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Leadrs Characteristics and Self- Development in the UAE Public Sector

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Abstract
Purpose: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of the effect of the leaders' characteristics (LC) on the leaders' engagement in the activities of Self-Development (SD).The public sector was the targeted context for the study. Questionnaires were distributed to 200 leaders of Abu Dhabi educational council schools.139 questionnaires were returned and used in the analysis using the PLS-SEM as a strategy of analysis. Data was collected from 139 male and female leaders in Abu Dhabi Educational Zone. The results in this study revealed that leaders' characteristics; learning adaptability, self-efficacy and propensity to development were important predictors of leaders' engagement in the self-development activities. Most importantly it was found that propensity is the most important predictor of leaders' self-development which was followed by learning adaptability and finally comes the leaders' self-efficacy.
Keywords: Self-Development(SD), Leader Characteristics(LC).

1. Introduction

Leadership as a topic is probably one of the most researched theme and concept in the world. Regardless of this vast information on leadership, leadership is still observed to be subjective and influenced by several factors (Bush, 2011). While environmental, social, cultural and economic factors often influence the way leadership is perceived and demonstrated (Barber et al. 2010), beyond these and other external factors that influence leadership (Bush, 2013).

Bearing in mind, that there are several factors which influence the development of leaders such as leaders and organizational characteristics (Putter,2010). United Arab Emirates (UAE) like any country in the world has sensed the significance of growing leadership capacities in the public sector at different levels. In 2008 the, the UAE government leaders program was launched under the aegis of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai, with a view to building and developing distinguished leaders for the future in collaboration with world-class institutions around the globe. Figure 1 below depicts the leadership model for the government of the UAE.

Leaders are adult learners whom per Knowles (1990) are self-directed learner. Thus, the self-development which is the focus of this study is rooted from the adult learning theory. The theory suggest that learning is effective when it is self-directed (Knowles et al, 2005).

Per Lambert (2002), understanding the principles of leadership and management is important and crucial for any individual or groups saddled with the responsibilities of leading and coordinating resources. As such, leadership development is considered the start of a journey for individuals because leadership structures vary from organisation to another and context to context (Yukl, 2002). This explanation emphasises the importance of interpersonal competence and emotional stability and intelligence which ensures that a leader is well prepared for roles, responsibilities and obligations (Bush, 2011). Thus, this understanding and the fact that successful outcomes is influenced by effective leadership which have been developed from different, but complementary factors have motivated this study.

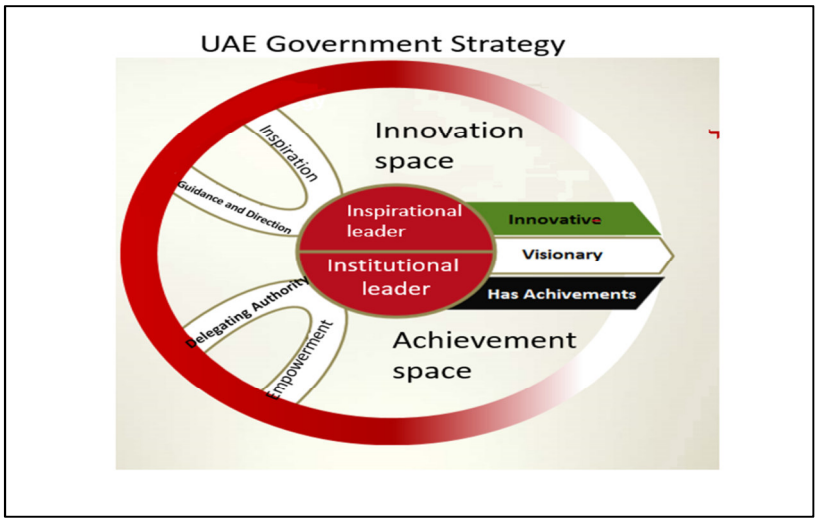

Figure 1. Leadership Model for the Government of the UAE.
Source: Government Leadership Program official site.

2. Related Literature

The continuous changing and unpredictable, which some describes as (Fog of War) environment, (Petrie, 2014) with the stagnation in the leadership development approaches (Uhl-Bien and Russ, 2009). This explanations and observation of leadership needs, challenges and development emphasises the relevance of self-directed leadership development. While explanations such as this further justified the reasons for conducting this research, it is important to note that some past literature exists on self-directed leadership development.

2.1. Self-Development

Self-development or self-directed can be defined as a comprehensive and deliberate activities that an individual undertakes in order to gain and retain a specific leadership knowledge, skill and or ability (Boyce, 2004, pp. 5- 6). If examined based on this definition, self-directed leadership can be explained as an assumption that organisational leadership have the potential to improve significantly through individuals' acceptance of primary responsibility for their own personal, professional and situational development (Boyce et al. 2010; Pedler et al. 1986). Self-directed leadership development can be traced to adult learning theory that states that learning is more effective when learning process is directed by self (Knowles et al. 2005). Adult learning theory emphasise the need for self-directed learning to be relevant, focused on problem-solving experience and based on readiness and motivation of a person to learn (Knowles, 1990).

2.2. Leader Characteristics

Although previous studies often focus more on the individual characteristics of a leader suggesting that leaders have specific personal traits (Yukl, 2002), Boyce et al. (2010) argued that it is the ability to utilise those traits and characteristics for self-development activities that qualifies certain leaders as self-developed or directed leaders. However, engaging in self-developing activities are not accidental (Goldstein and Ford, 2002), but rather one that emphasises a positive relationship between individual characteristics and propensity to self-develop (Boyce et al. 2010).

According to Uhl-Bien and Russ (2009), propensity to self-develop is influenced by perception of individuals about development and their ability to perform. For example, if leader beliefs in his/her capability to perform, then there is little propensity for self-development. But if confidence of an individual to be an exceptional leader dwindles, the propensity for self-development may be higher. These explanations indicate the need and importance of self-efficacy which Bandura (1986) explained as the individual's belief in his or her abilities to achieve and perform at optimal level. Although past researches on self-efficacy have been more focused on studying traits that makes people belief in their abilities to perform at certain level (Bandura, 1997). Authors such as Maurer et al. (2003), Colquitt et al. (2000) have all argued in favour of external factors such as attitude towards 360-degree feedback, learning motivation during training and other developmental activities outside of work.

Furthermore, literature such as Pulakos et al. (2000) argued that individuals who possess high learning adaptability have high tendencies to learn, and search for learning and training platforms and other development opportunities to help adapt and cope with job demands. Learning adaptability as mentioned here refers to an individual's ability disposition, willingness and motivation to change to any environmental condition to carry out

a task or perform (Ployhart and Bliese, 2006).

This means that beyond self-efficacy and propensity to self-develop, leader characteristics also includes learning adaptability. Therefore, this argument justifies a positive relationship between learning adaptability, self-efficacy and propensity to self-develop as specific characteristics that needs to be present in self-directed or developed leaders. According to I-DAPT theory individual adaptability is defined as "an individual's ability, skill, disposition, willingness and/or motivation to change or fit different task, social, and environmental features" (Ployhart and Bliese, 2006, p.13).

Therefore, the relationship explained above can be used to draw the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between leader characteristics and leader self-development.
H1a: Learning adaptability positively influences leader self-development.
H1b: Self-efficacy positively influences leader self-development.
H1c: Propensity to self-develop positively influences leader self-development.

3. Methodology

There are a number of research methodology designs a researcher can adopt to deploy research methods could be: experiment, survey, field, content analysis and evaluation research (Babbie, 2008;. Zikmund, 2003). This study used a survey method in which the respondents were asked to open a link on the internet to fill the questionnaires. (Saunders, 2007, p. 362). The collected data then can be turned into a quantitative which is another method that uses accurate numerical descriptions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Moreover, quantitative research is a measuring method employed on the designed variables through operational definitions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

In this study a survey questionnaire method was employed to collect data. Because it is the most appropriate method, which provides a numeric description of trends, attitudes and opinions of a population (Creswell, 2003). Survey allows researchers to collect large amount of data in a short of period of time and economically especially with the presence of modern internet based survey. Moreover, the collected data can be used to indicate possible reasons for specific relationships between variables (Saunders et al,. 2009).

Therefore, 200 questioners were distributed among the leaders in Abu Dhabi schools and 139 were returned back and analyzed. This study utilized Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and structural Equation Modeling (SEM) tools through Smart-PLS statistical software for data and hypothesis testing.

3.1. Research Framework

This study aims to examine a number of individual and organizational characteristics and their effect on leader self-development. These characteristics were considered as the main variables of the study. Variables in this study were measured using items have been used in previous studies. Having said that, the items were translated so that it suites the context and sample of the research. The dependent variable in this study is self-development, and the independent variable is leader's characteristics.

In the social science the Likert scale in which the respondents asked how strongly agree or disagree with given statement is used (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Some the rating scale could be of four, five or even seven-point rating scale. However, researchers are advised to use the same order of response categories, so that respondents don't confuse (Dillman, 2007). Figure.2 below illustrates the study framework.

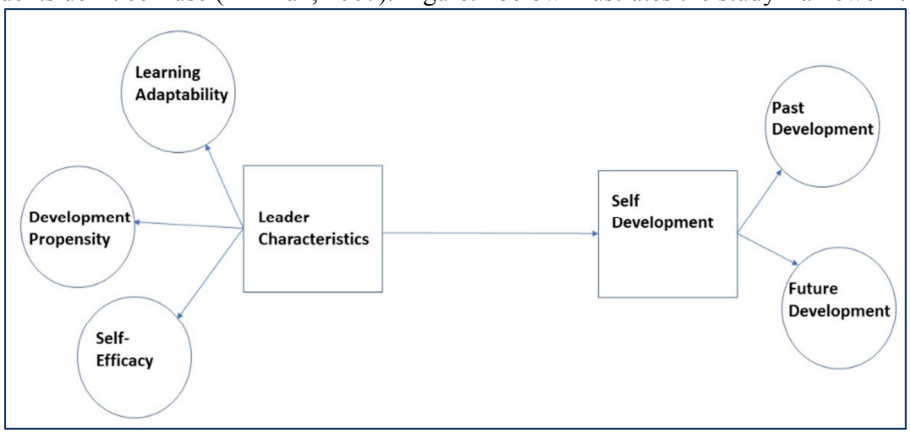

Figure 2. *Study Framework*

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

The data was collected using a survey questionnaire over a period of two months from October 2015 to

December 2015. The final sample number was 139 participants from all Abu Dhabi public schools and the response rate was 70%. The surveys were administered to the schools' leaders using Abu Dhabi Educational Council network, which help in providing the questionnaires to the targeted leaders. Then the researcher sent emails to the leaders encouraging them to participate in the study.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency N=139	Percent
Gender	MALE	65	47%
	FEMALE	74	53%
		139	
job title	MALE PRINCIPAL	43	31%
	FEMALE PRINCIPAL	59	42. %
	MALE DEBUTY	22	16%
	FEMALE DEBUTY	15	11%
		139	
EXPER	0-10	39	28%
	11-20	55	40%
	21-30	28	20%
	>30	17	12%
		139	
Age	20-30	29	21%
	31-40	44	32%
	41-50	51	37%
	51-60	15	11%
		139	

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis conducted in order to describe the variables from the respondents' perspective. The variables were; Self-Efficacy (SE), Learning Adaptability (LA), Development Propensity (DP), Past Development (PD) and Future Development (FD) of the respondents.

The results clearly show that the Learning Adaptability had the highest mean value. The obtained results clearly show that the Learning Adaptability gained the highest mean which was 3.90 and standard deviation result was .841 This result indicated that the leaders are with high learning adaptability, which enables them to master new skills and gain new knowledge in continuous changing environment capability, which promote their self-development.

The second highest mean value went to Self-Efficacy, with the mean and standard deviation values of 3.83 and .877 respectively. The result revealed that leaders have belief in their ability to master the required skills and achieve the required level of performance. Beside the importance of Learning Adaptability and Self-Efficacy to leadership self-development comes propensity to self-development leaders thought that they have. This is because of the latter high mean value, which was 3.71 and with standard deviation of .794.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Constructs

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Efficacy	139	1.00	5.00	3.8331	.87794
Learning Adaptability	139	1.00	5.00	3.9036	.84110
Development Propensity	139	1.00	5.00	3.7194	.79477
Past Development	139	1.67	5.00	3.6691	.85738
Future Development	139	1.42	5.00	3.7098	.77328

4.3. Construct Validity

According to Trochim (2006) construct validity is known as the degree to measure the measured claims by an item or a set of items. In order to assess the construct validity an examination of content validity, convergent validity and discriminate validity is needed (Hair et al., 2010).

4.3.1. The Content Validity

The content validity can be defined as the extent to which used items suitably gauge the construct can properly evaluate the concept designed to be measured (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, the loading of the items used to measure a construct has to be higher on their perspective compared to the loading on other constructs. Table 3 clearly

shows that the loading of the items on their perspective constructs higher than their loading on other constructs. The results prove the content validity of the measure because of the high loading of the items on their constructs compared to their loading with other constructs. (Chow & Chan, 2008).

Table 3: Factor Analysis and Loadings of the Items

	SE	LA	PS	OS	PD	LC	FD
SE1	**0.93**	0.83	0.70	0.48	0.55	0.89	0.77
SE2	**0.91**	0.80	0.67	0.45	0.58	0.87	0.73
SE3	**0.88**	0.79	0.68	0.47	0.51	0.85	0.74
SE4	**0.90**	0.79	0.72	0.47	0.53	0.87	0.70
SE5	**0.86**	0.78	0.64	0.46	0.52	0.83	0.67
LA1	0.85	**0.92**	0.68	0.47	0.61	0.89	0.75
LA2	0.79	**0.90**	0.69	0.44	0.53	0.87	0.71
LA3	0.81	**0.93**	0.73	0.48	0.57	0.89	0.74
LA4	0.81	**0.89**	0.61	0.45	0.50	0.85	0.73
LA5	0.73	**0.84**	0.72	0.50	0.53	0.82	0.75
PS1	0.66	0.67	**0.86**	0.38	0.51	0.75	0.62
PS2	0.72	0.75	**0.91**	0.53	0.58	0.82	0.71
PS3	0.58	0.54	**0.81**	0.49	0.52	0.65	0.58
PD1	0.60	0.60	0.59	0.34	**0.92**	0.64	0.64
PD2	0.54	0.57	0.55	0.37	**0.94**	0.59	0.69
PD3	0.52	0.52	0.57	0.43	**0.89**	0.56	0.67
FD1	0.54	0.53	0.47	0.40	0.35	**0.55**	0.72
FD2	0.68	0.68	0.59	0.42	0.59	**0.70**	0.80
FD3	0.72	0.75	0.66	0.52	0.63	**0.76**	0.87
FD4	0.73	0.76	0.70	0.50	0.72	**0.78**	0.87
FD5	0.69	0.69	0.67	0.52	0.70	**0.73**	0.88
FD6	0.71	0.74	0.67	0.52	0.66	**0.76**	0.90
FD7	0.57	0.55	0.48	0.31	0.57	0.58	**0.72**
FD8	0.68	0.71	0.62	0.51	0.58	0.72	**0.86**
FD9	0.70	0.71	0.66	0.48	0.62	0.74	**0.89**
FD10	0.70	0.70	0.67	0.51	0.61	0.74	**0.88**
FD11	0.73	0.72	0.65	0.43	0.66	0.75	**0.82**
FD12	0.62	0.66	0.58	0.39	0.57	0.67	**0.79**

4.3.2. The Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is known as, “the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct” (Hair et al., 2014,p.102). According to Hair et al. (2010) three tests researchers need consider in order to get the Convergent validity. These test are, factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Thus, the loading of the study items was investigated to ensure that their loadings higher than 0.7, which is considered the acceptable level of loading (Hair et al., 2010). Table 4 show that the factor loading of all the items at the required level of significance which is 0.01. same goes to the result of CR and AVE, which were found to range from (.89 to .96) for the CR and (.63 to .84) for the AVE .

Table 4: The Convergent Validity Analysis

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Self-Efficacy	SE1	**0.9267**	0.938	0.952	0.801
	SE2	**0.9133**			
	SE3	**0.8762**			
	SE4	**0.898**			
	SE5	**0.8613**			
Learning Adaptability	LA1	**0.9211**	0.9391	0.953	0.805
	LA2	**0.9046**			
	LA3	**0.925**			
	LA4	**0.892**			
	LA5	**0.8407**			
Propensity	PS1	**0.8607**	0.8296	0.898	0.746
	PS2	**0.9142**			
	PS3	**0.8142**			
Past Development	PD1	**0.9206**	0.9091	0.943	0.846
	PD2	**0.9443**			
	PD3	**0.8947**			
Future Development	FD1	**0.5534**	0.9609	0.965	0.702
	FD2	**0.6999**			
	FD3	**0.7632**			
	FD4	**0.7811**			
	FD5	**0.7293**			
	FD6	**0.7601**			
	FD7	**0.7212**			
	FD8	**0.8633**			
	FD9	**0.8935**			
	FD10	**0.8839**			
	FD11	**0.8239**			
	FD12	**0.7921**			

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

The statistical significance of the path coefficients was tested using the bootstrapping technique available within Smart PLS 2.0. as shown above in table 5, the T-Values and the path coefficients were generated and subsequently the P-Values were generated. The generated results indicate that there is a positive significance influence of the leader characteristics on the self-directed leadership development (β= 0.848, t=2.722, p<0.01). Therefore, the hypothesis (H1) the effect of the leader characteristics on the engagement in the Self-development was supported. The results also report the results of the leader characteristics dimensions.

The learning adaptability (β= 0.390, t=3.830, p<0.01) , Propensity (β= 0.256, t=3.712, p<0.01), Self-Efficacy (β= 0.260, t=2.513, p<0.01) have a positive significant effect on the engagement in the Self-Development. Thus, H1a, H1b and H1c have been supported. Finally, leader characteristics was found to have positive effect on the engagement in the self-development (β= 0.563, t=10.930, p<0.01).

Table 5: The Results of the Inner Structural Model

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Decision
H1	LC -> DEV	0.848	0.0287	29.566	0.000	Supported
H1a	LA -> DEV	0.3905	0.1113	3.507	0.000	Supported
H1b	PS -> DEV	0.2564	0.0691	3.712	0.000	Supported
H1c	SE -> DEV	0.2609	0.1038	2.513	0.012	Supported

*:p<0.05; **:p<0.01; ***:p<0.001

5. Conclusion

The importance of leadership self-development strategy has vastly been acknowledged in the literature. Despite the fact that all the pervious researches about leaders' self-development were conducted somewhere in the west the concept can be applicable and useful in the context of the UAE. This was obvious from the results of the study which confirmed the awareness of the respondents of the concept the study was examining.

A significant practical contribution stems from study regarding leaders' development. The study revealed that propensity to development has the strongest overall relationship with self-development. Thus, it is considered the most important predictor to leaders' self-development, which was followed by learning

adaptability and then self-efficacy. This result implies that decision and policy makers have to consider propensity to development when selecting leaders for new posts and put in mind that leaders with high propensity to be more fit to the higher position compared to others who are not willing or have not been willing to develop themselves.

This study has encountered several limitations. The first one was the scope, which was limited to the leaders in the schools of Abu Dhabi. Thus, generalizing the results to the whole United Arab Emirates public sector is not possible. The second limitation of the study relate to the methodology. The study used a cross-sectional research method to test the proposed hypotheses at a certain time. Self-leadership development activity is a long-term process, so using longitudinal research design to examine the effect of the leaders and organizational' characteristics on the leaders' self-development would more efficient and the results are going to be more precise.

Third, this study adopted a quantitative research method where the research administered a survey with several statements and the asked the respondents to respond to them based on their understanding about the statements. Thus, the possibility of the existence of biased perception is there (Macinati, 2008).

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