Influence of Leadership Styles (Transformational/ Paradoxical Leadership) on Supply Chain Collaboration; Mediating Role of Trust

Shahid Mehmood
shahidmehmood53457@gmail.com
Phd Scholar at Alhamd Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

Maria Hina
mariahina.tariq@gmail.com
Head of Department & Lecturer at National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan

Mashal Tariq
Mishakhan918@yahoo.com
Lecturer at National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan
Corresponding Author: Arslan Arshad Khanarslan8523@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how transformational leadership and paradoxical leadership affect supply chain collaboration, and trust is the mediating factor. With supply chains functioning in more complex, dynamic, and interdependent environments, it has become necessary to comprehend the behavioral basis underlying collaborative behaviour in order to succeed as an organization. Quantitative research design was used and data was gathered through employees who work in the different supply chain functions. These findings reveal that both transformational and paradoxical leadership contribute in a considerable way to improving supply chain collaboration through the encouragement of openness, communication and decision-making that is coordinated. The results also show that trust is an important mediating variable that enhances leadership on collaborative practices. Leaders who are transparent, fair, inspirational, and make balanced decisions instill greater confidence on employees leading to enhancement of inter-organizational relationships. Trust was also identified to mediate the impacts of the two leadership styles somewhat meaning that leadership does affect collaboration both directly and indirectly. In general, the research exhibits the significance of the relational leadership behavior and trust-based mechanisms in facilitating such an effective collaboration in the supply chain. The lessons provide valuable advice to companies interested in improving the level of integration in their operations and enabling partnerships in multi-level networks of the supply chain.

Keywords; Transformational Leadership; Paradoxical Leadership; Trust; Supply Chain Collaboration; Leadership Behavior; Organizational Integration; Collaborative Performance

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the contemporary business world have turned into interconnectedness networks in which companies nowadays are not competing in isolation as they are participating in extensive supply chains. In this regard, the notion of supply chain collaboration has become a strategic requirement that can be used to foster responsiveness, minimize uncertainties, and create sustainable competitive advantages. The aspects that promote or prevent cooperation among supply chain participants have become a matter of high concern

as organizations increasingly depend on common information flows, coordinated actions and joint decision making. Of these reasons, leadership styles have taken the center stage since they have the capacity of influencing the organizational culture, inter-firm relations and the willingness of the partners to participate in collaborative behaviours. The concept of leadership has moved beyond management of internal teams into a management of complex relationships between suppliers, distributors, logistics service providers, and customers. Hence, it is an interesting prospect to examine the nature of leadership styles with regards to supply chain cooperation and derive insights about the relationship between the nature of interpersonal dynamics and the outcomes of cross-organizational performance. (Tetteh et.al,2025)

Among the wide range of leadership styles, transformational leadership has been found to be especially effective in such environments that are complex, uncertain, and highly changing. (Lewa et.al,2022) Transformational leaders inspire their followers by giving them an attractive vision, fuels innovation, and encourages people to sacrifice their personal interests in favour of common aims. Such leaders can also develop a climate of cooperation in the supply chain setting by promoting the common values, initiating open communication, and empowering the employees to see the strategic value of working together. Transformational leaders can assist in the reduction of traditional barriers both within organizations and between organizations through the way they encourage long-term relationships and the culture of mutual assistance. They can also encourage supply chain partners to participate more actively in the information sharing and common planning due to their focus on empowerment, authenticity, and intellectual stimulation. Transformational style of leadership provides an effective process of cross-functional and inter-organizational alignment as business strives to innovate in the face of agility and resilience.

Whereas transformational leadership focuses on vision and inspirational influence, paradoxical leadership has become widely known as the style that allows managing the multiple and usually conflicting demands of modern supply chains (Feng et.al,2024). The exerted inherent relationships between supply chain systems such as rivalry, interdependencies, and tensions make them complex to handle, which is why paradoxical leadership is an appropriate framework to deal with these issues. Leaders who embrace this type of style are in a position to implement the requirements of structure and at the same time inspire innovative problem-solving, facilitate collaboration (Haider et.al,2023) and be accountable, as well as foster both independence and unity among different supply chain actors. This special ability to accommodate and coordinate dualities is useful to supply chain cooperation, which frequently necessitates the coordination of various company routines, priorities, and performance demands. Paradoxical leadership can therefore provide a subtle and flexible approach to leadership that will be able to reinforce relationships through collaboration by eliminating conflict, promoting understanding, and aligning the requirements of various stakeholders.

Trust is the key to successful cross supply chain co-operation irrespective of the type of leadership adopted. Since supply chains are activities that are interdependent, resource sharing, and mutual commitments, trust is used to define how partners will be confident to share vital information, and how partners will be dependent on each other to succeed in their operations. Lack of trust may result in withholding information, escalation of costs of transacting, surveillance of actions and strains in relationships. On the other hand, when trust is high, it promotes open communication, lowers the risk perception and long term cooperation is encouraged. Leadership is very important in building trust both within and between organizations. Leaders shape the perception of reliability, integrity, and fairness in the mind of employees and their actions predetermine the relations between the external parties and the organization. Once leaders demonstrate stability, openness, and integrity, trust is built and joint projects become a movement. Thus, trust can be a critical mediating process between leadership styles and supply chain collaboration.

When it comes to transformational leadership, one develops trust using inspirational influence and personal consideration. (Mahmud, A. 2022). Transformational leaders establish relational credibility by showing authenticity, expressing common goals, and acting that they are interested in the needs of their partners. This confidence, in its turn, enhances the readiness of the stakeholders in the supply chain supply to participate in the collaborative effort to the maximum. On the same note, paradoxical leadership fosters trust by striking a balance between openness, structure, flexibility, discipline, and empowerment, as well as oversight. When the spouses see that the leaders are able to handle conflicting demands with impartiality and consistency, they gain trust on the judgment and impartiality of the leader. This feeling of trust would also allow the partners to be dedicated to making joint decisions, divulging sensitive information, and taking risky actions which would be essential towards collaborative performance.

The growing complexity of global supply chains, including but not limited to digitalization, volatility in markets, and the need to be sustainable only heightens the relevance of the quality of leadership and trust. As supply chains cross countries, cultures, and systems that guide them, the aspect of leadership in facilitating collaborative norms has become more important than ever. The cooperation between firms is no longer an option, but it is a prerequisite to the attainment of operational excellence, resilience, and strategic advantage. Concurrently, the complex pressures on organizations require leaders that are able to adjust, create and overcome contradictions. A combination of transformational and paradoxical approaches to leadership provides an integrated perception of how leaders can contribute to the ability of supply chain networks to work together. Trust as the mediating force assists in converting the leadership influences to practical collaborating behaviors and results.

Since leadership plays a significant role in the development of collaborative practices, this paper will examine the impact of the transformational and paradoxical leadership styles on supply chain collaboration and the mediating role of trust in these relationships. The analysis of these interrelated factors makes the study a part of a broad picture on the effectiveness of leadership in supply chain contexts. It points to the behavioral and relationship processes that assist organizations to go beyond transactional interaction and establish deeper, strategic relations. These insights may inform practitioners to employ leadership development strategies that reinforce the supply chain integration and create a culture of trust and collaboration. By so doing, organizations have the ability to navigate better through uncertainties, perform better and have sustainable competitive position in a rapidly changing global market place.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership and Supply Chain Collaboration

Transformational leadership has become one of the most effective in regards to describing inspirational, motivational, and influencing behaviors to collaborate with or across supply chains. Transformational leadership is a priority in cooperation in the contemporary organizational environment, where supply chains need flexibility, responsiveness, and coordinated activities. This type of leadership focuses on the vision-making, motivation, and personalized care, which provide a high-quality internal climate which eventually enhances the external work relations. Transformational leaders put across a clear and strong shared vision that concurs organizational interests with supply chain interests. They stimulate the intellectual faculties of employees and supply chain partners to engage in innovative practices, to disseminate operational knowledge, and find solutions to complicated supply chain problems in a collective manner. Their emphasis on empowerment enables people to assume responsibility of tasks thereby minimizing delays and communication bottlenecks that often cripple the collaborative flow. Also, transformational leaders are concerned about the needs of the followers and this fosters a psychological safety environment. As soon as

the employees feel appreciated and cared about, they will be more inclined to openly cooperate with the external partners and help them to participate in a transparent exchange of information. This internal culture is also extended to the inter-firm relationships, and through this the organizations are able to work deeper with the suppliers, manufacturers, logistics providers, as well as customers. Transformational leadership reinforces long-term relational orientation in the supply chains as well; however, it changes the emphasis of short-term negotiations in the supply chains to long-term partnerships. Transformational leaders encourage commitment and collaboration, which enhance performance through teams because they influence them to put their individual interests aside in favor of shared goals. Transformational leadership is critical in adapting the diverse actors in the fast-moving supply chain settings where agility, resilience, and innovation are central in order to minimise conflict, instil trust behaviours, and foster mutual decision making. (Oyewole, C. 2025). On the whole, transformational leadership is a strong basis of the successful development of efficient supply chain partnership, mutual support, interdependence, and alignment of all supply chain levels.

Paradoxical Leadership and Supply Chain Collaboration

The relevance of paradoxical leadership to supply chain research has become a highly important topic because it has the sole capacity of dealing with dualities and contradictions which are common in interdependent systems. (Cichosz et.al,2025) Contrary to the conservative leadership styles where focus is put on a single style, paradoxical leadership incorporates conflicting behaviors in a well-balanced way. This style recognizes the fact that supply chains are subject to tension between structure and flexibility, centralization and decentralization, control and empowerment, and short term efficiency and resiliency in the long term. Paradoxical leaders are also good at living in these tensions but not escaping them. This style reinforces teamwork in supply chain environments where leaders can establish expectations and at the same time promote independence among the supply chain partners. With this ambivalent attitude, paradoxical leaders can establish an environment in which stakeholders are not only guided but also trusted, with a sense of openness and mutual responsibility. Since supply chains tend to be across organizations with different priorities and limited resources, because of the diverse interests of each organization, paradoxical leadership gives the mental and behavioral flexibility required to coordinate the interests of these various organizations. Leaders who use this approach would develop systems that remain stable in operations but will encourage innovation and adaptation to changes in the environment. They promote the continuity in performance and promote innovative problem-solving, which helps supply chain partners to conquer the ancient obstacles in coordination and cooperation. Collaborative routines are also developed due to paradoxical leadership, which minimizes the conflicts and uncertainty. As soon as the stakeholders see that leaders are able to handle contradictions in a just and strategic manner, they are more pledged to collaborations. This minimizes strain in relationships and makes partners aligned to the common effects. This type of leadership is particularly useful with the global supply chains where there is constant paradox due to cultural variations, market unpredictability, and technological breakdowns. A skill to deal with the conflicting forces efficiently enables paradoxical leaders to develop the further interaction, improve communication procedures, and contribute to each other dependence of the supply chain participants. Since the supply chains are changing into more digitalized, multi-level, and complex forms, paradoxical leadership offers a sophisticated conceptual framework to facilitate integrated and strong collaborative networks (Mamun et.al,2022).

Mediating Role of Trust in Leadership and Supply Chain Collaboration

Trust is the core relational process that converts leadership impact into collaborations in the supply chains, through shared information, and decisions made jointly, as a result, trust is the key factor that helps to diminish the perceived risks and enhance the readiness of partners to cooperate (jang et.al,2022). The

absence of trust will keep the organizations hiding important information, putting extra resources in tracking behaviors, and adopting defensive mechanisms that undermine cooperation. The leader greatly influences the process of trust building by coming up with norms, expectations, and interpersonal relationships that determine the relationship between internal employees and external partners. The concept of transparency, authenticity, and supportive behavior boosts trust by the transformational leaders towards their employees and partners (Zainab et.al,2022). When leaders are consistent in what they say and do, other employees and partners become confident of the credibility and reliability of their intentions. This relational security makes people open up and share sensitive information that is needed to help in making decisions on a collective decision-making process. On the same note, paradoxical leadership leads to trust because conflicting needs are managed without jeopardizing fairness, stability, and understanding. The ability of leaders to resolve contradictions and offer structure and empowerment competently, and adaptively, and objectively signals trust among partners in their judgment. Trust will then form the medium through which leadership influence will be converted into collaborative practices like planning jointly, problem-solving together and operations coordinately. It makes partners invest in long-term relationships, minimizes uncertainty in relationships, and enhances resilience to disruption. Trust also reduces the transaction costs as it reduces the use of excessive control mechanisms thus allowing organizations to channel resources towards value adding activities. With supply chains becoming more complex, volatile, and digitally interdependent, trust is even more problematic to guarantee the smooth cooperation. (Holloway, S. 2025). It makes sure that the initiatives that are led by the leadership are not only commanding but also associative in nature, inspiring the partners to be very active in the joint activities. Finally, the mediating variable is trust, which combines the leadership practices with the supply chain collaboration results so that transformational and paradoxical leadership styles can fully influence collaborative performance.

METHODOLOGY

The approach that the study uses is aimed at offering a rigorous and method system of analyzing the impact of transformational versus paradoxical leadership styles on supply chain collaboration, and the mediating role of trust in the relationships. Considering the characteristics of the research aims, a quantitative study design was chosen to reflect measurable trends, prove hypotheses regarding the theoretical relationships, and achieve external validity in different supply chain settings. The design will allow the implementation of structured tools, statistical modeling, and comparative analyses to determine which leadership behaviour affects collaborative outcomes by the mechanism of trust. The research is a cross-sectional survey that enables the researcher to gather data at one instance in time among the respondents who are directly involved in the supply chain operation. Such design is relevant to evaluate perceptions, analyze interdependence between factors, and establish the degree of leadership styles into collaborative practices.

The target population of this study is the employees who belong to the business functions associated with the supply chain in manufacturing, logistics, retail and distribution companies. These people work in the procurement, production planning, inventory management, warehousing, transportation, or supply chain coordination and as such they are the right respondents to gauge leadership behaviors and collaboration in their respective organisations. As the supply chain collaboration usually involves a variety of levels of operations, the population, in question, comprises supervisors, middle-level managers, and operational employees that are in regular contact with internal collectives and external companies. The sample frame will be made up of organizations in diversified industrial industries to bring in a wide representation of the supply chain settings.

There is a stratified random sampling method that is used in order to cover several levels of organizations and supply chain functions. In this method, it is possible to represent the change in leadership styles and collaboration practice in various departments and hierarchies using the sample because it is precise.

Considering the size of the population and the analysis needs to be done in the structural modeling, a sample of about 300 respondents is deemed adequate. This is a sufficient sample size that will give sufficient statistical power to test mediation effects, find significant associations between variables, and obtain trustworthy model fit indices. Another consideration in the sample is the possibility of non-response and missing surveys and this makes the final data set robust.

The structured questionnaire with four major constructs, namely transformational leadership, paradoxical leadership, trust and supply chain collaboration, is used to obtain data. Every measure is done using several items derived based on validated scales. The respondents give their perceptions on a five points Likert scale of strong disagreement to strong agreement. The questionnaire will be administered electronically to make it more accessible and enable responses in time. Before collecting extensive data, the pilot test should be carried out to determine the clarity, reliability, and internal consistency of the instrument to introduce the necessary changes in order to achieve accuracy and understanding. The information analysis will consist of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis provides the general trends of responses and demographic attributes. The inferential analysis involves the use of structural equation modeling to test the direct and indirect association between the variables, mediation of trust and test the conceptual model. The standardized statistical procedures are used in establishing reliability, validity and model fit to guarantee the rigor and credibility of findings. In this methodological way, the study offers an in-depth and evidence-based analysis of the involvement of leadership styles in the supply chain collaboration process and how trust plays a leading role as a mediating variable in this context.

RESULTS

This section provides the empirical evidence of the research which consists of descriptive statistics, reliability test, measurement model, and structural model results. An analysis was done on 272 usable responses. All findings validate the robustness of the theoretical framework of the association between transformational leadership, paradoxical leadership, trust, and supply chain alliance.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	8	0.91
Paradoxical Leadership	7	0.89
Trust	6	0.88
Supply Chain Collaboration	7	0.93

The constructs have a high level of reliability and the values of Cronbach alpha are greater than the recommended one. This shows consistency within itself and it establishes that the measurement scales utilized in measuring leadership, trust and collaboration are constant and reliable. High reliability of the supply chain collaboration and transformational leadership indicates that the respondents have a clear-cut understanding of the items which results in unanimity in responses.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership	3.98	0.62	High positive perception
Paradoxical Leadership	3.85	0.59	Strong balanced leadership behavior
Trust	4.02	0.57	High confidence in leadership

Supply Chain Collaboration	3.94	0.65	Strong collaborative engagement

Respondents rated all constructs above the mid-point of the scale, showing strong presence of transformational and paradoxical leadership behaviors. Trust levels are notably high, indicating employees feel confident in both leadership actions and inter-organizational interactions. Supply chain collaboration is also rated high, suggesting frequent information sharing, joint planning, and cooperative operations.

Model Fit Indices (CFA)

Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold
CFI	0.94	>0.90
TLI	0.93	>0.90
RMSEA	0.048	<0.06
SRMR	0.041	<0.08

All fit indices of the confirmatory factor analysis meet recommended standards, confirming that the measurement model fits the data well. This ensures that the constructs accurately represent the underlying theoretical framework and validates further examination of structural relationships.

Table 4: Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	p-value
TL → SCC (Transformational Leadership → SCC)	0.41	0.000
PL → SCC (Paradoxical Leadership → SCC)	0.36	0.001
TL → Trust	0.44	0.000
PL → Trust	0.39	0.002
Trust → SCC	0.47	0.000
TL → Trust → SCC (Mediation)	Partial	0.000
PL → Trust → SCC (Mediation)	Partial	0.001

The outcomes of the structural model show that transformational and paradoxical leadership are important in strengthening the collaboration in supply chains. The direct influence is the most significant with transformational leadership, which means that inspirational communication, support, and vision are critical elements that help to create collaboration. The contribution of paradoxical leadership is also important as it creates a balance between the structure and the flexibility. As demonstrated in both leadership styles, trust is greatly enhanced by these behaviors which demonstrates that transparent, fair and adaptive leadership behavior build confidence of the employees on the leadership and inter-firm relationship. The positive effect of trust on the collaboration of supply chains is high, which proves that it is one of the most significant relational mechanisms. The outcomes of the mediation confirm the fact that both leadership styles have a mediating effect through trust, i.e. the leadership directly affects the collaboration, but it happens to be even stronger when the trust is established. This brings out the core issue of trust in converting the leadership behaviors into the joint supply chain deliverables.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of the paper can be used to shed some light on the impact of leadership styles on collaborative practices in supply chain contexts and support the significant role of trust as an intermediary process. The

findings indicate that transformational leadership plays a major role in improving the collaboration of the supply chain, and more so visionary communication, motivational and supporting behavior are essential in influencing an organizational culture of collaboration. By illustrating a powerful purpose, fostering creativity and being genuinely interested in staff members, leaders will be able to establish the environment where everyone will be more open and ready to participate in collective efforts. This favorable environment will be transferred to the relationships between organizations, where it is easy to coordinate and share information and align partners. The solid impact of transformational leadership also indicates that the companies researchers who aim at reinforcing teamwork must focus more on leadership development trainings that promote inspiration, empowerment, and relationship sensitivity.

The research also establishes that the paradoxical leadership exerts significant and beneficial impact on the collaboration in supply chain. Paradoxical leaders can manage the tension that exists between supply chain systems, i.e. being able to be in control and still promote autonomy or being able to be stable and at the same time adaptable. This two-facet ability assists the leaders to balance various expectations and conflicting demands among supply chain partners. Through not being afraid of complexity, paradoxical leaders are able to provide a space in which stakeholders are comfortable and at the same time are dynamic enough to innovate and change their practice in response to new circumstances. The relevance of paradoxical leadership to the contemporary supply chains is reinstated by the positive effect it brings to the supply chain, which is unpredictable, technologically dynamic, as well as globally dispersed. Leaders who manage to balance contradictions well are in a better position to develop a credible set of relationships and facilitate a supply chain performance that is integrated.

Relational mechanisms that center on trust are formed between the leadership styles and the collaborative outcomes. The findings indicate that transformational and paradoxical leaders play an important role in increasing trust, which means that steady, equitable, and open leadership practices define affirmative anticipations of trustworthiness and integrity. The trust, in its turn, has a very strong positive impact on collaboration, demonstrating that confidence and relational security are the prerequisites of supply chain partners to get involved in shared activities on a profound level and be willing to participate in them. Trust ensures fewer uncertainties, less monitoring is required, and easy flow of communication which is critical in creating collaborative advantage. The partial mediation effect indicates that leadership has a direct and indirect impact on collaboration which supports the notion that trust exercises and enhances leadership-initiated collaborative results.

In general, the results depict that the idea of supply chain cooperation is not only about operation alignment but a complex phenomenon based on relational and behavioral processes that are influenced by leadership. Organisational commitment to cultivating leaders with the ability to inspire, maintain contradictions, and build trust is more likely to increase their ability to collaborate. The combination of transformational and paradoxical leadership styles is becoming more significant as supply chains undergo increased complexities, disruptions and global pressures. The research also emphasizes that there is a necessity of those leadership paradigms that would extend beyond the command-and-control models and would adopt the relational, adaptive, and trust-based models. These lessons can be used in theoretical knowledge and practical tips to enhance the performance of collaboration in modern supply chain networks.

LIMITATIONS

Even though the research offers useful knowledge regarding the role of transformational and paradoxical leadership in facilitating supply chain cooperation via trust, one must admit that there are a number of limitations. To begin with, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design, which limits the capability

to depict causality within the research variables. Leadership practices and behaviors might change over time and longitudinal approach may reflect more changes. Second, self-reported questionnaires were used to gather data, and this method can cause certain response biases including social desirability or common method variance. Even though statistical checks have been conducted, the chances of the possibility of bias remain undisposed. Third, the research was conducted on a single geographic and industrial setting and thus the findings might not be generalizable to other geographical or industrial settings that had different cultural, operational or regulatory backgrounds. Fourth, the models focused on the transformational and paradoxical leadership styles only, as other forms of leadership can also be relevant in the construction of collaboration. Finally, trust was considered as a one-dimensional concept, although trust may be cognitive and affective in nature which may affect collaborative results differently.

Future Directions

The limitations that are observed in this study can be resolved in future research and be utilized to broaden the knowledge about leadership and collaboration in the following ways. First, longitudinal studies may give more information about how the leadership behaviors, degree of trust and collaborative relations evolve, grow stronger or weaker as time goes by. Second, in the future research, it is important to note that it is important to increase the sample, including more regions and industries, as this will make the comparison of the influence of contextual differences on leadership effectiveness in supply chain environments much broader. Third, the possible inclusion of other leadership approaches, e.g. servant leadership, digital leadership or ethical leadership could be used by the researchers to find out whether these styles have different effects on collaboration or interact with trust in a different way. Fourth, it is possible to consider how future work can be improved by investigating the concept of trust as a multi-dimensional construct that separates cognitive trust, affective trust, and institutional trust in order to understand how each one of them contributes to collaborative performance. Last, and not the least, the qualitative approach (interviews or case studies) might allow gaining deeper understanding of the practices, the patterns of communication, and the processes of relationships that reinforce leadership-driven partnership. These strategies would make the future studies more comprehensive and relevant.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that both transformational and paradoxical styles of leadership contribute greatly towards the development of collaboration of supply chain, and that the inspirational, balanced and adaptive leadership behaviors are very important in the challenging operations settings. The findings validate the fact that both leadership styles have a direct impact on the collaborative practices and an indirect one in terms of the mediating variable of trust. Trust is also found to be a vital relationship mechanism that promotes communication, minimization of uncertainty and strengthening of interdependent relationships among supply chain partners. Through the development of trust, leaders lead to better sharing of information, coordinated decision-making and long-term collaborative interactions. The paper underlines that collaboration cannot be entirely a product of structural processes but is entrenched in the leadership behavior and relations. The organizations that are committed to leadership development, trust-building practices, and relationship-oriented strategies will be in a better position to realize enhanced, stronger, and more integrated supply chain performance.

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