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THE RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP & BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION: THE ROLE OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Responsible Leadership, Behavioral Transformation, Affective Commitment, Higher Education Institutions	The present study explores the relationship between responsible leadership and behavioral transformation in the higher educational institutions in KP, Pakistan, with mediation of affective commitment. Adopting quantitative approach, the research surveyed 298 teachers from various HEIs across KP southern region, using established scales. The data were analyzed using the statistical procedures to test hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that responsible leadership has significant positive impact upon behavioral transformation. and confirmed that commitment plays a partial mediating role in linking leadership and behavioral transformation. The teachers who perceive leaders as responsible, and supportive develop strong emotional attachment to institutions, which fosters positive behavioral changes such as collaboration, increased engagement, and productivity. The results provide significant information about hypotheses and reaching desired conclusion to make decisions. In this regard, the study suggests that HEIs are required to focus on developing the responsible leadership practices and enhancing the commitment to foster the culture of innovation and sustainable performance for desired success.
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INTRODUCTION

The concept of responsible leadership has emerged as significant phenomenon in contemporary era that gained growing consideration organizational framework aimed at promoting sustainable and ethical outcomes. This is mainly relevant in higher education, where leadership plays crucial role in determining cultural development and commitment to excellence that fosters inclusivity, ethical behavior, and social obligation (Islam, Yuka & Amlan & Jasim, 2024). The responsible leadership

prioritizes ethical considerations, and well-being, and integrates the pursuits to success with strong commitment to institutional sustainability (Afsar, Maqsoom, Afridi, Nawaz & Fazliani, 2020). In educational context, leadership has potential to drive behavioral transformation among employees and students, that ultimately contributing to academic thriving environment that emphasizes not only intellectual success but social and ethical responsibility (Haider, Akbar, Tehseen, Poulova & Jaleel, 2022). An ultimate aspect of the leadership is ability to inspire commitment as emotional attachment to institution and its values (Batool, Ibrahim & Adeel, 2024). The leaders can foster commitment among followers which results in the improved collaboration, increased engagement, and culture of innovation.

The affective commitment is the individuals' emotional attachment to institutions, fostering loyalty, motivation, and ownership, which in turn influences behavior and performance in diverse manners (Hashim, Ahmad & Jamaluddin, 2016). Thus, understanding the role of affective commitment in responsible leadership context allows for insights that how academic leaders nurture environments where ethical behaviors are not just mandated but embraced (Haque, Fernando & Caputi, 2019a). Similarly, the transformation of behaviors, when rooted in the affective commitment, is likely to be sustained, thus promoting long-lasting culture of innovation, responsibility, and ethical behavior in institutions (Lu, Huang & Luo, 2021). By fostering culture of responsibility, personal attachment and ethical engagement towards institutional values, the leaders can ensure that their institutions are not only producing knowledge but also positively contribute towards societies (Xia, Xu & Xie, 2024). By investigating these dynamics, this research contributes to growing knowledge on the leadership in higher education, offering practical insights into how leaders can leverage emotional commitment amid employees in institutional hierarchy to drive positive changes in behaviors and ensure sustainable success.

The study aims to understand how responsible leadership behaviors like promoting transparency, inclusivity and ethical decision-making, that serves as catalysts for the positive behavioral changes within academic institutions. As, these institutions navigate challenges related to ethics, diversity, responsibility and competition, responsible leadership role becomes vital in fostering environment that inspires positive behavioral transformations (Islam, Yuka, Amlan & Jasim, 2024). Therefore, behavioral transformation within institutions is decisive for enhancing performance, collaborative practices and ethical decision-making (Nazir, Qun, Hui & Shafi, 2018). Hitherto, role of affective commitment in transforming these behaviors such as nurturing creativity, innovation, improving engagement and ensuring ethical behavior has not been examined thoroughly (Kim & Leach, 2020). Without clear sympathetic how responsible leadership influences commitment and drives behavioral transformation, institutions may struggle to realize the potential for fostering engaged, ethical, and innovative environment (Khanam & Tarab, 2023). Thus, leadership shared with strong commitment is vital in shaping behavioral transformations as required to meet evolving challenges in higher education.

Questions & Hypotheses
1. To examine association among responsible leadership, affective commitment & behavioural transformation (H1).

2. To examine mediating role of affective commitment in linking responsible leadership and behavioural transformation (H2).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The evolving landscape of higher education has placed growing emphasis on leadership practices that foster inclusive, ethical, and responsible behavior. In this linking, the responsible leadership in is crucial for ensuring not only the sustainability but ethical development of teachers and students (Ahmad, Iqbal, Siddique, Abbas & Fakhr, 2020). The responsible leadership is effective in creating environment that nurtures affective commitment among academic community. This, in turn, plays a significant role in shaping behavioral transformation, including greater collaboration, enhanced ethical decisions, and institutional loyalty (Li, Yang & Akhtar 2022). The leadership involves in fostering the culture of accountability, and inclusivity, which are critical for shaping the values and behaviors of followers as leaders make decisions that reflect fairness, and well-being of employees beneath (Dong & Zhong, 2021). Similarly, behavioral transformation is a shift in values, attitudes, and commitments in response to responsible leadership in institutions (Haider, Akbar, Tehseen & Jaleel, 2022). This transformation includes commitment to shared tasks and development of ethical decision-makings, that are considered as orientation towards social responsibility and ultimately institutional sustainability.

The leaders who act as role model with responsible behavior create the learning environments more conducive that inspires the workforces to engage efficiently in their assigned tasks and contribute to positive institutional change (Yang, Li, Li & Li, 2024). The leadership inspires culture of ethical decision-making to make adoptions aligned with institutional values of fairness and integrity. The leaders who prioritize diversity and inclusivity for fostering environment where employees work together for contribution to innovation and improved performance (Xiao, Zhou, Yang & Qi, 2021). The commitment is individual's emotional affiliation to institution who are invested emotionally in institutional norms, values and mission, leads to increased engagement, motivation, and loyalty (Jiatong, Wang, Alam, Murad, Gul & Gill, 2022). It plays role in shaping behavioral transformation as emotionally committed individuals are likely to adopt behaviors align with the institutional goals, and ethical standards (Blader, Patil & Packer, 2017). The responsible leaders offer different opportunities to employees for career development by providing prospects to improve their task-oriented behaviors through motivation together with commitment to chase the desired outcomes over sustainable efforts.

The responsible leadership create environments where individuals feel supported and valued that increase their emotional affiliations with institution. The leadership influences commitment, that in turn leads towards behavioral transformation likewise increased engagement, ethical behavior, and teamwork (Newman, Miao, Hofman & Zhu, 2015). A culture of transparency, responsibility, and inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging, that strengthens affective commitment by increasing alignment with values and objectives, resulting in quality outcomes (Haider et al., 2022). When leaders validate ethical behavior, employee are likely to show utmost commitment and motivation in turn, promotes behavioral transformation to engage in the behaviors that align with institutional

ethical standards (Khanam & Tarab, 2023). These behaviors include participation in institutional activities, support for inclusivity and diversity, and adherence to ethical guidelines that are leading determinants towards the desired and commitment to success (Yang, Li, Li & Li, 2024). The leaders who promote diversity and inclusivity, inspiring collaborations and recognizing values of different groups across the academic community in educational institutions are effective in attaining desired consequences for success.

The behavioral transformation happens when individuals are not only committed emotionally but are motivated to contribute to institutional objectives wholeheartedly, leading towards ethical, productive and collaborative environments (Zhang & Su, 2020). The institutions should invest in leadership development programs that focuses empathy, ethical decisions and social responsibility, helping leaders to create environments that foster affective commitment (Ribeiro, Yücel & Gomes, 2018). The leaders should implement plans to engage teachers emotionally by recognizing their contributions, involving them in decisions and strengthening commitment by fostering behavioral transformation (Asif, Qing, Hwang & Shi, 2019). The responsible leadership plays significant role in promoting behavioral transformation with affective commitment as facilitator in enhancing the teachers' enthusiasms towards desired outcomes (Dong & Zhong, 2021). The leaders who establish inclusive, ethical, and just behaviors can foster emotional attachment and loyalty, leading towards improved academic decision-making, engagement, and collaboration (Li, Yang & Akhtar 2022). This, in turn, pays the ways towards realization of institutional objectives in efficient and effective manner for success.

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework
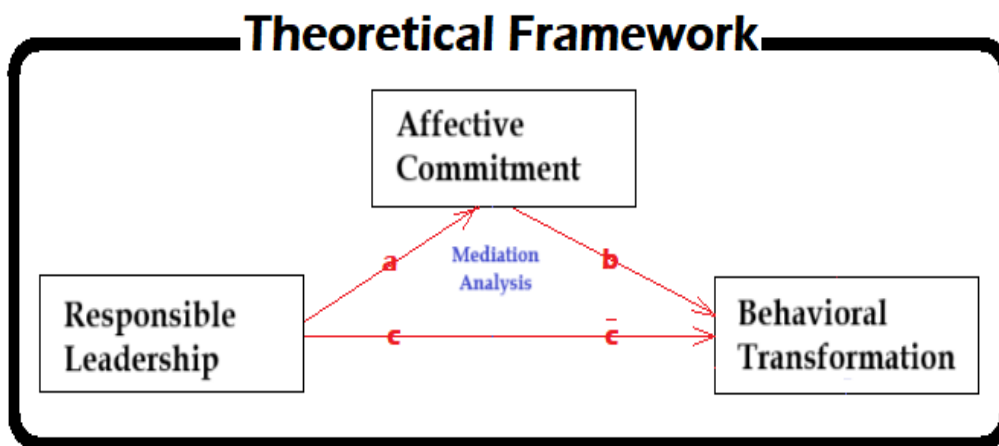
The facilitating role of commitment underlines the standing of emotional engagement in achieving the long-term institutional success and ultimate sustainability. The theories of commitment and leadership provide the strong foundation for understanding that how responsible leadership affects affective commitment and, finally, behavioral transformation (Hashim & Tan, 2015). In this drive, social exchange theory suggests that when leaders show responsible behavior, they create positive exchange with followers, leading to improved commitment (Nazir, Qun, Hui & Shafi, 2018). Also,

leadership theory emphasizes that leaders who engage in inspiring followers can foster emotional attachment, resulting in positive behavioral changes (Jiatong, Wang, Alam, Murad, Gul & Gill, 2022). The literature showed that leadership positively influenced employee commitment, that is associated with improved performance and collaboration in educational settings (Islam, Yuka & Amlan & Jasim, 2024). This inclusive understanding of leadership, commitment, and behavior transformation provides valued framework for shaping more collaborative, ethical and innovative academic environments in higher education that ensures dedication to success and sustainability in particular context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology provides details about methods and procedures to examine relationship amid responsible leadership, affective commitment & behavioral transformation to chase research hypotheses as by utilizing quantitative research design. The quantitative design seeks to quantify problems, test hypotheses, and generalize findings from sample and generalize towards populations (Patton, 2015). To access the population through sampling, survey approach was sued as it involves collecting data systematically from respondents to understand opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of specific population (Palys & Atchison, 2014). The population of study comprised teachers (1488) from higher institutions in southern region, wherein a sample of (315) was selected through sampling formula (Yamani, T1967). The collection of secondary data and primary data was ensured and analyzed as per the nature and requirements of study. The scales were adapted from the previous research studies for measuring the variables through different statements on 5-point Liker scale. The ethical considerations from all possible perspectives were ensured to conduct the study in systematic manner, extract information and reaching desired conclusion. The primary data was collected over Google Form and 298 responses were collected as used for data analysis to extract desired information.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The results of study are produced aimed at providing information to measure statistical relationship and outcomes as generated from analyzing the data collected during research process. These results provide evidence to support the hypotheses, and contribute to the understanding of a phenomenon being studied.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Responsible Leadership	298	1.30	4.80	3.1942	.77777
Affective Commitment	298	1.70	4.70	3.2849	.74078
Behavioural Transformation	298	1.63	4.70	3.3674	.61167
Valid N (listwise)	298				

The descriptive statistics provides the substantial information in describing the research variables in terms of sample-size, mean, minimum and maximum responses rates of the respondents towards different statements for measuring the research variables, mean and standard deviations that offer significant descriptions about research issues under consideration. In current descriptive statistics,

all the variables have suitable threshold variables that confirmed the required descriptions from different perspectives.

Table 2 Correlations Analysis

		[1]	[2]	[3]
Responsible Leadership [1]	Pearson Correlation	1	.373**	.549**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	298	298	298
Affective Commitment [2]	Pearson Correlation	.373**	1	.462**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	298	298	298
Behavioural Transformation [3]	Pearson Correlation	.549**	.462**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	298	298	298
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The association among the research variables was hypothesized through first hypothesis to confirm the strength and direction in relationships among the predictor, mediator and criterion variables. In this linking, positive and significant associations are evident from the results of the correlation procedure thereby confirming the exitance of association. The results revealed that predictor and mediator have significant association with criterion variable (behavioral transformation), likewise, responsible leadership (R = .549 & P = .000), and affective commitment (R = .462 & P = .000), and responsible leadership and affective commitment (R = .373 & P = .000), and therefore hypothesis is accepted from results.

Table 3 Mediation Analysis

Criterion	Predictors	R	R-Square	Coefficient	P-Value
		Path a			
Affective Commitment	Constant	.3733	.1393		
	Responsible Leadership			.3555	.0000
		Path b & ć			
Behavioural Transformation	Constant	.6149	.3781		
	Responsible Leadership			.3441	.0000
	Affective Commitment			.2465	.0000
		Path c			
Behavioural Transformation	Constant	.5490	.3014		
	Responsible Leadership			.4317	.0000

The mediation procedure was used to examine the affective commitment as mediator in linking the responsible leadership and behavioral transformation. The results of mediation through all the four paths provides significant information likewise in first path, 13.93% change occurred in affective commitment is due to responsible leadership with significant impact (R = .3555 & P = .0000). In the

second and third paths, 61.49% change occurred in behavioral transformation is due to responsible leadership (R = .3441 & P = .0000), and affective commitment (R = .2465 & P = .0000). The fourth path revealed 54.90% change in behavioral transformation is due to responsible leadership (R = .4317 & P = .0000). The results confirmed the partial mediation of affective commitment due to the decrease in coefficient value from (.4317) in direct relation to (.3441) in indirect relation while the p-values remained significant in the mediation process and thus from these mediation results, the hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The responsible leadership has gained momentous consideration in numerous sectors, including the higher education, due to its focus on ethical conduct, well-being and sustainability in institutional and stakeholders' contexts (Lynham & Chermack 2006). In higher education, leadership is crucial for development by fostering behavioral transformation among employees (Zulfqar, Valcke, Devos, Tuytens & Shahzad, 2016). This transformation is a shift in values, attitudes, and behaviors among individuals, that is vital for progress in academic environment (Heleta & Bagus, 2021). The affective commitment, in turn, is individuals' emotional identification and attachment with institution that plays crucial role in fostering transformation to influence how individuals interact with institution and contribute to its success (Haque, Fernando & Caputi, 2019b). The responsible leadership goes beyond the traditional classification of leadership power and authority to ensure empathy, ethical decision-making, accountability, and commitment to sustainable development and success (Islam, Yuka, Amlan & Jasim, 2024). The leader ensures that institution operates in manner that confirms long-term viability and positively contributing towards community and global environment over transparent decisions

In educational context, transformation reveals changes in teaching strategies, coordination, ethical decision-making, engagement, and attitudes toward inclusion and diversity. The leadership plays critical role in shaping culture over inspiration, teamwork, creativity, innovation, commitment and desirability toward positive change (Haque, Fernando & Caputi, 2019). Thus, commitment is crucial for understanding behavioral transformation as it explains how individuals develop a cavernous, personal affiliation towards institutional values (Grund & Titz, 2022). The commitment can foster attitudes, behaviors, intrinsic motivation and loyalty to excel intellectually, partake in extramural activities and contribute towards the institutional prolonged sustainability (Jiatong, Wang, Alam, Murad, Gul & Gill, 2022). Thus, commitment leads towards high satisfaction, retention, resilience, identification, and willingness to contribute towards institutional success (Kim & Leach, 2020). In this drive, when individuals feel that their contribution are respected and aligned with institutional mission and vision, their emotional affiliations may develop overwhelmed at the desired outcomes (Xia, Xu & Xie, 2024). Thus, leadership values for commitment and transformation in behaviors in different perspectives.

Similarly, the affective commitment is rooted in emotional affiliation that is further rooted with the changes that emphasizes ethical conduct, and shared values that builds culture of mutual respect and trust, leading towards constructive behavioral transformations (Nazir, Qun, Hui & Shafi, 2018). Thus, over transparent, ethical, and loyal leadership, institutions can create culture that inspires

and sustain changes, leading to prolonged progress, loyalty and greater academic and institutional success (Ahmad, Islam, Sadiq & Kaleem, 2021). The leaders who prioritize the professional growth and well-being of employees are likely to foster sustained engagement and loyalty, leads to higher satisfaction, greater retention, and better academic achievement, benefiting both employees and institution (Khanam & Tarab, 2023). Thus, institutions that successfully mix affective commitment and responsible leadership are likely to achieve long-term sustainability (Islam, Yuka & Amlan & Jasim, 2024). The literature revealed that the behavioral transformations, driven by the strong emotional attachment with the institution, lead towards lasting developments in the personal and institutional outcomes, like faculty innovation, student retention, and community involvement and sustainable performance.

CONCLUSION

In findings of current study confirmed that responsible leadership plays significant role in fostering behavioral transformation in the higher educational context, with particular focus upon affective commitment. The results underline standing of leadership practices that not only align with ethical principles but also engage individuals emotionally with institutional values, mission, and strategic objectives. In this drive, responsible leadership and affective commitment are pivotal to fostering eloquent behavioral transformation. Thus, when leaders adopt practices that prioritize inclusivity, ethics and empathy, they not only inspire better individual commitment but also contribute toward long-term success and sustainability. Eventually, by nurturing an emotional connection between stakeholders and institutions, responsible leadership can serve as the catalyst for positive change, academic excellence, and thriving educational community. The study confirms the existence of the association and significant partial mediating role of affective commitment in linking the ethical leadership and behavioral transformation thereby offering certain recommendation as extracted from findings of study.

Recommendations

1. The universities should implement initiatives that enhance emotional influences, such as mentorship programs and trainings, to strengthen faculty loyalty and commitment towards the institutions desired outcomes.
2. The higher education institutions need to prioritize leadership training focuses on empathy, and transparency in the decision-making to ensure that leaders act responsibly and creating positive organizational culture.
3. The institutions should provide emotional support and ongoing professional development to faculty wherein they feel empowered and valued to contribute towards the behavioural and ultimately institutional transformation.
4. The leaders should involve faculty in key decision-making processes to enhance their sense of ownership and emotional affiliations to institutional goals that helps in determining long-term success and sustainability.

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