Linkage Between Leader's Personality, Leadership Style And Employee Engagement

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Abstract: Under globalization, the selection and development of effective leaders is a critical matter for the success of business. Towards this end, researches on the personal characteristics that tie to effective leadership and high employee engagement would be of real significance. Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between personality and leadership styles or leadership style with employee performance, but rare researches bridge the relationships among the three. Hence this study aims to discover the linkages among leader's personality, leadership style and employee engagement and to further establish a conceptual framework. Relevant literatures were broadly searched and critically reviewed, encompassing the theories of personality, the models of leadership styles and the evolution of employee engagement. To analyze in-depth, the paper pegged on the selected theories from the three fields, explored and argued the latent linkages between them. It is suggested organizations that consider the personalities of the potential candidates when selecting suitable leaders could win more engaged employees. And the proposed framework could also provide guidance in the process of recruitment, selection, promotion for organizations in building a preferred organizational culture. Empirical testing is highly recommended as the future research direction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Business is facing increasingly intensified competition under globalization which highly demands leaders to play more significant roles than ever before to enhance the employee engagement towards business success.

A number of researches have investigated the relationship between leaders' personality and leadership styles, or between personality and employee engagement. For example, Hamid Hassan (2016) examined the determinants of leadership style in Big Five Personality dimensions, but lack of information about the relationship between personality and employee engagement. Ozgur Ongore (2014) examined the personality with job engagement, but rarely research on relationship between leadership style and employee engagement. Hence, the lack of knowledge on linking leaders' personality, leadership style and employee engagement has resulted in insufficient guideline for organizations to effectively select a right leader, or to design a proper leader development program to build preferred leadership styles, or to recruit and select the suitable employee, towards enhancing employee engagement which has been convinced to contribute to competitive advantage (Iqbal, Anwar and Haider, 2015). Therefore, the study is aimed to discover the linkages among leader's personality, leadership style and employee engagement and to further establish a conceptual framework by broadly and critically reviewing relevant literatures.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 overviews personality with two classical theories compared and contrasted. Leadership styles are reviewed in Section 3 followed by Section 4 which focuses on employee engagement. Section 5 proceeds with the discussions on the linkages between the personality, leadership styles and employee engagement and ends with the conceptual framework proposed. Finally, Section 6 draws the conclusion.

II. OVERVIEW OF PERSONALITY

Personality refers to the special characteristics or pattern of traits that differentiate the person from others. According to Pervin (1968), personality is the structural and dynamic character performed when the individual responds to the circumstances, which indicates the lasting traits that make one different from others.

Back to 1946, Cattell introduced the famous 16 Personality Global Factors (16PGF) by summarizing human personality traits up to 16 types based on the factor-analytic theory (Cattell R.B., 1933, 1946). The 16 types of personality factors including: warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule-consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness, privateness, apprehension, openness to change, self-reliance, perfectionism and tension, are categorized as the primary traits that provide the most basic definition of individual personality differences. And based on the primary traits, Cattell and his colleagues proposed the secondary traits which refer to the original Big Five Personality traits namely: Extraversion/ Introversion, High Anxiety/ Low Anxiety, Tough-mindedness/ Receptivity, Independence/ Accommodation and Self-control/ Lack of restraint.

Later on, another similar Big-Five personality version proposed by Goldberg (1990) represent the culmination of more than 40 years of research on the emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal and motivational disposition of individuals (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). It comprises of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability (Neuroticism) and imagination/intellect and has been consistently used to describe personality in a variety of empirical settings within different contexts (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Hofstee et al., 1997). Its contribution has been such that it is said to represent a valid measure of personality at the global level (Digman, 1990; Mount et al. 1995). Nowadays, the more famous version of the Big Five personality was proposed by Costa & McCrae (1992). It is also known as the OCEAN model, which stands for Openness (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A) and Neuroticism (N).

Although the 16PGF as origin does not appear does not appear in any current accounts of the development of the Big Five (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1990; Costa and McCrae, 1992), the 16PGF scales and items still founded the development of other Big Five factor models (e.g. Costa and McCrae, 1985; McKenzie et al., 1997). A range of studies comparing the 16PF global factors, Goldberg(1990)'s Big-Five and the set of O-C-E-A-N Big Five factors, show a striking resemblance among the three (Gerbing and Tuley, 1991; Conn and Rieke, 1994; Cattell, 1986; Schneewind and Graf, 1998; Carnivez and Allen, 2005). These studies show strong correlational and factor-analytic alignment among the three models: Between the three extraversion factors; among anxiety, emotional stability and neuroticism; among receptivity, imagination/intellect and openness; between accommodation and agreeableness; between self-control and conscientiousness. The alignments among the three Big Five models are displayed in Table 1. The following section elaborates each personality factor using the OCEAN terms.

16PGF (Cattell, 1946)	Big Five (Goldberg,1990)	O-C-E-A-N (Costa &McCrae,1992)
Extraversion/Introversion	Extraversion	Extraversion
Low Anxiety/High Anxiety	Emotional stability	Neuroticism
Tough-Mindedness/Receptivity	Intellect or culture	Openness
Independence/Accommodation	Agreeableness	Agreeableness
Self-Control/Lack of Restraint	Conscientiousness or dependability	Conscientiousness

Table 1: Alignments among the three main five-factor models

Openness (O) as mentioned by Digman (1990), is tuned to be willingness of individuals to make adjustments to existing attitudes and behaviors once new ideas or situation has been exposed. It describes four different aspects: openness to feelings and emotions (sensitivity), openness to abstract idea and imagination (abstractedness), openness to new approaches and idea (openness to change), and openness to people (warmth).

Conscientiousness (C) is used to measure the ability to control one's impulses (Costa & McCrae (1992), which matches self-control. Self-controlled people can inhibit their impulses; they are seen as serious, rule-conscious, practical and a perfectionist. These individuals are hard workers, well organized, action-oriented and tend to take responsibility for their actions (Goldberg, 1990; O'Brien and DeLongis, 1996). On the contrary, the unstrained people are very flexible and more likely to follow urges. They may be perceived as self-indulgent, disorganized, irresponsible, and uncontrollable.

Extraversion (E) differentiates people based on the interaction of people with the outside world (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extrovert people are oriented towards people and seek out relationship with others. They are more likely to be the center of a group of friends and more valued by their friends and become influential individuals to targets. But people who are known as introvert and social inhibited, tend to be less outgoing, spending more time on their own.

Agreeableness (A) primarily deals with interpersonal tendencies (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Those people do not always ask questions, but rather value agreeableness and social harmony. They are likely to be good-natured, friendly, cooperative, courteous, trusting, flexible, altruistic and tolerant (Barrick et al. 2005). They may feel anxious when speaking out their own opinion, and having difficulty persuading others.

Neuroticism (N) typifies persons as calm, depressed, insecure, emotionally unstable, mistrust, and hedonism (Robbin et al., 2008), which is in line with anxiety. They are more likely to appraise stressful situations as threats rather than challenges, seek out emotional support and use emotion-focused coping strategies (Costa and McCrae, 1985; Endler and Parker, 1990). Alternatively, emotionally stable individuals tend to have greater self-efficacy and organizational commitment. They may minimize the negative effect or be unmotivated to seek change because of a general comfort level.

III. OVERVIEW OF LEADERSHIP STYLE

Leadership style is defined as "a pattern of emphases, indexed by the frequency or intensity of specific leadership behaviors or attitudes, where a leader places on the different leadership function" (Casimir, 2001).In addition, leadership styles also refer to the way leaders behave towards the individuals they are leading.

The first major study of leadership styles was performed in 1939 by Kurt Lewin who led a group of researchers to identify different styles of leadership (Lewin, Lippit, White, 1939). This early study has remained quite influential as it established three major leadership styles (U.S.Army, 1983): Authoritarian/Autocratic, Participative/Democratic and Delegative/Laissez-faire. *Authoritarian/Autocratic* leader tells his or her employees what to do and how to do it, without getting their advice. *Participative/Democratic* leader includes one or more employees in the decision making process, but the leader normally maintains the final decision making authority. *Delegative/Laissez-faire* (free-rein) leader allows the employees to make decision, however, the leader is still responsible for the decisions that are made.

Burns (1978) identified two types of leadership styles: transformational and transactional. Bass (1990) and Bass and Avolio (1995) espoused one more leadership styles namely laissez-fiare. According to them, t*ransformational* leaders rather than focusing solely on current needs of their employees or themselves focus on future needs. *Transactional* leaders identify and clarify subordinates' job tasks and communicate to them how successful execution of tasks will lead to the receipt of desirable rewards. *Laissez-faire* leaders abdicate their responsibility and avoid making decisions. Subordinates working under this kind of supervisor basically are left to their own devices to execute their job responsibilities (Yammarino and Bass, 1990).

Yukl (2006) classified leadership style task-oriented, relations-oriented, and change-oriented. Task-oriented leadership focuses on accomplishing the task in an efficient and reliable way, whereas Relations-oriented leadership emphasizes on increasing mutual trust, cooperation, job satisfaction, and identification with the organization. Change-oriented leadership focuses on understanding environment, finding innovative ways to adapt to it, and implementing major changes, strategies, products, and processes.

As described above, similarities exist between task-oriented leadership, transactional leadership and automatic leadership (Burns, 1978, Bass, 1985; 1990; 1999; Bass & Riggio, 2006;). Three of them focus on task be given by leader while the exchange between leaders and followers and both emphasize work products or outcomes. Relation-oriented leadership is in line with the transformational leadership (Bass 1985; 1990; 1999; Burns 1978; Conger, 2011) and democratic leadership (Bass, 2008; Avolio, 2010; Caza & Jackson, 2011). In contrast, change-oriented leadership theories and contingent leadership approaches advocate for the right leadership style and behaviors for the context and situation faced by the organization (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; 1979; 1996; Bass,2008; Yukl, 1999, 2008; 2011). Lassies-faire leadership allows employee make the decision for task process but leader going to take responsibility. Hence, the change-oriented and

the laissez-faire are not aligned. The alignments of the three leadership styles are summarized as in Table 2.

Kurt Lewin(1939)	Bass (1999)	Yukl (2006)
Authoritarian/Autocratic	Transactional	Task - oriented
Participative/Democratic	Transformational	Relations - oriented,
Delegative/Laissez-faire	Laissez-faire.	Change- oriented.

Table 2: Alignments among the Three Main Leadership Style Models

Task-oriented leadership (Task-Or.): It is known as initiating structure in Ohio State Leadership Studies. It is identical with job-centered leaders (Mehtap et al., 2011). Task-oriented leadership describes a leader who directs subordinate work activities toward goal attainment. Leaders with this style always give instructions, spend time planning, emphasize deadlines, and provide explicit schedules of work activities. The behavior of task-oriented leadership is mainly concerned with accomplishing the task, utilizing personnel and resources efficiently, and maintaining orderly reliable operations.

Relations-oriented leadership (Relation-Or.): It is known as a consideration structure in Ohio State Leadership. It is identical with employee-centered leaders (Mehtap et al., 2011). Relations-oriented leader is aware of subordinates, respect subordinate or team members' ideas and feelings, and they focus on building mutual trust within each other. This type of leader is friendly, provides open communication, develops teamwork, and oriented toward their subordinates (Daft, 2008). Besides that, relations-oriented leadership is more focused on subordinates' human needs in order to build effective work teams with high performance goals.

Change-oriented leadership (Change-Or.): As mentioned by Kotter (1996), leadership is the most critical responsibility in managing change. Therefore, change-oriented leadership is needed to have effective managing changes. According to Yukl (2002), change-oriented leadership of behaviour is mainly concerned with improving strategic decisions; increasing flexibility and innovation; adapting change in the environment; making major changes in processes, products, or services; and gaining commitment to the changes. There are few classifications of specific types in change-oriented behaviours, which are the influencing organizational culture, developing a vision, implementing change, and increasing innovation and learning.

IV. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT (EE)

Employee engagement has been defined in many different ways and the definitions and measures often likes other better known and established constructs like organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Robinsonetal.,2004). According to Maslach et al. (2001), engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy, which is opposite to burnout (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006).

The academic work on engagement was started in the 1990s when Kahn (1990) propsoed and defined the term

personal work engagement as: "the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance." He argued that three psychological engagement conditions are necessary for an employee to bring themselves into their work role performance. These determinants are: meaningfulness (work elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process and organisational norms) and availability (individual distractions). His work emphasised that engagement is dynamic and subject to fluctuation. Somehow, this stage is more concerned with personal engagement from the psychological perspective.

Moving forward in the 2000s, the concept of engagement was boomed from both practitioners and academians. The behavioural perspective of engagement was highlighted, which originated from Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) where they consider job engagement in the context of organisational behaviour and defined it as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Furthermore, Schaufeli and Bakker (2006) positioned work engagement as a mediating variable in their job demands and resources model of work motivation and engagement and emphasized work engagement as the psychological state that accompanies the behavioural investment of personal energy.

From above information, employee engagement can be understood as cognitive, emotional and physical role performance characterised by absorption, dedication and vigour and dependent upon the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, availability and safety. The three main models of employee engagement are aligned as displayed in Table 3.

Kahn (1990)	Schaufeli and Bakker (2004)	Schaufeli and Bakker (2006)
Safety	Vigour	Behavioural
Availability	Dedication	Emotional
Meaningfulness	Absorption	Cognitive

Table 3: The Three Main Models of Employee Engagement

V. LINKAGES BETWEEN LEADER'S PERSONALITY, LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In order to clarify the linkages among leader's personality, leadership style and employee engagement, this study pegged on Costa & McCrae (1992)'s OCEAN big five personality, Yukl (2006)'s leadership style model and Kahn (1990)'s employee engagement model.

A. LINKAGE BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND TASK-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP STYLE

Task-oriented leadership concentrated on organizing group activities, defining the work need to complete, and maintaining standard and deadlines. A leader who belongs to task-oriented leadership usually has self-controlled personality. This is because the self-control leader is rule-consciousness and perfectionism to ensure every single task can be completed on time. Besides that, Singer & Millage (2013) mentioned that individual with task-oriented leadership style tends to be a high level of assertiveness and low emotional responsiveness. It also grouped as high independence and low anxiety in 16PF. Thus, task-oriented leadership style is associated with high conscientiousness, but low agreeableness and low neuroticism.

B. LINKAGE BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND RELATIONS-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP STYLE

Relations-oriented leadership intends to build mutual relationships between managers and subordinates in order to set up an effective work team towards high performance goals. In order to build mutual trust within each other, friendliness and approachability are needed. As mentioned by Chernyshenko et al. (2011), individuals with extraversion personality are described as friendly, gregarious, and warm. Additionally, leaders with less independence have more individualized considerations. They always care about individuals' growth and development needs; always praise and reward their subordinates appropriately. Consequently, employees are happy in participating and giving ideas in the groups. Thus, the study reviews relations-oriented leadership style is associated with high extraversion and high agreeableness.

C. LINKAGE BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND CHANGE-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP STYLES

Change-oriented leadership focuses on making changes in the aspects of improving strategic decisions; increasing flexibility and innovation; adapting change in the environment; and making major changes in processes to increase organizations performance. Bono & Judge (2004) and De Vries (2008) proved that it is positively related between extraversion and change-oriented leadership. According to Bass (1999), the leaders need to be more energetic, expressive and tend to have abundant social confidence while implementing changes, all of which are important elements of extraversion. Besides, Zopiatis and Constanti (2012) stated that change-oriented leadership is also positively related to openness (less tough-mindedness) as it requires open-minded leader in order to accept new idea and become more creative in making changes, hence, to transform people and organizations to achieve the vision that they desired. Thus, Change-oriented leadership style is associated with high extraversion and high openness.

D. LINKAGE BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The task-oriented leaders usually provide a little opportunity for employees to involve in the decision-making process (Tyler and Smith, 1995). This leading style might hamper creativity and lead to employees' low participation and low engagement to the organization. Supported by Goethals et al. (2004), autocratic approach often leads to employees' lower morale and less effective with their current working area. Thus, there *is a negative relationship* between

task-oriented leadership and employee engagement. Skogan (2008) stated relation-oriented leaders like to invite employees to participate and take part in the decision making procedure. Employees in this leadership style will feel more participation, high morale and responsibility to the organization. This not only increases employee satisfaction, but also motivates employees to work harder by more than just a financial reward (Bhatti et al., 2012). Thus, there *is a positive relationship* between relation-oriented leadership and employee engagement. The change-oriented leaders keep a low profile and obedient, and seldom give the direction to their employees. They like to avoid making each of decisions and let employees perform everything. This type of leaders fail to lead (Webb, 2007). Thus, there *is a negative relationship* between change-oriented leadership and employee engagement.

E. LINKAGE BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Shirom (2003, 2007) and Shraga (2007) provided evidence on a significant relationship between vigor toward work and the openness and extroversion factors of the Big Five personality characteristics. While, other researchers have suggested that personality variables such as curiosity (Reio and Callahan, 2004; Reio et al., 2004), optimism, self-efficacy (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006), self-esteem and coping style (Rothmann and Storm, 2003; Rothmann, 2003; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) all play a part in the development of work-oriented variables. However, no specific research has explored the gap between personality characteristics and engagement (Maslach and Leiter, 2008), although relations between the constructs remain ripe for investigation.

Based on the discussions above, the conceptual framework under this study is depicted as in Figure 1 where the personalities, leadership styles and employee engagement are interrelated with each other.
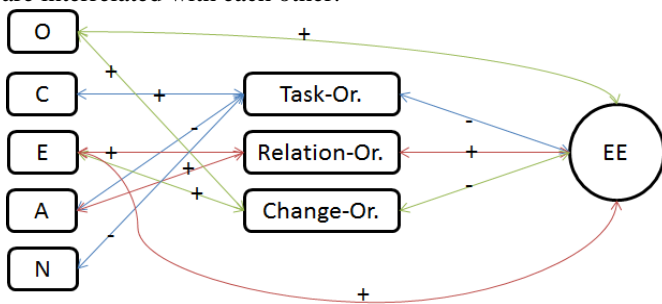

Figure 1: The Proposed Conceptual Framework

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, this paper reviewed the main theories of personality, leadership styles and employee engagement and then explored the relationships among the three by searching on previous empirical proofs and finally clarified the specific linkages that have been studied so far. It is found that different personality traits link with different leadership styles; different leadership styles have opposite association with employee engagement and the linkage between personality and

employee engagement is under investigated which forms the research gaps for future study. And more significantly, it predicts the possible linkages among the three factors which need further empirical evidence in the future. Through the enhanced understanding of the relationships among leaders' personality, leadership style and employee engagement, it is hoped that organizations can better identify, train or shape their leader's personality to match with the leadership styles preferred, and to build stronger employee engagement towards sustained competitive advantages.

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