Investigating How Transformational Leaders Use Goal Setting Approach to Promote ERP Implementation within Chinese SMEs

Ruiying Li*

School of WMG, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, United Kingdom

ruiying.li129@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper investigates how transformational leaders facilitate ERP implementation within the company by setting reasonable goals. Specifically, this paper proceeded with an extreme case study within a Chines small and medium-sized company. From the outcome, this paper found that transformational leaders could naturally influence the factors related to goal setting process with the leadership characteristics. Moreover, this type of leadership could facilitate goal acceptance by improving the attainability and controlling goals' challenging levels.

Keywords: Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Transformational Leadership, Goal Setting, ERP Implementation, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

1 Introduction

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system improves business management efficiency by facilitating the organizational intranet establishment [1]. However, Chinese small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) experienced extremely high failure rate, up to 80%, with huge cost on ERP implementation [2, 3], which result in large-scale negative influence to the company [4].

On the other side, leadership is proved as one of the key influence factors of ERP implementation by Wang et al [5]. Moreover, in particular, transformational leadership could improve the ERP acceptance and organizational performance by setting proper goals [5-7]. From the side of setting proper goals, goal setting theory plays an important role among various motivation theories, like social cognitive theory [8] and operant-based behaviorism theory [9]. Therefore, this study will stand from the goal setting theory, investigating how transformational leaders facilitate ERP implementation through setting proper goals, in the context of Chines SMEs.

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2 Literature Review

2.1 Transformational Leadership

Bass [7], one of the top researchers in the area of leadership, created the notion of transformational leaders on the basis of Burn's [10] transformative leader and House's [11] charismatic leader theory. This dissertation follows the description proposed by Bass [7], transformational leaders are those attempt and succeed in lifting colleagues, subordinates, followers, customers, or constituents to a deeper consciousness of the problems of consequence.

Leadership may be classified as being either transaction or transformation based on Burns' [10] categorization. Transactional leadership is characterized by its emphasis on the trade or trade between followers and leaders [12]. Leaders grant or withhold incentives for followers' productivity or lack thereof [13, 14]. The transactional circumstances in transactional leaders are based on leaders' and employees' discussions on employee needs, such as a better wage than previously [12]. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, focuses on empowering people by aligning personal-fit objectives and assisting them in achieving individual development criteria [13, 14]. From this view, transformational leaders elevate leadership beyond just monetary transactions to a more spiritual degree of impact. Followers are driven to dedicate themselves to accomplishing the common vision and objectives of the organization.

In addition, Bass [7] identified four fundamental elements of transformational leadership via factor analytic research: "idealized influence," "inspirational drive," "intellectual stimulation," and "individual concern" (see Table 1 for details). This identification was backed by a number of experts [15, 16]. In addition, Leithwood and Jantzi [17] included two components are included by Leithwood and Jantzi [17], "vision establishment" and "value symbolization." In addition, they proposed six components of transformative leadership. Specifically, this dissertation supports Bass's [7] classification since "vision establishing" and "value symbolization" are included in Bass's [7, 18, 19] "idealized influence" and "inspirational motivation" components (see Table 1). In fact, the MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: a well acknowledged assessment instrument for transformational) [19] may be used to assess these factors.

Table 1. Transformational Leadership Elements

Transformational Leadership Components		
Component	Content	Application
Idealized Influence	Charismatic behaviours; Attributed-oriented induction (value symbolization)	Reduce employees' resistance of e-business implementation
Inspirational Motivation	Inspirationally motivate followers through vision establishment	Motivate employees to face the uncertain e-business environment positively
Intellectual Stimulation	Encourage thinking innovatively	Deal with multi-challenges during the e-business transaction innovatively

Individual Considera-tion	Personal interaction; Treat each follower as an individual	Improve individual interaction in the online environment

2.2 Goal Setting Theory

To apply leadership techniques across a company, transformational leaders must create objectives. According to Bass and Riggio [20], transformational leaders assist followers evolve by connecting the aims and objectives of the individual follower, and the wider organization." In order to better comprehend the theoretical overlap between transformative leaders and objectives, this dissertation proposes the "Goal-Setting Theory" to examine the literature-identified link between transformational leaders and goals.

Edwin Locke and Gary Latham [21] constructed goal-setting theory inductively from more than 400 empirical research, with a foundation in prominent theory of motivation [9, 22, 23]. Based on the notion that conscious objectives impact people's activity [24], the theory defines "goal" as "what the person is deliberately attempting to achieve" [9]. In addition, the core of the theory would be that challenging and particular objectives (if accepted) motivate greater task performance than generic goals [25].

According to the hypothesis [26], objectives impact task performance primarily through four processes. First, goal clarity and objective significance directly affect the focus and actions of implementers [26]. Second, goal attainment motivates individuals to labor [27, 28]. Then, from Locke and Latham [26], goal commitment influences durability through affecting individual persistence. Lastly, objective complexity indirectly drives individuals via the acquisition and use of task-related information [29]. Table 2 outlines each component of goal setting theory, its relative impact mechanism, and its applicability to e-business.

Table 2. Goal Setting Theory Elements

Goal Setting Theory Components		
Component	Relative influence mechanism	Application
Goal difficulty	Indirective motivation	Motivate employees to continuously study and overcome security issue in e-business.
Goal specificity	Direct influence	E-business leaders could against highly development and unpredictable market through setting specific goals.
Goal attainability	Energizing function	Controlling goal attainability to match employees' ability level can help implement information system in e-business companies.
Goal importance	Direct influence	Solve the problem of laziness and poor performance under long-term telecommuting.
Goal commitment	Permanence influence	Motivate employees to work permanently until achieving the research and development of new technologies.

In everyday life, not all acceptable objectives will be attained. Locke [25] urged subsequent researchers to pay greater attention between the providing of the actual and incentive performance" throughout the goal-setting procedure. From this perspective, this research presents the framework in Figure 1 consisting of goal formulation, goal acceptance, and goal accomplishment.

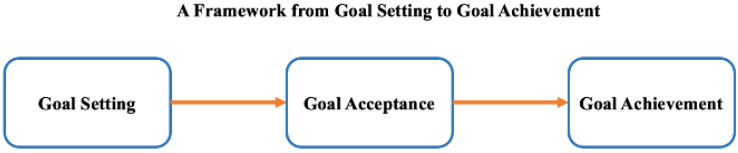

Fig. 1. Goal Setting Vs Goal Achievement

2.3 Transformational Leadership Versus Goal Setting

Section 2.3 elaborates on the material of the preceding two chapters and investigates how distinct transformational leadership components impact the five-goal components independently. The table 3 covers goal setting aspects, relative transformational leadership components, and e-business applications.

Table 3. Transformational Leaders Vs Goal Setting

Main Content of Chapter 4		
Goal Setting Components	Relative Transformational Leadership Components	Application
Goal Difficulty	Idealized influence; Inspirational motivation	High acceptance of goal difficulty developed by transformational leaders could thus facilitate the development of competitive advantages in the e-business
Goal Specificity	Intellectual stimulations; Individual consideration; Inspirational motivation	Specific goals can save employees' energy and concentrate on prioritising the most significant issues within complex e-business social networks
Goal Attainability	Individual consideration	Transformational leaders consider employees at an individual level and set attainable goals that could help the e-business companies maintain steady growth and avoid taking unnecessary risks
Goal Importance	Inspirational motivation; Individual consideration	Couriers will improve service quality through understanding the importance of successful delivery for the brand and self-development
Goal Commitment	Inspirational motivation	Employees inspired by transformational leaders with high collectivistic values will commit to giving their best to achieve the goal, like technology upgrades

Sections 2-1 and 2-2 explored individually the fundamental characteristics of transformative leaders and goal setting theory, respectively. Section 2–2 offers a structure for the goal-setting procedure and identifies that goal acceptability plays a crucial role from goal establishing through goal accomplishment. In addition, this chapter elucidated how different aspects of transformational leadership affect major aspects of goal-setting theory. The theoretical framework developed based on the above investigation is shown in Figure 2 below. Figure 2 illustrates five related components of transformational leaders and goal-setting theory: goal difficulty, goal clarity, goal attainability, goal significance, and goal commitment.

Fig. 2. Framework through Literature Review of Transformational Leaders & Goal Setting

2.4 ERP implementation

This study describes ERP as a unified system that covers day-to-day company operations such as accounting, purchasing, and project planning [30]. ERP system combines a variety of management operations and promotes data flow across different processes, therefore avoiding data duplication and enhance data integrity with a single source [30].

On the other hand, ERP implementation is the transformative process of analyzing the existing business procedure structure and declaring structural adjustments [30, 31]. This transformative process includes a shift in perspective, strategic planning, data processing, user training, comment support, business execution, and deployment [32, 33]. Indeed, through enhancing data transmission effectiveness and cross-functional coordination performance, ERP deployment provides several chances for firms to increase integration [34]. Consequently, the degree of compatibility between workers' attitudes, corporate strategy, and ERP system design is a crucial implementation factor for improving overall operational efficiency [35, 36].

The deployment of an ERP system might take between three months and many decades [30, 37]. In reality, the necessary time depends on the quantity of resources and the number of users, and also the amount of data usage and the size of the organization [38]. In addition, the deployment of ERP may involve continuous running expenditures [30]. In order to determine whether or not deploying ERP is viable, organizations must balance predicted benefits against implementation budget.

Nonetheless, ERP deployment in e-business organizations has a significant failure rate (in the range of 60 to 80 percent on average) [2]. The failure rate among Chinese SMEs might reach as high as 85 percent [39]. Implementation failure often results in catastrophic losses, competitive advantages, organizational performance, and even insolvency [40, 41]. Therefore, it is vital to determine the Critical Performance Factors (CSF) that have the greatest impact on the ERP implementation's success [42]. Finney and Corbett's [43] article summarizes around 20 CSFs of ERP installation (see Table 4). In addition, based on the research of Sarker and Lee [44], this dissertation separates all the components into 3 groups: leadership or administration, technical, and economic considerations.

Table 4. ERP Implementation's Critical Success Factors [43,44]

Critical Success Factors of ERP Implementation	
Category	Critical Success Factors (CSFs)
Leadership/Management Related	Top management commitment and support
	Change management
	Training and job redesign
	Implementation strategy and timeframe
	Consultant selection and relationship
	Visioning and planning
	Balanced team
	Communication plan
	Managing cultural change
	Post-implementation evaluation
	Team morale and motivation
	Project management
	Troubleshooting/Crises management
	Client consultation
	Build a business case
	Empowered decision makers
Technical Related	Business Process Reengineering (BRP) and software configuration
	IT infrastructure
	Selection of ERP
	Legacy system consideration
	Data conversion and integrity
	System testing
Economy Related	Project cost planning and management

Over than 50% of the CSFs of ERP deployment link to the leadership/management viewpoint, as shown in Table 4. Other experts in the existing literature concur that leadership is the "most" important aspect in influencing the effectiveness of ERP [45-47].

Bucker [48] studied those high-performance organizations that have utilized ERP systems for more than 19 years and found that leadership is the most important factor for successful ERP implementation. Leaders can inspire and motivate members to accept the technical change by exhibiting specific leadership behaviors, which is a prerequisite for the ERP system's implementation [6].

The literature research indicates that the ERP system is a crucial element of e-business administration [1,49]. It combines a large number of management activities and promotes data flow across these processes, therefore avoiding duplicate data and improving data integrity with a central repository [30]. However, ERP adoption has a significant failure rate in e-business organizations, particularly Chinese SMEs [2,39]. Several academics [45,47,50] have identified leadership as the "most" important factor in ensuring the success of ERP implementation. Numerous studies have shown that transformational leadership is the most effective leadership style for ERP deployment [6,51]. However, these researchers did not assess the precise actions transformative leaders engaged in to promote ERP deployment.

In contrast, several research [52] have shown that goal formulation is the first phase of ERP adoption. No researcher has evaluated the impact of goal setting variation on ERP adoption, however. In other words, experts should also examine the effect of ERP adoption from establishing unreasonable targets, in addition to the impact from setting fair goals.

Furthermore, this dissertation aims to increase between the practical and theoretical scope of academic study. Though goal setting is regarded a component intimately associated to transformative leaders [7,20] the research found that relatively few academics have analyzed their connection, particularly from the standpoint of goal-setting theory. Likewise, there are insufficient empirical research investigating the potential correlations. In order to fill the vacuum left by the aforementioned three views, this research investigates how transformational leadership enables ERP deployment in Chinese small and medium-sized firms from the standpoint of goal-setting theory.

3 Research Methodology

Based on the constructivist-interpretationist paradigm, this dissertation investigates the topic through a qualitative case study. In addition, this dissertation used a cross-sectional, single-method, qualitative case study methodology based on the paradigm. China-based architectural engineering industry small and medium-sized (fewer than 500 employees) e-business firm was selected after the study approach was determined [3]. the integration and implementation of heating and cooling systems, contract work for overprotection services in the area of heating and cooling environment, Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC), and generic contract for building project in the field of construction and installation.

Moreover, with the vision of "Becoming the top systems engineering network operator in the west frigid mountain region of China," standardizing the effective management procedure and reinforcing supervision has now become the enterprise's primary development trend, particularly the implementation with one of the greatest e-business

control systems: the ERP system. For the purpose of summing up the experience of business change from a leadership standpoint, this study will investigate how leaders utilized goal setting to enhance transformation leadership, hence achieving ERP deployment inside the firm.

4 Findings Analysis and Discussion

The major objective of this dissertation is to address the gap mentioned in the literature reviews by investigating the link between transformative leaders and goal setting theory via a case study of ERP installation in a Chinese SME e-business organization. The contribution to knowledge made by this dissertation is summarized in Figure 3.

Although few studies examine leadership style from a "goal" viewpoint, both goal setting theory and transformational leadership highlight the importance of goals for leadership. From the literature study, the upper half of Figure 3 (the framework under the subject "suggested framework via a review of the literature of transformative leaders and goal setting theory") was developed as a theoretical framework. In respect to goal acceptability and goal attainment, the literature study identifies five relevant components (goal difficulty, specificity, attainability, significance, and goal attainment) between transformative leaders and goal-setting theory. Literature also implies that a good attitude toward ERP adoption is not equivalent to real implementation activity (see Section 7.5), indicating a practical disconnect between objective acceptance and success. This dissertation could not uncover any researchers systematically investigating how transformational leadership enhances goal acceptance and goal attainment by affecting goal-setting theory's core goal-setting components. Consequently, this dissertation adds to the body of knowledge by addressing this gap.

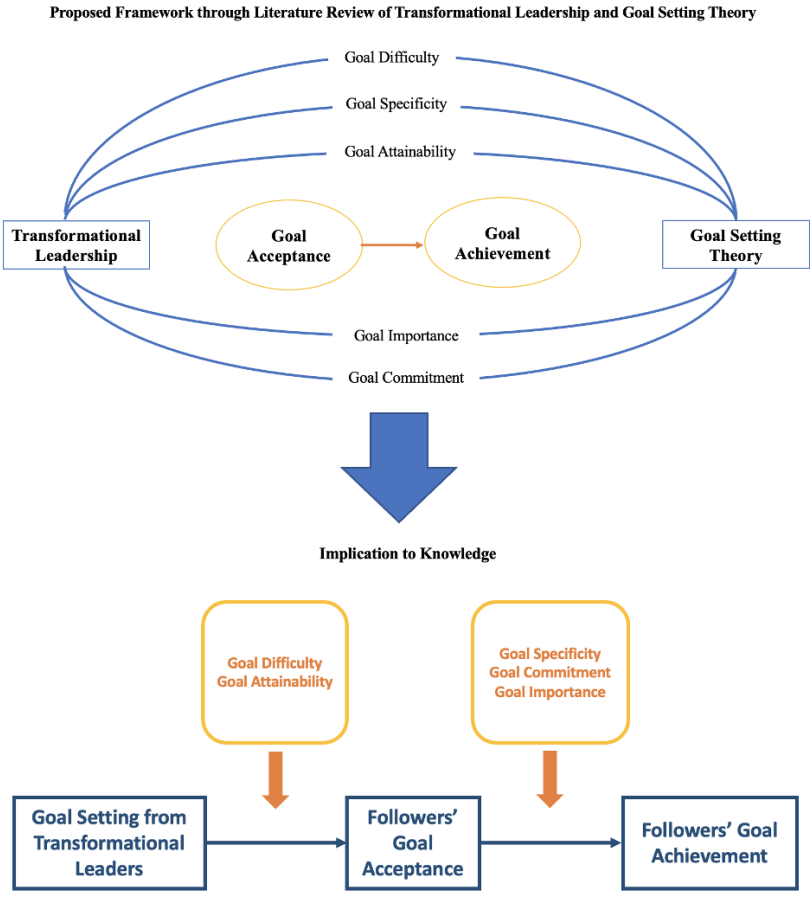

Fig. 3. Implication to Knowledge from the Study

Figure 3's lower half outlines the input made by this study's analysis of results. It is hypothesized that the six distinct components impact goal acceptability and goal success in various combinations. Initially, several researchers have agreed that goal acceptance is a vital step toward goal attainment and the primary factor of work performance [53]. Nonetheless, some personnel may oppose the introduction of new information systems [54]. The dissertation's results about the unfavorable organizational attitude toward ERP deployment prior to transformation further corroborate this claim. According to the research, transformational leaders increase members' ERP implementation goal acceptance by managing goal difficulty and enhancing goal attainability, such as by establishing short-term growth focus and defining essential activities.

Conversely, the results demonstrate that good attitudes do not guarantee that the objective will be realized via activity [55]. The results indicate that some objectives may not be attained even when they are favorably viewed by actors. This is due to the fact

that leaders failed to stress goal precision, goal commitment, and goal significance. Due to the failure of middle management to communicate the objective, the general workforce learned about the plan to deploy an ERP system mostly via rumors and not from the administrators. According to the research [56], among the most prevalent reasons for the gap between goal acceptability and accomplishment is failing to act on the objectives. To address this problem, several experimental investigations have shown that setting explicit objectives enhances people's memories [57]. Second, a clear promise made by workers might motivate them to attain objectives [58]. In this research, executives neglected to evaluate how managers promote the Implementation process to their colleagues; as a consequence, middle managers' desire to pursue the aim was poor. Lastly, the focus on goal significance might raise workers' self-efficacy, which increases the likelihood of goal attainment [59], a factor that is also disregarded throughout the goal-setting process of transformational leaders.

5 Conclusion

This research develops a conceptual framework to describe how transformational leaders enable goal acceptance and success by influencing several goal-setting components. In the meanwhile, this research gives practical advice by analyzing the ERP installation process of Chinese SMEs. When pursuing ERP installation, advice will be provided from the views of several groups inside e-business SMEs.

Overall, the results of this article demonstrate the significance of transformative leaders in the ERP deployment of e-business SMEs through goal setting. However, future study would benefit immensely from broadening the research setting from SMEs to major e-business organizations and use quantitative approaches rather than qualitative ones to quantify the degree of effect of each component.

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