

Followers in the Transportation Industry

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares the follower profiles of transportation industry personnel with other industry groups, principally engineers and DOD personnel. In compiling the comparison, Chaleff's courageous follower behaviors are used to identify the profiles and identify similarities and diversities. In addition, the paper reports on comparative analysis for follower behaviors, locus of control and the Big Five personality factors from a pilot study.

INTRODUCTION

An essential goal for engineering managers in all industries is to create a productive environment that is profitable to the employer, satisfying to the manager and rewarding to the employee in a way that exceeds business and personal performance objectives. Part of that process is employee selection. Another part of that process is employee development. Understanding the employee inner drives is a key role in those two parts. Identification of factors that lead to employee satisfaction from both a hygiene and motivation [1], leads to reduced attrition and higher morale. Pursing a corporate consciousness relative to the concepts of follower behaviors, locus of control and Big Five personality factors has been noted to positively impact employee performance.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify the nature of the relationships of courageous follower behaviors [2] and locus of control as well as courageous followers and the Big Five Personality Factors. Strauser, Ketz and Keim [3] report that increasing an employee's ability to develop an internalized locus of control in a work setting could positively impact both performance and work personality. With a growing interest in exploring the leader-follower process, i.e., leadership, a broader

understanding of the relationship of personality, locus of control and follower behaviors would provide an expansion opportunity for the leader-member exchange discussion from a more dynamic and wholistic reference point.

As behavior is a choice and therefore the follower behaviors are a choice [4], being equipped with this understanding, employees will be able to make a more knowledgeable choice in self selecting their behaviors [5]. Much of the literature that does discuss the role of the follower only does so in relation to leadership [6] [7]. Chaleff says that "we are a in love with leadership and uncomfortable with followership, although the two are inseparable" [2]

PERSONALITY TRAIT INDICATORS

L. L. Thrustone is credited in some circles for the first mention of a Big-Five personality model in 1933 when he addressed the American Psychological Association in Chicago [8]. During the decades since, much factor analytic research has focused on personality trait theory [9]. The big-five framework is a hierarchical model of personality traits [10] of five abstract factors which represent personality. The factors are bipolar constructs (e.g., extraversion vs. Introversion) summarizing more specific facets and traits. Psychologists define the "Big Five" personality traits as dimensions of personality that are based on empirical investigations [11]. McCrae & John [12] consider the big-five framework to be a "unifying taxonomy" for the explaining related research whereas Goldberg [13] goes so far as a consensual structure indicating the level of respect the model has received among researchers.

The factors are often defined as follows [14]:

- Extraversion - having specific traits such as being talkative, energetic, and assertive.

- Agreeableness - traits like sympathetic, kind, and affectionate.
- Conscientiousness - tendency to be organized, thorough, and planning oriented.
- Neuroticism (a.k.a., Emotional Stability) - characterized by traits like tension, moodiness, and anxiety.
- Openness to Experience (a.k.a., Intellect or Intellect/Imagination) - having wide interests and being imaginative and insightful.

Research indicates that personality holds efficacy as a predictor of job performance [15]. Research points to the domain, conscientiousness as a preferred, valid predictor of performance in most jobs as well as for personnel selection [16]. Others include emotional stability and agreeableness [15]. Although empirical research seems to heavily favor conscientiousness for its primacy, Bowling [17] reports on meta-analyses findings indicating [13] personality traits have a causal relationship with job satisfaction and performance [18] [19].

This study applies the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) instrument to establish an individual's relative position on each of the bi-polar factors [20]. This instrument employs a sixty Likert style question format and uses an equal number of questions to address each factor. This test categorizes participants as high or low in each of the five domains or factors: Research supports the NEO-PI-R's construct validity for its domains and factors. Reliability of the NEO-PI-R has been assessed as satisfactory using a test-retest design [21]. A seven-year longitudinal study of the NEO-PI-R demonstrated long-term stability of the instrument [20].

The second personality trait indicator instrument used in this study is the locus of control. Strauser, Ketz and Keim [3], report on research supporting work personality as a significant predictor of locus of control. Rotter [22] is credited with the original locus of control concept which reflects a generalized belief concerning who or what influences events from internal to external control: internal control describes the belief that control of future outcomes resides primarily in oneself, an internal. On the other hand, external control refers to the expectancy that control is outside of oneself, either in the hands of powerful other people or due to fate/chance, an external [23]. According to Rotter [22], locus of control is belief in a person's abilities to control life events, i.e., locus of control is about the perception of control [3]. The theory of locus of control is derived from social learning theory and may be related to expectancy theory [24] in that reinforcement induces behavior [3].

Researchers have also described locus of control as worker belief in their ability to control workplace rewards [25] [26]. Research reports that internals seem to exhibit greater intrinsic motivation, be more achievement oriented, and report lower turnover intentions [27] [28], critical traits for the hiring manager. *Similarly*, Furnham

and Drakeley [29] find that locus of control is correlated significantly with job success [30] and correlates with strategic planning by executives [31]. As Furnham and Drakeley [29] suggest, however, it is the employers challenge to alter perceptions to take advantage of locus of control preferences to increase on-the-job satisfaction and motivation as a means for benefiting organizational morale.

The role of followers in the organizations is now becoming recognized as powerful contributors that enable, guide and limit leadership as contributors to organizational effectiveness) [2]. This study also employed The Followership Profile [32] to assess follower behaviors based on work by Chaleff [2]. Chaleff [2] contends that in order to be effective and perform at the highest level, followers must exercise certain behaviors that form a framework of five dimensions or behaviors, exemplifying what he calls "courageous followers." The behaviors should be evident in all levels of the organization [32] where followers exist. The five behaviors are defined as follows [33]:

- Assume responsibility – taking responsibility for the organization, demonstrating a sense of ownership towards the organization as if a steward of the organization.
- Serve - demonstration of leader-like conviction and commitment in pursuing the organization's mission, vision and principles. Kelley [34] describes courage to serve as followers who serve by protecting the organizational "commons" and as a willingness to give in return for what they might take from the organization
- Challenge – diligently seeking consistency in word and deed by the organization and leader to the point of willingness to initiate confrontation and examination of actions and communications, i.e., holding the organization to value congruence [34] [35] [36] or constructive feedback [37].
- Participate in transformation – championing the need for change on an organizational and personal basis. They expect the leader to be similarly proactive [34]. Lippitt [38] credits this behavior as part of teambuilding.
- Take moral action – an ability and strength to separate if challenge behavior is unsuccessful in realigning actions and words to moral values. The follower will seek regulatory intervention if appropriate. Kelley [34] calls this the exercise of the courageous conscience. As Howell and Shamir [36] posit, followers share blame when a leader fails. Follower intervention, on the other hand, is consistent with egalitarian leadership.

Locus of Control and courageous follower behaviors

Courageous followers assume responsibility for themselves and the organization by demonstrating a sense of ownership by being self-disciplined in their emotions and behaviors [21] [32]. The courageous follower context has two parts, self-awareness and self-

responsibility. Self-responsibility means that followers self-manage their commitments and others' expectations for them. Self-awareness means that courageous followers behave consistent with organizational values; similarly, internals are recognized as setting higher standards for themselves [39]. Courageous followers are proactive in reporting progress, a trait that is consistent with an internal locus of control [28]. Consistent with assuming responsibility, Chaleff [2] notes that the courageous follower will complete their required tasks and then assist others in order to support organizational goals, a type of participatory approach to organizational membership as would be expected of an internal [28]. Followers overcome professional obsolescence by investing in personal development. This would be consistent with maintaining career effectiveness associated with an internal [28]. Courageous followers do not require organizational incentives to maintain personal or professional competence. Similarly, O'Brien [39] notes that internals set high standards for themselves (and others).

H1a: Internal locus of control is related to courage to assume responsibility.

Courageous followers understand the organization as something to be shared and nurtured with all members of the organization i.e., a participatory concept similar to what Spector [28] reports for internals. They serve by protecting the organization from abuse and slander concepts that parallel Spector's [28] research that internals recognize and are impressed with morale and commitment. Courageous followers serve the organization by giving into the organization in return for what they might take from the organization; what an internal would perceive as a performance-to-reward expectancy) [40]. At the same time, they are proactive in obtaining organizational resources when championing new ideas. Similarly, an internal will exert control in the belief that they can control the work environment through his or her behavior [28]. These followers serve by trying to maintain an equitable division of labor even in the face of unjust criticisms whereas internals seek to have more personal control over the work environment [28].

H1b: Internal locus of control is related to courage to serve.

Chaleff [2] theorizes that courageous followers regard themselves as equal to the manager and therefore are quite willing to be the "duty conscience" for the manager. In that role, courageous followers will challenge and confront the manager and peers about behaviors and actions that are inconsistent with organizational objectives—a process that would require the personal persuasion trait of an internal [28]. The courageous follower is willing to point out the manager's missteps—to challenge the manager to stick to the high road. Similarly, the person with an internal locus of control will set high standards for themselves and others) [39]. It is conceivable that challenge behavior requires

persistence—a trait of internals [3]—as people at all organizational levels are often resistant to change.

H1c: Internal locus of control is related to courage to challenge.

Courageous followers recognize the need for transformation—organizational change—and champion the need for change. Similarly, Spector [28] reports that internals believe they can control the work setting through behavior and will attempt control. Chaleff [2] theorizes that courageous followers will put themselves on the line, and believe others, especially the manager, should do the same. They stay with the manager and group during the difficulty of real change. Spector [28] notes that internals perceive themselves to have control over the work environment, which may relate to a willingness to see change through, whereas, O'Brien [39] and Spector [28] find that internals have higher levels of job satisfaction.

H1d: Internal locus of control is related to courage to participate in transformation.

According to Chaleff [2], the emergence of toxic leaders or toxic policies may require a courageous follower to separate from the leader or organization. Internals have great mobility as a result of their career planning [28] and are prepared to move on if moving on is appropriate [2]. Kelley [34] describes this as a conflict between duty to obey, duty to disobey, and duty to take positive action. Spector [28] reports that internals would exhibit more turnovers than externals when experiencing highly dissatisfying jobs but have lower levels of stress and absenteeism. In other words, performance would continue during a job search. O'Brien [39] reports that internals re-evaluate to overcome cognitive dissonance and attributes this to an ability to control, or influence one's personal morale more easily than the organization's. Attrition is costly and carries both costs and risks for employees and an organization. Employees with high conscientious i.e., internals, would be expected to be proactive in seeking higher moral ground relative to toxic leadership. Internals believe in their ability to take control in minimizing stress and seeking resolution by terminating the relationship [41].

H1e: Internal locus of control is related to courage to take moral action.

Big Five Personality and Courageous Follower Behaviors

The personality domain, openness to experience is recognized as the domain of the artistic, independent, non-conformist that is strong on imagination and intellectualism [41]. For organizations not dependent on teamwork, the characteristics seem to have appeal. For organizations dependent on collaboration, integration and teamwork, those open to experience may not be a

direct fit. On the other hand, the follower behavior, courage to assume responsibility is described as being proactive in maximizing personal value for the company and as those who are passionate about the organization's processes, purpose, vision and members [2]. Some words used to describe the follower behavior overlap with openness. For instance, the assuming responsibility follower behavior includes discovering and creating opportunities to pick up work responsibilities and may require imagination and intellectualism. This implies some level of teaming as these behavior components seem to also have a brother's keeper facet. This facet runs counter to traits of independence and autonomy associated with openness. Independence seems to be a dominant trait barring the influence of common good, purpose and vision. The courageous follower behavior, assume responsibility, is also described as a sense of ownership, however, this ownership in theory is a collective, or more akin to stewardship for a common purpose. These are attributes normally associated with high levels of participation and not autonomous, independent employees. There appears to be only a weak negative theoretical relationship between openness to experience and assuming responsibility.

H2a openness is negatively related to the courage to assume responsibility.

Cable and Judge [42] report that the personality domain, conscientiousness, describes achievement, organization, task-focus and dependability. Similarly, Barrick & Mount, [18] describe the conscientious domain as representative of hard-working, achievement-oriented, persevering, careful and responsible behaviors. Clark and Robertson [43] describe conscientiousness with terms of competence and self discipline. John and Srivastava [8] described conscientiousness domain as goal oriented, controlled and diligent. These descriptors come close to describing what employers want in a Type A dedicated personality and indeed conscientiousness has been tied to performance. This personality domain seems to parallel the courageous follower behavior, courage to serve, in that the behavior describes individual seeking opportunities to unburden the leader while asserting their strengths in serving the organization [32]. The behavior includes passion for the organizational purpose, teamwork and transactional expectations relative to energy put into the organization of a pay-it-forward basis. The courageous follower behavior describes followers as those who are proactive in encouraging others to contribute to the organization with little regard for social loafers. The serve behavior includes a representation of an expectation of an equitable division where servers are interested in facts not rumor.

H2b conscientiousness is related to courage to serve.

Cable and Judge [42] describe extraversion as a tendency to be sociable, assertive, expressive and active. Erdheim, Wang, Zickar [41] include being gregarious and talkative. Chaleff [2] describes the

courageous follower behavior, courage to participate in transformation as a willingness to engage in change on both a personal and an organizational level. Chaleff describes this as championing the need for change and capability to stay with the organization throughout the struggle of change. This is a behavior that seems congruent with sociability, assertiveness and activism. In demonstrating this behavior pattern, Dixon [2] implies that the courageous follower will accept risk associated with leading change both personally and in the organization. For personal change, the courageous follower is ambivalent about whether self-discovery or feedback is the source for initiating change processes. These constructs seem to support appreciable commonalities.

H2c extraversion is related to the courage to participate in transformation.

Descriptions of the personality domain, agreeableness, embody the image of a "nice-guy". Cable and Judge, [42] use the terminology of tendency to be likable, nurturing, adaptable, and cooperative in unfolding agreeableness. Digman [44] relates extraversion to being friendly. Erdheim, Wang, Zickar, [41] relate agreeableness to the humane aspects of people which Cable and Judge amplify as the characteristics of altruism, nurturance, caring, and emotional support. These terms carry with it thoughts of courteousness, flexibility, trust, good-naturedness, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant [18]. John and Srivastava [8] defined agreeableness as the ability to adapt to diverse social situations as permitted by such traits as likeability and friendly compliance. For Digman [44] extraversion is being active, enthusiastic and energetic. The descriptors of this domain lead to an image of someone who has an ability to move throughout the organization encouraging and challenging all levels of the organization to excel. For the courageous follower, Chaleff describes the behavior courage to challenge as someone who can, and will, call for purity in the pursuit of organizational mission, vision and principles. In order to accomplish this call, the courageous follower must be accepted as equals and as the organization's duty conscious [32], else they would not be long tolerated. The courageous follower would be willing to exploit his or her recognition as being agreeable to maintain a true course towards the organization's purpose as they challenge and confront those who would lead astray. In some respects, this seems counter intuitive as no one who would upset the status quo would seemingly be tolerated. However, given strong rapport with leaders and followers, and being recognized for nurturing and cooperating until sacred missions and principles were violated, would be consistent with organizational respect and tenure when insisting the high moral road be maintained. Additionally, the challenging behavior means that the courageous follower seeks to understand the manager, or management's, needs, goals and constraints. When these are consistent with the common understanding of