

Relationship between Followership Style and Performance in Service Sector

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Abstract

This paper describes the relationship between followership style and performance in Service Sector. 188 randomly selected mid-management responses from the two organisation were collected. A questionnaire was administered in a bank and export house, and for testing hypothesis, a multiple regression test was used. Results indicate that out of five followership styles; four styles were demonstrated i.e passive, alienated, exemplary and conformist. Conformist followership style was the most common followership style observed among the mid-management of service sector. There is a positive relationship between high active engagement and dependent uncritical thinking leading to performance.

Key words: *followership style and performance*

1. Introduction

Organizations have not only the leaders and but its followers' are too (Avolio & Reichard, 2008).

Literature shows that followers' role is not recognized (Kelley, 1992). Followers are as important as leaders (Shondrick & Lord, 2010) and leadership with followership co-exist, (Kelley, 2008).

Banutu-Gomez (2004) in order succeed the leaders must share their followers how to lead as both are interdependent (Henry, 2012). It is, therefore, necessary to promote good followership. In corporates, the mid-management work in co-ordination with heads of departments and are expected to work toward accomplishing organisation objectives and goals. The mid-management responsibilities include achieving targets, administering and customer handling, monitoring progress and the like. The heads of departments' roles are more of setting goals and objectives. Mid-management is closer to junior management and with are expected to work towards good results. However, they need the support of heads of departments and to understand mid-management' followership styles for maximum effectiveness.

The study of followership is at its nascent stage of research and within the organizational management is relatively new (Kellerman, 2008). Though various models and theories have been devel-

oped on followership. Its important all the theories need to be translated into practice within organizational settings to see the results. The purpose of current research is to identify followership styles in the middle management to examine if evidence actually supports the use of five followership styles as a means of improving organizational performance.

One of the important contribution in the literature by Kelley's (1988, 1992) is the idea of followership and has a cardinal place that Kelley's work occupies in followership literature. This research paper focuses on followership styles in an organisation in Delhi NCR (Northern capital region) and draws the inferences of followership styles on two organisation i.e bank and export house. In addition, the effort is made to come up with useful information for administrators and leaders of bank and export house on followership styles and performance. Findings from this study will also enable heads of departments, i.e customer service department, hr department and marketing department to be in a better position to identify staff members who need higher levels of partnership and support. This will go a long way in creating a more effective means of mid-management' empowerment and collaboration.

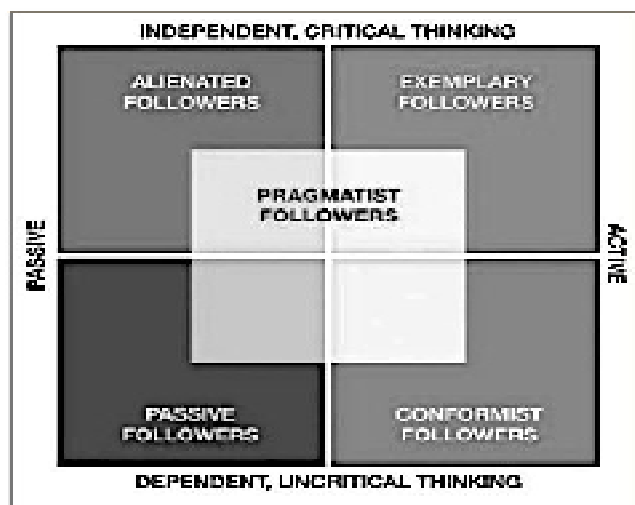
2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Followership Style

The present research paper is empirical in nature and is based on Kelley's (1992) theory of followership i.e based on the two dimensions. The first dimension is referred as independent critical thinking, vs dependent uncritical thinking and second is active engagement vs passive engagement. It is one of the most important contributions to literature with leadership concept (Blanchard et al., 2009).

Based on the two dimensions stated, Kelley (1992) identified five basic styles of followership on the two dimensions as shown in below figure. Out of two quadrants: active vs passive and independent critical thinker vs dependent uncritical thinker and describes "exemplary followers" as actively engaged and exhibiting high independent critical thinker. This type of follower is vital to organizational success and likely to function very well in self-managed teams. Hence, in Kelley's work, followership is operationalized along two main dimensions:

- a) Active Engagement (AE), or the propensity to take initiative;
- b) Independent Critical Thinking (ICT), which consists in offering constructive criticism and showing the ability to think for oneself.



Kelley's (1992) model represent 5 followership style i.e alienated followers means they are high on independent and critical thinkers, but passive in their roles. They rank high on independent and critical thinking and rank low on active engagement. They get a feeling that their efforts are being used without being recognized for their contributions in an organisation. These set of followers do not hide their feelings and openly express their disapproval of ideas. Hence, Alienated followers are susceptible to job dissatisfaction and lead to low organizational commitment, low motivation, and low performance. Alienated followers depend on their leaders and require constant supervision as they are passive in nature. They are neither creative nor ambitious (Kelley, 1988).

The conformist followers are also called “yes” people. They are active participants in the organization's work but uncritical thinkers, they follow orders to the letter (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Conformists are comfortable in their job (Collinson, 2006), keep a good relationship with the senior and are prepared to do everything. It's been observes Conformists followers are loyal to their leaders and therefore compromise their own needs to satisfy the organization performance and growth.

Pragmatic followers are average in their engagement and exhibit characteristics of the above four followership styles. Thus, they use the style that is appropriate to the prevailing situation which also benefits them. They rarely question a leader's decisions.

2.2 The Concept of Performance

Any organisation effectiveness is seen by its performance and has most important focus (Fauzilasalley, 2011). The duties, responsibilities or individual's job assignments are referred for performance (Vigoda, 2000). Performance is classified into 'will-do' approach leading to positive approach for

“can-do” as will do refers to individuals’ knowledge, skills, abilities (Schmitt & Chan in Motowidlo, 2003).

As mid-management performs a whole lot of duties & their key responsibilities. They not only deal directly with junior management by handling their issues but also drives senior management goals. For an organisation to achieve its goals, mid-management needs to be exemplary or conformist followers in order to carry out their duties.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This paper examines the relationship between followership styles and performance in service sectors two organisation.

1-What are the preferred followership styles of the middle management in Service Sector?

2-Is there a significant relationship between followership styles (independent critical thinking and active engagement) and performance of the middle management in service sectors?

The present studies analysed AE (active engagement) and ICT (independent critical thinking) in relation to their antecedents in their effort to validate Kelley’s scale and also investigated the relationships between the two dimensions and some potential outcomes of performance. Considering the definitions of the two behaviours, and their operationalization, which emphasize the positive side of AE and ICT, as well as the mixed results mentioned above, we hypothesize that:

H1—Conformist style has a positive relationship with performance.

H2— Passive followership style has a positive relationship with performance.

3.2 Participants

A total of 212 mid-management from the two Service Sector organisation have involved in this study. Many of the mid-management had master’s degree with an average experience of four years and above in their current place of work. A randomly selected 212 mid-management from different mid-management responded to followership and performance questionnaires.

In addition to a socio-demographic section which included questions about the control variables, Variance explained by the EFA solution was 55.4%, while Cronbach’s alpha was .83.

Follower's active engagement on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = never, 6 = always) had Cronbach's alpha .88.

Follower's independent critical thinking (ICT) explained variance (performance) was 44.4%, while Cronbach's alpha was .76.

3.3 The Instruments

Kelley (1992) followership style instrument (20-item of followership questionnaire) was used to identify followership style in mid-management with Williams and Anderson (1991) performance questionnaire (4-item of in-role) were used for data collection. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was (Cronbach alpha = 0.76).

3.4 Data Collection

Participants consisted of 212 mid-management employees working in bank and export house of Delhi NCR region.

Questionnaires were distributed and were collected by the researchers for all 212 participants and the overall response rate was 89%. The socio-demographic characteristics of the 189 respondent sample are summarized in Table 1:

Dimension	Sample mean/percentage
Gender	85.6% women 14.4% men
Age	39.5 years (<i>SD</i> 8.18, from min = 23 to max = 60)
Education level	15.7% with a master's degree or other post-graduate qualification
Type of contract (length)	97.5% with permanent contract 2.5% with temporary contract
Tenure in organization	4.6 years (<i>SD</i> 9.36)
Length of employment	7.8 years (<i>SD</i> 9.42)

4. Result

The first research question was: What are the preferred followership styles of mid-management in the Service Sector? The Service Sector mid-management examined followership styles were having

all five Followership style. Conformist followership style was the most preferred style i.e 34.51% of the participants.

Table 2 Followership styles used by Service Sector mid-management Commonly use styles.

Followership Style	Number	Frequency %
Exemplary	48	25.5%
Alienated	21	11%
Passive	31	16.4%
Conformist	89	46.9%

(N= 189 Common/frequency %)

The Correlation matrix for followership styles and performance ; Exploratory Factor Analysis (ML, Promax rotation) on the 24 items used to measure the investigated variables showed positive results. As expected, eigenvalues for six items were greater than 1 and the average variance extracted was 52.6%. Preliminary check results were thus satisfactory.

Table3 shows means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of all variables. Performance shows positive correlations with conformist style.

Table 3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Performance	-						
2. Gender (1 = male)	0.09	-					
3. Tenure in organiz.	0.04	.23**	-				
5. Passive	.24**	-.16**	-0.09	-			
6. Exemplary	.12*	-0.03	-.17**	.47**	-		
7. Conformist	.41**	0.03	.16**	.29**	.19**	-	
8. Alienated	-.14**	0.04	-.13**	.16**	0.06	-0.01	-
<i>M</i>	3.33	-	15.6	34.9	3.36	3.66	5.18
<i>SD</i>	0.67	-	9.36	5.69	1.01	1.02	1.10

Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of all variables.

Note.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$

AE = follower's active engagement and ICT = follower's independent critical thinking.

Multiple regression results examining the linear and curvilinear effects of followership behaviors on Performance. It shows the results of the hierarchical multiple regression. Performance was explained by two variables. The positively related conformist ($\beta +.36, p < .001$), and tenure in organization ($\beta +.20, p < .05$).

Summarizing, the findings show that:

H1—Conformist style has a positive relationship with the performance was supported. There is a significant positive linear relationship between Conformist style of followership and performance means when followers are high on independent critical thinker with passive engagement leads to performance. In other words, the followers with critical approach, the more they are satisfied while their engagement whether low or high does not have an impact on performance.

H2— Since there is no curvilinear relationship between passive style of followership and performance; passive followership style has a positive relationship with the performance was not supported.

The results of the correlation of predictor variables with performance, however suggest that mid-management who were passive followers were not high performers in this study. This finding did establish the main characteristics of passive followers as proposed by Kelley (1992). Hence clear why mid-management who claimed to be passive followers are the low performers in this context.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study show that the majority of mid-management who participated in this study indicated conformist followership style. Alienated and exemplary followership styles were two followership styles which was not related to performance indicating the low performance of mid-management. Passive followership style was low related to the performance indicating low performers of mid-management who affirm to be passive followers.

Although who indicated exemplary followership style there performance was low. As per literature review exemplary followership characteristics are not only desirable but are also said to be responsible for the improvement of an organization performance. Based on these findings, the heads of departments in Service Sector should be knowledgeable about different followership styles. Also they should identify the followership styles among their mid-management.

Since heads of departments in Service sectors depend on middle-management for the success of the organisation, it is imperative for them to make conscious effort to identify or recognise and promote conformist followership characteristics. Further the study is needed to examine factors responsible for high performance. In the middle management specially examination needs to be conducted to identify other followership style of exemplary followers or passive followers contribution.

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