



## CREDENCE TO LEADER AFFECTING DESIRED LEVEL OF COMMITMENT: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE'S CYNICISM ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose-** Credence to truthful leader increases employee's commitment level to organization. The over committed members of organizations might cause to performance loss. Natural attitudes such as employee's cynicism about organizational change could be used to moderate organizational commitment. As credence to the leader reduces the cynicism level it would be possible to control the effectiveness of cynicism to change and use it.

**Methodology-** To test the propositions, a case study has been arranged on an industry leading dressing retail company located in Turkey in 2016. After the validation of measures a series of regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses and to define the direction of relations.

**Findings-** The obtained data from the questionnaires were confirmed the predicted relationships from credence to leader to organizational commitment level, and employee's cynicism about organizational change moderated this relation.

**Conclusion-** The study was one of the first attempts to propose managers to use cynicism which lose strength by experience of employees and credence to leader for organizational performance.

**Keywords:** Cynicism, organizational change, credence to leader, desired commitment level

**JEL Codes:** M10, M12, Z13

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Credence to leader improves organizational performance by increased solidarity thanks to believing the vision. Employees of the organization experience high levels of communication and commitment to realise the vision. Despite no performance loss might be associated with communication, like low levels of commitment; high levels of the commitment might be problematic. Though employees could rapidly advance in their career plans in exchange with carrying out job requirements, time to time the organizational capabilities could not satisfy and donate them. Organizations could never expect not to look for vacancies and be fully committed even the most committed employee being talked. Moreover illegal behaviours and various unethical endeavours of employees to show how high commitments they have might cause the organization to become vulnerable and to lose creativity (Scott and Hart, 1979). Organizations need tools to moderate commitment of the employee and the moderation includes lowering it to desired level. The choice of top management team of the organization should serve strategically to optimise the costs and outputs.

Employees have concerns about change as well as organizations. Cynicism was believed to result from a usual mood of blaming others for the failure of change (Wanous et al. 2000). This blame could be based on a lack of motivation, and ability but not a result of a situational attribution for the failure of change was made by employees because of unforeseen events or forces beyond the control of management. Wanous et al. treated cynicism as a learned response, rather than a personality-based predisposition. While employees improve cynicism to change, organizations even the most innovative ones resist to implement the innovations they acquire not to lose control on principal capability for consistency (Gündüz, 2013). If organizations have a relation oriented or in other word interdependence sensitive leader whom followers pay

credence than cynicism of the employees could be managed and used as a tool to balance the commitment level. It could have not been possible to find a research specifically tended to utilize any kind of cynicism for organizational purpose. So a research should have been done among a sample group including a truthful leader attracted high credence from followers. Depending on the considerations of the participants of Young Guru Academy Summit held in 2015 and 2016, the industry leading dressing retail Company of which head office located in Istanbul had been chosen as sample case. Vast majority of the participants of the after meeting assessment (88%) evaluated the leader of the Company as a more representative truthful leader deserving credence.

The aim of this research was to find out if organizational change cynicism moderates the effect of credence to leader on employee commitment level. Though it may be harmful if a trusted manager could manage the negative effects of growth and continuous change organizational and individual goals might be achieved for a desired level of personnel turnover. The demographics bias of cynicism might be informative for the following researches too.

In this context, the study begins by a brief literature review of employees' credence to leader, cynicism to change, and commitment, then will go on to development of hypotheses. A multiple regression had been conducted to test the model built on the assumptions. Second section dealt with research analyses and comparison with prior work results. The results of the analyses had been discussed and considered for recommendation for managers and questioned for future work by academicians at the last section.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Credence to Leader**

The successful communications of managers in motivating employees were described by motivational language theory (Sullivan, 1988). Among lots of exchanges these managers also supply the information and feedback needed by employees. Their vision about values and goals of organization was shared with employees in frequent informal communications. These types of managers are natural servant leader candidates walking through desks and are ready to assist anyone in case. They are willing to be friends besides to lead if possible and this habit of interest in communicating with employees is crystal clear. These communicating efforts apt to lead to improved employee motivations if the loveable managers were sincere. Motivating behaviour theory favours all types of communicative attempts not only the purposeful communication of uncertainty-reducing information but also the initiative of communicating starting in the down time and lasts all the work day. This means that communication is a precondition of motivation and should never be interrupted by manager. Now a highlight is needed about the style of speaking. The manager has three categories to pay attention about employee needs and values as well as the nature of contingency: (a) what employees need to know, (b) the importance of role play and informal communicating, and (c) the importance of viewing workers as people rather than as instrumentalities (Sullivan, 1988). A fourth emphasis might be on the habit to talk only on issues not personalities to cause only positive types of conflicts to resolve. Then motivated employees were expected to experience high levels of satisfaction and performance thanks to credence to leader. The credence to a truthful leader is apt to increase the employee commitment levels. Although previous researches provided evidence for different contexts supporting that idea there are numerous management implementations and researches that have produced opposite conclusions (Zhu et al., 2015). Especially debates are on truthfulness and peremptory good sense which increase credence. One may argue that truthfulness is a heavy burden for leaders depending on the organization, sectoral environment or country regulations. Providing with enough training and career opportunities to increase employee commitment requires a risky investment with vogue ups behind the other cons discussed up. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the effects of leadership on the levels of commitment within the moderating effects of organizational change cynicism. On the other hand the conclusions would strengthen the bridge between two different stream of research in organizational behaviour and psychology.

### **2.2. Cynicism to Organizational Change**

Employees probably would become more cynical about their organizations (Harari, 2016). There might be many potential targets for cynicism, such as top managers, a job position of another employee, interest of shareholders, and organizational change efforts (Brown and Cregan, 2008). The different points of views consider that cynicism can be acquired mostly by learning. Dean et al. suggest that "the world is not divided into cynics and non-cynics" which means people have varying degrees of cynicism (Dean et al., 1998). One stream of research has found negative associations between organizational cynicism and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, complaints, a weakened perception of pay for performance among employees, and organizational citizenship behaviour (Andersson and Bateman, 1997; Abraham, 2000; Wanous et al., 2000). Particularly cynicism to organizational change always has been associated with lower organizational commitment. They also reported not surprisingly higher turnover among cynics. Cynicism had not predicted employees' behavioural responses in the organization, either performance or absenteeism (Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). The latter research founded that employees' cynical attitudes toward the employer did not influence their absence levels, their work performance, or their organizational citizenship behaviours. Thus the organizational citizenship behaviours could not be

interpreted to have its roots from cynicism. The prediction on these alternative findings might be that cynicism is incidental upon stolidity. Although cynical employees feel disenchanting and report less positive feelings toward their organization, they do not act out this displeasure in behaviours that influence organizational performance directly. Cynicism also can be good for organizations. Research found that cynics feel less intention to comply with requests to engage in unethical behaviour (Brown and Cregan, 2008). Moreover cynic employees can be functional for organizations as cynics may provide a necessary check on the enticement to place adherence to self-serving means over principle or the attraction of assuming that self-interested or dishonest behaviour will go undetected. In their particular manner cynics may act as the voice of conscience for the organization. Furthermore at the individual employee level, people who always believe in others' soundness were likely to be exploited by those who lack it (Dean et al., 1998).

Encouraging leaders to adopt a participatory information-sharing or a decision-making climate as management style has the potential to affect levels of cynicism. Thus it was the duty of managers to cope with or make use of cynicism in order to fulfil any organizational or individual change.

### **2.3. Commitment**

Entrepreneurial orientation is a strategic orientation characterized by risk-taking, innovativeness, and pro-activeness, which provides a basis for entrepreneurial decisions, especially for those who are facing a market opportunity. Employees should acquire more business knowledge because of doing the same job would be possible utmost a five year period from now on. Low entrepreneurial orientation individuals recognize opportunities better when they have accumulated enough business knowledge (Song, 2017). For the individual employee level looking for alternative business vacancies is a routine business while commitment degree should be adjusted at organizational level as a daily managerial task.

Traditional considerations have overestimated the value of performance outcomes that is empirically and logically attributable to leadership (Meindl et al., 1985) Meindl and his colleagues found leaders had little or no real impact on the performance of particularly business organizations or big governmental agencies. The success or failure had been found to depend on factors that cannot be controlled by any individual. However, people believed in leaders, even though leaders had no significant impact on the performance output of organizations. Some researchers had argued that leaders had a symbolic value that might be important (Levine and Moreland, 2006). Leaders might create lovable groups and become symbols of these groups by a clear vision and fair communication. So, the followers of the leader could see no conflicts of interest, and feel no need to hide in the group performing full capacity to improve performance of the organization.

If the commitment level might be categorized as low, moderate and high the choice of the leader preference would be questionable. Low levels of commitment would be desirable because it might compensate high turnover problems with enhanced creativity of new competent employees who seek opportunity to prove themselves. Moreover, organization could quit misfits and provide discontented employees with an opportunity to find more compatible workplaces in low commitment work environment preference. The negative effect of high personnel turnover is hidden unemployment. This occurs when the employees do only what is required by the job descriptions, at the expense of career advancement and commitment to organization. The attitude of hidden unemployed was recognised by steadily looking for new job opportunities in neighbour industries. Meanwhile loyal colleagues suffer from having an unstable, disloyal work environment and a heavy work load.

The advantages of moderate levels of commitment generally outweigh the disadvantages (Randall, 1987). The employees are more committed creating lower rates of turn over. They are mentally satisfied because they execute their work written in job descriptions plus that of their career plans. Organization goals and competitiveness could be assured for strategic planning for a known image and brand in the industry operated. Employees exercise commitment in return for remuneration and career opportunities by the organizations.

At high levels of commitment employees enjoy improved career targets, and remuneration expectation while sharing and contribution organization leader's goals and vision. However the capabilities of organizational life and donations might not always be satisfactory to its members' requirements in this case. Further, the organization might lose flexibility and become vulnerable to a variety of unethical and illegal behaviours of employees to express high commitments to their organization (Scott and Hart, 1979). Even the most committed employee would not fully commit to organization and quit looking for job opportunities. And last but not least commitment is a cost centre in organizational budget including training and enumeration expenses increased due to empowerment of employee capabilities.

Each level provides managers options of commitment to choose. Once existing levels of commitment have been screened considering contingent outcomes, managers might choose the best option for the future of organization. If a change is desired in the level of commitment whatever it might be a strategy would be explored to adjust (Randall, 1987). Despite organizational goals could be best met by a level of commitment the general tendency of the work-force is to refuse to commit totally to the firm.

The lean affective commitment could be enforced by a level of commitment born by long experiences of employees. Employees' images and involvement in decision-making process as proud members of the organization were experienced. There are two other types of commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Second type is the continuance commitment based on the costs that employees forbear to face the barriers of leaving the organization and alternative costs. Third type is normative commitment in the form of employees' feelings of peer pressure to remain with the organization.

#### **2.4. Truthful Leader, Organizational Commitment and Cynicism about Change**

The truthful leader incorporates the behaviours of ethical and moral leaders. Truthful leaders gather respect of followers by traditional, classical regulations in communication and relationships. They promote followers who are open to two-way communication, eager to reinforce, and involved in decision-making by transfer of authority (Brown et al., 2005). According to Gini role modelling of the leader by followers importance of ethics goes back to Aristotle who argued "the spirit of morality is awakened in the individual only through the witness and conduct of a moral person" (Gini, 1975: 55). Only words generally were insufficient for followers to fully understand the way of performing business. Though it was hard to find, the witness of moral leadership can prove to be more effective in educating the strategic successor (Gini, 2013). Once witnessed every employee share the same vision with the truthful leader thanks to the notion of individualism. Contrarily bosses were likely to be seen as adversaries, aliens, and bricking stones on the path. The credence to leader is an intrinsic behaviour of followers and certainly for truthful leaders. Hence, the following hypothesis is offered:

*Hypothesis 1: Credence to leader affects the intrinsic commitment to the organization.*

The research question was whether cynicism to change could be used for organizational purposes or not. This paper proposed the answer was yes. Some researchers discriminate components of cynicism to change by three roots (Tolay et al., 2017). First one was defined as the negative view produced by poor managerial acts of change. Second was bad experiences related with past results of chance. The third was borne by acquisitioned concerns of chance when one felt unease because of the fear of possession lose.

When employees loved and believed in credible leaders the commitment could exceed the desired level in organizations. Then leaders and top management team should find a tool to balance the commitment level in a natural way. People always seek new job opportunities because of say advances in knowledge networks and do not like organizational change inherently. Some degree of cynicism would be useful both in organizational and individual level particularly in times of change. Therefore second hypothesis is stated as:

*Hypothesis 2: Organizational change cynicism moderates the intrinsic commitment to organization.*

### **3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Sample and Data Collection**

The sample size of the research had been chosen to meet the level of  $e=0.04$  and  $\alpha=0.05$  for generalization of the findings. The sample size that can be accepted for the safety level of 0.95 of the proportional estimation of the principal mass standard deviation and variances is  $n=600$  (Green et al., 1988). The application has been made to a sample above this number as in this case with a coincidental accessibility. The questionnaire forms had been distributed in sufficient number electronically. The required rate of return was minimum  $n=405$  for the statistical method applied. For instance, the rate of return of the questionnaire forms had exceeded 35% and the number of the participants consisting of the employees, being member to organization in case study, has been surmounted over  $n=600$  than it was safe to start the statistical applications in any type of research.

A pilot survey had been executed to eliminate between the CEOs of companies who have participated in the YG Academy Annual Summits starting in the year 2000. The pilot group was 100 randomly chosen participants of 2015 and 2016 summits. The first place was for a CEO of a company leading the retail market in Turkey. Then a second pilot survey had been conducted to scrutinize if the trustworthiness of that CEO was sufficient. After the simplification of survey items, the majority of respondents perceive their leader having high credibility. Every respondent opt the higher values for each of the question representing high credibility for their leader compared low credibility perceptions of the adverse items. In addition the overall perception of all the questionnaires showed quite higher credibility to leader in force. T test values showed significantly bigger means compared the respective answers to questions for followers which declare perceptions about their manager to have low credibility (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). The data collected and discriminated by the stores based as the work teams. So it was safe to work with The Retail Company as a good representer case for the truthful leadership. In this sense, a self-administered survey was mailed to all of 3000 employees working under The Company Headquarters located in Istanbul. In order to test the hypotheses, data was collected from a wide hierarchy range of specialists and managers. After deleting records with missing cases 846 completed questionnaires (return rate: 28%) were remained, which constituted the sample for this study. The demography of the sample was consist of approximately: 40% male, 48%

under 30 years old, 39% 31-39 years old, 13% 40+ years old, 18% had associate degree 59% had undergraduate degree, 15% had graduate degree, 8% had PhD. Work experience totals: 42% less than 5 years, 34% 6-10 years, 12% 11-15 years, 12% 16+ years. Work experience in the current job totals: 59% less than 5 years, 26% 6-10 years, 11% 11-15 years, and 4% 16+ years.

### 3.2. Analyses

Credence to leader was measured by the criterion of Kouzes and Posner (2012) which consisted of 10 items. To measure cynicism to organizational change 15 item Likert 5 type scale of Wanous et al. (1994) which had reliability of .86 (i.e. coefficient Cronbach's alpha) and 8 items scale of Reichers et al. (1997) in form of agree/ disagree were used for consistency. Antecedents of affective and continuity commitments had been taken from measures of Allen and Meyer (1990) which derived normative component commitment from seven-item "The Organizational Commitment Norm Scale" Buchanan (1974). The reliability for each commitment scale was as follows: affective .87; continuity .75; normative .79. All the necessary transformations for linearizing, validity and reliability analyses had been done before testing the hypothesis.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Credence to a truthful leader correlates positively with all the commitment dimensions as shown by Table-1. While cynicism borne from poorly managed change did not show any correlations with credence to a truthful leader or other types of cynicism to change. But other types of cynicism to change had negative correlations with credence to a truthful leader. Normative commitment had correlated with all types of cynicism to change but affective commitment showed correlation only with the cynicism because of the fear of acquisition loss in case of change. The moderator variable created with the variables of credence to a truthful leader and cynicism to organizational change did not showed any correlations with the dimensions of commitment but correlated with all types of cynicism. There were no other significant correlations before the regression analysis which would tell us about the directions of the relations.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Credence to leader	4.14	.85							
2. Continuity commitment	3.79	.93	.297**						
3. Affective commitment	4.02	.39	.369**	.277**					
4. Normative commitment	3.49	.52	.190*	.211*	-.010				
5. Bad Management Cynicism	2.81	.66	-.081	-.094	.039	-.208*			
6. Past Experiences Cynicism	3.07	.50	-.183*	-.023	-.226*	-.116*	-.063		
7. Acquired Cynicism	3.98	.38	-.195*	-.090	-.008	-.233**	-.017	-.100	
8. Credence to leader x Cynicism	13.46	1.72	.053	.091	-.113	.041	.122*	.149*	.195*

n= 846; \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01

The regressions were generally parallel to predictions as shown by Table 2. The regression models were tested (using SPSS ver. 22 package) by a series of models.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis Results on the Moderator Effect of Cynicism on Credence to Leader-Commitment**

Regression Model	Independent Variables	Depended Variables	Standardized $\beta$	Sig.	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F Value	Model Sig.
1A	Credence to leader	Continuity commitment	.102*	.04	.086	6.717	.00
1B	Credence to leader	Affective commitment	.176**	.00	.118	16.271	.00
1C	Credence to leader	Normative commitment	.161*	.02	.107	10.122	.00
1D	Credence to leader	Commitment	.146*	.03	.094	7.982	.00
2A	Bad management borne organizational change cynicism	Commitment	-.135*	.04	-.114	9.013	.00

2B	Past experiences borne organizational change cynicism	Commitment	-.214**	.00	-.180	10.128	.00
2C	Acquisition loss borne organizational change cynicism	Commitment	-.235**	.00	-.198	19.261	.00
2D	Cynicism	Commitment	-.195**	.00	-.114	9.277	.00
2E	Credence to leader X Cynicism	Commitment	.104*	.04	.085	6.608	.05
3	Cynicism	Credence to leader	.011	.42	.025	2.324	.05
4	Experience in current job	Cynicism	-.294**	.00	.248	21.396	.00

n= 846; \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01 (all one tailed F tests)

Model 1 with four sub models clearly clarified the Hypothesis-1. Sub models 1A, 1B, and 1C tested if credence to a truthful leader affected positively the dimensions of employee commitment to the organization while 1D and other models used combined commitment.

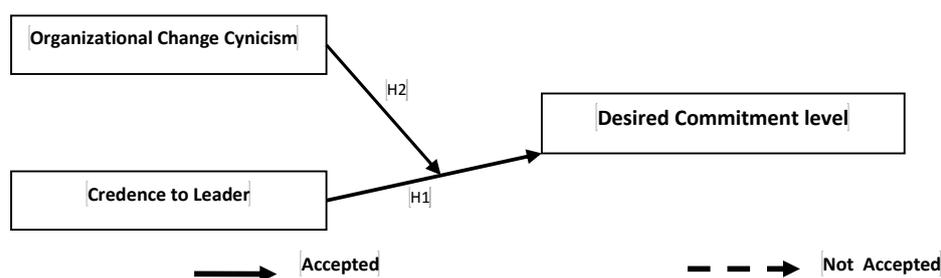
Hypothesis-1 stated credence to leader affects the intrinsic commitment to the organization. All the dimensions and the combined component of commitment ( $\beta=.146$ ;  $p<.05$ ) had been positively affected by credence to leader confirming H1. Affective commitment component had the strongest regression impact ( $\beta=.176$ ;  $p<.01$ ) by credence to leader.

Hypothesis-2 stated that organizational change cynicism moderates the intrinsic commitment to organization. Model-2D showed the highly significant effect ( $\beta=-.195$ ;  $p<.01$ ) of combined cynicism to change on the commitment of employees to organization. This effect was not the only strong predictor of commitment. The cynicism had shown the highly significant negative effects to commitment whatever the reason would have been (Models 2A, B, and C: standardized  $\beta$ 's=-.135,  $p<.05$ ; -.214,  $p<.01$ ; -.235,  $p<.01$  respectively) as seen on Table-2. Model-2E tested the created moderator variable effect on commitment level. Though the correlations were insignificant there had been a significant positive regression to commitment level. So H2 was fully confirmed.

Although it was not hypothesized two additional checks had been performed to examine the moderator variable. Model-3 checked if cynicism had adversely affect credence to leader. There was not a significant regression as expected. Model-4 was prepared to understand if experiences of employees have an independent effect on cynicism. There found to be a quite significant negative effect ( $\beta=-.294$ ;  $p<.01$ ) proving cynicism is not accumulating by years by learning or being bored by business but lessening by relationships, membership, accepted organizational identity, organizational citizenship, and for any other reasons.

In accordance with the regression analyses results, research model is designed as illustrated in Figure-1 below:

Figure 1: Final Research Model



5. CONCLUSION

Within the context of a case which was for a leading retail dressing company this survey scrutinized the moderator effect of cynicism on the commitment level. All the predicted relations confirmed. Employee’s cynicism about organizational change moderates the relation between credence to leader and desired level of commitment. Being one of the first attempts to propose managers to make good use of cynicism there were some constrains. First, the random selection of respondents could not have been met to generalize the results. Following researchers might choose randomly chosen participants from

different industries and populations to confirm the outputs generated. Second insufficiency was generated because of time restriction. A time series analysis would perform better about the cynicism to change taking more than one segment measuring attitudes during change acts in organizations. Third, cynicism has opposite sided effect on commitment comparing credence to truthful leader. Following researches may include other predictors to support moderator effect of cynicism on commitment level. Despite the restrictions some implications for management could be derived from the results. Prior longitudinal research indicated that transformational leader behaviours influence employees' cynicism about organizational change. Direction of causality was consistent in suggesting transformational leader behaviours lower employee's cynicism about organizational change (Bommer et al., 2005). Organizational cynicism had been found related to lack of commitment and turnover intentions. It was also associated with decreased performance, to a greater extent than organizational trust (Chiaburu et al., 2013). These studies have discussed the subject with the lens of negative attitudes. Others which used cure lenses suggested Human Resources practitioners concerned about organizational change cynicism should encourage their line managers to adopt a participatory style of management, such as information sharing, involvement in decision making process. Though this strategy is a generic tool for many challenges of management, it still works especially in those workplaces where employees are more likely to embrace the opportunities for involvement (Brown and Cregan, 2008). The organizational level cynicism was more vogue than individual level in times of change understandings. While there was individual concerns such as trust to change, compulsory new jobs, unforeseen difficulties, and individuals need not change contrary to organizations obligation of change to survive. Individuals are more liable to cynicism than organizations (Battistelli et al., 2014). Cynicism about organizational change often combines pessimism about the likelihood of successful change with blame of those responsible for change as incompetent, lazy, or both (Reichers et al., 1997). As shown by this work cynicism to change can be used by organizations. Some demographic variables had been found related with employees' cynicism level like gender, age, education and department in prior works while others had not been (Işık, 2014). However only work experience has been found negatively related to organizational change cynicism. This finding was consistent with a prior work which founded reducing organizational change cynicism by time (Barton and Ambrosini, 2013).

Managers and truthful leaders powered by credence of followers would be able to use natural attitudes like cynicism to change to moderate the desired level of commitment. Some degree of freedom, automation, and delegation of authority which a truthful leader would willingly offer might awake deep devotion feeling to the entity. This entity would be better performing than an organization full of highly committed members.

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