Coupled Effects of Knowledge and Leadership

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Abstract: In today's highly competitive global business environment, organizations are revitalizing their workplace strategies for their long-term survival. To foster innovative behaviors in employees, managers need to recognize the importance of Leadership Traits, which includes innovative role-modeling, intellectual stimulation, providing vision, support, required resources, recognition and feedback, as well as playing a major role in consulting, delegating, rewarding and assigning tasks to employees. The present work examined the gender, age and seniority dependency of the Pakistani Managers Knowledge levels on leadership Traits. To explore the managers knowledge levels, a questionnaire was administered to 510 respondents who were managers belonging to four different industries. The result demonstrated that the Knowledge level of the managers on Leadership traits showed significant difference according to the gender and the type of Industry. No significant difference was found related to their seniority and selection criteria.

Key words: Leadership Traits · Type of industry · Managers Gender

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive global business environment, organizations are revitalizing their workplace strategies for their long-term survival. These changes would enable organizations to sustain their competitive advantage and generate profits. Besides that, organizations could create working conditions that will boost employee productivity and job satisfaction. Thus one of the most significant aims is to find innovative people who have that "magic" the company is looking for. Furthermore the strategic employees in the 21st century should be innovative thinkers who understand how to apply problem-based learning using out-of-the-box approaches. Besides, leaders should play a vital role to inspire and influence employees to achieve a shared vision in cultivating innovative behavior. In short the first part of the study highlights the leadership traits that are vital in shaping managers innovative behavior to compete in the challenging competitive environment and the second part the gender, age and seniority distribution of managers in leadership traits knowledge levels were documented. The questions directed to the managers in the present study are based on the leadership traits extracted from the study of De Jong and Den Hartog [1]. Now let us review the literature on leadership traits that shape employees innovative behavior.

Literature Review: This article is going to focus on Leadership Traits that influence innovative behavior at work. Leaders have a powerful source of influence on employees' work behavior and likely to enhance employees' innovative behavior. As stated by de Jong and Den Hartog [1], the most effective leaders:

" will help individuals... to cooperate and integrate their differing styles through a process of applied creativity that includes continuously discovering and defining new problems, solving those problems and implementing the new solutions."(P.42)

Table 1 shows leadership traits that can inspire employees' innovative behavior. These traits include innovative role-modelling, intellectual stimulation, stimulating knowledge diffusion, providing vision, consulting, delegating, support for innovation, organizing feedback, recognition, rewards, providing resources, monitoring and task assignment.

Previous studie [2-9] supported the relationship between leadership and innovative behavior. In the innovative role-modelling trait, leaders who acted as a model of creativity promoted employees to be more creative. For example in de Jong and Den Hartog [1] study, one of the front-runners employee said:

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Table 1: Leadership traits

No.	Traits	Dimensions
1.	Innovative role-modelling	Being an example of innovative behavior,
2.	Intellectual stimulation	Increase employees awareness of problems to evaluate current practices
3.	Stimulating knowledge diffusion	Stimulating open and transparent communication, introducing supportive communication structures like informal work meetings
4.	Providing vision	Communicating an explicit vision on the role and preferred types of innovation
5.	Consulting	Checking with people before initiating changes that may affect them, incorporating their ideas and suggestions in decisions.
6.	Delegating	Giving subordinates sufficient autonomy to determine relatively independently how to do a job
7.	Support for innovation	Acting friendly to innovative employees, being patient and helpful, listening, looking out for someone's interests if problems arise
8.	Organizing feedback	Ensuring feedback on concepts and first trials, providing feedback to employees, asking customer for their opinion
9.	Recognition	Showing appreciation for innovative performances
10.	Rewards	Providing financial/material reward for innovative performances
11.	Providing resources	Providing time and money to implement ideas
12.	Monitoring	Ensuring effectiveness and efficiency, checking-up on people, stressing tried and tested routines(negative relationship)
13.	Task assignment	Providing employees with challenging tasks, make allowance for employees' commitment when assigning tasks

Source: de Jong and Den Hartog [1].

"I am always looking for ways to do things better and improve results. It stimulates some of my employees to do the same." (p.50)

Study of Scott and Bruce [10] on intellectual stimulation and innovative behaviors discovered that when leaders stimulated their employees to be innovative, employees tend to perceive it as encouragement and create possibility for employees to express their proposals and therefore it generates idea generation. For example: increasing employees' awareness of problems and stimulating them to rethink old ways of doing things, referred from [1,10-13].

For Knowledge diffusion stimulation trait, de Jong and Den Hartog [1] study illustrated that stimulating the dissemination of information among subordinates enhances idea generation. For example, according to one of the front-runners' employee, " It's always good when people are aware of how things are going. When you hear about someone's problems in engineering work, you may come up with suggestions or ideas for solutions if you have faced a similar problem in the past."

De Jong and Den Hartog [1] research findings on providing vision attributes demonstrated that organizations which provide their employees with instructions as a guidance to achieve their goals and vision was believed to enhance both idea generation and creativity of employees. This is illustrated by the statement of one of the respondents: We want to innovate endlessly to create value for our customers and to improve our methods of delivery. Whenever an idea matches this principle, it is much easier to convince other employees of its value."

Apart from the above traits,there are alos consistent empirical support for relationship between consulting keadership and delegating with innovative behavior.Some other studies [1,10,11,14-16] demonstrated a positive relationship between innovative and a "shared leadership" style characterized but frequent consultation. According to de Jong and Den Hartog [1], lack of consultation declined employees' motivation and eliminates ideas that could have improved performance. For example, one respondent indicated that "People are usually less motivated for another person's idea unless they are able to reshape it. If I just order an employee to do something, I cannot expect a high-quality outcome." There is also reliable empirical support for a positive association between delegation and idea generation and application behavior. De Jong and Den Hartog [1] discovered that leaders can influence the innovation process by granting their subordinates freedom and autonomy and these led to several kinds of innovative behaviors, including the generation, testing and implementation of ideas. Furthermore, de Jong and Den Hartog [1] survey revealed respondent said that "As soon as we have decided to go ahead. I delegate the implementation activities to my employees I am dominant and my employees would not dare to object to my opinion."

Other leadership trait that influence innovative behavior are support for innovation and organizing feedback. Based on de Jong and Den Hartog [1] findings on support for innovation, a respondent stated that: People know that I just love new ideas. That's why they come up with suggestions every day. I am always excited by them." The respondent also stated that "You can really

discourage innovative behavior by being unreliable. When you do not support your subordinates when problem arise, you can forget successful innovation." Hence employees should not be penalized for mistakes but it should reflect as a learning opportunity and leader should be supportive in guiding employees' creative performance. Previous research by Hellstorm *et al.* [16] on the association between organizing feedback and innovative behavior illustrated that employees are ready to show their innovative behavior when leader gave feedback on their proposal [1]. This will ensure that there will be an improvement in the idea given.

As for recognition attribute, a respondent point out: "When someone makes a suggestion I try to pay a lot of attention to such an initiative. Occasionally, I allow him or her a day or two to work out the idea," [1]. Consequently, de Jong and Den Hartog [1] noted that recognition includes giving praise (compliments),awards(e.g. certificates of achievement, increased autonomy) and ceremonies(e.g. public speeches and celebrations) which will stimulate both creation and application behavior.

Besides, rewards provide monetary incentive for employees to concentrate their attempt to execute new services or work processes. de Jong and Den Hartog [1] noted that respondents revealed: I do not believe that financial rewards are a trigger for idea generation. It does not improve work involvement. But after a new service has been introduced, my employees will see the results of their efforts in their salary. If I did not do this, I would communicate that you cannot make a career by doing more than expected." Nevertheless, there was a study by Amabile [15] that showed financial rewards may not be a good benefit in generating ideas [1].

Providing resources such as time and money to apply idea is crucial. A respondent from de Jong and Den Hartog [1] study stated that "Being enthusiastic about an idea is one thing, but your employees will not believe you if you do not come up with the resources to develop it." Ekvall and Ryhammer [17] also found that the availability of resources was highly correlated to innovative outcomes.

In addition, monitoring element might hinder employees' application efforts but it also required to keep track of employees' progress. One of the respondent from de Jong and Den Hartog [1] declared "You have to keep yourself informed about how things are going. You should not just throw away your money. But your supervision must not become too strict or else your employees will feel they are constantly being watched by "big brother" and avoid all risks". A study of Olham and

Cummings [17] proved that controlling supervision was negatively associated to employees' creative performance. On the other hand Leonard and Swap [18] found that some degree of monitoring is essential to ensure the progress of innovation [1].

Finally, task assignment attribute is important for task content to match employees' job competency. One of the respondents stated that: "It is essential that people like their job. If they enjoy doing their work, they are more interested in delivering high quality. Then they are more eager to make suggestions for improvement as well" [1]. Previous research such as Olham and Cummings [17] showed that task assignment can influence idea generation.

In conclusion, leadership traits as above are vital to influence and facilitate employees to be innovative in the workplace. Leaders may exhibit these leadership traits in different ways based on situation such as leader might consult employees more than once to ensure that innovative ideas are implemented successfully. Furthermore, relationship between leader and employees may create indirect consequences and have a stronger or weaker impact on employees' innovative behavior. As a result, leadership is crucial in crating working environment to support employees' innovative efforts.

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample: 510 managers from four different industry types in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan participated in the present study. The Telecom sector, banking sector, Computer and Health industry were selected for the present study. The criteria of selection of the managers were based on their work experience and middle level managers were the sample drawn from the target population.

Design: A questionnaire consisting of two parts were directed to the mangers. The aim of the first part of the questions was to gain information about manager's gender, seniority, qualification and the type of industry.
The second part aimed to determine the knowledge level of manager's on leadership traits knowledge. The questions directed to the managers in the present study are based on the leadership traits extracted from the study of De Jong and Den Hartog [1]. Thus, 20 questions were prepared and addressed to 100 managers to validate these questions. After the questions were validated, 4 questions were extracted. The remaining 16 multiple-choice questions were directed to the 510 middle level managers participating in the present study.

Data Analysis: The responses given to the second part of the questionnaire by the middle managers were scored with 1 for correct and 0 for incorrect answer. The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (The Statistical Packet for The Social Sciences) package program. Dunnett test is used in groups with n < 60 and in non homogeneous groups. Scheffe test were used to test differences among managers knowledge scores. p< 0,05 was taken statistically important.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Distribution of Middle Managers: The study revealed that gender distribution of middle managers working actively at the four industries, were 47,1 % male (n=240) and 52,9 % female (n=270).

Industry Type Distribution of Middle Managers: Industry type distribution of middle managers were as follows; Telecom (n=165, 32,4 %), Banking (n=150, 29,4 %), Computers (n=12, 11,8 %) and Health (n=135, 26,5 %).

Seniority of Middle Managers: Table 1 shows the seniority distribution of middle managers. It was found that the majority of the managers, 295 out of 510, have a work experience of 11 years and more.

Preference of the Manager's Profession: As it can be seen in Table 2, 72,5 % and 27,5 % of the participants have chosen their profession voluntarily and involuntary respectively.

Distribution of Managers on the Basis of Qualification: Distribution of the middle managers according to qualification was that there were 260 managers who had done their bachelors degree and 250 had done their master degree.

Middle Managers Leadership Traits Knowledge Level: The second part of the questionnaire in this study was concerned with the leadership traits knowledge levels of these managers. Thus, a 16 item questionnaire was addressed to the middle managers in order to determine their Leadership traits knowledge levels. The scores of the individual managers varied from 5 points minimum to 15 points maximum out of 16 points in total (Table 3).

As shown in Table 3, the average correct response of managers was 10,29 out of 16 and their average percentage is 68,6 out of 100.

Table 3 shows that the knowledge level of middle managers in Leadership traits is changing extremely. Table 3 indicates that the knowledge level of middle managers in leadership traits is insufficient despite the average success percentage of (68,6/100).

Table 1: Seniority distribution of middle managers

seniority	f	%
1-5 years	85	16,7
6-10 years	130	25,5
11 years and up	295	57,8
total	510	100,0

Table 2: Preference of the manager's profession

Choosing the job	f	%
voluntary	370	72,5
involuntary	140	27,5
total	510	100,0

Table 3: Middle managers general leadership Traits knowledge level

N	$\bar{x}$	sd	Overall question	Minimum point	Maximum point	Average success
510	10,29	2,29	16	5,00	15,00	% 68,6

Table 4: Distribution of the managers' knowledge levels according to their gender

Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	Sd	t	df	p
Male	48	9,71	2,24	2.499	100	0.014*
Female	54	10,81	2,22			

p<0.05

Table 5: The achievement of secondary school type on question 13

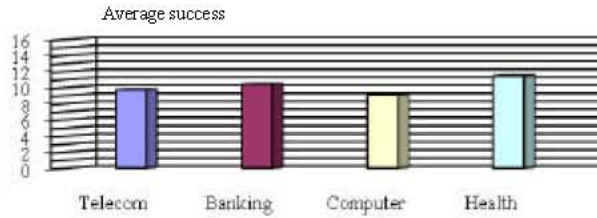|	Industry type	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	F	p
question 13	Telecom	33	0,7576	0,43519	2,923	0,038*
	Banking	30	0,7667	0,43018		
	Computers	12	0,5833	0,51493		
	Health	27	0,9630	0,19245		

p<0.05

Fig. 1: Knowledge levels of the managers due to Industry type (out of 16)

It is obvious that the minimum score of 5 is an indication of the need for further training of the managers on this issue. As far as the distribution of manager's knowledge levels according to their gender was concerned, it was observed that that the female managers have better average results compared to their male counterparts in the total score. (Table 4).

A further question was directed to industry type the managers were working in. The aim of this question was to differentiate the scores of the managers on their knowledge level of leadership traits who were working in different type of industries. There were significant depending on the industry type they were working in. (Figure 1).

The comparison of the knowledge levels of the managers according to their working places revealed that the best scores were obtained by the managers working in Telecom with x̄ =11.44.

The answer of middle managers from 4 different types of Industry to question 13 is given as an example below (Table 5).

Question 13. leadership traits are vital to influence and facilitate employees to be innovative in the workplace

A) True   B) False

The average correct answer scores to question 13 according to the industry type the middle managers were working in, was determined statistically significant.

Then, the question can be asked why do the managers have different knowledge levels in Leadership Traits? Probably, the reason for this may be associated with the mangers qualification and experience. In contrast to Telecom other industries take ordinary managers. Another reason is that in most of the organizations the leadership traits of the managers are not assessed at recruitment stage. Next the relationship between the knowledge levels and seniority of the middle managers was checked

CONCLUSION

There was no significant differences in the basic Leadership traits knowledge scores of middle managers according to the participating managers seniorities ($p > 0.05$) (Fig. 2).The information obtained from this study showed that Leadership traits knowledge levels of the middle managers are not lasting for a long time.

If managers were educated very well on basic leadership traits, it can be very helpful to their understandings and Leaders may exhibit these leadership traits in different ways based on situation such as leader might consult employees more than once to ensure that innovative ideas are implemented successfully.

Furthermore, relationship between leader and employees may create indirect consequences and have a stronger or weaker impact on employees' innovative behaviour. As a result, leadership is crucial in creating working environment to support employees' innovative efforts. These results are consistent with the studies of de Jong and Den Hartog [1].
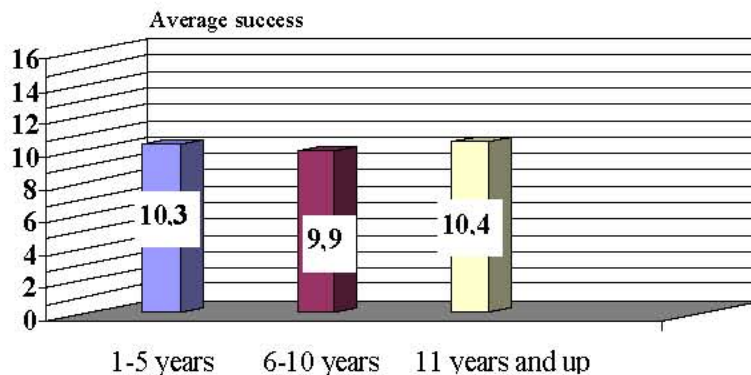

Fig. 2: Distribution of the correct answers according to seniority.

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