

LEADER'S SELF-EFFICACY AND GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Self-efficacy is one of the most frequently analyzed predictors of leader effectiveness. We seek to offer an analysis of leader effectiveness through the most powerful self-regulatory mechanism influencing leader behavior in any organization, which is based on social cognitive theory - self-efficacy. The concept of general self-efficacy represents an individual's beliefs about his or her ability to successfully face specific job tasks or situations. The aim of the present paper is to analyze the interrelationship between general self-efficacy and specific leadership self-efficacy in the concept of the transformational leadership model. The research population consisted of 183 teachers - potential educational leaders with an average age of 43.5yrs. To measure general self-efficacy, the -General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; in Kosci et al., 1993) was used to assess self-efficacy by the leaders themselves. Specific leadership self-efficacy was measured by the LSE - Leadership self-efficacy scale (Bobbio & Manganello, 2009). Different types of transformational leader behaviors were measured by the LPI -Leadership Practices Inventory instrument (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Our research findings suggest a clear association between general and leadership self-efficacy, and an analysis of the association between self-efficacy and leadership behaviors suggests that the multidimensional LSE scale is a more parsimonious instrument that corresponds better with the specificity of leadership than the broader construct of general self-efficacy. Practical applications of the LSE scale can be envisaged in the selection of leaders, their assessment and in training programs in the work environment.

Keywords: *Leaders self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, self-concept, education, transformative leadership.*

1. Introduction

Self-concept is a psychological construct encompassing how individuals perceive, evaluate, and understand themselves. It is an internal mental model of the self-integrating perceptions of one's individual physical characteristics - appearance, abilities, values, beliefs, and relationship to oneself. Self-concept can be positive (involving a realistic self-image associated with a positive attitude towards oneself, self-esteem, and positive attitudes towards one's abilities and values). However, it can also be negative (associated with low self-esteem, insecurity, and negative evaluative beliefs about oneself) (Anderson, 2011). Self-esteem develops over a lifetime under the influence of various factors, including family, education, culture, interpersonal relationships, and life experiences. Positive self-concept is often associated with improved mental health and resilience to stress (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000). According to Goleman (in Livi et al., 2008), self-knowledge and self-concept are the first and necessary steps towards self-management and managing others at the level of relationships, productivity, or increasing effectiveness. An important component of self-concept is a self-regulatory mechanism based on social cognitive theory - self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy represents an individual's beliefs about their ability to cope with specific work tasks or situations successfully and is formed based on specific (positive or negative) experiences of coping with work tasks. It is based on an individual's belief in their abilities to achieve goals, solve problems and cope with challenging situations. There is a reciprocal relationship between self-image and self-efficacy as a positive self-image and attitude reinforces self-efficacy beliefs and higher self-efficacy leading to achievement and experience of success, which in turn reinforces the individual's self-confidence and overall self-image. The concept of general self-efficacy as part of Bandura's social cognitive theory describes effective individuals as motivated, resilient in the face of adversity, goal-oriented, and able to think clearly even under pressure or in situations of stress (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is considered by various authors (in Prochazka et al., 2013, 2014) as a significant predictor of higher leader efficacy,

especially in the case of the world's most cited model of leadership in different areas of society functioning (educational environment not excluding) - transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership emphasises emotionality in leading people. In his classic work *Leadership* (Burns, 1978), Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership as a process in which a leader communicates and interacts with their followers in order to increase their motivation as well as morale by taking a natural interest in their needs and striving to develop their overall personal potential. One well-known author whom Burns significantly influenced was Bass (1985). The current conception of transformational leadership emphasises enhancing employees' intrinsic motivation, exercised primarily in close supervisory relationships, and promoting leaders' effectiveness in innovation and the creation of new visions and ideas. A leader in a company characterised by a high frequency of change can influence employee attitudes by developing trust, openness and vigour through transformational leadership (Bass-Avolio, 1990). The transformative leadership approach is related to various indicators of leader effectiveness. It is positively related to objectively measured group performance, to the evaluation of leader effectiveness by the leader's supervisors, to the evaluation of leader effectiveness by the leader's followers, to the evaluation of leader effectiveness by an external evaluator, and the self-assessment of leader effectiveness (Prochazka et al., 2014). One of the most popular models within transformational leadership theory, which is also the most commonly used in application to educational leadership, is *Kouzes and Posner's (2016) Transformational Leadership Model*, which includes specific personality traits and practices that enable a leader to lead followers along with practical guidelines for behavior in challenging situations. The model consists of *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership*®, which cover almost all of the behavioural patterns of an exceptionally successful leader.

2. Methods

Based on the general theory of self-efficacy, leaders with higher levels of self-efficacy can be expected to be willing to exert greater goal-directed effort despite various difficulties persistently. According to Jayawardena and Gregar (2014), a measure of general self-efficacy predicts a specific level of self-efficacy. Thus, for leaders, there is a specific "leadership self-efficacy" as a leader's beliefs about their ability to succeed in leading other people.

According to Howard (2008), leaders with higher levels of leadership self-efficacy transfer their behavioural consciousness of efficacy to their followers, increasing the whole team's effectiveness. Concerning the study of Kane et al. (2002), leadership self-efficacy impacts group goal setting and leader strategy, positively influencing workgroup performance. However, on the other hand, according to Jayawardena and Gregar (2013), the specific leadership self-efficacy of managers is unrelated to their career success. This study aims to analyse the interrelationship between general and specific leadership self-efficacy in the context of the transformational leadership model.

The research sample comprised 183 teachers - potential educational leaders with a mean age of 43.5 years (SD = 1.35). They were secondary school teachers in the districts of Banska Bystrica, Trencin and Zilina. The selection of the research sample was guided by the criterion of availability and willingness to participate.

General self-efficacy was measured using the Kosc et al. (1993) - General Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. It is a research instrument with ten statements that measure the degree of perceived self-efficacy on a 4-point scale. The raw score takes values from 10 to 40, and the reliability of the questionnaire, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, is .89).

Specific leadership self-efficacy was measured by the Leadership self-efficacy scale (LSE - Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009), consisting of 21 items comprising six dimensions - Starting and leading change processes in groups, Choosing effective followers and delegating responsibilities, Building and managing interpersonal relationships within the group, Showing self-awareness and self-confidence, Motivating people, and Gaining consensus of group members. The reliability of the whole scale (21 items) was .91.

Potential transformative leaders were identified through the LPI – Leadership Practices Inventory (Kaliska & Heinzova, 2022), which focuses on the analysis of five main types of leadership behaviour: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The questionnaire consists of a 30-item self-assessment inventory in leadership skills, with six items for each area of leadership in which respondents rate their behaviour on a 10-point Likert scale. The sum of each leadership domain is an extra score, which can take values from 6 to 60. The reliability of the questionnaire, measured by Cronbach's alpha for each component, took on values ranging from .68-.83.

The research data were processed using SPSS Statistics version 22.0. The normality of the distribution of the variables was assessed by describing the shape of the distribution (skewness, kurtosis). The data did not show the characteristics of a normal distribution; therefore, we used non-parametric statistical methods - Spearman's correlation coefficient - in their processing.

3. Results

Table 1. Description variables (N=183).

	Model the way	Inspire a shared vision	Challenge the process	Enable others to act	Encourage the heart	Specific leadership self-efficacy	General self-efficacy
Median	7.23	6.28	6.43	7.76	7.81	4.99	3.89
Mean	7.18	6.23	6.32	7.38	7.62	4.71	3.72
Std. Deviation	1.33	1.83	1.63	1.22	1.59	1.63	1.23
Shapiro-Wilk	.73	.86	.71	.84	.78	.82	.86
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Minimum	2.53	2.01	1.18	1.57	1.57	1.63	1.23
Maximum	8.84	10.00	9.63	10.00	10.00	7.00	3.98

Table 1 presents descriptive indicators of the observed leadership behaviors. It shows that for the leadership behavior types, respondents tended to exhibit Encourage the heart (AM=7.62), Enable others to act (AM=7.38) and least tended to exhibit Inspire a shared vision (AM=6.23).

Table 2. Correlations between general self-efficacy, leadership self-efficacy and transformational leadership (N=183).

		GSES	LSE
		ρ	ρ
LPI	Model the way	.178**	.387**
	Inspire a shared vision	.224*	.287*
	Challenge the process	.058	.247**
	Enable others to act	.294	.025
	Encourage the heart	.137	.174

Note: ρ – Spearman correlation coefficient, *relation significant at $p \leq 0,05$; ** = $p \leq 0,01$

Our findings suggest a weak and moderate relationship between general self-efficacy and Model the Way and Inspire a Shared Vision behaviours. For specific leadership self-efficacy, we found weak to moderate relationships with Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, and Challenge the Process behaviours. The correlations between specific leadership self-efficacy and general self-efficacy can be expressed as a statistically significant, strong relationship ($\rho = .788$; $p = .003$).

4. Discussion

In the present study, we focused on revealing the potential relationships between general and specific - leadership self-efficacy in a specific environment, which was the educational reality of Slovak schools. We examined the personality as mentioned above characteristics in the context of transformational leadership, specifically Kouzes and Posner's (2016) model, which is the baseline model in more than 42% of existing research analyses using the LPI as an effective psychometrically valid and reliable instrument for mapping transformative types of behaviour in educational contexts (Sun et al., 2017). Leadership self-efficacy was analysed using the LSE scale (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009); the authors noted sufficient psychometric properties and stability of the scale's factor structure. Our study is a probe into the issue under investigation in the Slovak school environment and a contribution to validating the LSE scale. We worked only with the total score, and therefore, we consider it necessary to analyse its individual dimensions and their relationships with general self-efficacy and individual types of transformative leader behavior in more detail.

According to Prochazka et al. (2013), in the case of leadership research, the measure of general self-efficacy predicts the measure of specific self-efficacy. According to research by other authors (Bass, 1997, Avolio & Bass, 2004), general self-efficacy is primarily related to self-confidence predicting charismatic behaviour and inspiring followers, suggesting that if general self-efficacy is an overall measure of confidence in one's abilities it should logically be associated with high self-confidence. The clear link between charismatic behaviour or inspiring followers and self-efficacy has been confirmed in our research for general and specific leadership self-efficacy. Similar conclusions were reached by Kane et al. (2002), according to whom leaders high in general self-efficacy aspire to higher and more attractive challenges on their own and with their followers, making them behave transformatively and be more successful with their followers in achieving a shared vision.

5. Conclusion

That transformational leadership is an approach appropriate for educational settings and that it influences many parameters important to the effectiveness of school functioning is evidenced by our findings of the relationships between both general and leadership self-efficacy and several types of transformational leader behaviours. In the realm of education, this model provides a conceptual framework for educational leadership, a measurement tool (LPI), and a framework for designing educational leadership training specifically aimed at supporting the practices/behaviours of the transformative leader.

In the school setting, developing individuals' leadership potential is key to enhancing their effectiveness, where self-efficacy emerges as one of the most important determinants. Since both general and leadership self-efficacy are formed based on success or failure in coping with various work tasks, it can be assumed that both constructs may change over time, which creates room for their positive influence through various developmental and training practices.

From a theoretical and conceptual perspective, it is important to acknowledge that existing knowledge relating to the relevance of some models of effective leadership to educational contexts, examined explicitly in terms of their contribution to the success of schools as organisations, can and should be used in the design of requirements for the qualities of school leaders, and as such should be reflected in the forms of training or support for existing and future school leaders.

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