals. He has presented number of research papers at regional, national and international conferences within and outside state. He has contributed 3 chapters in the edited books of national and international repute.

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