

Reviewing Public Sector Leadership

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Abstract: *Leadership is an essential component of public administration. There are variety of leadership dimensions, which evolves to highlight effective forms of leadership, in ensuring the stability of the government's administrative machinery. Using Quinn's (1988) dimensions of leadership, which are applicable to the current situation, 20 items were tested for validity using confirmatory factor analysis from the perspective of managerial groups and professionals from several ministries participated in the study. According to the findings, 17 measurement items have been validated, which demonstrates that two types of leadership exist in ensuring the organization's stability by taking into account the two existing internal and external environments. Failure to maintain control over these two environments will have an impact on the public sector's performance and add to the administration's instability. The ongoing effort to shape leadership must continue. The practical and methodological issues in relation to public leadership constructs are discussed in light of these findings.*

Keywords: Leadership, control, flexibility, stability, task, people, adaptive

1. Introduction

Leaders are identified as organisational variables, and previous research has shown that leaders have an impact on the behavioural traits of employees, including positive, passive-aggressive conduct, deviant behaviour, and incivility especially in the public organisation setting (Avey, Palanski, & Walumbwa, 2010; Ghosh, Dierkes, & Falletta, 2011; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). The responsibilities of leaders in the public sector are varied to accommodate institutional and public needs (Yang, 2011). Along with a clear vision, trust, good communication, involvement, and encouragement, they also have an excellent culture and a knowledge-based attitude that are unique to them (Feeney & DeHart-Davis, 2009; Fei & Rainey, 2003). As a result, leaders support any requirements for public accountability. They have a positive attitude toward preserving the bonds among the organisational members and display financial control behaviour (Bolin & Heatherly, 2001).

Quinn, (1988) suggestion for leadership has received the most attention (Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). It consists of control and adaptable leadership shows dynamism and leaders respond to environmental needs while also having strong interpersonal skills. A leader may provide the best example and acts as a role model. Leaders are frequently used as a point of reference because of their involvement in performance evaluation. They act under the rules established, and they frequently exhibit admirable behaviour. As a result, leaders can regulate employee conduct.

Since leaders are the most influential people at work and are essential for effective role performance and role conceptualization, leadership is known to have good effects. Mehmood & Arif (2011), Ouellette, Lazaer, & Chambers (1999), Zhihong, Wei, & Xiaoying (2013) have all made this claim. Leaders' presence in the public sector offers both technical guidance and emotional support. Although studies have made use of different leadership styles as beneficial research instruments because of their high validity and reliability, it is questionable whether the tool is relevant for the current study given the context of Malaysia's public sector environment. Thus, it is crucial to look at the leadership framework in the context of Malaysia's public sector.

2. Literature Review

According to Quinn's leadership paradigm, the study examined various leadership behaviours (1988). Although this leadership model has been designed decades ago, it still shows the successful aspects that correspond with the present requirements of leadership. It combines leadership conduct with leadership qualities and a distinctive leadership style (Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). According to Quinn, leaders have two key roles: (1) Flexibility; the socio-emotional or maintenance role, and (2) Control; the structuring, organising, goal-setting, and controlling role. Control orientation is known as initiating structure in interaction, whilst flexibility is known as thoughtful behaviour (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Leaders that exhibit thoughtful behaviour care about people, their well-being and self-esteem. This is essential for the public sector because of the enormous duties assigned for achieving social and economic objectives, which call for responsiveness and effectiveness in task implementation through adequate direction (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

Identified as two related attributes are flexibility and control in leadership. According to Taormina (2005), a leader's attitude should contain consideration for others, progressive stability, strategic thinking, and confidence in others. Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander (2006) stated how a leader can employ emotional intelligence and show it through self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills, and empathy. They stressed the importance of flexible and controlled leadership toward workplace job attitudes. To achieve a balance in leadership behaviour, these attitudes are crucial (Zhihong et al., 2013). Therefore, it is beneficial for leaders to use their leadership style because it improves cognitive values. It entails observing, interpreting, and understanding the surroundings so that the leader can respond and take appropriate action. The many leadership philosophies span from participative to authoritative roles, and the leader chooses whether to carry out the duty themselves or assign it to a subordinate and enabling leaders to set objectives and improve the routes to achieving those objectives (Dhiman, 2021; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2010; Tarplett, 2011; Zhihong et al., 2013).

Similar to the reinforcement theory, the strategy calls on leaders to employ specific methods to promote desired behaviours. Regarding the personnel and their personalities, leaders in such a situation might choose from a variety of approaches, such as directive, supporting, achievement-oriented, or participative attitudes (Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin, Subramaniam, & Ahmad Said Alshuaibi, 2012; Rauib, Anantharaman, Cyril, & Murad, 2010). Control and flexibility are two common leadership philosophies that place more emphasis on involvement and authorization. Authoritarian leaders are in charge of achieving organisational objectives while also issuing orders and making choices. They place more emphasis on status, regulations, and processes, as well as occasionally punishment. Although they confer with

others when deciding on a plan of action, participative leaders allow subordinates to participate in decision-making (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

It had been highlighted that the integration of flexible and controlling leadership adhered to the paternalistic leadership perspective. The paternalistic style of leadership, which combines authoritative/control and manipulative/flexible leadership tendencies, can be described as father-like leadership. Additionally, it shows how important leaders to consider high-power distance cultures and emphasise collectivism. Leaders are therefore perceived as close friends who offer guidance to staff on a variety of topics, including personal concerns (Zhihong et al., 2013).

Control and adaptable leadership are important in controlling the interactions and relationships between peers and outsiders (Yulk, 2010). Both of these leadership styles exhibit adaptable leadership that is stable and demonstrates positive interactions amongst peers, superiors, and subordinates. Additionally, this behaviour promotes leaders to practise good communication by spending time with external clients including customers, suppliers, subcontractors, employees of government agencies, notable members of the community, and managers from other organisations.

According to the literature, a leader's actions appear to have a significant and lasting effect on both the organisation and the community. Effective leadership is measured by the group's awareness of and performance of the primary job assigned with success (Fei & Rainey, 2003; Young & Dulewicz, 2005). We can evaluate a leader's efficacy using a variety of parameters. The parameters could include elements like morale, job satisfaction, absenteeism, and output (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). The government of Malaysia has made Institut Tadbir Awam Negara (INTAN), a system that aids in creating effective leaders, available, which offers leadership development mentorship and apprenticeship programmes (INTAN, 2012). The majority of employees concur that they need effective leadership to make risky decisions, and flexible and controlled leadership behaviours are traits of an effective leader. Leaders are frequently required to be adept at fostering group productivity, competence, and motivation. At some point, leaders must take charge of the group, the individuals inside it, and even themselves (Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Dhiman, 2021; Yulk, 2010).

3. Research Methodology

This study employed the quantitative cross-sectional survey method. The target audience is public administrators in Malaysia's federal ministries. Public administrators are a highly trained group of professionals. They are classified as highly autonomous employees who are held accountable as public-sector leaders and managers. They possess the characteristics of effective public managers and leaders. This study also used a systematic random sampling method to select sample members from a larger population, and only 410 of the 447 completed surveys were used in the final analysis. (Quinn, 1988) created 20 leadership assessment items (Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is carried out to show evidence of sufficient construct validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000); the convergent (related to other constructs) and discriminant validity (unrelated to other constructs) were conducted (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006).

4. Findings

The majority of respondents (58.5%) were between the ages of 31 and 40. Female respondents constituted 64.4% of the total, while male respondents constituted approximately 34.4%. The largest group of respondents (77.8%) were married, and the majority (95.4%) were Muslim, with a Bachelor's Degree (62.2%). According to the findings, the majority of respondents agreed that leadership behaviour was highly observed. All items had mean values ranging from 2 (rarely) to 4 (very often). CFA was used to assess the validity of the instruments, and the goodness-of-fit (GOF) indices were used to ensure model fitness and the unidimensional approach of the measures. Following that, the measurement model's validity and reliability were assessed. If the goodness-of-fit indices were not within the recommended level, further evaluation to refine the model was recommended. Maximum likelihood (ML) was used as a guideline to detect specification errors during the model re-specification process to improve overall model fit. Furthermore, modification indices (MI) have a high covariance and a high regression weight as potential deletions (Hair et al., 2006). The interpretation of data fit in the model is required for goodness-of-fit testing. Absolute fit indices and incremental fit indices were used in this study. According to the preliminary CFA results, some of the items have low factor loadings (.50), indicating that they did not achieve unidimensional validity and were not correlated to the latent construct.

As a result, few of the items were removed. The high value of Modification Indices (MI) (above 15) indicated redundant items in the model. It also suggested that the model's fitness could be improved through respecification via factor correlation. The outcomes of model re-specification via item deletions and correlating items. The results indicated an increase in the goodness-of-fit indices and a better fit to the data. The new model's results also showed that the absolute fit measures, GFI, RMSEA, incremental fit measures, NFI, CFI, TLI, and parsimonious fit measure (Cmin/df) all exceeded the recommended value and adequately fit the data. The revised control leadership measurement model, which eliminates two items to achieve the items' unidimensionality (total 9 items). One item was removed from the revised measurement model of flexibility leads to improving the items' unidimensionality (a total of 11 items). Thus, the study has shown the presence of construct validity as the Fitness Indexes for the constructs have attained the required level.

Table 1: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	χ^2	χ^2/df	P	NFI	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Control	5.016	0.836	0.542	0.998	0.997	1.000	1.000	0.000
Flexibility	34.608	1.442	0.074	0.990	0.984	0.994	0.997	0.033

Table 2 further shows that the magnitude of all the variables and their indicators are above the reasonable loadings (Standard Regression Weights) of 0.30, which indicates the existence of convergent validity (Ford, Maccallum, & Tait, 1986). The estimated parameters are all also in the same direction. The critical ratios (C. R.) for all the estimated parameters exceeded the benchmark of ± 1.96 , which were statistically significant; and the standard errors (S.E.) were not excessively large or small.

Table 2: The Magnitude, Direction and Statistical Significance of the Estimated Parameters between Latent Variables and their Indicators

Indicator		Latent Variables	Standard Regression Weight	SE	CR	P
Monitor compliance with the rules	←	Stability	0.762			
Compares records, reports and so on to detect discrepancies	←	Stability	0.773	0.058	16.321	***
Maintain tight logical control	←	Stability	0.762	0.052	15.090	***
Get the unit to meet expected goals	←	Task	0.875	0.045	19.997	***
Sees that the unit delivers on stated goals	←	Task	0.892	0.045	20.818	***
Clarifies the unit's priorities and direction	←	Task	0.874			
Makes the unit's role very clear	←	Task	0.886	0.037	26.002	***
Treats each individual in a sensitive caring way	←	People	0.809	0.040	21.565	***
Shows empathy and concern including with subordinates	←	People	0.903	0.038	26.213	***
Develop a consensual resolution to openly expressed differences	←	People	0.901			
Surfaces key differences among group members and then works participatively to resolve them	←	People	0.906	0.039	27.813	***
Facilitate consensus building in the work unit	←	People	0.871	0.036	26.223	***
Experiments with new concepts	←	Adaptive	0.850	0.042	222.240	***
Does problem-solving in creative and clever ways	←	Adaptive	0.939	0.040	25.203	***
Comes up with inventive ideas	←	Adaptive	0.850			
Influences decisions made at higher levels	←	Adaptive	0.528	0.080	10.832	***
Get access to people at a higher level	←	Adaptive	0.522	0.071	10.722	***

Discriminant validity examines whether concepts or measurements are assumed to be unrelated. Within the discussion of evaluating test validity, Campbell & Fiske (1959) introduced the concept of discriminant validity. Although there is no standard value for discriminant validity, a result less than 0.85 indicates that the two scales have discriminant validity. A result greater than 0.85, on the other hand, indicates that the two constructs heavily overlap. The results showed that the constructs had a correlation value of less than 0.85, indicating that discriminant validity existed between the constructs. As a result, the scales developed for the study have good discriminant validity. The findings also revealed the presence of criterion validity. A researcher could use criterion validity to predict any relationship between the measure and the behavioural outcomes. Concurrent validity was used in this study because data on scales and criterion variables were collected at the same time. Based on the findings, the study obtained criterion validity because the correlation analysis value was greater than 0.50, indicating that there was a correlation between variables. In this

study, there was no evidence of a strong correlation between any pair of variables. All correlation coefficient values, however, were significant at the 0.01 level, indicating significant relationships between constructs.

5. Discussion

The importance of leadership has been emphasised because task implementation necessitates leaders' monitoring and control. Employee effectiveness cannot be maximised if work is kept separate from leadership. Any imbalances and discrepancies can be identified and corrected by leaders. In this case, the Quinn leadership framework, as cited by Hooijberg and Choi (2001), was used, which consists of control and flexible leadership. It provides a thorough examination of the leadership behaviours required in public organisations. In discussions on contributing to leadership behaviour in the context of specific public organisations, scholars such as Ouellette et al. (1999) and Zhihong et al. (2013) supported Quinn's ideas. Quinn (1988) defines flexible leadership as the organisation focusing on two critical aspects: people-orientation and adaptation. Many organisations regard these two critical aspects as indicators of success and effective leadership behaviour (Hooijberg & Choi, 2001).

People orientation demonstrates leaders' ability to support their employees, demonstrate accommodation and support. Leaders demonstrate concern by being sensitive to their followers' needs and conditions, sensitivity to people's problems, fairness to coworkers, politeness, respect, dignity, friendship, mutual trust, warmth, rapport, and justice. Leaders also provide guidance and support by encouraging people to follow procedures, creating a harmonious working environment, and guiding them to personal advancement, growth, and achievement. Additionally, leaders have been observed to exhibit decent, compassionate, informative, and encouraging behaviour (Nghah, Samiidy, & Hali, 2020; Nusair, Ababneh, & Bae, 2012; Van Ginkel & Van Knippenberg, 2012).

Another trait of flexible leadership is adaptability, which refers to organisational strategies that are beneficial for both short and long-term growth. Adaptive orientation recognises the ability of organisations to operate in a changing environment. To create organisational responsiveness, leaders must emphasise both the internal and external environments. Strategies are developed to take into account environmental factors, allowing organisations to cope with changes and delegate as a responsive organisation. Organizational norms and culture, ethical values, and human resource management strategies have been identified as important efforts among those that have been introduced and adopted (Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Rehman, Shafique, Khawaja, Saeed, & Kalyar, 2021).

Nonetheless, the organisational culture and norms have been identified as the most important strategy. Leaders are expected to promote work culture and act under the functions and duties of public institutions, allowing employees to develop emotional strength when dealing with customers. Previous research has shown that adopted cultures are always prepared and self-disciplined, such as "have a nice day" (HAND) and controlled emotions. The approach has made it possible for employees to be more responsive and aware of both negative and positive behaviour within a working system (Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin et al., 2012; Lashley, 2002). As a result, stability orientation examines what the leader does and how he/she behaves in response to the demands of the situation, including subordinate expectations, perception, and the potential use of his/her abilities and experiences. This style, which includes autocratic, transactional, and transformational leadership, is the most developed situational variable factor

in leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, stability orientation may necessitate a good fit between leadership style and organisational context (Hunt, 1979; Johnson & Klee, 2007).

Aside from flexible leadership, the public sector environment also includes control leadership. Control leadership enables leaders to enforce organisational strategies, programmes, rules, and regulations. According to studies, organisations typically focus on control orientation leadership for the benefit and success of the organisation. Within the context of this discussion, control leadership behaviour includes both stability orientation and task orientation (Choi & Choi, 2009). Task orientation, on the other hand, is where leaders are concerned with employees' tasks and ability to perform. Close supervision is required for this leadership orientation to monitor tasks and maximise the individual's adherence to procedures. Leaders typically use coercion, reward, and legitimate power to influence individual performance and behaviour (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). Public organisations have systematic task governance; each individual is given a complete job preview before they start, allowing them to mentally and physically prepare for the job. Thus, the governance of individual tasks falls under the purview of public leadership, which is responsible for ensuring that employees' workloads are manageable (Stouten et al., 2010).

On the practical note, it is presumed that flexible and control leadership are considered to be carried out with wisdom, diplomacy, and ethics. Otherwise, it is suggested that the aim of stifling may develop a sense among employees, where they may feel to be used as an engine for increasing productivity. This approach can harm the employee's personal and cause the individuals to feel dissatisfied and deviant (Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin et al., 2012; Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2011). Thus, it is vital to emphasize the development of control and flexible leadership through appropriate training and development initiatives because previous studies have highlighted significant relationship between leadership and employees behavioral aspects (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004; Fauziah et al., 2011).

On the methodological aspect, the study examined the leadership perspective based on managerial observations which are also leaders and supervisors. However, management often has to protect the organization and avoid statements that may negatively affect its reputation. Therefore, the validity of the reports provided is doubtful. Furthermore, conducting the study in a specific sector indeed enabled us to validate external factors that are correlated with different types of jobs and organizations, however it also created limitations on the ability to generalize the findings. Thus, it is suggested that future studies should be broadened to various job categories and ministries and extended to public organisation at the state and local level, in order to investigate the findings for the comparative analysis and investigation of differences between perspectives (Chua, 2011; Sekaran, 2003).

6. Conclusion

In this study, both control and flexible leadership have been found to be effective and accommodative of the organization's planned and emergent activities. Literature identified that control and flexibility leadership encompasses desirable leadership behavior, such as servant leadership and participative leadership, through empowering and developing people as well as by providing direction. Besides, due to environmental pressures, public organizations may also need to undergo several changes, like venturing into partnership, which can facilitate organizational objectives. Thus, control and flexibility leadership are recognized as desirable leadership behaviors that enhances the organizational effectiveness and efficiency, which can further assist in accommodating organizational and environmental change.

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