

EXPLORING ACADEMICS' SELF-LEADERSHIP, INDIVIDUAL BASIC VALUES, AND FOLLOWERSHIP BEHAVIORS: THE CASE OF THREE HEIS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT: *The delivery of quality education continues to be a mandate within higher academic institutions within the country. Government quality initiatives put more pressure on higher education institutions to deliver quality learning. With the corresponding escalating accountabilities, academic leaders are expecting more from their followers. However, evidence from the existing literature points to the fact that limited attention has been accorded to followership within leadership research (Busari et al. 2019). This study looked into the dynamics of followers' behavior within the school context. More than two hundred academics participated in the study, where descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling were used to organize the data gathered. The degree of predictive influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable was established to come up with a best-fit model for courageous followership behaviors and infer implications. The result of the study adds to the growing literature on followership by providing a new dimension to the phenomenon of followership within another cultural setting.*

Keywords: courageous followership behavior, individual basic values, self-leadership strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational quality and excellence do not rest solely on the shoulders of their leaders. The delivery of quality education continues to be a mandate within higher academic institutions within the country. Government quality initiatives put more pressure on higher education institutions to deliver quality learning. Within academic organizations, academic administrators are under pressure as they are enjoined by the government to work with other educational stakeholders to develop human capital through quality initiatives. Clearly, it is a task not only for the leaders but also a collective effort by all members and across all levels of the organization. With the corresponding escalating accountabilities, academic leaders are expecting more from their followers. To this end, the individual work outputs are very significant. Accordingly, follower behaviors are vital components of the leadership process [1], especially within the hierarchical structure of higher education institutions, where many individuals find themselves more often a follower than a leader.

However, evidence from the existing literature points to the fact that limited attention has been accorded to followership even if, to some point, everyone is a follower [2]. To this end, there is a need to understand followers' roles and relationships with leaders and with other followers within the school context. Like in any organization, followers exist in academic institutions as long as the leaders exist. Breakthroughs or breakdowns in organizations are attributable to both the leaders and the followers [3]. In fact, it has been pointed out that leaders contribute a maximum of twenty percent only, compared to the followers' contribution of eighty percent to organizational success [4]. It goes without saying that the effectiveness of leaders is to a great extent dependent on the quality of their followers.

Kellerman [5] emphasized that what followers do and do not do is not dependent on their leaders but is also a reaction to a range of different stimuli. This study assumed that individuals can be exemplary followers and that there are internal and external stimuli that affect the way they follow. The result of the study adds to the growing literature on followership by providing a new dimension to the phenomenon of followership within another cultural setting.

The study aimed to explain the influence of individual basic values and self-leadership strategies on the manifestation of courageous followership behavior among academic employees. The study attempted to determine a best-fit model to determine which of the two variables exerts the most influence on courageous followership behaviors.

This paper is supported by the following:

Chaleff's Courageous Followership Model; Schwartz's Theory of Values, and Manz's Self-leadership Concept

Exemplary followership behaviors have been attributed to impacting organizational processes and quality organizational outcomes. The followership model [6] rests on the platform of the courageous relationship between followers and leaders who share a common purpose. He propositioned that exemplary followers exhibit the courage to do what is necessary, including standing up for one's own beliefs, especially if they conflict with the views of others. Chaleff identified five dimensions in which a follower exhibits courageous followership: the courage to assume responsibility, to serve, to challenge, to participate in transformation, and to take moral action. The theory of values [7] postulates that, at a more basic level, values form a continuum of related motivations, which gives rise to the circular structure of ten motivationally distinct types of values that are either congruent or in conflict with each other. Schwartz described values as varying in importance and serving as a guiding principle in life. He further stated that the pursuit of one value may result in conflict with other values but congruence with another.

The concept of self-leadership [8] is the notion that understanding as much about oneself makes one know and appreciate others better. Self-leadership aims to increase personal effectiveness through improved performance [9]. Self-leadership includes three distinct but complementary sets of strategies. Behavior-focused, which intends to increase self-awareness to manage behaviors involving unpleasant tasks; natural reward, which focuses attention on the positive perceptions and experiences that are realized from a given task or activity; and constructive thought patterns, which deal with the creation or alteration of cognitive thought processes to positively impact performance [10].

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2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a descriptive causal-comparative design to identify causes or consequences between the variables. Also known as ex-post facto design, causal-comparative research is a non-experimental method of investigating a cause-and-effect relationship after an action or event has already occurred [11]. Three survey questionnaires were adapted and revised to suit the needs of the study. The Short Schwartz Value Survey (SSVS), the Self-Leadership Questionnaire, a self-assessment scale to measure employment of self-leadership strategies adapted and revised, and the Followership Profile, developed to measure Chaleff's five behavioral categories. The questionnaires contained the ten basic values, which the respondents are required to rank according to their value priority, fifteen indicators for self-leadership strategies, and twenty-four items to examine courageous followership behaviors. The instruments were content validated by experts and tested, and they showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.720 for individual basic values, 0.815 for self-leadership strategies, and 0.799 for followership behaviors. Applying Cochran's equation, a total of 270 academic employees were randomly selected. Descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling were applied to determine the extent to which the hypothesized model is consistent with the data gathered and to come up with a best-fit model for courageous followership behaviors, and infer implications. Qualitative data through key informant

interviews was also gathered to supplement some quantitative findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Mean Summary of the Perceived level of influence of the Individual Basic Values

Individual Basic Values	Mean	SD	Description
Self-transcendence	3.59	0.507	The value strongly guides the principle in life
Self-enhancement	2.76	0.589	The value moderately guides the principle in life
Openness to Change	3.29	0.550	The value moderately guides the principle in life
Conservation	3.67	0.477	The value strongly guides the principle in life

Data from Table 1 shows that for the opposing higher order values self-transcendence and self-enhancement, the higher mean is self-transcendence ($M=3.59$, $SD=.507$) and for the opposing higher values openness to change and conservation, the higher mean is conservation ($M=3.67$, $SD=.477$). The influence of self-transcendence as opposed to self-enhancement, could be attributed to the roles of academic employees in the facilitation of learning because in academic organizations, the measure of success is the production of quality of learners and not monetary profit. Putting the welfare of the learners, or transcending selfish concerns is a trait observable between academic faculty and the students. These findings are supported by Schwartz's theory which suggests that there is an association between the dominance of personal values and occupation. The respondents of this study are mostly in social occupations which have been found to give more importance to the values of benevolence than to power and achievement [12].

The higher-order value conservation was perceived to guide the principle in life more than the value of openness to change implying that academic employees' culture still strongly influences their values. The results are also supported by the findings that there are similarities between the values that emphasize conservation and the stability of career anchors [13]. According to the study, individuals are more likely to comply with rules and norms to prevent professional loss. The findings that values also influence followership behaviors but in differing degrees are also corroborated by statements from key informants:

"For me, my values are very important because it would affect your work."

"You have to value patience, commitment, and dedication in your work."

"In my work since I am dealing with financial matters, you should be honest and have integrity."

"Basic values are important like respect, patience, tolerance especially if you are irritated, but you need to tolerate it."

"For me, change is more important, as I am not a very traditional person."

Table 2: Mean Summary of the Respondents' Assessment of their Self-leadership Strategies

Self-leadership Strategies	Mean	SD	Description
Behavior-focused	3.06	0.518	Self-leadership strategy is used some of the time
Natural Rewards	3.16	0.626	Self-leadership strategy is used some of the time
Constructive Thought Patterns	3.14	0.606	Self-leadership strategy is used some of the time
Overall mean	3.12	.432	Self-leadership strategy is used some of the time

The overall mean of the academic employees' assessment of their use of the self-leadership strategies shows that generally, the 'self-leadership strategy is used some of the time.' A closer look at the data in Table 16 reveals that of the three self-leadership strategies, the highest mean is natural rewards ($M=3.16, SD=.626$), followed by constructive thought patterns ($M=3.14, SD=.606$), and behavior-focused strategy ($M=3.06, SD=.518$). The results indicate that academic employees do not always use self-leadership strategies in the performance of their tasks implying that the academics have a positive perception of their tasks and focus more on the pleasant aspects rather than the negative. This may be due to the fact that to them, the job they are performing is not 'unpleasant' and the performance does not necessitate the application of self-leadership strategies, or that the employees' individual traits assure performance without the need to self-motivate. This is supported by the study of school principals where they demonstrated a weakness in self-leadership capacity but with no correlation between self-leadership capacity and student performance [14]. This is also supported by a study that reported that situational factors such as perceived stressful environments are among the reasons that affect the tendency to use self-leadership among individuals. [15]. The performance of many academic tasks requires the employees the use motivating strategies. These are confirmed by some of the statements from key informants.

"I just perform the tasks even if I do not like it. I would first take a break such as go out with my friends. I would secure information about the task so that I will learn to appreciate it."

"I practice self-discipline to perform my task no matter what. I utilize my own time to work the task to finish it. I just eat food and listen to music while working."

"I have performed unpleasant tasks many times already. I just don't think about it, rather I just work on it in order to finish it."

"I also look forward to sleeping after the work is done."

The data from Table 3 displays that in general, the respondents' courageous followership behaviors are moderately manifested as shown by the mean ($M=3.20, SD=.405$). The data show that the dimension of courage to assume responsibility reflects the highest mean ($M=3.43, SD=.526$), and the dimension of courage to challenge reflects the lowest mean ($M=2.92, SD=.668$). The overall findings reflect the professionalism that is inherent in academic employees and imply that responsibility is taken seriously among the different ranks. In academic professions, it is second nature to be responsible.

Table 3: Mean Summary of the Respondents' Manifestation of Courageous Followership Behavior

Followership behaviors	Mean	SD	Description
Courage to Assume Responsibility	3.43	.526	Moderately manifested
Courage to Serve	3.14	.581	Moderately manifested
Courage to Participate in Transformation	3.22	.599	Moderately manifested
Courage to Challenge	2.92	.668	Moderately manifested
Courage to Take Moral Action	3.04	.599	Moderately manifested
Overall Mean	3.20	.405	Moderately manifested

The courage to challenge is the lowest mean which may be attributed to trust giving them no reason to challenge their leaders. This implied trust in the leadership found support in the study which presents that trust and integrity in leadership were perceived to affect followership. The manifestation of the followership behavior leaning towards an exemplary followership style is presented in a study where it was also positively and significantly related to job performance [16]. The study also revealed that leaders who value and acknowledge the contributions of their followers produce effective followers [17]. The findings of the study were validated by some statements from key informants in the study.

"My leaders are my superior and, they are the authority over me. It is their task to oversee us in our work so, we have to respect them."

"I show that I am willing to serve my leaders even if they are difficult to follow by exercising patience."

"If ever there are things that I am made to do that I am against, I will talk with my supervisor."

"I will not do anything that will compromise my principles and will find ways to do what is right."

Structural Model that Best Explains Courageous Followership Behaviors

Structural equation modeling (SEM) guides many researchers across disciplines. There are three latent variables in this study: courageous followership behavior, is the endogenous variable; while individual basic values and self-leadership strategies are the exogenous variables. Evaluation of the fitness made use of at least one of the three categories as recommended by experts [18] namely absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit. According to the criteria, for the absolute fit category, the root mean square residual (RMSEA) should be < 0.05 ; the goodness of fit index (GFI) should be > 0.90 . For the incremental fit category, the comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) should be $>.90$; The Parsimonious fit calculation should be $< .30$.

The hypothesized model proposes that courageous followership behavior is the effect of individual basic values and self-leadership strategies. The resulting indices presented in Table 4 show that the hypothesized model passed all the criteria for acceptability and is also the best-fit model using the seven criteria for goodness-of-fit. The hypothesized model fits well with the observed data.

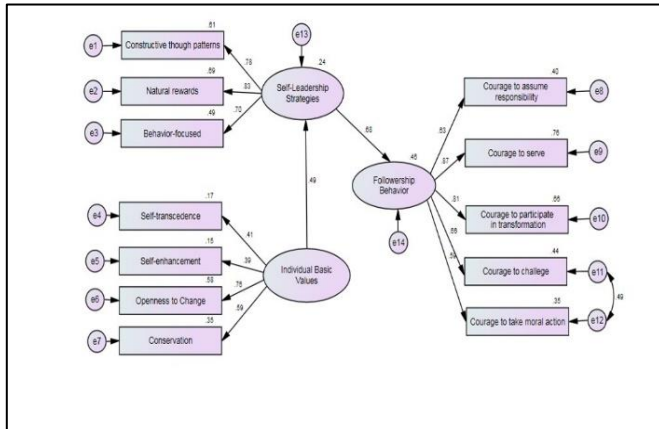


Figure 1. Illustration of Hypothesized Model: Best Fit Model

Figure 1 shows the structural model with path coefficients generated through structural equation modeling. The generated hypothesized model confirmed the assumption that self-leadership strategies caused the manifestation of courageous followership behaviors among academics. The SEM analysis showed a significant positive relationship between self-leadership ($\beta=.531, p=.000$) and courageous followership behaviors. It is observable from the figure that self-leadership strategies are both a cause and an effect variable. The figure further discloses that self-leadership strategies ($r=.68$) explain 46% of the manifestation of courageous followership behaviors. This is supported by a study that presented that self-leadership influences organizational work behavior and work engagement [19]. The results are also corroborated in a study that finds that self-leadership had a significant effect on the innovative behaviors of teachers [20]. This was also formerly reported by another research that self-leadership was instrumental in the extraordinary achievements of individuals [21]. Figure 1 also shows that the variable *individual basic values* do not contribute significantly to the courageous followership behavior of the academic employees ($\beta=.059, p=.282$). The generated model showed that the individual basic values do not directly affect followership behaviors, but rather, it explains the use of self-leadership strategies. In fact, twenty-four (24%) of the use of self-leadership strategies is explained by individual basic values. Experts recommend deleting from the measurement model any item having a factor loading of less than .6 and an R^2 or squared correlation of less than .40 [22]. However, the author also stated that the researcher may not do so if the fitness indices which is the standard index category, and the required level of acceptance have already been achieved. It has been reported that among the important factors affecting followership is the followers' attitude itself [23]. This implies that providing personal development to academic employees including the leaders will lead to the development of followership behaviors. The importance of followership behaviors is also supported by the findings of a study that reported that courageous followership behaviors play a constructive role in leadership development which re-downs to organizational success and growth [24].

The findings of this study can serve as a basis to intensify personal development initiatives among academics to cultivate exemplary followership behaviors.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Followership behavior is important to any organization as it is attributed to impact organizational processes and quality organizational outcomes. Nonetheless, situations where employees possess strong self-leadership skills, allow for the realization of courageous followership behaviors, implying the significance of understanding much about oneself to know and appreciate others better. However, self-leadership is influenced by individual basic values which suggests that strengthening individual basic values among academic employees will result in higher self-leadership capacity. Also, the impact of self-leadership to followership behaviors as shown by the structural model put forward the argument for the need to develop self-leadership strategies to enhance and cultivate courageous followership behaviors among the employees within academic organizations.

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