



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i2/9188>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i2/9188

Received: 17 December 2020, **Revised:** 19 January 2021, **Accepted:** 31 January 2021

Published Online: 22 February 2021

In-Text Citation: (Pey et al., 2021)

To Cite this Article: Pey, Y. S., Busari, A. H., Choi, L. J., & Hassan, Z. (2021). “Followership” - The Missing Puzzle in Educational Leadership Research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 904-923.

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Vol. 11, No. 2, 2021, Pg. 904 - 923

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www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

“Followership” - The Missing Puzzle in Educational Leadership Research

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, many scholars have begun to view followers as assets in understanding leadership. However, limited studies have explored the potential impact of followership on educational leadership, particularly in school settings. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to review the teachers' followership styles in literature from 1997 to 2018 in school settings with reference to the Kelley Followership Model. The findings have shown that most of the teachers are categorised as exemplary followers. This group of teachers acquired high scores in independent critical thinking skills and are actively engaged in school activities. Exemplary teachers may equip schools to improve and sustain their performance. Good followership can be strengthened by dyadic relationships between leaders and followers. This relationship is imperative as it shapes the development of pragmatic strategies that help to promote leadership effectiveness. The results benefit both school leaders and teachers in recognizing the value to cultivate a dignified leader-follower relationship.

Keywords: Followership, Followership Styles, Educational Leadership, School, Leader-Follower Relationship

Introduction

Over the past three decades, followership proposition started to penetrate the monopoly of leadership conceptual literature. Among the limited leadership study that referred to followers, Gronn & Ribbins (1996) for instance, affirmed the role of followers when they mentioned methodologies, such as ethnography and biography. However, Gronn (1999) failed to convince the people to recognise the role of followers in the leadership process despite the attempts to promote follower-centric leadership in his book. Till date, the empirical evidence based on followership-centric research is relatively small and inadequate (Carsten et al., 2016; Foti et al., 2017), especially in the educational leadership field (Crippen, 2012; Francis, 2015; Thody, 2003). There are limited studies that explored the potential impact of followership on educational leadership, particularly in school settings. This knowledge gap has warranted ongoing research efforts in educational followership field. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to illustrate the teachers' followership styles in school settings.