

TESTING THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL NATURE OF “NEW LEADERSHIP” IN A NON-WESTERN CONTEXT: THE CASE OF MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Past researchers in leadership studies have observed a shift in the dimensions of new leadership behavior such as transformational and transactional styles. For the past few decades, leadership styles continue to be one of the most exciting issues for organizations. Many studies have attempted to explore its effect on work outcomes such as employee's commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and performances. Leadership styles exhibited by the managers have often been known as the essence of leaders' behavior which is the major driving force behind this continuous recognition of employees' behavior in the management literatures. Hence, a better understanding of the dimensionality of leadership styles is needed to facilitate further theoretical development and practical measurement of the construct. The purpose of the research reported here was to test empirically and to validate a conceptualization of two forms of leadership styles known as transformational and transactional, that consists of four and five dimensions, respectively. Data was gathered through a survey using a structured questionnaire to employees in Malaysia with a total of 146 respondents. A series of tests such as factor analysis, correlation, and reliability analysis was conducted to confirm that the instrument is valid (content, construct, convergent, discriminant and nomological) as well as reliable. Implications regarding the value of conducting validity and reliability test for practitioners and researchers are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership can be practiced by any organization members regardless of their status in the organizations, and leadership is generally understood as the ability to exert influence over others (Peabody, 1962). Past studies (Ansari, 1990; Farrell & Schroder, 1999; Rajan & Krishnan, 2002) have conceptualized leadership as a social influence process from an organizationally designated superior to his or her subordinates.

In view of the fact that Malaysia's colonial heritage, coupled with more recent foreign direct investments by Japanese and Westerners, the traditional patterns of leadership and business management have been modified (Sin, 1991). It is evidenced that Malaysians' management styles and practices are being westernized especially in those working in manufacturing companies that reported directly to their foreign partners and/or bosses. In spite of the above statement, it has been found that Malaysian leaders are not expected to be self-serving such as placing their own interest ahead of the group, as they are still governed by their key cultural and religious values which