

Integrative Framework of Leadership Effectiveness

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Abstract

This paper reviews the two most dominant approaches of leadership, substitutes for leadership and full range leadership which have allured the myriad of empirical research during the couple of decades. This study contends based on the existing literature, the theoretical and methodological issues on both approaches and proposes an integrative framework of leadership effectiveness by combining the components of both approaches into a single framework which may be used as a reference model for future studies.

Keywords: substitutes for leadership, full range leadership, integrative framework, effectiveness

1. Introduction

The significance of hierarchical leadership influence on subordinates' attitudes, behaviors and motivation has been acknowledged and aligned with respect to overall organizational effectiveness, leadership phenomenon - either as characteristics or a process has been widely studied around the globe to deepen the understandings about efficacious leadership. In this perspective, two eminent approaches of leadership; substitutes for leadership, and transformational and transactional leadership have been evolved and remained dominant in most of the empirical studies (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). At one side, substitutes for leadership presumes the effect of contextual variables on leaders' ability in influencing the followers' behaviors (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). In more simple words, situational variables also affect the subordinates' behaviors other than the leadership influence. On the other side, full range leadership approach does not make any assumption regarding the impact of contextual variables on leadership efforts exerted to influence the followers' behaviors rather focuses on the direct relationship among leaders' styles and followers' outcomes. Considering these two distinct lines of theories, this research attempts to propose an integrated leadership framework based on aligning these two leadership theories. Hence, this study is divided into two major parts. The first part addresses the theoretical and methodological issues related to substitutes for leadership and full range leadership separately. The second part presents an integrative leadership framework as a promising model of leadership effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Substitutes for Leadership

(Kerr & Jermier, 1978) questioned the basic assumption of path goal theory; even the unnecessary and redundant leadership behaviors directed towards the path clarification and goal attainment result in increased subordinates' satisfaction and performance (Robert.J. House, 1971; Robert.J. House & Mitchell, 1974). However, Kerr and Jermier (1978) asseverated that in many situations, leadership efforts are paralyzed by several subordinates, task and organizational characteristics. These subordinates, task and organizational characteristics may make leaders' behaviors redundant and were termed as substitutes for leadership.

Total of 13 situational variables were identified in their original article, four under subordinates' head (ability, experience, training and knowledge; need for independence; professional orientation; indifference towards organizational rewards), three under task characteristics (routine and methodological invariant tasks; task provided feedback; intrinsically satisfying task), and six under the head of organizational characteristics (organizational formalization; organizational inflexibility; advisory and support staff; closely knit, cohesive and interdependent work groups; organizational rewards not in leader's control; spatial distance between leader and followers) . Further, based upon the effects of these substitutes on leaders' behaviors and subordinates' work outcomes, substitutes variables were classified into three major categories namely; substitutes, neutralizers and enhancers (J.P Howell, Dorfman, & Kerr, 1986). A substitute variable makes the leadership behaviors unnecessary and redundant. Neutralizer variables paralyze the leadership efforts. Theoretically, substitutes take place of leadership and have direct significant effect on subordinates' behaviors but neutralizers nullify the leadership influence and don't affect on outcomes when leadership is found absent. Further, the substitutes are correlated with leadership behaviors and outcomes but neutralizers have no correlation with leadership behaviors and outcomes. Whereas, enhancers robust the relationship between leadership influence over subordinates behaviors.

To date, substitutes for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) attracted lot of empirical research (Childers, Dubinsky, & Skinner, 1990; Farh, Podsakoff, & Cheng, 1987; Freeston, 1987; J.P Howell & Dorfman, 1981; J.P. Howell & Dorfman, 1986; McIntosh, 1990; Pinter, 1986; Pinter & Charters, 1988; Podsakoff, Dorfman, Howell., & Todor, 1986; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996; Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Boomer, 1996; P.M. Podsakoff, S.B. Mackenzie, & R. Fetter, 1993; P.M. Podsakoff, S. B. MacKenzie, & R. Fetter, 1993; Podsakoff, Neihoff, Mackenzie, & Wiliams, 1993; Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, & Huber, 1984; Vries, 1997; Wu, 2010; Yusof & Shah, 2008), however, in general these empirical researches failed to support the main proposition of theory. (Vries, 1997) combined the findings of earlier studies and revealed only 2% of the cases went in the general support of the theory. Different authors pointed out various reasons regarding the absence of general support towards the main hypothesis of the theory.

First, (Williams et al., 1988), after reviewing the 11 samples used in different studies, found average reliability scores below than 0.62 of original substitutes scales and concluded that scales/instruments developed by the Kerr & Jermier (1978) to measure substitutes variables have poor psychometric properties and explained as one of the reasons of disappointing findings. Later on, (P.M. Podsakoff, B.P. Neihoff, et al., 1993; Williams, et al., 1988) revised the scale and reduced the substitutes measures from 74 to 41 items. Second, (Vries, 1997) concluded that using of too many moderators simultaneously may be the other reason. He advocated that variation in reliability scores in analytic procedure may affect the multiple moderated regression power in detecting the effect of substitutes variables on the relationship between leadership and subordinates' work outcomes. As a panacea, he proposed to reduce the moderator variables in empirical researches and finally, he proposed the need for leadership a singular moderator as a substitute (Vries, 1997) to substitutes for leadership variables (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Third, some authors have criticized the application of inappropriate statistical techniques like sub grouping, backward regression and principal component regression etc. to detect the interaction effects (leadership style \times situational variable) of leadership behaviors and substitutes variables in the researches. Although, their arguments seem quite convincing but the interaction effects of leadership behaviors and substitutes variables on outcomes criteria were not tested in some of the empirical studies. For example, in their own study (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), they did not test the interactional effect of leaders' behaviors and substitutes variables and the same holds true in the studies of (Freeston, 1987; Pinter, 1986).

2.1.1 Methodological Shortcomings in Studies Testing the Substitutes for Leadership

Several methodological issues can be raised in earlier studies. First, most of these studies were conducted using the samples from one organization on one type of job and work etc. This shows the lack of variation of situational characteristics across the samples. For example, (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) utilized a sample of 54 police officers employed by state owned university which were below the rank of sergeant. (J.P Howell & Dorfman, 1981) utilized a sample of 183 employees from a single hospital. In another study by (J.P. Howell & Dorfman, 1986) used a sample of 220 pharmacists, technicians and also from the hospital. The extreme example can be found from the study of (Pinter, 1986), who concluded his study with a sample of 15 elementary school teachers from four schools. It is not necessarily true that all substitutes variables may exist in one organization under study rather substitutes variables represent diverse situational characteristics which could prevail in different organizations or even in different industries.

For example, professional orientation can be found in high level of technical jobs like; doctors, engineers, technicians etc and likewise in case of sales staff, spatial distance between subordinates and superiors may be present. Otherwise, in most of the jobs, subordinates and leaders are found having close contact. Thus, limiting the sample in one organizations restrict the occurrence of substitutes variables (i.e. lack of observations) and the results in lowering the interactions terms (McClelland & Judd, 1993). Moreover, the limited sample size also affects the power of statistical techniques applied to detect the interaction effects (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Villa, Howell, Dorfman, & Daniel, 2003) of independent variables (leadership behaviors) and the moderator variables (situational variables) on dependent variables. Second, in earlier studies, researchers have also tested those interactional relationships among variables which were not explicitly hypothesized. Third, some of earlier studies ((Jermier & Bickers, 1979; Sheridan, Vredenburg, & Abelson, 1984) utilized either other situational variables as substitutes variables or designed their own scales to measure the situational variables other than the originally proposed by Kerr & Jermier (1978). For example, Jermier & Bickers (1979) utilized specific measure of task interdependence, task variability and work shifts. Despite of the criticisms, substitutes for leadership theory can potentially be linked with other leadership theories in order to better understand the effective leadership process. In this article, the authors expect that aligning the components of substitutes for leadership with full range leadership would lay the platform for future researchers to expand the horizon of leadership research in different situational contexts. The next sub section gives the overview of full range leadership theory, and then discusses the important missing links to this theory.

2.2 Full Range Leadership Theory

The second famous approach to leadership is full range of leadership styles which assumes the direct relationship among leaders' behaviors and styles. Inspired by (Burns, 1978), Bass and associates were in search of identifying the range of leadership behaviors that would be practiced in any kind of organization at any level. (Bass, 1985) transferred this transformational leadership concept into organizational context. Bass' work on transformational leadership differs from (Burns, 1978): the later after reviewing the biographies of several political leaders, concluded that there are two different leadership styles; transformational and transactional and the leaders can be either transformational or transactional. In contrast to Burns' conception, Bass (1985) asserted that transformational and transactional leadership styles are not mutually exclusive rather built upon each other. Further, a leader disposes a range of leadership behaviors i.e. transformational, transactional and laissez fair leadership styles. Leaders, who believe on give and take; identify their followers' needs and exchange rewards for acceptable results ascribed as transactional leaders. Whereas, transformational leaders operate beyond the normal expectations of their followers by influencing their higher orders needs and values and in return expect higher level of performance standards by exerting/showing extra efforts and try to produce higher degree of satisfaction on followers' part. However, laissez fair leadership refers to the absence of active leadership where leader does not intervene in subordinates' activities.

Research on this area has been supported by many field studies conducted in diverse organizational settings (Bass, Avolio, & Goodheim, 1987; Bass, Waldman, Avolio, & Bebb, 1987; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; R.J. House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991; Trice & Beyer, 1986). Despite of its general support by the field studies and its unprecedented acceptance in leadership literature, this theory has been also criticized. Some of the elements which can be the part of this theory are enlisted below.

2.2.1 Missing Links to Full Range of Leadership Theory

Firstly, (Yukl, 2006) asseverates that a full range leadership theory cannot be completed, nevertheless, it includes the leadership behaviors which focus on path clarification, scheduling the subordinates' work activities, and showing consideration towards their followers. More straightforwardly, the basic leadership styles proposed by Ohio State researchers (Hemphill & Coons, 1957) and Michigan state researchers (Kahn & Katz, 1953); initiating structure / task oriented and consideration / human oriented leadership styles could be made parts of full range of leadership behaviors. Secondly, the underlying theory neglects the importance of situational variables which have bearings on leadership practices. However, in many studies, it has been proven that other than leadership behaviors substitutes are also important in influencing the follower' behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1996). Correspondingly, (Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Howell & Dorfman, 1981; Vries, 1997) also concluded that when leadership itself seems inadequate, organizations should focus on the creation of substitutes for effective functioning. In light of the above discussion, next section details the integration of full range of leadership behaviors and substitutes for leadership and also discusses the proposed methodology for empirical testing of the integrative framework.

3. Integration of Substitutes for Leadership and Full Range leadership Theories

Research on combining these two theories seems promising for future studies. Firstly, claimed by (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997), any leadership study testing the effects of leaders' behaviors of interest on subordinates' behaviors without substitutes variables will be misleading because many in researches substitutes variables have been found more accountable in explaining the variance in subordinates' outcomes criterion (Podsakoff et al., 1993 & 1995 & 1996; Vries, 1997). Secondly, substitutes for leadership concept has offered a list of contextual variables which may prevail in diverse organizational settings. Organizations face number of environmental constraints which affect their functioning and demand a variety of leadership styles to effectively coordinate and manage these situations. In order to better understand the effects of contextual variables on full range of leadership behaviors effectiveness, the alignment amid the components of these leadership theories can prove productive, if combined in a single framework. Thirdly, the substitutes for leadership theory to date has not offered the aligned conceptual framework for empirical validation despite of its popularity as leadership classic. Similarly, the full range leadership theory though offers the conceptual framework, however, does not incorporate the situational moderators which may augment or obstruct the overall effectiveness of leadership behaviors. Therefore, the absolute absence of integrated leadership framework, effort has been made by combining the components of both concepts into single framework. This integrative approach to leadership theory is expected to address the shortcomings in existing literature and for future validation.

3.1 Proposed Conceptual Framework

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This conceptual framework is based on integration of the components of substitutes for leadership and full range of leadership theories. The frame is constituted upon three major components; situational factors (subordinates, task and organizational characteristics), the leadership styles/behaviors and subordinates' outcomes criteria. The Upper part of the frame comprised of three dimensions; subordinates' characteristics, task characteristics and organizational characteristics and the lower part is comprised of two subsections; leadership characteristics / styles and subordinates' outcomes criteria.

The upper part represents the contextual factors that are supposed to be influencing the relationship between leadership efforts and subordinates' outcomes at first place, as it has been assumed in all contingencies leadership theories. Arrow heads stemming out from situational variables (subordinates' characteristics, task characteristics and organizational characteristics) are striking the line which is directed from leadership behaviors to followers' outcomes criteria. Which explains that these substitutes variables are playing the moderating role between leadership behaviors and subordinates outcomes. Parallel to their moderating roles, these substitutes variables also influence subordinates' behavioral outcomes. This relationship is strongly supported and reported in many field studies (Howell & Dorfman, 1981 & 1986; Podsakoff et al., 1987 & 1993 & 1995). For instance, meta analysis conducted by (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Boomer, 1996) revealed that substitutes variables accounted 50% variance in subordinates' organizational commitment, 40% in job satisfaction, 29% in role ambiguity and 15% in role conflict. Consequently, the variance explained by these variables in subordinates behavioral outcomes were larger than the variance explained by leaders' behaviors. Therefore, the arrow heads rooted from subordinates' task and organizational characteristics are also directed towards the followers' work related outcomes.

The two divided components of the lower section include leadership characteristics and subordinates' outcomes criteria. The arrow head linking from leadership characteristics to subordinates' outcomes criteria depicts the direct effect of leadership characteristics on subordinates behavioral outcomes. Moreover, this relationship is also intersected by the situational variables, as already explained, these variables are playing the role of moderators between leadership behaviors and subordinates' work outcomes. The next subsection proposes the methodology for the empirically testing of the proposed leadership framework.

3.2 Suggested Methodology

The researchers should be very careful in designing the methodology of the studies, if their studies include the contextual variables. First, if the sample is restricted to the limited number of jobs drawn from few organizations operating in the same industry, care should be awarded through selecting the substitutes variables based upon the characteristics of industry / organizations (Villa, et al., 2003) and also the level of jobs under study.

However, in such cases, sample should be large enough (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Villa, et al., 2003) to meet the minimum sample size required for the adequacy of statistical techniques used to detect the interaction effects of variables of interest. Second, with logical justifications, the causal relationships among variables of interest; i.e. how situational variables influence the relationships among leaders' behaviors and subordinates' work outcomes, must be explicitly stated (Villa, et al., 2003) before empirical validations. Third, if the researchers intend to empirically test the full components of the above propose model, wide range of jobs from different organizations in diverse industrial settings should be chosen for sample purpose. Fourth, appropriate statistical techniques, like; moderated multiple regression (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; J.P Howell, et al., 1986; Villa, et al., 2003; Vries, 1997); WABA analysis (Schriesheim, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Yammarino, 2000; Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, & DeChurch, 2006; Schriesheim, Cogliser, & Neider, 1995); structural equation modeling, should be applied for detection of interactional effects of leaders behaviors and contextual variables on subordinates' work outcomes.

4. Conclusion

The authors don't claim that the integration of substitutes for leadership and full range leadership theories would result in guaranteed effective leadership process, rather efforts have been made by the authors based on the review of the existing literature in constructing the integrated approach to leadership theory. The authors conclude hereby suggesting that careful selection of substitutes variables, leadership behaviors and work outcomes especially in the context of industry under study would make the researches more meaningful in the future.

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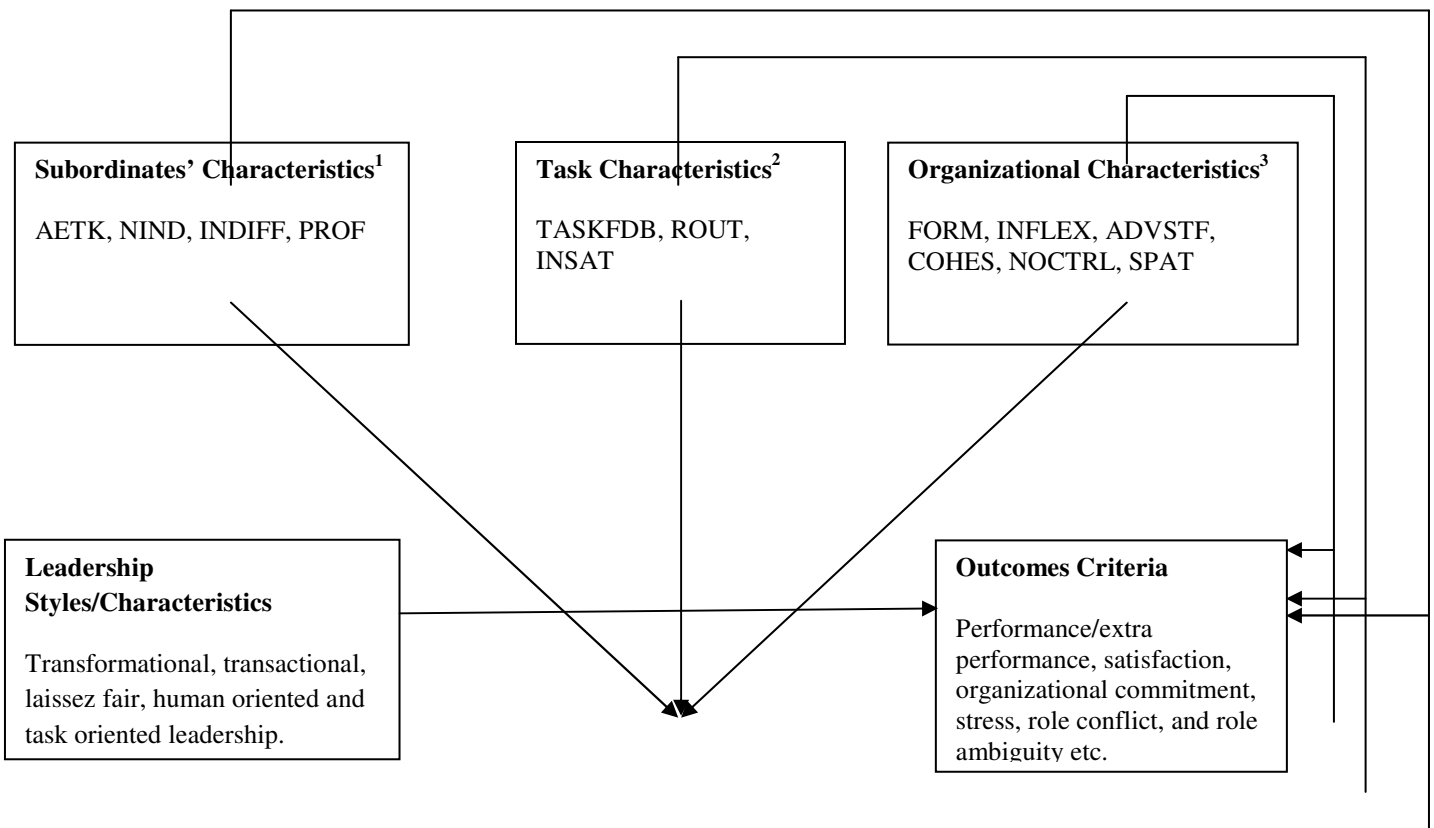
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Figure: Integrative Framework of Leadership



1. "AETK" = Ability, experience, training, and knowledge, "NIND" = Need for independence, "INDIFF" = Indifference toward organizational rewards , "PROF" = Professional Orientation.
2. TASKFDB = Task provided feedback concerning accomplishment, "ROUT" = Unambiguous, routine, methodologically invariant tasks, "INSAT" = Intrinsically satisfying tasks.
3. "FORM" = Organizational formalization, "INFLEX" = Organizational inflexibility, "ADVSTF" = Advisory and staff support, "COHES" = Closely knit, cohesive, interdependent work groups, "NOCTRL" = Organizational rewards not within the leader's control, "SPAT" = Spatial distance between leader and followers.