

University Students' Perception of Transformational Leadership of the University President in Korea: The Role of Students' Personality, Affect, and Affective Commitment to the University

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Abstract. This study explores how university students' personality and positive or negative affect influence their perception of transformational leadership of the university president. It further examines how the level of students' affective commitment to the university moderates the relationship. Survey data were collected from 141 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in a large public university in South Korea. The students answered survey questions to measure their big-five personalities, positive and negative affect, affective commitment to the university, and their perception of the university president's transformational leadership. The results of hierarchical regression analyses show that (a) students' positive affect is positively related to their perception of the university president's transformational leadership, after controlling for the effect of the students' personality and that (b) students' affective commitment to the university moderates the relationship between negative affect and perception of transformational leadership of the university president. This study sheds light on the dynamic, reciprocal process of the social construction of university leadership with an emphasis on students' affective state and personality traits as critical factors in understanding distant leadership.

Keywords: student perception; transformational leadership; personality; affective experience; organizational commitment

1. Introduction

For over thirty years, leadership has been one of the most actively explored topics in the field of management for both academicians and practitioners. The majority of initial studies of leadership have taken a perspective of leaders rather than that

of followers (Weick, 1993). For example, studies have explored the characteristics (i.e., traits or abilities) of leaders and examined their influences on leadership effectiveness. However, later studies have begun to think of leadership as a social product constructed by both leaders and followers rather than leaders alone (Hollander, 1992; Lord & Maher, 1993). This shift has aroused academic attention to the followers' perspectives and perceptions of leadership (Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich, 1985). In educational settings, university leadership has been conceptualized mostly from the perspectives of school leaders in terms of what they do or what they think the leaders' role is (Clarke & Wildy, 2010; Marks & Printy, 2003), which resonates with the leader-centric approach in the management field. Later studies have paid attention to complex, reciprocal processes involved in education leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2010).

The notion of the social construction of leadership originates from the follower-centric perspective (Meindl, 1995). This perspective posits that leadership is socially constructed by followers, so the followers' individual differences and their experiences are crucial in conceptualizing and perceiving the image of their leaders. Meindl (1995) suggested that both situational and individual differences influence the social construction of leadership. For instance, social contexts such as crisis (Bligh, Kohles & Meindl, 2004) and situational performance shape followers' perception of leadership (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Also, individual differences, including personalities (Felfe, 2005), self-identity (Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999), risk-taking tendencies (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001), and needs for structure (Collinson, 2006; Felfe & Schyns, 2006) influence followers' social construction of leadership.

While existing studies have focused on followers' individual differences and their impact on the social construction of leadership (i.e., followers' personalities and self-identities: Felfe, 2005; Lord et al., 1999), they have put little emphasis on the impact of followers' affective experiences on their leadership perception. Our claim for the importance of understanding the affective influence on leadership perception is grounded on scholarly evidence. Studies have shown that individuals' affective experiences offer explanations for fundamental mechanisms pertaining to attitude, behavior, and performance of individuals (Clore & Schnall, 2005; Staw & Barsade, 1993) as well as facilitate individuals' thought processes such as decision-making, perception (Isen, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), and possibly leadership perception in our case.

The influence of followers' affective experience on leadership perception can be even more pronounced when they have a distant relationship with the leader. The examples include the relationships between a CEO and ordinary employees or between a university president and students. In this case, followers often lack information about their distant leaders to evaluate them (Katz & Kahn, 1966), and rarely have direct interactions and exchanges with them. Therefore, when relationships between leaders and followers are distant, followers are more likely to perceive and evaluate leadership in a more affective and symbolic way relying on their own feelings and judgments, rather than in an evidence-based and

concrete way (Collinson, 2005; Shamir, 1995). In this case, followers' affective experience can have a more significant influence on how they perceive leadership than when they have close relationships with leaders.

In the literature on leadership in educational settings, studies have mostly focused on teacher perceptions, rather than student perceptions, of principal leadership which have been associated with enhanced student academic performance and a positive school climate (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018; Ubben & Hughes, 2001). A notable exception is a study by Odhiambo and Hii (2012) that examined the perceptions of parents and students in terms of how effective their school leadership was at a Catholic school in Sydney, Australia. While the study showed that parents' and students' general satisfaction was influenced by their perceptions of the principal's relational leadership, the literature on transformational leadership perception reports other important outcomes as well including increased motivation, experiences of meaningfulness, and creativity (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Ilies, Judge & Wagner, 2006; Tepper et al., 2018).

Drawing on the social construction of leadership theory (Meindl, 1995) as an overarching framework, this study illustrates the impact of followers' affective experience, above and beyond the impact of followers' personalities, on their perception of transformational leadership in the context where university students (i.e., followers) view and evaluate a university president as a distant leader. Transformational leadership emphasizes leaders' capability to transform followers' goals and beliefs, induce followers' intrinsic motivation, and facilitate the emotional arousal of followers to achieve a vision (Cherulnik et al., 2001). Hence, transformational leadership is more likely to rely on emotional processes (George, 2000). Thus, followers' affective experiences can have a larger impact on their perception of transformational leadership than on the perception of other types of leadership.

In addition, this study examines how university students' affective commitment to the university moderates the relationship between their affect and perceptions of the university president's transformational leadership. Because leadership, particularly at the senior or president level, is a symbolic entity that represents the organization as a whole (Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018; Pfeffer, 1981), followers with a high level of organizational commitment would be more sensitive to and concerned about the leaders and their leadership styles. Thus, such followers' perception of transformational leadership will be more dependent on their affective experience, as they pay more attention to their leaders and constantly evaluate and re-evaluate their leadership. Followers with lower levels of organizational commitment would be less concerned about leaders and their leadership, and, thus, their perception of transformational leadership would be less dependent on their affective experiences. Therefore, the relationship between students' affective experiences and their leadership perception may vary depending on the level of students' commitment to the university in which they are enrolled.

This study contributes to three areas of discussion. First, by exploring the impact of students' affective experiences on their perception of distant leadership, this

study contributes to a better understanding of how the distant leadership of a university president is socially constructed by the students. The focus on students' affective experiences as an antecedent of transformational leadership perception addresses the call for studying the dynamic and reciprocal nature of university leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). School structure and culture as well as staff motivation may shape leadership effectiveness (Sebastian, Allensworth & Huang, 2016), and so does students' perception of a university president's leadership as followers' individual differences are an important mechanism of understanding leadership (Meindl, 1995).

Second, this study complements previous research on followers' dispositions or personalities as the main antecedents of leadership perception (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Felfe, 2005; Felfe & Schyns, 2006). Furthermore, it extends prior findings by examining the impact of positive and negative affect while controlling for the personality effects. As followers tend to perceive distant leadership on the basis of their affective experiences (Collinson, 2005), a deeper understanding of how students' affect shapes their perceptions of university leadership is warranted.

Finally, by studying the moderating effect of commitment to the university on the relationship between students' affective experiences and their leadership perception, this research reveals the extent to which university students as key followers as well as stakeholders pay attention to the university president as a symbolic representation of the organization (Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018). In doing so, this study sheds light on the importance of taking students' perspectives in assessing school leadership and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the process of the social construction of leadership in educational settings.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

This study adopts the social construction of leadership theory (Meindl, 1995) as an overarching framework in viewing a university president's leadership from the university students' perspective. In the following subsections, we elaborate on our research model depicted in Figure 1. More specifically, we introduce the theoretical framework and then propose that student personalities, positive and negative affect, and affective commitment to the university play an important role in shaping the students' perception of the university president's transformational leadership.

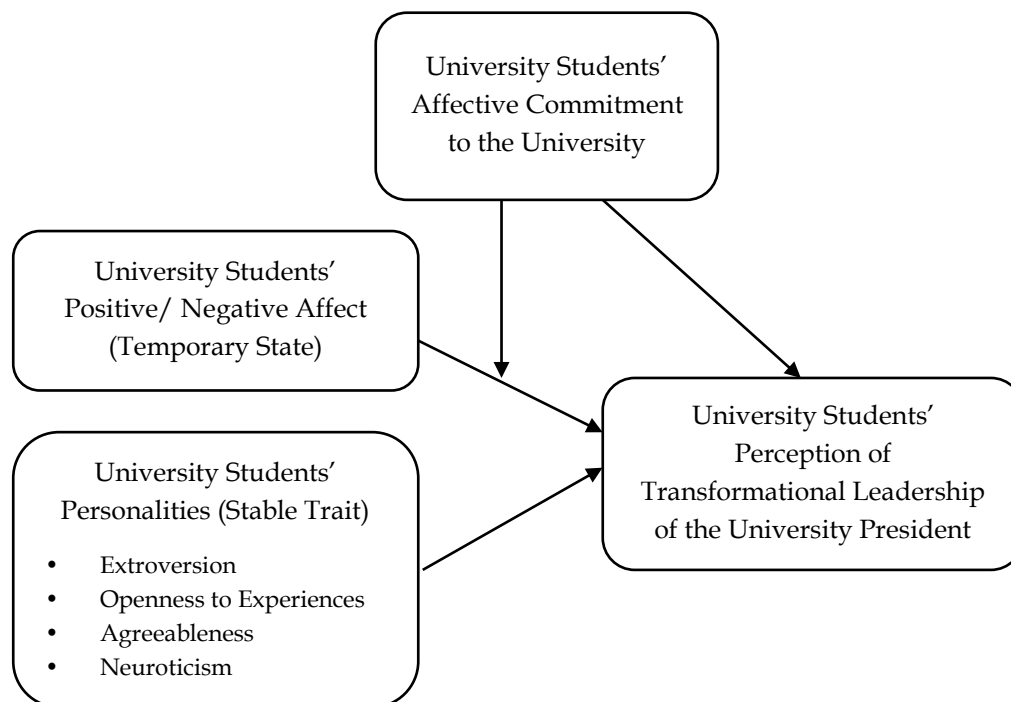


Figure 1: Research model

2.1. Social Construction of Leadership

Meindl et al. (1985) suggested a follower-centric approach to understanding leadership, which is to view leadership as a social construction among followers. Followers tend to simplify complex phenomena related to their organization, and often attribute the causes and outcomes of the organizational phenomena to leadership. Through this process, followers gain psychological benefits, such as reduced cognitive burden and uncertainty and a sense of comfort and security (Bligh et al., 2004; Felfe, 2005). More importantly, the attribution process enables followers to construct an image and impression of their leader, thus facilitating their social construction of leadership. Research findings have shown that the psychological benefits that accrue to followers through the attribution process are likely to create positive images of the leaders (Gardner, 2003).

Followers tend to attribute blame and credit to leaders in varying degrees. For example, Gibson and Schroeder (2003) tested the effect of leaders' hierarchical position on attributions and showed that upper-level positions received more blame than credit. Interestingly, Shamir (1995) proposed that perceptions of distant charismatic leaders will be more idealized than those of close charismatic leaders. Given our research context of a university president as a leader and the university students as followers, the process of the social construction of leadership is likely to be more active.

2.2. Personality and Social Construction of Leadership

Among several dispositional characteristics of followers, personalities are considered one of the most important factors that influence the perception of leadership. This is because personalities, in general, tend to have a stable impact on individuals' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Felfe & Schyns, 2006). Shamir,

House & Arthur, (1993) and Keller (1999) argued that individuals tend to believe that they are similar to other people. This illusion of similarity occurs because being similar to other people confirms individuals' self-concepts and perceived congruence with others. For example, the moral foundations of the followers have been associated with their ethical leadership perceptions (Fehr, Yam & Dang, 2015). Thus, when followers believe that they have similar personalities with their leader, they are likely to evaluate them more positively or think of them as more transformational (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Schyns & Felfe, 2006). Hence, students' (i.e., follower) personalities can impact their perceptions of the transformational leadership of the university president.

Followers with high extroversion and openness are likely to perceive leadership as transformational. Extroverts enjoy being with others and are full of energy, and people who are open to new experiences are characterized as imaginative and creative. Followers with either personality characteristics would perceive their leaders as more transformational because both are common personalities found among transformational leaders (Judge & Bono, 2000), and, thus, enhance followers' similarity perception with their leaders.

Followers with high agreeableness are also likely to perceive leadership as transformational because highly agreeable people tend to view others in a positive light with a pro-social orientation towards others (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell & Hair,, 1996). Agreeable individuals are cooperative, and emphasize social harmony and building positive relationships with others (Goldberg, 1993).

On the contrary, neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anxiety and anger, and is highly correlated with pessimism (Boland & Cappelliez, 1997). Thus, people with high neuroticism are less likely to be motivated and idealized by transformational leadership. Moreover, neuroticism is known to have a negative relationship with the emergence of transformational leadership (Judge & Bono, 2000). Therefore, we hypothesize as below.

Hypothesis 1a. University students with high extroversion will perceive the university president as more transformational.

Hypothesis 1b. University students with high openness to experiences will perceive the university president as more transformational.

Hypothesis 1c. University students with high agreeableness will perceive the university president as more transformational.

Hypothesis 1d. University students with high neuroticism will perceive the university president as less transformational.

2.3. Affect and Social Construction of Leadership

While past research on affect and leadership has been mainly devoted to understanding leaders' affect and its effect on leadership effectiveness (George, 2000; Palmer et al., 2001), there has been a growing interest in studying the impact

of followers' affect on their perception of leadership (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Affect is considered a fundamental mechanism that explains why and how certain attitudes, cognition, and behavior come to exist. In the same vein, followers' positive or negative affect may influence their social construction of leadership. The impact of followers' affect can be stronger in the perception of distant leadership, in particular because followers tend to perceive distant leadership based on an affective, symbolic image of the leaders rather than relying on concrete or specific evidence (Collinson, 2005; Shamir, 1995).

By positive affect, we mean a positive emotional state or how much a person experiences enthusiastic, active and alert at the moment (Frijda, 1986). High arousal positive affect is a state of high energy and concentration as well as pleasurable, full engagement, whereas low arousal positive affect is a state of calmness and serenity (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). By negative affect we refer to subjective distress and unpleasant affective experiences that accompany a variety of aversive mood states (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). High arousal negative affect includes anger, fear, contempt, disgust, guilt, anxiety, and nervousness, whereas low arousal negative affect includes sadness and lethargy.

Meindl (1995) suggested that followers' level of emotional arousal can impact the extent to which they attribute the causes and outcomes of organizational phenomena to their leaders. More specifically, followers' experience of high arousal positive affect tends to enhance their perception of transformational leadership (Mayo, Pastor & Meindl, 1996). This is because high emotional arousal tends to bound followers' rationality (Kaufman, 1999), thus having the followers become susceptible to positivity bias, which fosters a positive perception of leader behavior (Wright & Dawson, 1988).

We propose that the effect of followers' positive or negative affect may remain even after controlling for the effect of the followers' personalities in the case of the perception of distant leadership. One of the major factors that shape the social construction of leadership is individual differences (Meindl, 1995). Individual differences can be either (a) stable differences, such as personality differences, or (b) unstable, changing differences, such as an affective state (e.g., Rhee, 2007). To fully uncover the effect of individual differences on the social construction of distant leadership, it is important to consider the impact of both stable and unstable individual differences. Hence, we hypothesize that students' positive and negative affect will influence their perception of the university president's transformational leadership, above and beyond the impact of their personalities.

Hypothesis 2. University students' positive and negative affect will influence their perception of transformational leadership of the university president, even after controlling for the effect of students' personalities.

Several research findings show how followers' positive and negative affect may have different impacts on their leadership perceptions. Dasborough and Askanasy (2002) found that followers experiencing positive affect interpreted leader behaviors more favorably and perceived the leadership as transformational

because positive affect fosters positive interpretations of leaders' behaviors. Additionally, Sinclair (1988) showed that individuals experiencing positive affect tended to appraise others' performance more positively. Thus, it is likely that university students experiencing positive affect appraise the university president's leadership as transformational. Hence, we hypothesize as below.

Hypothesis 3. University students experiencing positive affect will perceive the university president's leadership as more transformational.

The effect of followers' negative affect is not clear, especially for the high arousal negative affect, such as anger or fear. On the one hand, studies have argued that followers with high arousal affect, regardless of positive or negative, tend to perceive their leader as more transformational (Meindl et al., 1985). Thus, followers experiencing high arousal negative affect may think of the leader as transformational. On the other hand, individuals with negative affect tend to be more critical and skeptical in judgment and evaluation or interpret things in a more pessimistic way (Scheier, Weintraub & Carver, 1986; Staw & Barsade, 1993). This argument suggests that followers experiencing negative affect may view their leaders less favorably or less transformational. Because of the two different possibilities regarding the impact of university students' negative affect on the perceptions of university president's transformational leadership, we set competing hypotheses as follows.

Hypothesis 4a. University students experiencing negative affect will perceive the university president's leadership as more transformational.

Hypothesis 4b. University students experiencing negative affect will perceive the university president's leadership as less transformational.

2.4. Direct and Moderating Effects of Affective Organizational Commitment

In the previous section, we proposed that followers' affective state may influence their perceptions of transformational leadership. In this section, we suggest that the effect of followers' affective experiences can be moderated by an organization-related psychological factor, such as followers' affective commitment to the organization. We further propose that followers' affective commitment can directly impact leadership perception as well. By affective organizational commitment, we refer to an affective bond with the organization (Jaros l., 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1991; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) or with the university in our case.

Affective commitment to an organization heightens the level of identification with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The extent to which members identify with the organization, in turn, influences how they perceive things related to the organization, such as leadership (Gautam, Van Dick & Wagner, 2004; Machokoto, 2019). Because followers tend to identify their leaders, particularly at the senior levels, with their organization (Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018; Pfeffer, 1981), followers with high affective commitment to the organization are likely to be affectively attached to their leader. Therefore, we predict that university students with high affective commitment to the university will perceive the university president's leadership as more transformational.

Hypothesis 5. University students with high affective commitment to the university will perceive the university president's leadership as more transformational.

Furthermore, the more the followers are affectively committed to the organization, the more they become attentive to emotional information about leadership. This is also because followers tend to identify leaders with the organization (Pfeffer, 1981). Leaders carry symbolic meanings and their identity tends to overlap with the organization's identity (e.g., Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018). Thus, when followers are affectively committed to the organization, the impact of their affect on leadership perception may be amplified. In other words, a positive feeling about leadership may become more positive because the quality of leadership matters for the followers who are affectively committed to the organization. In the same vein, a negative feeling about leadership can become stronger with the followers with affective organizational commitment. Hence, we hypothesize as follows.

Hypothesis 6. The effect of university students' positive and negative affect on their perception of the university president's transformational leadership will increase when the students have a high level of affective commitment to the university they are enrolled in.

Drawing on the social construction of leadership theory (Meindl, 1995), this study complements and extends extant literature by proposing how university students as followers perceive the distant transformational leadership of the university president through their affective experiences, an important yet under-explored aspect of leadership perception. This approach also responds to the call for a deeper exploration of the reciprocal nature of university leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2010), which has generally neglected students' perspectives in evaluating university leadership.

3. Methods

To collect data for the test of study hypotheses, we have conducted an online survey study with university students, exploring the relationship between students' personalities, affect, as well as their perception of the president's transformational leadership. Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in a large public university in South Korea participated in the survey. A survey recruitment flyer was posted on a social network service that the majority of the university students used, and their participation was voluntary. About a year before the survey was conducted, the university had a new president who attempted to make various radical changes throughout the university, including tenure and promotion policy and student graduation requirements. Students had mixed thoughts and feelings about the president so we concluded that this case is an appropriate site to examine the relationship of students' personalities and emotions with their perception of leadership. Detailed survey processes are delineated below.

3.1. Sample and Procedure

Among the total 141 student participants, 106 were males and 35 females, and 80 were undergraduate and 61 graduate students. We assumed that all the

respondents had a similar amount of information about the university president and that they had almost no previous direct interaction with them.

When the survey was conducted, the university did not have any institutional monitoring or approval of human subjects research. However, this study only assessed students' personalities, affects, and perceptions of another person which have been widely used in existing studies without any sensitive questions or information. Thus we concluded that this study was safe to run in the university. Also, at the beginning of the online survey, we have fully explained all the necessary information about the survey, such as confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any time.

3.2. Measures

Positive and negative affect. The PANAS (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule) scale is one of the most well-known measures of emotional state, developed by Watson et al. (1988). PANAS has ten positive emotions (e.g., interested, enthusiastic, proud, and alert) and ten negative emotions (e.g., distressed, guilty, hostile, and afraid). We asked the participants to rate the items on a scale from 1 to 5, based on the strength of affective experience where 1 = "very slightly or not at all" and 5 = "extremely" (see Appendix 1). The internal consistency (i.e., Cronbach's alpha) of positive affect was 0.82, and negative affect 0.80. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the suggested minimum value for acceptable reliability is 0.6.

Transformational leadership. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X)© measures the extent to which a leader exhibits transformational and transactional leadership and the followers' level of satisfaction with the leadership style. We used 20 items to measure the students' perception of the university president's transformational leadership using a 5-point scale (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999). Internal consistency of each sub-scale was at a good or acceptable level: idealized influence ($\alpha = 0.76$), inspirational motivation ($\alpha = 0.64$), intellectual stimulation ($\alpha = 0.73$), and individualized consideration ($\alpha = 0.71$).

Personality. The International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) with 40 items (Goldberg, 1999) was used to measure personality traits in the current research (see Appendix 1). Each personality trait was assessed with 10 items using a 5-point scale (1 = very inaccurate; 5 = very accurate). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were good or acceptable: neuroticism ($\alpha = 0.83$), extroversion ($\alpha = 0.76$), openness ($\alpha = 0.68$), and agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.80$).

Affective commitment to university. We measured students' level of affective commitment to the university using 10 items suggested by Nora and Cabrera (1993). We used a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix 1), and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.81.

4. Results

Using SPSS 20.0 software, we performed reliability tests for each of the measurements and conducted correlation analysis. To test the hypothesized relationships, hierarchical regression analysis and moderated multiple regression analysis was performed.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables. Because some of the personality variables had significant correlations higher than 0.30, we checked for multi-collinearity problems. The results indicated that multi-collinearity between the variables was not significant (Tolerance > 0.10, VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) < 10, Eigenvalue > 0.01, Index < 100). Our initial examinations further showed that our regression models below meet the assumption of normality, homoscedasticity, as well as no multicollinearity.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Years in the university	4.20	1.99									
2. Gender (Female 0, Male 1)	.75	.43	-.033								
3. Neuroticism	1.81	.739	-.109	-.097							
4. Extroversion	3.61	.588	.040	-.092	-.332**						
5. Openness	3.77	.578	-.119	-.051	-.057	.430**					
6. Agreeableness	3.52	.627	.108	-.133	-.303**	.383**	.270**				
7. Positive affect	2.86	.722	-.153	.065	-.293**	.275**	.248**	.149			
8. Negative affect	2.46	.744	-.099	-.026	.569**	-.181*	.025	-.364**	-.032		
9. Affective commitment to university	3.52	.533	-.043	-.082	-.141	-.002	.028	.085	.092	-.084	
10. Perception of transformational leadership	3.03	.620	.045	.135	-.267**	.203*	.152	.299**	.355**	-.082	.187*

N = 141; † p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

4.2. Hypothesis Tests

4.2.1. Effects of Individual Differences: Personality and Positive and Negative Affect

Model 2 in Table 2 illustrates regression results examining the relationship between student personalities and perception of the university president's transformational leadership. Hypothesis 1c, which predicted that students with high agreeableness would perceive transformational leadership more strongly than those with low agreeableness, was supported ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$). Also, students' neuroticism had a negative relationship with the perception of

transformational leadership with a marginal significance ($\beta = -0.16, p < 0.10$), thus marginally supporting Hypothesis 1d. Students' extroversion and openness personalities were not associated with their leadership perception, thus rejecting Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

Next, to test the effect of students' positive and negative affect after controlling for the effect of personalities, we regressed personality, positive and negative affect altogether on the perception of transformational leadership. We found that students' positive affect, but not negative affect, was positively related to the perception of transformational leadership even after controlling for the effect of student personalities (see Model 3 in Table 2), thus partially supporting Hypothesis 2. Model 3 in Table 2 also shows that students' positive affect has a positive relationship with their perception of transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$), thus supporting Hypothesis 3. Because students' negative affect was not associated with their perception of transformational leadership of the university president, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were not supported.

Table 2: Results of hierarchical regression analyses for perception of transformational leadership: Direct effect of student personalities and affect

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Step 1: Control variables			
Gender	.14	.16†	.14†
Years in the university	.05	.01	.06
Step 2: Independent variables (Personalities)			
Neuroticism		-.16†	-.16
Extroversion		.04	.00
Openness		.07	.02
Agreeableness		.24**	.26**
Step 3: Independent variables (Affect)			
Positive affect			.27**
Negative affect			.12
R ²	.02	.16**	.23**
Adjusted R ²	.01	.12	.18

N = 141; † p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

4.2.2. Effects of Affective Organizational Commitment

In Model 2 in Table 3, there is a direct positive relationship between students' affective commitment to university and their perception of transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported. However, when interaction terms are added in the model (Model 3 in Table 3), the significant positive relationship disappears and a moderating effect appears. To test the moderating effect of affective commitment to university, we regressed the

perception of transformational leadership on students' positive and negative affect, affective commitment to university, and interaction terms of positive/negative affect and affective commitment to university. Model 3 in Table 3 shows that a coefficient of the interaction term is significant only for the interaction between negative affect and affective commitment to university ($\beta = -0.47$, $p < 0.10$), but not for the interaction between positive affect and affective commitment to university. Hence, Hypothesis 5 was partially supported, which predicted that the relationship between university students' positive and negative affect and their leadership perception would be amplified when students have a high level of affective commitment to the university. The moderating effect is depicted in Figure 2.

Table 3: Hierarchical regression analyses for perception of transformational leadership: Effect of affective commitment to university

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Step 1: Control variables			
Gender	.14	.13†	.14†
Years in the university	.05	.11	.11
Step 2: Independent variables (Affect and affective commitment)			
Positive affect (PA)		.35**	.34**
Negative affect (NA)		-.04	-.03
Affective commitment to university		.18*	.18
Step 3: Interaction effects (Affect x Affective commitment)			
PA x Affective commitment to university			.02
NA x Affective commitment to university			-.13†
R ²	.02	.18**	.20**
Adjusted R ²	.01	.15	.16

N = 141; † $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

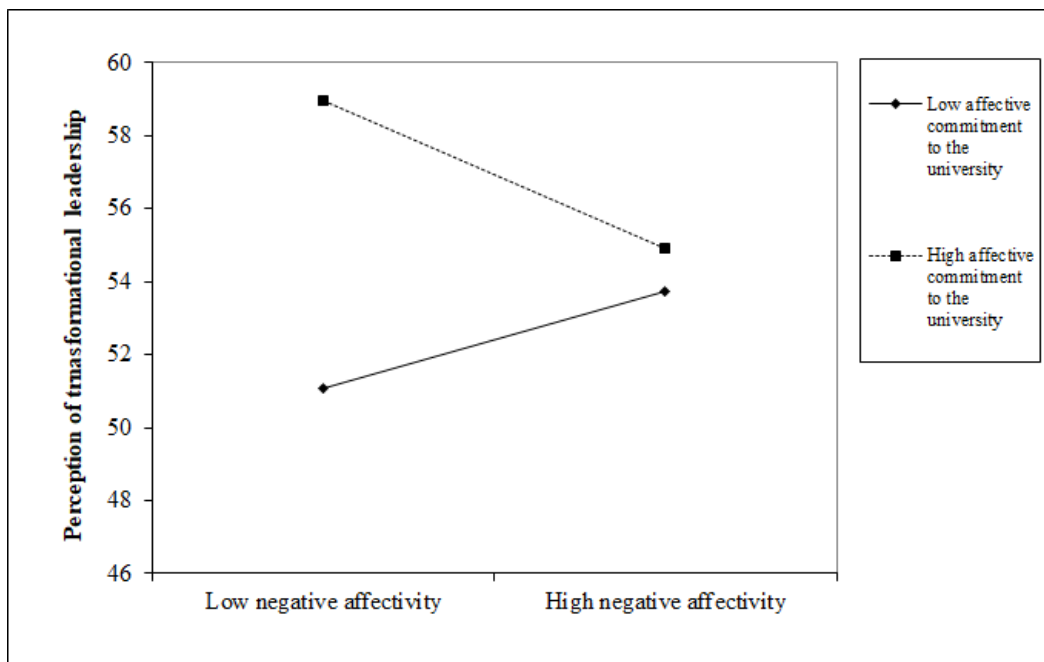


Figure 2: Moderating effect of affective commitment to university on the relationship between negative affect and perception of transformational leadership of the university president

5. Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to examine how university students' personalities and affective experiences influence the social construction of distant leadership of the university president. Followers' affect has important implications for understanding their perception of distant leadership, in particular because followers tend to rely on the affective or symbolic image of distant leaders when evaluating leadership effectiveness. Corroborating previous findings, university students with high agreeableness perceived the university president as more transformational (Schyns & Sanders, 2007), and those with neuroticism perceived leaders as less transformational. Moreover, even after controlling for the effect of student personalities, there was a significant relationship between students' positive affect and their perception of the transformational leadership of the university president. This indicates that, for the perception of distant leaders' transformational leadership, followers' positive affect may matter above and beyond the impact of followers' personality. Finally, students' affective commitment to school enhanced their perception of transformational leadership and amplified the negative relationship between students' negative affect and their perception of transformational leadership.

The hypotheses on the relationship between students' extroversion or openness and perceived transformational leadership were not supported. Past research found that followers viewed leaders more positively when they shared similar characteristics (Fehr et al., 2015; Keller, 1999). It is probable that students may not have perceived the university president as always extrovert or open to new experiences, which are exemplary features of transformational leaders. In fact, at the time when the survey was conducted, there was a negative sentiment at the

research site regarding the university president's arbitrary decisions, rather than building consensus, on a number of school policies. Perhaps this situation had formed an image of the university president as less open to and more withdrawn from others' opinions. Hence, the similarity argument can be limited depending on how extroverted or open the leaders are. In contrast, agreeableness and neuroticism seem to show stable effects such that agreeable individuals view others in a more positive light and that those with high neuroticism tend to view others with negative sentiments (e.g., Costa, McCrae & Löckenhoff, 2019). Hence, students' agreeableness and neuroticism may have shown a more stable effect on the perception of transformational leadership than extroversion and openness personalities have.

Most of the hypotheses pertinent to students' negative affect were not supported, except for the moderating effect of affective commitment to school on the relationship between negative affect and transformational leadership perception. It may be that the degree and variance of the university students' negative affect were not big enough to produce significant effects ($M = 2.46$ on a 5-point Likert-type scale; $SD = 0.74$). Another possible explanation pertains to the extent to which followers view themselves as interdependent with the leader (Eberly & Fong, 2013). The more the followers viewed themselves as connected to the leader, the stronger their motivation was to remain connected to the leader who elicited positive affect. However, non-interdependent followers did not make a significant distinction between positive or negative affect associated with the leader. This finding implies that, in the case of distant leadership of the university president to whom students are remotely connected with a weak sense of interdependence, it is likely that their negative affect may not necessarily result in a weakened perception of transformational leadership.

When combined with the effect of affective commitment to the university, however, students' negative affect significantly reduced their perception of transformational leadership. The more the students were affectively committed to the university, the less they perceived the university president as transformational when the president was associated with negative feelings. For the university students with a high level of affective commitment to the university, negative feelings about the university president may have meant unsatisfactory performance of the president, thus resulting in the perception of the president as possessing less transformational leadership. Insofar as students experience affective commitment or connection to the university, they become psychologically engaged with the university and pay careful attention to what it does and what it stands for (Hur et al., 2017). As a symbolic representation of the organization (Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018), the leadership of a university president could be under scrutiny by multiple stakeholders including its students, particularly those who are more committed to the university.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study findings contribute to the discussion of school leadership and the social construction of leadership theory in several ways. First, we attempted to contribute to the follower-centric view of leadership research. While a leader-

centric viewpoint has been a dominant approach in leadership research in both educational and managerial settings (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Weick, 1993), later studies have developed the idea of the social construction of leadership from followers' perspectives. Leadership effectiveness is determined not only by what and how leaders do, but also by how followers perceive the leadership (Hollander, 1992). While school leadership literature has viewed leadership mostly from teachers' perspectives (Dinham, 2005; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018; Ubben & Hughes, 2001), the current study opens up the possibility of taking students' perspectives into account (e.g., Odhiambo & Hii, 2012). A more vigorous attempt to understand the follower-centric perspective of leadership may enable us to fully uncover the dynamics of transformational leadership and leadership perceptions.

Second, by a focus on followers' (i.e., students') perception of distant leadership, this study applied the argument of the social construction of leadership to the context of a distant leader-follower relationship in educational settings. The follower(student)-centric approach allows the exploration of how students perceive the distant leadership of the university president in an affective and symbolic way (Popper, 2013). This study, therefore, extends prior studies on perceptions by teachers who are relatively closer to school leadership than the students are (Hauserman, Ivankova & Stick, 2013; Ubben & Hughes, 2001). Followers use different types of information when forming impressions of their leaders, depending on how approachable or distant the leaders are (Collinson, 2005; Shamir, 1995). By parsing out the effect of follower personalities and affect as an important mechanism of the social construction of distant leadership, we suggest future research opportunities in the arena of perception of distant leadership.

Finally, given the importance of follower (i.e., student) affect as a key source of distant leadership perception, we call for a fuller investigation of the impact that followers' positive or negative affect may have on the social construction of leadership. Past research has mainly focused on the effect of dispositional aspects of followers, including personality and self-concept (Felfe, 2005; Lord et al., 1999). However, there is evidence that followers' affect influences the way they interpret leaders' actions and the way they view the style of leadership (i.e., Isen, 2000; Johnson, 2008). This study showed a significant positive association between students' positive affect and their transformational leadership perception of the university president, above and beyond the effect of student personalities, thus suggesting the criticality of examining the effect of follower affect.

The current findings have implications for educational and management practice. Given that leadership tends to be socially constructed by both leaders and followers (Hollander, 1992; Meindl, 1995), understanding and managing followers' leadership perception mechanisms become crucial for the leadership to be effective. Hence, university leaders need to pay attention to the students' affective experiences in the university and their level of affective commitment or connection to the university. For instance, frequent communication of university vision and development (Berson, 2015), as well as relational practices such as

holding town hall meetings (Hsieh et al., 2015) or collaborative decision-making, are recommended. As university leaders face ever-growing challenges in fast-changing, complex environments with diverse stakeholders, professional development or relational training are emphasized (Lasater, 2016) through which skills and competencies to build rapport and establish trust can be cultivated. An important basis of leadership perception involves how caring and trustworthy the leaders are. Indeed, researchers have indicated that these are crucial competencies for university leaders to evoke affective commitment from the school community (Cherkowski, 2012), which ultimately results in leadership effectiveness, positive school climate, and desirable performance outcomes (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018; Ubben & Hughes, 2001).

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present findings need to be considered in light of several limitations. First, respondents to our questionnaire might have been those who were satisfied or dissatisfied with the current leadership more than others, producing a biased distribution of data and results. Second, generalizability is limited by the sample and the research context. We cannot eliminate the possibility that the findings were unique for the specific research context or specific students and departments within the university due to relatively small sample size ($n=141$) in this study. Finally, we did not control for the influence of environmental factors such as media evaluation of the university president or recent positive or negative events having occurred at the university, for example.

Future research may examine whether the current study findings hold in different cultural or contextual settings. Antecedents of leadership perception may vary depending on different research settings. For example, perception or evaluation of self-sacrificial leadership and dictatorial leadership may differ depending on followers' personalities. Also, follower positive affect could have different impacts on the perception of distant or close leaders. Besides, future research may look at whether there is a fit between certain personality types and positive or negative affect. For example, researchers may investigate whether agreeable followers experiencing positive affect perceive leaders as more transformational than those experiencing negative affect.

6. Conclusion

The current research explored the importance of followers' personalities and positive and negative affect in understanding the social construction of distant leadership in university settings. We investigated the impact of student personalities and positive and negative affect on their perception of the transformational leadership of the university president. We further investigated the moderating effect of students' affective commitment to the university on the relationship between their personalities and perception of transformational leadership. Students' positive affect has an impact on their perception of transformational leadership of the university president, above and beyond the impact of students' personalities. Also, students' affective commitment to school fostered their perception of the transformational leadership of the university president.

The present study addresses the call for understanding university leadership as a highly contextual competence with a dynamic, reciprocal nature involving school culture, staff motivation, delegated leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Majumdar, 2018; Sebastian et al., 2016), and students' perception of leadership (e.g., Odhiambo & Hii, 2012) in our case. This study sheds further light on the follower-centric view of leadership with a focus on followers' affective state, personality traits, and affective organizational commitment as critical determinants of the social construction of distant leadership.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire items

1. Positive and Negative Affect: The PANAS (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule) (Watson et al., 1988)

Please indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few days. Use the following scale to record your answers.

	items	1 very slightly or not at all	2 a little	3 moderately	4 quite a bit	5 extremely
Positive affect	interested					
	excited					
	strong					
	enthusiastic					
	proud					
	alert					
	inspired					
	determined					
	attentive					
	active					
Negative affect	distressed					
	upset					
	guilty					
	scared					
	hostile					
	irritable					
	ashamed					
	nervous					
	jittery					
	afraid					

2. Personality: International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999)

Please rate how accurately each of the items describes you. Use the following scale to record your answer.

1: very inaccurate (VI)

2: moderately inaccurate (MI)

3: neither inaccurate nor accurate (NINA)

4: moderately accurate (MA)

5: very accurate (VA)

	items	1 VI	2 MI	3 NINA	4 MA	5 VA
Extroversion	Am the life of the party					
	Don't talk a lot *					
	Feel comfortable around people					
	Keep in the background *					
	Start conversations					
	Have little to say *					
	Talk to a lot of different people at parties					
	Don't like to draw attention to myself *					
	Don't mind being the center of attention					
Agreeableness	Am quiet around strangers *					
	Feel little concern for others *					
	Am interested in people					
	Insult people *					
	Sympathize with others' feelings					
	Am not interested in other people's problems *					
	Have a soft heart					
	Am not really interested in others *					
	Take time out for others					
Neuroticism	Feel others' emotions					
	Make people feel at ease					
	Get stressed out easily					
	Am relaxed most of the time *					
	Worry about things					
	Seldom feel blue *					
	Am easily disturbed					
	Get upset easily					
	Change my mood a lot					
Openness	Have frequent mood swings					
	Get irritated easily					
Openness	Often feel blue					
	Have a rich vocabulary					
Openness	Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas *					

	Have a vivid imagination					
	Am not interested in abstract ideas *					
	Have excellent ideas					
	Do not have a good imagination *					
	Am quick to understand things					
	Use difficult words					
	Spend time reflecting on things					
	Am full of ideas					

* Reverse scored items

3. Affective commitment to school: 10 Items by Nora and Cabrera (1993)

Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement. Use the following scale to record your answer.

- 1: strongly disagree (SD)
- 2: disagree (D)
- 3: neither disagree nor agree (NDNA)
- 4: agree (A)
- 5: strongly agree (SA)

items	1 SD	2 D	3 NDNA	4 A	5 SA
I am confident I made the right decision in choosing to attend this university.					
I am certain this university is the right choice for me.					
My close friends rate this university as a quality university.					
I am satisfied with the prestige of this university.					
I feel I belong at this university.					
My education at this university will help me get a better job than an education from another university.					
My education at this university will help me secure future employment.					
It is very important for me to graduate from this university as opposed to some other school.					
Most students at this university have values and attitudes similar to my own.					
Most faculty, academic advisors, and college administrators at this university have values and attitudes similar to my own.					

4. Transformational leadership: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X)©

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