The many faces of leadership: Proposing research agenda through a review of literature

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is one of the most studied topics in organizational settings and has been studied in relation to several employee performance outcomes. Based on literature review, it is observed that the concept of congruence between leaders and followers is relatively new. As organizations spend a huge amount of their budget on different leadership development programs, congruence between the perception of leaders and followers is necessary to achieve better results. In developing countries, very little literature is available on the concept of congruence between leaders and followers. The present study is an effort to review and synthesize major leadership theories and its relationship with different outcomes. Further, based on a comprehensive review of literature, a future research agenda about leadership studies in a developing country is proposed.

Introduction

The concept of leadership is as old as the history of people who tried to make groups and manage individuals for accomplishment of certain tasks. According to Sarachek (1968), the concept and practice of leadership has its origin in the beginning of human civilization with different attributes. However, the industrial revolution, when common people gained power on the basis of their skills, created a paradigm shift to a new theory of leadership (Clawson, 2003). The concept of leadership is the most discussed and observed, but there is lack of mutual understanding on what leadership approach or style deems to fit in a particular context or culture (Goethals, Sorenson, & Burns, 2004). In past, extensive research on leadership has given rise to many leadership theories and models which can fit in different contexts and affects different outcomes. However, there was still need to review major leadership theories, models, and related outcomes which the present study has tried to address. The study starts with the definitions of leadership, classical view of leadership, moves on to different leadership models (partial models to comprehensive models) and its relationship with different outcomes. Later, role of national culture in effective leadership is discussed and a research agenda for further leadership studies in a developing country (Pakistan in particular) is proposed.

Section 1. Definitions and models of leadership

Organizational leadership is a multidisciplinary field and has been the area of interest to the scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds, i.e. sociology, psychology, management, education, political science, and organizational studies. Concept of leadership

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has been defined by many research scholars in the past (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004; Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Conger & Riggio, 2007; Northouse, 2009), yet not a universal definition of leadership is agreed upon. Bennis and Nanus (1985) have highlighted that leadership is like beauty. It is hard to define beauty, but when you see it, you know it. According to Fiedler (1967), leadership is an interpersonal relationship in which power and influence is unevenly distributed and one person directs and controls the behaviors of others. Northouse (2009) takes leadership as a power relationship which exists between the leader and the followers. Though numerous definitions of leadership exist, yet most of the definitions share the similarity that leadership is an effort to influence, the power to make subordinates submissive (Wren, 1995) and/or to transform the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1976). According to Humphreys (2001), leadership is the most studied and least understood area in the social sciences. However, most of the definitions are related to the trait, ability, skill, behavior and relationship (Northouse, 2007) that shows that the leadership field of study rushed from one fad to another (Yukl, 2010). According to Yukl (1989), the major lines of empirical research on leadership include leadership versus management, traits and skills, power and influence, situational determinants of leader behavior, and the importance of leadership for organizational effectiveness. In addition, leadership and gender, culture and leadership and congruence in leadership styles are also significant areas of research. On the basis of empirical researches, different leadership theories were developed to address different organizational problems, and to predict proposed situations in response to different behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

The main contributions to the early era of leadership studies were classical management theory and scientific management theories. The classical theory focused on the design of total organization whereas the scientific management theory focused on the systematic management of the individual's tasks to achieve organizational goals. Maslow (1970), Herzberg and McGregor (1960) focused on work situation, its effects on leaders and followers, individual needs, and increase in productivity and came up with different theories i.e. hierarchy of needs, the dual factor theory and motivation-hygiene theory and theory X and Y. The following discussion is based on (a) partial models that focus on the individual as a leader, (b) partial models that focus on the process of leadership and (c) comprehensive models which encompass both the individual and the process.

Trait theory

The trait theory of leadership, known as "Great Man theory', was one of the first systematic efforts to study the concept of leadership in the early 20th century (Northouse, 2004, 2007). The notion of great men theory states that, there are some rare individuals who have the ability to revolutionize the history or bring a real change in the society. Trait theories of leadership emerged during 1920s and 1930s. According to the notion of trait theory, the traits instilled in the leaders makes them different from non-leaders. Allen (1998) highlighted that trait theories were the earliest form of leadership theories after the Great Man theory was proposed. Trait theories assume that leadership qualities of individuals are inherited and are a part of their personality (Allen, 1998). These qualities may be social or political in nature. According to Northouse (2007), some leaders from history like Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon, and Hitler were studied and it was noticed that such leaders were effective due to some unique and innate leadership qualities. Therefore, different studies were carried out to find out those attributes and personal characteristics that distinguished them from others.

Stogdill (1974) conducted different studies between 1920 and 1975 and came up with the findings of some traits of effective leadership. In 1949, he proposed intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability as the unique traits of effective leadership. In1974, he identified the responsibility and task completion and added in the earlier list of leaders' traits. In addition, he emphasized on the importance of situational factors for the success of any leader.

Mann (1959) studied leadership traits in small settings and came up with more than five hundred different measures of personality. He combined the most common measures in seven main characteristics that included intelligence, adjustment, extroversion-introversion, dominance, masculinity-femininity, conservatism, and interpersonal sensitivity. When he compared these characteristics in relation to leadership, he found a highly significant relationship between leadership and intelligence, adjustment, extroversion measures and most of the times, a positive relationship with dominance, masculinity, and interpersonal sensitivity. Further, he acknowledged the importance of situational elements too. However, Mann (1959) and Stogdill (1974) agreed that traits for effective leadership vary from situation to situation and sometime acts in combination.

Fiedler (1967) also agreed that effective leaders cannot be predicted on the basis of only traits for every situation. However, Lord, De Vader and Alliger (1986) considered that conclusions of Stogdill and Mann were based on flawed studies in a variety of ways and therefore created wrong conclusions. He is of the view that their results were overgeneralized and negatively interpreted. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) talked about six characteristics of effective leadership: motivation, honesty, integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. Kouzes and Posner (2003) came up with four key leadership traits: honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, and competency. Although trait theories of leadership emphasized more on the traits of the leaders, but never clarified as if these traits are inherited in the leaders or can be learned with time through adequate education or training (Allen, 1998). At the same time, Pierce and Newstrom (2006) indicated that, many researchers came up with individual traits of effective leadership, yet no one was able to predict the leadership success and failed to identify precise traits that predict leadership success. Horner (1997) further highlighted that trait theories ignored the environmental and situational factors which tend to affect the effectiveness of the leader in a particular situation.

Behavioral theories of leadership

The trait theories concentrate on leaders' certain personality characteristics whereas the behavioral theories focus on the