Impact of Leadership and Decision-Making Qualities in Politics

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide an overview of the leadership and decision-making qualities in politics. Current findings from the 'science of decision making' reveal key gender distinctions in the behaviours between women and men, and how these behavioural differences influence and shape decisions as well as the outcomes of leadership styles employed. The concept of leader qualities and attributes is indeed an old one, predating the scientific study of leadership and reaching back into antiquity, across several early civilizations. The current study also examines the impact of organizational leadership on public relations effectiveness from an internal perspective. Specifically, it builds links between leadership style, employee empowerment, and employees 'perception of organizational reputation. The results showed that transformational leadership positively influences employees 'perception of organizational reputation, not only directly but also indirectly, through empowering employees. Transactional leadership represented by contingent reward behavior has a significant negative direct effect on employees perception of organizational reputation.

Keywords: leadership, decision making, qualities, politics.

INTRODUCTION

Several scholarly disciplines share an interest in the decision-making process. On one hand, there are related fields of operations research and management science, both concerned with how to improve the decisions which are made. Their models of decision making, aimed at providing a rational basis for selecting among alternative courses of action, are termed normative or prescriptive models. On the other hand, there have been attempts by psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists to understand the decisions and choices that people do make. March and Simon (1958) were among the first to suggest that an understanding of the decision-making process could be central to an understanding of the behavior of organizations—a point of view that was later amplified by Cyert and March (1963) in their behavioral theory of the firm. In this tradition, the goal is understanding rather than improvement, and the models are descriptive rather than normative. Whether the models are normative or descriptive, the common ingredient is a conception of decision making as an information-processing activity, frequently one which takes place within a single manager. Both sets of models focus on the set of alternative decisions or problem solutions from which the choice is, or should be, made. The normative models are based on the consequences of choices among these alternatives, the descriptive models on the determinants of these choices.

If there is a general quality of leadership that plays a part in all situations it is relatively unimportant in determining an individual's success as a leader. To a considerable extent the manifestation of leadership is determined by the social situation under one set of circumstances an individual will be a good leader and under others he will be a poor one.

A Normative Model of Decision Processes

What would be a rational way of deciding on the form and amount of participation in decision making to be used in different situations? Neither debates over the relative merits of Theory X and Theory Y nor the apparent truism that leadership depends on the situation are of much help here. The aim in this portion of the research is to develop a framework

for matching a leader's behavior, as expressed in the alternatives presented in Table 1, to the demands of his situation. Any framework developed must be consistent with empirical evidence concerning the consequences of participation and be so operational that a trained leader could use it to determine how he should act in a given situation. The normative model should provide a basis for effective problem solving and decision making by matching the desired decision process with relevant properties of particular problems or decisions to be made.

Following Maier (1963), the effectiveness of a decision is thought to be a function of three classes of outcomes, each of which may be expected to be affected by the decision process used. These are:

1. The quality or rationality of the decision.

2. The acceptance or commitment on the part of subordinates to execute the decision effectively.

3. The amount of time required to make the decision.

The roots of leader quality research were planted in the functionalism that characterized early Indian psychology, in the applied focus of some early Indian psychologists, and especially in the mental testing movement. Functionalism reflected an emphasis on the "typical operations of consciousness under actual conditions", in which the focus was on discerning the purposive nature of behavior. This focus was fertile ground for the emergence of applied psychology and yielded the first textbook in industrial/organizational psychology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work by Barnlund (1962) represents the single study at that time that varied both task and composition. Barnlund reported a statistically non significant correlation of .64 between leader emergence in one situation and similar status in group situations of differing tasks and members, and he concluded that his results lent "credibility to the idea that leadership grows out of the special problems of coordination facing a given group and the available talent of the participants" (p. 51). The conclusions from the leader quality reviews and the rotation design studies provided impetus for the emergence of "leader situationism" models. These models perhaps started with A. J. Murphy (1941), who argued, "Leadership does not reside in the person. It is a function of the whole situation" (p. 674).

The models continued with the work of Jenkins (1947), Sherif and Sherif (1948), Hemphill (1949), and Gibb (1947, 1954, 1958). The situationism perspective emphasized that certain group situations would call for specific leader qualities, and the individual who possessed those qualities would be effective as a leader in that situation; however, under a different group situation, another person could be more appropriate or effective in the leadership role. Fiedler (1964, 1971b) provided perhaps the most conceptually sophisticated framework of leader situationism with his contingency model. He articulated the features of group situations that produced favorable circumstances for certain stable patterns of leadership exhibited by an individual. Leaders were likely to be effective when their leadership patterns matched situational contingencies.

Hersey and Blanchard (1969b), House (1971), Vroom and Yetton (1973), and Kerr and Jermier (1978) offered similar situation-matching models. Unlike Fielder's contingency theory, however, each of these models specified that leaders could vary their individual responses to changes in situational contingencies. Thus, presumably, the same individual could lead effectively across different situations. Nonetheless, these situational approaches dominated the zeitgeist in leadership in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the quality approach to leadership was generally in decline in this period, psychologists in applied settings who were interested in leader and executive selection still utilized individual difference models. The research by Miner (1965, 1978) and that by Bray, Campbell, and Grant (1974; see also Bray, 1982; Howard & Bray, 1988, 1990) were two well-known examples. Miner examined the associations between several patterns of managerial motives and subsequent advancement. He found that need for power, need for achievement, and a positive orientation toward authority were significantly correlated with promotion to higher leadership positions in organizations.

Bray et al. (1974) collected assessments of many attributes in organizational managers during a 3-day assessment center session, and followed that initial assessment with subsequent assessments 8 and 20 years later. They also conducted interviews with the bosses and supervisors of the original participants during the years between assessments. They found that attributes reflecting advancement motivation, interpersonal skills, intellectual ability, and administrative skills predicted attained managerial level 20 years after initial assessments. McClelland (1965), Boyatzis (1982), Moses (1985), Sparks (1990), and Bentz (1967, 1990) conducted similar quality-based studies of managerial performance and promotion. The general resurgence of leader quality perspectives came in the 1980s and can be attributed to several research lines. The first was a statistical reexamination of both the early leader quality reviews and the rotation design studies.

Lord, De Vader, and Alliger (1986) used validity generalization techniques to correct the correlations reported by Mann (1959) for several sources of artifactual variance (i.e., sampling error, predictor unreliability, and differential range restriction across studies) and to calculate a population effect size. They also added leader attribute studies published after Mann's study to their analysis. Using only Mann's data, they reported corrected correlations of .52 for intelligence, .34 for masculinity, .21 for adjustment, .17 for dominance, .15 for extraversion, and .22 for conservatism. Adding the newer studies produced corrected correlations of .50 for intelligence, .24 for adjustment, .13 for dominance, and .26 for extraversion. They concluded that "personality qualities are associated with leadership perceptions to a higher degree and more consistently than the popular literature indicates" (p. 407).

 similar meta-analytic review by Keeney and Marchioro (1998) reported comparable findings. Kenny and Zaccaro (1983) reexamined the findings of rotation design studies, particularly that of Barnlund (1962). They decomposed the correlations reported by Barnlund into the variance in leader ratings that could be attributed in part to the rater, to the interaction of rater and ratee, and to the characteristics of the person being rated (i.e., the potential leader). They estimated the association between ratee effects found across Barnlund's groups situations and found that between 49% and 82% of the variance in leadership ratings could be attributed to stable characteristics of the emergent leader.

Zaccaro, Foti, and Kenny (1991) completed a similar rotation design, in which both task and group composition were varied, and reported a significant amount of quality-based variance in leader ratings (.59) and leader rankings (.43). In another similar study, Ferentinos (1996) reported an estimate of 56% for quality-based leadership variance. Taken together, these studies provide solid evidence that leaders who emerged in one group situation also were seen as leaders in different groups with different members, and across different situations, requiring different leadership responses.

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, the charismatic leadership models produced a deluge of empirical research across a variety of samples and using a variety of measures and methods (Conger, 1999). Whereas a substantial part of this research specified the contextual aspects of charismatic influence (e.g., Shamir & Howell, 1999), another consistent trend has been increasing study of the attributes of the charismatically influential leader (House, 1988; House & Howell, 1992; Zaccaro, 2001). The charismatic leadership research paradigm, together with the recent meta-analytic reviews, new rotation design studies, and longitudinal studies of managerial advancement, have contributed to a revitalization of the leader quality model. Indeed, Bass's (1990) comprehensive book summarizing the leadership literature devoted nine chapters (or 163 pages) to the personal attributes of leaders.

Bass (1990) provided a comprehensive review of the leader quality literature up to the late 1980s, building in turn on reviews by Stogdill (1948, 1974). In this section, we review studies of leader attributes that were published between 1990 and 2003. We consider these recent studies within the context of leader attribute categories offered by Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Fleishman, and Reiter-Palmon (1993) and by Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000).

They specified five categories of leader attributes:

(a) cognitive abilities,

(b) personality,

(c) motivation,

(d) social appraisal and interpersonal skills, and

(e) leader expertise and tacit knowledge.

(a) Cognitive Abilities

General cognitive ability has been one of the most frequently studied leader attributes. The conceptual and empirical reviews by Bird (1940), Stogdill (1948), Mann (1959), Lord, De Vader, et al. (1986), and Keeney and Marchioro (1998) all pointed to its ubiquity. This popularity has continued in the time period of the present review. Recent studies also have examined other cognitive abilities, such as creative reasoning abilities and complex problem-solving skills, as determinants of leadership.

(b) Personality

Perhaps the largest set of leader quality studies published in the last decade has focused on leader personality. These studies have examined primarily (a) leadership and the Big Five model and (b) leadership and dimensions of the Myers-Briggs

Type Indicator (MBTI). A number of other studies have examined other attributes, such as locus of control, adaptability, optimism, and destructive personality characteristics.

(c) Motivation

Leadership researchers have examined primarily the following motive-states as influences on leadership: need for power or need for dominance, need for achievement, need for affiliation, and need for responsibility. The latter is similar to another motive-state that has emerged recently in the leadership literature motivation to lead.

(d) Social Appraisal Skills

Social Appraisal Skills, or social intelligence, reside at the heart of effective leadership. Social intelligence refers to "the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding". Zaccaro (2002) defined social intelligence as reflecting the following social capacities—social awareness, social acumen, response selection, and response enactment. These capacities refer to a leader's understanding of the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of others in a social domain and his or her selection of the responses that best fit the contingencies and dynamics of that domain.

An author has defined four distinct emotional intelligence skills. These are:

- Emotion identification: This refers to skills in identifying and appraising one's own feelings, as well as the emotional expression of others. It also reflects skills in expressing emotions and distinguishing real from phony emotional expression.

- Emotion use: This refers to skill in using emotions to direction attention to important events and environmental cues. It also reflects skills in using emotions in decision making and problem solving.

- Emotion understanding: This refers to skill in understanding emotions within a larger network of causes and meaning, to understand how different emotions in oneself and others are connected.

- Emotion management: This refers to an ability to stay aware of emotions and particularly "the ability to solve emotion-laden problems without necessarily suppressing negative emotions.

(e) Leader Problem-Solving Skills

Leadership represented a form of social problem solving and that, accordingly, social problem-solving skills were important proximal leader attributes predicting leader performance. In support, Connelly et al. (2000) found that skills in problem construction and solution generation predicted leader career achievement, even after controlling for the influences of general intelligence, creative thinking capacities, personality, and motives. Such skills were associated with attained organizational level in army civilian managers, also after controlling for cognitive, personality, and motivation attributes. The application of problem solving and appraisal skills to experience drives the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge can be defined as "what one needs to know to succeed in a given environment, and is knowledge that is typically not explicitly taught and often not even verbalized". Tacit knowledge and its corresponding attribute of practical intelligence are strongly related to leader adaptability.

(f) Role of Women's Participation in Decision-making

A most critical determinant of women's ability to make a difference is the nature of governance and the political mainstream where women are beginning to participate. Decision-making in public offices are supposed to be positions of public trust, i.e., those who assume these positions are responsible or accountable to the electorate or the taxpayers or the general public. But the degree of observance of public accountability varies among countries. The more feudal governance is with patronage well-entrenched as a tradition, the more accountability will tend to be defined by narrower personal, family or clan interests as well as those of one's political group and patrons. The interests of the greater public would be of

lower priority, if not easily ignored, were it not for security concerns and insuring peace and order which could compel those in power to engage in the rhetoric of public service and welfare. On the other hand, the more democratic governance is, the more likely developed are the mechanisms for public accountability and the more politically mature are the citizens, who are aware of their rights and demanding accountability from public officials, and the greater the sense of accountability to the general public of those voted and appointed to public office.

The ability of women to make a difference may also be a function of what factors propelled them to public office. The circumstances of women's entry into positions of power will determine whether they will be politically marginalized or become key players in their political organization and in the decision-making positions in public office that they assume. Were they thrust into politics by luck of a dynastic prerogative when one carries the name and by some osmosis the reputation of a recognized national leader or a renowned politician as a wife or a daughter? Are they tokens selected by political parties, or the product of a calculation by political parties of the value that women could bring to the party as a response to some advocacy or legislation for more equal political participation by women? Or did they cut their teeth in political work and rose through the ranks of political parties on merit to become effective recognized party leaders? Or did they earn the confidence of a constituency with whom they have effectively worked and their commitment tested which led to their selection as the representatives of the said constituency?

Leadership Style and Perceived Organizational Reputation

Transformational leadership positively influences employee's perception of organizational reputation, not only directly but also indirectly, through empowering employees. Leadership behaviors, such as communicating shared vision and high performance expectations, providing an appropriate role model, fostering collaboration among employees to achieve collective goals, stimulating new perspectives and ideas, emphasizing the quality of relationships with employees, and showing concern about employees individual feelings and welfare, directly cultivate employees favorable overall attitudes toward the organization.

Leadership Style and Employee Empowerment

With regard to the linkage between leadership style and employee empowerment, the present study revealed that transformational and transactional leadership are both positively associated with employees' feeling of control; in other words, managerial empowerment, with the former demonstrating stronger effects. Thus, transformational leaders are more likely to delegate power to employees and involve them in decision making than transactional leaders, supporting claims in existing literature.

CONCLUSIONS

The systemic nature of organizations determines that the public relations function interacts with other subsystems in the achievement of organizational goals. Moreover, it is influenced by organizational contextual factors, such as organizational culture, structure, internal communication system, employee satisfaction, and gender equality. The current study represents an extensive effort to explore how public relations effectiveness is affected by organizational antecedents. Hence, taking an internal perspective, the purpose of the present study was to study the influences of organizational leadership and decision making style on public perception of reputation and the mediation role of employee empowerment on such influences.

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