

RESEARCH BRIEF

## Exploring Transformational Leadership and Fellowship in a Cultural Context: The Case of the Philippines

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The concepts of transformational and transactional leadership were introduced by Burns (1978), which Bass (1985) further developed. According to Bass (1985), transformational and transactional leadership are independent but complementary constructs. The latter focuses on the exchange of productivity for reward (i.e., productivity can be achieved by giving rewards and no productivity can mean the withdrawal of rewards or benefits). The former is concerned about achieving extraordinary outcomes and in the process allows employees to develop their own leadership capacities (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Avolio, Waldman, & Einstein, 1988). Consequently, transformational leadership occurs when leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of motivation (Pawar & Eastman, 1997).

Despite the wide acceptance of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), there have been criticisms in some areas of its conceptual definition and measurement factors (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2008; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Its nuances were captured in the interviews conducted that showed individual consideration as the most identified

dimension of the transformational leadership construct. Hence, we explore in this study how the Filipino trait of fellowship (i.e., the concept of *kapwa*) can become a hallmark of good leadership. A study by Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, and McKenna, (2014) postulated that individualized consideration as a dimension mediates the relationship between a leader's wisdom and leader-member exchange. A leader manifests genuine concern and care for others, which is driven by empathy and compassion.

Our research objective is to provide further understanding on the conceptual definition of transformational leadership dimension of individualized consideration, specifically in the Philippine cultural context —*kapwa*. A clearer perspective of this dimensional aspect of the construct will aid in improving management practices by reinforcing leadership-training programs in this area. We will extend the research on transformational leadership, specifically on the analysis of the dimensions and how future metrics may be improved to provide leadership researchers and scholars a firmer grasp of the construct in Philippine management studies.

Findings will be significant for leaders, both in the private and public sector, as it will help them better direct their respective workforce in achieving organizational goals and at the same time create a working environment that is based on fellowship characterized by collegiality and mutual respect.

## Transformational Leadership and Fellowship

Transformational leadership will continue to be an explored area of leadership as studies are still limited in many aspects, such as linking transformational leadership and performance (Goodwin, Whittington, Murray, & Nichols, 2011; Valdiserri & Wilson, 2010), cascading to different levels of transformational leadership (Bruch & Walter, 2007), as well as other facets like development of transformational leadership, new predictors and contingencies, training authentic transformational leaders, the inner workings of transformational leaders, the dark side of transformational leadership, and many other perspectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

As emphasized by Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership is about improving the performance of the followers and developing these followers to their fullest potential. It has four dimensions, which serve as the guide for determining behavior:

1. **Individualized consideration.** Gives personal attention to others, making each individual feel uniquely valued;
2. **Intellectual stimulation.** Actively encourages a new look at old methods, stimulates creativity, and encourages others to look at problems and issues in a new way;
3. **Inspirational motivation.** Increases optimism and enthusiasm, communicates high expectations, points out possibilities not previously considered; and
4. **Idealized influence.** Provides vision and a sense of purpose and elicits respect, trust, and confidence from followers.

Of the four dimensions, idealized influence or charisma seemed to receive much attention in the literature. Bruch and Walter (2007) found that idealized influence and inspirational motivation were the most identified transformational leadership behaviors present among upper managers than middle managers they studied, with job satisfaction as the dependent variable.

Hinkin and Tracey (1999) propounded the thesis that charismatic leadership emerges at a time of crisis, as was true during political or religious upheavals. The study of Waldman, Ramirez, House, and Puranam (2001) also showed that the connection between top managers and firm outcomes would depend on the

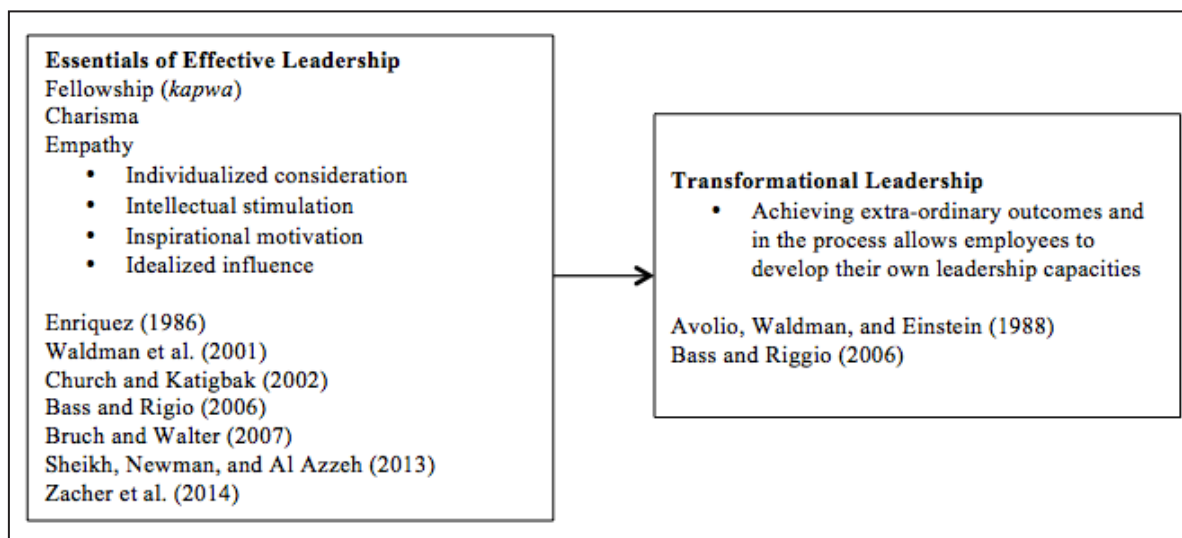


Figure 1. Literature map.

managers' charismatic leadership, but only during a period of crisis. Meanwhile, expecting idealized influence to come up in a business setting and in a period of stability seemed unrealistic. Charisma, for example, was found to be irrelevant during times of organizational stability (Hinkin & Tracey, 1999).

On the construct of *kapwa* (i.e., fellowship, as we define it), it is defined as a shared identity with others (Church & Katigbak, 2002). This accounts for individualized consideration as primary transformational leadership behavior, rooted in the Filipino's notion of *kapwa*, which "embraces both the categories of 'outsider' (ibang tao) and 'one of us' (hindi ibang tao)" (Enriquez, 1986, p. 16) and sparks genuine concern.

Without empathy, which is an essential trait of individualized consideration (Zacher et al., 2014), there would be fewer chances for followers to identify with the other transformational leadership dimensions, let alone follow a leader. A closer look at fellowship and giving it more weight in assessing transformational leadership behaviors in a Philippine context is suggested to come up with a more accurate measurement of transformational leadership. Further, cultural values can affect transformational leadership behaviors (Sheikh, Newman, & Al Azzeh, 2013). In the West where individualism is appreciated and encouraged, Asian culture tends to promote collectivism. Fellowship is a construct that is attuned with collectivism since it takes into consideration the others.

The abovementioned discussion is summarized in Figure 1. It can be construed that in moving towards making a difference in fostering the success of organizational goals, it requires a dynamic and innovative leader-follower relationship, which is best embodied in a working ecosystem where specific organizational core values (e.g., professionalism, teamwork, and commitment) are translated into action and output. These core values, which may be specific to various organizations, can be effectively realized if fellowship is practiced. A realized fellowship will consequently create an empowered community of motivated workforce—an outcome of transformational leadership.

## Transformational Leadership in the Philippines

While there is a universal acceptance of transformational leadership, it must be stated that the foundations of this concept are based on the West. Cultural context gives important perspectives to the study of leadership. Transformational leadership studies in Asia are sparse and do not specifically focus on the dimensional aspects of the construct. Cultural values affect transformational leadership behaviors and we posit that measurement of leadership behaviors of Filipino managers should be based on a contextual approach.

To touch on the dimensional aspect of transformational leadership, we employed the MLQ. According to Bass and Avolio (1993), it evaluates three leadership styles: (1) transactional, (2) transformational, and (3) passive-avoidant. It allows individuals to measure how they perceive themselves with regard to specific leadership behaviors using a leader-self form but its core comes in the rater-other feedback that is enabled with the rater form. That is, the MLQ was designed with a dual or full-circle feedback method.

We utilized the MLQ because it is a well-established instrument in the measure of transformational leadership. Despite its shortcomings as mentioned by Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013), and Muenjohn and Armstrong (2008), it is still extensively used, researched, and validated. As per Bass and Avolio (1993), other than the MLQ being used in thousands of research programs, construct validity is also methodically explained with factor analyses creating the six-factor model for the MLQ. Likewise, Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) eventually espoused the nine-factor leadership model and its robustness in homogeneous situations. That is, reliability scores for the MLQ subscales ranged from moderate to good.

We subjected the MLQ to a sample of 30 Executive Directors (EDs) belonging to companies and enterprises experiencing a period of growth and stability. Table 1 shows the different leadership styles and Appendix 1 details out, in verbatim, the statements that provide qualitative support for individualized consideration

behavior that is identified most with transformational leadership derived from interviews.

### Discussion on Anecdotal Evidence of the Nature of Leadership in Philippine Private Corporations

From the in-depth interviews conducted with the respondents, 97% (i.e., 29 out of the 30 respondents) claimed that their leader manifests transformational leadership style. From among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, the most mentioned dimension was the individualized consideration, as seen from Table 1.

Note that there is a low turnout for inspirational motivation and idealized influence (i.e., dimensions more coherent with charismatic leadership) among the respondents. Respondents identified individualized consideration as the most apparent transformational leadership behavior in the qualitative interviews. This result is counterintuitive to the existing literature

because these are the categories commonly identified with a dominant transformational leadership dimension. We suspect that this may be due to the Filipino concept of *kapwa*, which Enriquez (1986), father of Filipino Psychology, identified as the core concept underlying Filipino interpersonal behaviors, which Church and Katigbak (2002) deemed as a shared identity with others.

Various studies have consistently acknowledged the significance of contextual factors in the study of transformational leadership and the limited research on this area warrants further studies. Results found from the MLQ and interviews provides a direction to outline a framework of organizational change and focus on this dimension may help explain its contextual role on the transformational leadership construct—the concept of *kapwa*.

The concept of fellowship as can be implied from Church and Katigbak (2002) and Enriquez (1986) calls for the need to consider intrinsic motivation in knowledge-work contexts. According to Senge

**Table 1**  
*Leadership Style*

Code/Area	Category	Theme
Open communications (18)	Individualized Consideration	Transformational Leadership
Listens to suggestions (15)		
Caring attitude (15)		
Attends to employees needs (6)		
Situational leadership (3)		
Open door policy (2)		
Encourages creativity (13)	Intellectual Stimulation	
Delegates the work (11)		
Nurtures/develops employees (6)		
Demands people to do more (5)		
Implementing changes (2)	Inspirational Motivation	
Motivates employees (6)		
Source of inspiration (5)		
Sets objectives clearly (4)		
Charismatic attribute (4)		
Knowledge of the business (4)		
Setting good example (6)	Idealized Influence	
Leadership from the top (6)		
Doing the right thing (4)		
Emulates the leader (3)		
Plays fair (2)		
Religious (2)		
Serving others (1)		

(n. d., as cited in Marshall, 2012), the most striking part of being in a team is the “meaningfulness of the experience.” That is, people talk about being part of something larger than them, of being connected, of being generative. **Clearly, this is what *kapwa* is all about.**

Furthermore, Senge (n.d., as cited in Marshall, 2012) suggested that the ideal social environment for knowledge work is a learning organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. **Clearly, this is the outcome of transformational leadership.**

## Conclusion

The MLQ has been subjected to critical analysis in the study of Hinkin and Tracey (1999). However, to date, there is still a lack of concrete conclusions. Hence, research in transformational leadership can be ascribed to the evolution of measurements tools like the MLQ. While there has been support for the structure represented by the MLQ, there are shreds of evidence of inconsistencies in the MLQ factor structure as per Bass and Riggio (2006).

In measuring transformational leadership in the Philippine context as revealed in our application of the MLQ, we propose a modification in the factors enumerated in the Individualized Consideration (see Table 1) by incorporating *kapwa* as a component since it is part of the Philippine psyche and it is where most Filipino respondents can identify with most. The purpose of which is to identify behaviors that can be measured more accurately in a Philippine cultural context.

Therefore, unlike traditional forms of leadership, incorporating fellowship in the MLQ is much more compatible with the environment for leaders and followers to create meaningful outcomes in the organization.

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