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Do self-monitoring and achievement orientation assist or limit leader effectiveness?

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ABSTRACT: Many assume that leaders' traits, such as self-monitoring and achievement orientation, are related to leader effectiveness. However, previous studies have not shown consistent results on the relationships between self-monitoring, achievement orientation, and leader effectiveness. Some empirical works show that high self-monitoring and achievement-oriented leaders are perceived as more effective. By contrast, other research demonstrates high self-monitoring and high achievement orientation to be hindrances to leader effectiveness. High self-monitoring leaders are "chameleon-like" and can show excellent behavioural flexibility; they can also be perceived as manipulative and not genuine. Some studies find that achievement orientation, albeit found in many effective leaders, is negatively associated with motivation to learn and willingness to accept new ideas. Therefore, this current study aims to investigate the relationships between self-monitoring, achievement orientation, and leader effectiveness. To limit common method bias, data was gathered from two different sources: leaders and subordinates, with a counterbalancing method in place. Data was collected from 215 pairs of leaders and subordinates in the financial and hospitality industries in Indonesia, using very good scales (α between 0.75 and 0.95). Multiple regression analysis demonstrates that achievement orientation is positively associated with leader effectiveness. However, self-monitoring has no relationship with leader effectiveness.

1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a popular research topic that has been widely studied for more than a century (Avolio et al., 2009; Bass, 1990; Day, 2014). Among many focuses in leadership research, leader effectiveness is one of the most impactful in understanding leadership (Mumford & Barrett, 2012). The concept of leader effectiveness determines the criteria of effective leaders as a basis for studies of leadership (Yukl, 2012). Thus, various studies have been conducted to examine the role of leader effectiveness in various contexts, including military (Bartone et al., 2007; Hardy et al., 2010; Rockstuhl et al., 2011), governmental (Hooijberg, Lane, & Diversé, 2010), and corporate (Hooijberg & Choi, 2001; Kaiser et al., 2008) ones. This is not surprising given the importance of the role of leaders, especially in a corporate setting, and the increasing demands and challenges that exist in the workplace. The study of Gilley et al. (2008) demonstrates that leader effectiveness plays a significant role in company performance by driving change and innovation. A review by Jing and Avery (2008) describes similar arguments: that leader effectiveness has important relationships with organisational performance and individual performance at the organisational level. Leader effectiveness is a potential source of facilitation to the organisation in making improvements and facing challenges and changes.

However, despite the importance assigned to leader effectiveness, until now a consensus among researchers regarding the definition of leader effectiveness is still lacking. The term "leader effectiveness" is often treated as interchangeable with other similar terms, such as "leadership effectiveness" and "management effectiveness". One probable reason for this is

the differences in the types of criteria used in each study to evaluate leader effectiveness (Yukl, 2012).

DeGroot et al. (2011) conclude from previous research that leader effectiveness can be reviewed in terms of "results" (leader effectiveness outcomes) or "behaviour" (leader effectiveness behaviour). Erkutlu (2008) proposes similar arguments: that leader effectiveness can be measured objectively, such as by evaluating productivity or profit gained, and subjectively, through evaluations provided by leaders, subordinates, and coworkers. In this study, we use a definition of leader effectiveness behaviour that states that effectiveness is derived from team members' evaluations of the actions or behaviours of leaders that are relevant to team performance (DeGroot et al., 2011). These behaviours consist of interpersonal aspects (communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving) and task-management aspects (goal setting and planning) in teamwork, a concept initiated by Stevens and Campion (1994).

Many approaches have been put forward by researchers for understanding the concept of leader effectiveness. The trait-based approach dominated the early development of scientific research to discover what distinguishes effective and ineffective leaders. Despite the fact that its prominence has since dimmed in the midst of leadership theory development, this approach has regained some popularity (Zaccaro, 2007). The reappearance of this approach is supported by an argument that states that leader effectiveness cannot be separated from leaders' personal traits and qualities and thus the measurement of leader effectiveness should always involve leaders' traits (Judge et al., 2002).

The five-factor model of personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992) is often considered as a prominent aspect of personality (Goldberg, 1990) for its ability to integrate many traits into a frame of mind (Judge et al., 2002). However, Day and Schleicher (2006) criticised researchers' overemphasis on the Big Five personality traits, given that there are many other traits that are no less important to investigate. Day et al. (2002) found that self-monitoring is a relevant trait in understanding work-related outcomes and attitudes in an organisational context, including job performance, which is often used as criteria of leader effectiveness, and leadership emergence. Self-monitoring is defined as the extent to which an individual controls and regulates their self-presentation, expressive behaviour, and non-verbal affective display in social settings (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2013; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974).

Another potential trait to be considered in studying leader effectiveness is achievement orientation. This is often referred to as the performance goal, which describes the desire or tendency of a person to demonstrate competence that outperforms others (Sijbom et al., 2015). Achievement orientation is one aspect of achievement goal orientation theory, which concerns an individual's perspective on the meaning of an event according to the individual's objectives: being focused either on demonstrating competence (performance) or on developing competence (mastery) (Dweck, 1986; Pekrun et al., 2009).

Both self-monitoring and achievement orientation are potential traits to be focused on in understanding leader effectiveness. Nonetheless, researchers are still arguing as to whether both traits are predictors of, or hindrances to, leader effectiveness. This leads to our research question: what is the relationship between self-monitoring, achievement orientation, and leader effectiveness?

Caligiuri and Day (2000) show that self-monitoring has a significant relationship with commitment, motivation, and interpersonal relationships in a work setting, which is related to the interpersonal aspect of leader effectiveness. Self-monitoring is also associated with subordinates' evaluation of their leaders' ability to adapt to different situations (Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Zaccaro et al., 1991). In order to be effective, leaders need to be able to diagnose situations that are experienced by their company and identify what types of behaviour are most appropriate (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). This self-monitoring flexibility has been shown by previous research to be related to both interpersonal and task-management aspects of leader effectiveness. In addition, in comparison to low self-monitoring individuals, high self-monitoring individuals also tend to get better performance appraisals, and are more likely to get promotions and to emerge as leaders (Day et al., 2002; Day & Schleicher, 2006).

However, research on the relationship between self-monitoring and leader effectiveness is still limited and does not show consistent results. High self-monitoring is also found to have

negative sides. It might increase a person's tendency to be unauthentic and opportunist in task-based and non-interpersonal situations (Oh et al., 2013), and authenticity is important for leaders to effectively show their true selves, value, and vision to subordinates (Ilies et al., 2005). Studies conducted by Oh et al. (2013) show that high self-monitoring individuals are chameleon-like; able to behave according to the situation by suppressing expression relevant to their original personality. While beneficial and often perceived as highly effective (Gardner et al., 2009), such displays of flexibility by high self-monitoring leaders can also be perceived as inconsistent by their followers (Day et al., 2002; Day & Schleicher, 2006).

Despite this dual nature of self-monitoring, the flexibility associated with high self-monitoring individuals is fundamental to leadership, given that the change which frequently occurs in the workplace requires leaders to be flexible and able to adapt well to new situations (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Such leaders are able to read situations and demonstrate the appropriate behaviour for them. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: That self-monitoring is positively associated with leader effectiveness.

Achievement orientation was originally the subject of many educational studies, particularly in research about academic achievement (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Church, 1997; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007), and it is also important that it is investigated in organisational settings. Some studies show that achievement orientation is one trait characterising effective leaders (Müller & Turner, 2010), leading to effective and superior performance (Boyatzis & Ratti, 2009). Even so, research on leaders' achievement orientation in organisational settings is still limited.

Some other studies indicate that achievement orientation has negative sides too. It is found to have positive correlations with cheating behaviour (Van Yperen et al., 2011) and negative correlations with motivation to learn (Elliot & Church, 1997). This has been attributed to interpersonal benchmarks of achievement orientation, which only emphasise the demonstration of performance and orientation towards results, instead of the process of developing skills. Both aspects can be a hindrance to leader effectiveness, given that leaders should always have the motivation to develop their skills, and that integrity is important for leaders in order that they be trusted and perceived as effective by their subordinates. Indeed, leaders' integrity is found to have relationships with the organisational commitment and work performance of their subordinates (Leroy et al., 2012). Moreover, Sijbom et al. (2015) showed that achievement-oriented leaders tend to oppose creative ideas submitted by subordinates, which could be problematic, given that communication between leaders and subordinates is reported to be the most salient interpersonal aspect of leader effectiveness (DeGroot et al., 2011).

On the other hand, Peus et al. (2015) found that achievement orientation is one factor that drives success for female leaders in holding leadership positions in the United States and some Asian countries. The majority of women leaders stress their willingness to work hard and their dedication to achieving superior levels of performance as crucial success factors in their advancement. Supporting this finding, Dragoni and Kuenzi (2012) found that leaders' achievement orientation is positively associated with unit achievement orientation. Thus, achievement orientation appears contagious, especially for those leaders who have been with their work units for a relatively long period of time. Given all of the above, we suggest:

Hypothesis 2: That achievement orientation is positively associated with leader effectiveness.

2 METHODS

2.1 *Participants and procedure*

The participants in this study were 292 pairs of leaders and subordinates from two industries (financial and hospitality), selected with the following criteria: leaders who have at least two subordinate levels, and subordinates who were two levels directly below the leaders in the company structure. Data was gathered using convenience sampling. Complete responses

were received from 229 pairs of leaders and subordinates, representing a very good response rate (approximately 78%) (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006), from which 14 pairs of questionnaires were excluded due to invalid responses, leaving 215. The leaders who participated in this study were between 22 and 55 years old ($M_{age} = 41.20$; $SD_{age} = 7.82$); 62.8% were males; 88.4% were married; 82.8% had children. At least a bachelor degree had been attained by 63%, and 32.1% had worked in the company for more than 15 years. A majority of participants were from the hospitality industry (60.9%), and the most common level of interaction between leaders and subordinates was more than 15 times a week (33%).

2.2 *Measures*

To limit common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012), this study used two sources of data (leaders and subordinates) and a counterbalancing method (mixing measurement items, splitting them, and putting them in different sections of the questionnaire). All scales used a 6-point Likert-type scale, anchored from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*).

Leader Effectiveness. Leader effectiveness was measured using 14 items of a leader effectiveness scale adapted from DeGroot et al. (2011) ($\alpha = 0.95$). Rather than their direct leader, we asked the participants to evaluate the leader of their leader. Sample items included "The leader of my leader greets me while passing by" and "The leader of my leader gives ideas to solve problems".

Self-Monitoring. The instrument consisted of ten items adapted from a revision of a self-monitoring scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984), with $\alpha = 0.75$. The items reflected the definition of self-monitoring, including: "I am sensitive to the slightest change of expression in people I talk with" and "It is difficult for me to adjust my behaviour while dealing with different people".

Achievement Orientation. Leaders' achievement orientation was measured using four items about performance goals, adapted from Sijbom et al. (2015), that were adjusted to fit the work setting ($\alpha = 0.78$). Sample items of this scale included "As a leader, I have to prove that I work better than others" and "As a leader, I need to show better performance than others", thus describing a desire to outperform others.

2.3 *Control variables*

We controlled industry type (finance vs hospitality) and some demographic variables which are theoretically linked to leader effectiveness, specifically gender (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; DeRue et al., 2011), age (Kirkman et al., 2004), marital status (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006), number of children (Johnson, 2005; Wallace & Young, 2008), education (Barbuto et al., 2007), and tenure (Kirkman et al., 2004). Frequency of interaction between leaders and subordinates was also controlled, given that leaders are required to create productive ties with their subordinates in order to work together to achieve company goals (Harvey et al., 2006).

3 RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, and correlations observed are presented in Table 1. This shows that leader effectiveness had a significant positive correlation with achievement orientation ($r = 0.17$; $p < 0.05$), number of children ($r = 0.15$; $p < 0.05$), and frequency of interaction between leaders and subordinates ($r = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$).

To analyse the relationship between self-monitoring, achievement orientation, and leader effectiveness, we conducted multiple regression analyses with leader effectiveness as the dependent variable, and self-monitoring and achievement orientation as two independent variables. It was revealed that achievement orientation was a significant predictor of leader effectiveness ($\beta = 0.18$; $p < 0.05$). In contrast, the effect of self-monitoring on leader effectiveness was not significant ($\beta = 0.63$; $p = 0.37$). The model predicted 4% of leader effectiveness (R^2 change = 0.04). The second model, which included additional control variables that have significant correlations with leader effectiveness (type of industry, frequency of interaction

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	41.20	7.83	1										
2. Sex	–	–	–0.15*	1									
3. Material status	1.95	0.34	0.32**	0.05	1								
4. No. of children	1.69	1.03	0.35**	0.09	0.36**	1							
5. Education	4.18	1.55	–0.21**	–0.24**	–0.06	–0.16*	1						
6. Tenure	4.86	1.80	0.54**	0.10	0.21**	0.25**	–0.08	1					
7. Industry type	–	–	–0.17*	–0.32**	–0.02	–0.21**	0.55**	0.04	1				
8. Frequency of interaction between leaders and subordinates	3.56	2.02	–0.06	–0.03	0.05	–0.12	0.04	–0.11	–0.08	1			
9. Self-monitoring	4.52	0.58	0.06	0.08	–0.04	0.01	–0.01	–0.19**	–0.08	0.05	1		
10. Achievement orientation	4.77	0.82	0.22**	0.15*	0.11	0.12	–0.12	0.09	–0.18**	–0.01	0.23**	1	
11. Leader effectiveness	5.05	0.68	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.15*	0.03	0.02	–0.10	0.19**	0.11	0.17*	1

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed); **Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis results.

	Step 1	Step 2
Variable	Control variable	Control variable, self-monitoring and achievement orientation
Type of industry		0.05
Number of children		0.17*
Frequency of interaction between leader and subordinate		0.20**
Self-monitoring	0.063	0.06
Achievement orientation	0.175*	0.15*
R^2	0.04	0.11
F	4.16*	4.72**
df1; df2	2; 203	5; 200

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed); **Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed).

between leaders and subordinates, and number of children), predicted 11% of the variance of leader effectiveness (R^2 change = 1.10). It also yielded similar results: the impact of achievement orientation on leader effectiveness was significant ($\beta = 0.15$; $p < 0.10$), while the impact of self-monitoring on leader effectiveness was not significant ($\beta = 0.06$; $p = 0.42$). These results indicate that self-monitoring is not associated with leader effectiveness (Hypothesis 1 was not supported), yet provide initial support for the positive relationship between achievement orientation and leader effectiveness (Hypothesis 2 was supported). The small R^2 changes of 0.04 and 1.10 do not necessarily imply that our findings make little contribution

to the literature; rather, they demonstrate that leader effectiveness is a large construct, and its relationship with other traits should also be explored.

4 DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study investigates the relationship between self-monitoring, achievement orientation, and leader effectiveness. We found that achievement orientation has a significant positive correlation with leader effectiveness. On the other hand, self-monitoring does not have a significant relationship with leader effectiveness.

This research contributes to leadership research by addressing the critics of Day and Schleicher (2006) and identifying other personality traits associated with effective leaders besides the so-called Big Five, although it does not explain the mechanism of how these traits actually affect leader effectiveness. The influences of general or cross-situational traits on leader effectiveness are likely to be more distant, although still significant (Zaccaro, 2007). Thus, future research should use more integrative models, which might include behavioural or situational aspects, in order to develop a more comprehensive picture of leadership.

Although this research finds that self-monitoring is not associated with leader effectiveness, it is, nonetheless, a meaningful contribution to the field of leadership studies. It contributes by showing that self-monitoring is a relevant trait to predict specific aspects of leader effectiveness, which is supported by the study results of Semadar et al. (2006). In this study we used a broad definition of leader effectiveness, which included both interpersonal and task-management aspects. Therefore, future research should focus on specific roles or tasks of a leader in order to investigate the effect of self-monitoring on the performance of such work.

This study also advances current knowledge in arguing that research on self-monitoring in the field of leadership should focus more on authenticity than effectiveness. In alignment with previous research, the chameleonic effect of high self-monitoring may not always be perceived as effective (Day & Schleicher, 2006; Oh et al., 2013). In spite of the association between self-monitoring and behavioural flexibility that benefits leaders by allowing them to adjust themselves to the situation they are in, their flexibility might also be perceived as inconsistency by their subordinates. Genuineness or authenticity is important for leaders in showing their true selves and their values and vision to subordinates in an effective manner (Ilies et al., 2005). In addition, the authenticity of a leader also increases the trust of subordinates towards them (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Furthermore, the trust that subordinates have towards their leaders is correlated with subordinates' perception of leader effectiveness (Norman et al., 2010).

There are also two demographic variables which are associated with leader effectiveness: number of children and frequency of interaction between leaders and subordinates. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Wallace and Young (2008), which found that the presence of children can increase one's productivity in the workplace. This might be caused by the work value shifting from intrinsic to extrinsic in employees with children; that salary and compensation (including benefits for children) have become more valuable than the satisfaction from doing the work itself (Johnson, 2005).

The finding of a relationship between the frequency of interaction between leaders and subordinates and leader effectiveness is not surprising if one refers back to the definition of leadership itself. The higher the frequency of interaction between leaders and subordinates, the greater the opportunity for leaders to establish productive relationships with subordinates, and to direct them in achieving the objectives of the company, as well as being perceived as more effective by those subordinates (Harvey et al., 2006). Further, good superior–subordinate relationship quality can produce good outcomes for a company, among which are increased commitment to the organisation and reduced level of turnover (Joo, 2010). However, there is no significant relationship found between type of industry and

leader effectiveness. This shows that the study results can be generalised across at least two types of service industry: finance and hospitality.

The research shows that achievement orientation is a trait that is associated with leader effectiveness. The findings of this research can be used by companies as a consideration in selecting and promoting employees to leadership positions. Companies are expected to recruit employees who have the potential to be leaders, and leading positions in the company can be held by employees who are competent and able to bring advancement to the company.

As with all other studies, this study also has several limitations. First, this is a cross-sectional study in which we gathered data only at one single time. This design cannot explain cause and effect of correlations. Nevertheless, cross-sectional studies remain among the most used in organisational research for their ease and efficiency. We also used two techniques to minimise the effect of common method bias in this study: different sources of data and counterbalancing.

Furthermore, our findings cannot describe the relationships between these two traits and leader effectiveness for different management levels. This was as a result of the difference of structure that each company had, which complicated our attempts to categorise managers. Management levels should form a subsequent research focus because each level has different tasks and roles; there might be different concepts of leader effectiveness at each management level. Leader effectiveness in lower-level management relies more on individual differences, while for higher-level leaders, leader effectiveness is as much a function of environmental factors as it is leaders' individual differences (Hoffman et al., 2011). As an aspect of individual differences, traits might thus lend more impact to lower-level leaders than to higher-level leaders. Hence, further studies should be conducted on different levels of management in order to see whether these traits are only associated with certain levels of management or can be generalised for all management levels.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine whether self-monitoring and achievement orientation traits are positively associated with leader effectiveness. Our findings suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between achievement orientation and leader effectiveness; leaders exhibiting a high degree of achievement orientation are perceived as more effective by their subordinates than those exhibiting low achievement orientation levels. However, no significant relationship was found between self-monitoring and leader effectiveness. These findings contribute to the limited research about the relationships between leadership effectiveness and the traits of self-monitoring and achievement orientation. These findings also have practical implications for recruitment and training programmes in companies. Further studies should be conducted in order to better characterise the concept of leader effectiveness.

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