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TITLE Examining the Followers' Influence on Leaders' Performance: A "Reverse" Pygmalion Perspective

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this inquiry was to find and test the correlation of followers' influence on leadership performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted with respondents from PT XL Axiata Tbk. (XL) in Indonesia. Sixty managers (59% response rate) and 162 of their constituents participated (57% response rate). Leadership performance was assessed using the Leadership Practices Inventory, image compatibility measured by the Image Compatibility scale (Dunegan, 2003), LMX perception of followers is measured by an Leader-Member Exchange Multidimensional (LMX-MDM) questionnaire (Liden & Mashlyn, 1998), and IBQ-Target G44 (Yukl & Michel, 2006) to measure upward influence tactics. The typical constituent was male (75%), between 31-40 years old (71%), with between 2-10 years of service (61%). Respondents in the dyadic relationships mostly are not similar in terms of gender (88%), educational institution (95%), or geographical origin/tribe (68%). The majority of respondents had not worked together (71%) before, but they have known each other between one and five years (79%). The surveys were translated from English to Bahasa Indonesia. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed that all observed variables had good reliability and validity.

KEY FINDINGS

Both leader's self assessment or followers' assessment on the LPI are similar in terms of rank order of the five practices, although self assessments are consistently higher than those from followers. Modeling the way was seen by both groups as the most frequently engaged in leadership practice.

This present study in general demonstrated a relationship between the followers' influence tactics and the leaders' performance (as measured by LPI scores). Three upward influencing tactics (legitimizing, rational persuasion and inspirational appeal) had significant positive effects in the relation of followers' upward influence and leader's performance. Those tactics are supported, according to the author, "because followers use these tactics to influence leaders, and when the leaders followed and committed to the influence, the result was higher leader performance, as assessed by both the leaders and the followers. It has a positively significant effect, which means the more the followers use these tactics, the higher the leaders' performance score" (p. 176). The coalition tactic was negatively related to leaders' performance; suggesting that, in this case/company, an attempt to influence one's leader by asking others to persuade the leader to carry out their request has just the opposite impact as hoped for. Ingratiation and personal appeal tactics were unrelated to (had no effect on) leaders' performance.

The author suggests that leaders need to be more aware about the importance of their followers, and "need to know more about their followers, and try to understand whether the style, behavior, and characteristics that they have now fit with the follower's ideal image of a leader" (p. 191). Another practical implication is that "by knowing that followers are able to influence their performance, leaders should utilize this influence more by giving the followers greater opportunity to constructively influence them. Knowing each follower is unique, and might use different upward influence tactics, leaders can better prepare themselves to respond to those influences" (p. 193).