

TITLE: Assessing the Discriminant Validity of the Leadership Practices Inventory

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study was to examine the construct validity of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI).

METHODOLOGY: Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test three alternate conceptual models of transformational leadership: (1) defined by separate and distinct behaviors; (2) as a single factor; and (3) a hierarchical concept explained by a number of independent behaviors that share in common a strong relationship with a higher-order construct. The Leadership Practices Inventory was completed by 1,440 subordinates (54% response rate) who worked in Australia for an international banking organization. The majority were female (69%), their mean age was 31.2 years, and they worked for managers in lower to middle-level management positions. LISREL 8 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) was used to analyze the 30 LPI items.

KEY FINDINGS: The chi-square difference test showed that the five factor model (1) was a significantly better fit than the single factor model (2). The third model examined was a higher order with five first-order factors, and compared with the first model is a slightly poorer fit, although adequate to fit the data. The author concludes (p. 237):

This study examined three alternate models of transformational leadership. The analysis indicated that two models provided an acceptable fit to the data: a single order five-factor model (Model 1) and a higher-order model (Model 3). Although comparison of the fit indices indicated that the single order multidimensional model was a better fit to the data, it was argued that the higher order model provided the better substantive interpretation....

The findings of this study suggest that while it is possible to distinguish conceptually among separate transformational leader behaviors, either these distinctions are not captured by the LPI or subordinates do not notice the differences....

The findings of this study have practical implications for management development programs. The evidence that the LPI has weak discriminant validity suggests that there is little justification for giving feedback on specific transformational leader behaviors, nor could one defend promoting the development of specific transformational leader behaviors. Without evidence to

show that distinct leadership behaviors are in fact measured, feedback may be misleading and detrimental. Caution must be used, however, when interpreting these findings; there is clearly a need for replication of these results.