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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE INTEGRATED MODEL OF FOLLOWERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP STYLES IN JAPAN

Minoru Nishinobo
Faculty of Business Administration, Setsunan University (Japan)

Abstract

This study explores an integrated model of followership and leadership styles that functions optimally. Utilizing Kelley's (1992) model of followership and Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory, Bjugstad et al. (2006) proposed a theoretical framework linking these constructs. However, empirical exploration remains limited in the literature. The analysis focused on variables such as demographic factors, affective commitment, followership, and leadership. Affective commitment was measured as a reflection of follower productivity, given its known impact on job performance. All proposed hypotheses were rejected, indicating that exemplary and conformist followership styles are associated with higher productivity, independent of leadership styles. Active followership enhances affective commitment among followers. Post-hoc analyses revealed that followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) positively influence affective commitment, while their combination with leadership (relationship behavior) yields negative effects. These findings highlight the complex dynamics between followership and leadership in promoting affective commitment within organizations.

Keywords: *Integrated model, followership, leadership, affective commitment*.

1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate an integrated model of followership and leadership styles that functions optimally. Using Kelley's (1992) followership model and Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory, Bjugstad et al. (2006) proposed a combined framework for understanding these concepts. However, an empirical examination of this integrated model has yet to be conducted. Clarifying this model through empirical research could lead to significant practical advancements, such as enhancing the efficiency of recruitment, assignment, and training within human resource management. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature on the role-based approach to followership and leadership processes. Since leadership is inherently a relational process, we explored the impacts of this integrated model of followership and leadership styles.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Kelley's followership theory

Kelley (1992) categorized follower types along two dimensions; Independent, critical thinking, and Active. Followers who exhibit independent, critical thinking consider the implications of their actions, demonstrate a willingness to be creative and innovative, and may offer constructive criticism. Conversely, followers who are dependent and uncritical tend to comply with the directives of their leaders. The second dimension, active, is used to determine the level of ownership that the follower demonstrates (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Kelley employed these two dimensions to classify them into five distinct follower types: Conformist, Passive, Alienated, Exemplary, and Pragmatic. Bjugstad et al. (2006) proposed an integrated model using four of these five follower types, excluding the pragmatic one.

2.2. Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory

Situational leadership theory is a popular theory based on task behavior, the relationship behavior of a leader, and a follower's maturity (Johansen,1990). The leader is directed to adopt one of four styles based on the degree of relationship- and task-oriented behavior required by the situation (Bjugstad et al., 2006). These four leadership styles include Telling, Selling, Participating, and Delegating.

2.3. An integrated model of followership and leadership styles

Bjugstad et al. propose a concept that integrates Kelley's followership style with Hersey and Blanchard's leadership style, aiming to enhance follower productivity in practical settings. Figure 1 outlines the recommended behaviors for both leaders and followers in each quadrant of the integrated model of followership and leadership styles put forward by Bjugstad et al. (2006). Based on the integrated model of followership and leadership, we set up the following four hypotheses:

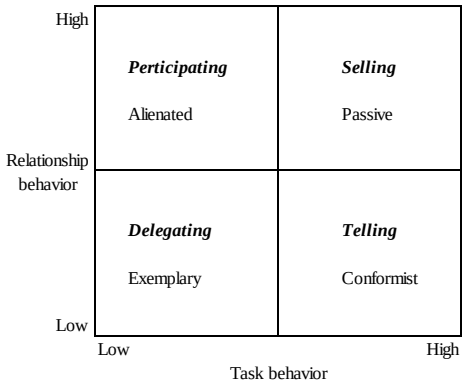
Hypothesis 1: When a leader has a participative style, the affective commitment of followers with an alienating style is statistically higher than that of followers of other styles.

Hypothesis 2: When a leader has a selling style, the affective commitment of followers with a passive style is statistically higher than that of followers of other styles.

Hypothesis 3: When a leader has a delegating style, the affective commitment of followers with an exemplary style is statistically higher than that of followers of other styles.

Hypothesis 4: When a leader has a telling style, the affective commitment of followers with a conformist style is statistically higher than that of followers with other styles.

Figure 1. Integrated model of followership and leadership styles.



3. Study

3.1. Participants

We surveyed 524 full-time employees of a Japanese trading company (Mage= 38.59, SD = 9.54, female; 31.3%) who completed the study, yielding a response rate of 69.22%. The survey was conducted from August 22 to 31, 2014. The web survey screen provided explanations of ethical considerations and guarantees of anonymity, and consent for participation in the survey was confirmed.

3.2. Measures

We measured all variables using a 5-point scale (from 0: never to 4: always). Respondents were requested to answer the questions honestly. As expected, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis to confirm that the dimensions of followership and leadership captured the concepts we wanted to measure. Second, exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the job satisfaction scales used in this study. Third, a one-way ANOVA and Tukey's multiple comparisons were conducted to test the hypotheses. Finally, a post-hoc analysis was conducted using hierarchical multiple regression analysis to determine which followership behaviors, leadership behaviors, and their interactions affected followers' productivity.

Followership. We measured followership using eight items adapted from Nishinobo and Furuta's (2013) measurement scale. This scale has 30 items however the research partner company requested a reduction in the number of items. We selected questions with high factor loadings from Nishinobo and Furuta's (2013) scale. Finally, the items of followership included four items of followership (active) and four items of followership (independent, critical thinking). For each dimension, Kelley's (1992) followership measurement scale was used for one out of four items, and three items were from Nishinobo and Furuta's (2013) measurement scale.

Leadership. We measured leadership using eight items adapted from Takahara and Yamashita's (2004) scale. This scale was developed using four items for leadership (task behavior) and leadership (relationship behavior), using the LBDQ-XII. This scale achieved reliable results for a major pharmaceutical company in Japan. Therefore, we used the leadership scale in this study.

Affective commitment. Affective commitment was measured following Kitai (2014). Bjugstad et al. (2006) showed that a combination of followership and leadership styles can increase followers' productivity. According to Robbins (2005), organizational commitment positively affects job

productivity. Several researchers have also demonstrated a positive relationship between organizational commitment and productivity (e.g. Katz & Kahn, 1966; Randall, 1987; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

4. Results

The average age of the participants was 38.59 years (SD = 9.5). There are nine departments in this company, the rest being indirect departments such as human resources and accounting. In terms of gender, there were 360 men (68.7%) and 164 women (31.3%), years of service are 115 (21.9%) with 0 to 4 years of service, 154 (29.4%) with 5 to 9 years, 86 (16.4%) with 10 to 14 years, 64 (12.2%) with 15 to 19 years, 67 (12.8%) with 20 to 24 years, 33 (6.3%) with 25 to 29 years, and 5 (1.0%) with 30 years or more. Then, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses to ensure a distinct factor structure of leadership and followership. A two-factor leadership model was $\chi2(13) = 38.320$, p<.000, CFI = .990, GFI = .979, AGFI = .955, RMSEA = .061, and a two-factor followership model was $\chi2(26) = 71.138$, p<.000, CFI = .974, GFI = .973, AGFI = .952, RMSEA = .058. A two-factor model of leadership and followership provided a good fit for the data. Therefore, we adopt a two-factor structure of leadership and followership. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability coefficients for each variable used in this research. Consistent with previous research (Nishinobo, 2014; Nishinobo, 2021), affective commitment was positively correlated with followership and leadership variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations.

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1 Followership: active	2.81	0.56	(.80)				
2 Followership: independent, critical thinking	2.07	0.72	.386**	(.84)			
3 Leadership: task behavior	2.83	0.82	.420**	.052	(.87)		
4 Leadership: relationship behavior	2.68	0.87	.485**	.160**	.701**	(.91)	
5 Affective commitment	2.96	0.66	.496**	.214**	.354**	.376**	(.91)

Note: N = 524. Cronbach Alphas appear in parentheses within the diagonal.
**p < .05.

4.1. Procedures and experimental design

Kelley (1992) classifies scores above midpoint 2 of a 5-point Likert scale as a high group and below midpoint 2 as a low group of each followership dimension. Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory is the same. However, the data obtained in this study showed a large bias in the number of combinations of followership and leadership styles. Therefore, we subtracted the median from the values for each dimension of followership and leadership, and divided the participants into high and low groups.

Table 2. Result of one-way ANOVA [Dependent Variable: Affective commitment].

Leadership Style	Followership Style	Frequency	Mean	SD	F value	Tukey's multiple comparison
Telling	Conformist[★]	9	2.78	0.57	9.66***	Exemplary > Alienated
	Exemplary	23	3.27	0.44		Exemplary > Passive
	Alienated	10	2.66	0.63		
	Passive	18	2.36	0.63		
Selling	Conformist	46	3.21	0.55	7.52***	Confromist > Passive
	Exemplary	141	3.27	0.57		Exemplary > Alienated
	Alienated	26	2.90	0.41		Exemplary > Passive
	Passive[★]	37	2.85	0.56		
Participating	Conformist	13	3.18	0.44	1.27	
	Exemplary	23	2.90	0.88		
	Alienated[★]	14	2.70	0.80		
	Passive	9	2.64	0.69		
Delegating	Conformist	12	3.03	0.42	8.66***	Exemplary > Alienated
	Exemplary[★]	35	3.13	0.69		Exemplary > Passive
	Alienated	53	2.57	0.64		
	Passive	55	2.56	0.54		
All	Conformist	80	3.13	0.53	34.03***	Confromist > Alienated
	Exemplary	222	3.21	0.63		Confromist > Passive
	Alienated	103	2.68	0.62		Exemplary > Alienated
	Passive	119	2.63	0.59		Exemplary > Passive

Note:[★] indicates the followership style best fits against each leadership style, as assumed by the previous study.
***p < .001

4.2. Test of the integrated model of followership and leadership

To test Hypotheses 1 to 4, we performed one-way ANOVA (see Table 2). The analysis results showed that none of the hypotheses were supported. This result confirms that exemplary and conformist

followership styles tend to be more productive, regardless of the leadership style. In other words, followership (active) might increase affective commitment. Therefore, we conducted a post-hoc analysis of the effects of followership and leadership behaviors and their interactions on affective commitment rather than on followership and leadership styles. First, we conducted a Z-transformation to avoid multicollinearity owing to correlations between the main effects and interactions (Aiken & West, 1991).

However, the post-hoc analysis also suggested the main effects of followership (active) on affective commitment (β=.33, p<.001) and leadership (task behavior) (β=.13, p<.05). Next, the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) positively affected affective commitment (β=.16, p<.05). In contrast, the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (relationship behavior) had a negative effect on affective commitment (β=-.15, p<.05) (Table 3). The results partially supported those of Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore, & Bullock (2009). The results of our multiple regression analysis confirmed that the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) had a significant positive effect on affective commitment, and the interaction term between followership (active) and leadership (relationship behavior) had a significant negative effect on affective commitment.

Table 3. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis to affective commitment [A post-hoc analysis].

Variable	Affective commitment		
	Model1	Model2	Model3
Gender（0： Male, 1： Female）	-0.16***	-0.12**	-0.13**
Division（1: 1st Div, 2: 2nd div, 3: 3rd Div, 4: 4th Div, 5: 5th Div, 6: 6th Div, 7: 7th Div, 8: 8th Div, 9: Others）	-0.01	0.03	0.03
Followership (active)		0.38***	0.39***
Followership (independent, critical thinking)		0.03	0.03
Leadership (task behavior)		0.12*	0.13*
Leadership (relationship behavior)		0.10	0.08
Followership (active) × Leadership (task behavior)			0.15*
Followership (active) × Leadership (relationship behavior)			-0.15*
Followership (independent, critical thinking) × Leadership (task behavior)			0.05
Followership (independent, critical thinking) × Leadership (relationship behavior)			-0.05
Adjust R^2	0.02**	0.29***	0.29*
F value	7.32***	35.90***	22.77***

Notes: ***p <0.001, **p <0.01, *p <0.05; VIF<3.02

5. Discussion

While the interaction between followership and leadership is widely acknowledged, there remains a significant gap in research regarding the impact of this interaction on follower productivity. This model illustrates how the fields of followership and leadership can be synthesized for practical applications aimed at enhancing follower productivity. Building on Bjugstad et al.'s (2006) integrative model, we hypothesized four combinations of followership and leadership styles that relate to follower productivity and conducted statistical analyses to test these hypotheses. Our findings indicate that the integrated followership and leadership style model proposed by Bjugstad et al. (2006) is not the most effective approach for improving follower productivity.

There are two reasons why these hypotheses were not supported. First, Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory have faced significant criticism regarding its theoretical foundations. Furthermore, Hersey & Blanchard (1969a; 1969b), who explored the origins of the theory, lack empirical support. Future research should investigate various leadership and followership theories. There is an ongoing discuss about the integration of followership with different leadership theories (Küpers & Weibler, 2008). For example, combining servant leadership with followership may enhance productivity, including among followers exhibiting alienated and passive styles of followership (independent, critical thinking). Second, this study utilized affective commitment as a variable to measure follower productivity. However, Blanchard et al. (2009) found that follower active engagement among followers is closely linked to affective commitment. In the future, it will be essential to measure follower productivity using variables such as work output. On the other hand, the post-hoc analysis revealed that followership (active), leadership (task behavior), and the interaction of followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) had a positive effect on affective commitment positively influenced affective commitment. Furthermore, the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (relationship behavior) had a negative effect on affective commitment. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the impact of followership behaviors and styles, as well as the combination of various leadership theories, on followers' productivity.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature. First, we demonstrated that an integrated model of followership and leadership styles aimed at enhancing follower productivity was not empirically supported. However, the post-hoc analysis suggests that specific followership and leadership behaviors, as well as their interactions, may influence followers' productivity. This finding aligns with previous studies and contributes to the role-based approach to followership. Second, this paper contributes to the understanding of the leadership process by empirically demonstrating the mutual influence between followers and leaders. The leadership process refers to the dynamic interaction between leaders and followers. However, previous research has primarily examined leader behavior as an independent variable (Hamada & Shoji, 2015). This study adopted an approach that emphasizes the reciprocal influence between followership and leadership. Our analysis revealed that the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) had a positive effect on followers' productivity, while the interaction between active followership (active) and leadership negatively impacted productivity.

5.2. Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations. The limitations of this study and future research, are outlined in four points. First, collecting and analyzing data will be essential in the future, not only for Japanese companies but also for various countries and industries. Second, this study analyzed the results of followers' responses. Future research should examine followers' behaviors as perceived by their leaders. Third, as mentioned above, we must consider various combinations of leadership and followership, such as the impact of combining servant leadership with followership on follower productivity. Furthermore, it is important to identify the variables to be used when analyzing productivity. Fourth, Kelley (1992) classified followership types using the midpoint of a five-point scale; however, in this study, the classification of followership types was significantly biased. Therefore, the following types were classified using the median. Consequently, future research should aim to collect data from more than 10,000 valid respondents.

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