

FOLLOWER CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIVATIONS IN A LEADERSHIP PROCESS

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Abstract

The importance of followership studies cannot be underestimated. Industrial practitioners and academics are beginning to realize that followership is a distinct area of competency. Good followers obtain greater satisfaction, remuneration, self-actualization and other work benefits than poor followers. Having good followers enhances a leadership process leading to organizational performance, effectiveness and adaptability in a knowledge and technological advancing workplace. Knowing what shapes the characteristics of followers can improve feedback to leaders and help leaders adjust their behavior towards their employees. The main purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of followership and its motivations. This study reported the findings of a qualitative study. Participants were employees in various public and private organizations. Data used in this exploration was collected through semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked to describe follower characteristics that effectively support organizational leaders, influence of the leader, and other factors besides leadership that influence a follower's decision to follow the leader. This study should benefit organizations that want to improve their leadership training programmes by including effective followership strategies. Specific recommendations for further research are also suggested.

Keywords followership, follower characteristics, followership motivations, leadership

INTRODUCTION

Good leaders who are successful essentially have good followers. A leader cannot do everything alone. They need effective followers to support them. However, majority of studies on leadership have focused exclusively on leaders and leadership (Collinson, 2010).

What had been studied of followers and followership were often disguised and included as part of studies that focused primarily on leadership. Very often, the studies on followership were fragmented rather than studied as a whole, single, and unified construct. Empirical research that focused primarily on followers have largely been neglected (Raffo, 2013). In later years, researchers such as Pfeffer (1981) and Meindl (1990) have questioned the validity of studies that examined only one of two closely linked concepts. Leadership is not only a question about leaders' behavior or the interaction between leaders and follower, but also the characteristics and needs of followers.

The importance of the effects of follower characteristics on leadership cannot be overestimated. Practitioners and academics are beginning to realize that followership is a distinct area of competency (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009a). Good followers obtain greater satisfaction, remuneration, self-actualization and other work benefits than poor followers. Having good followers enhances organizational performance (Chong & Wolf, 2010), effectiveness and adaptability (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009b). By understanding followership, organizations will be able to cater to the needs of followers. The requirement for followership for instance in performance appraisals would be made visible thus reducing the appearance of unfairness. Knowing what shapes the characteristics of followers can improve feedback to leaders and help leaders to judge the effects of their leadership more accurately (Schyns, Kroon & Moors, 2008). To understand leadership fully, we must "look" through the eyes of the followers (Kottke, Pelletier & Agars, 2013). Although they might not be able to influence or change the behavior of their followers, leaders who are aware of the expectations of their followers can help them adjust their behavior towards their employees.

Since empirical studies on followership have not been well developed, the present study reports the findings of an exploratory investigation into the nature of followership. Followership is relatively new compared to leadership (Schyns, Kroon & Moors, 2008). The term 'followership' is difficult to be defined. The difficulty in defining is due to different perceptions of followership which are often based on leadership traits and behaviors (Chong & Wolf, 2010). This scenario resulted in unique difficulties of requirement efforts for effective followership. Who is the follower? What are distinct characteristics of followers? In this study, the socially constructed definitions of followership from different individuals of different organizational settings are investigated. Different individuals might assume different meanings depending on each individual's underlying assumptions of what is to be a follower (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; Collinson, 2006).

The researcher began by reviewing literature of followership in the context of follower-centered approaches to leadership. Next, interview data was collected from individuals acting in follower roles in various industries and across organizational levels to analyze for themes of the nature of followership. The study was concluded by discussing the implications of the findings for future research and practice aimed at further developing and investigating followership effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has focused on followership as a fixed set of behaviours or traits. Although followership was introduced in previous studies such as transformational

leadership, leader-member exchange leadership, distributed and shared leadership, they are basically leadership models. Most of the behaviours mentioned in these models are leadership behaviours and not followership behaviours. Followership behaviors differ in that they do not address independent activities of those occupying “subordinate” positions but behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader(s) (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, WestPatera, & McGregor, 2010). In short, followership behaviors are not about how individuals self-manage or self-regulate their work or other co-workers but it is about how they relate to those with higher authority or their leaders. Followership behaviours include the way they take responsibility for their work, the way they communicate with leaders (e.g., giving or withholding opinions), their approaches to problem-solving with respect to leaders (e.g., passive or proactive problem-solving), etc.

As there is a status difference between the leader and the follower in terms of roles and responsibilities (Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007), the typical followership behavior must involve some form of deference to the leader. If deference does not exist so would followership (Rost, 1995). The degree to which followers show deference can vary. Some followers may show more deference with traditionally accepted behaviours such as relinquished responsibility-taking, conformity, obedience, and reluctance to speak up, while others may demonstrate a more vocal, and courageous role of followership in which they see themselves more as partners in the relationship or even co-leaders (Chaleff, 1995; Dixon and Westbrook, 2003; Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007).

The research that has been done on followership covers three categories: traits that are specific to followership, those specific to leadership and those valuable to both. However, research efforts are still lacking as most existing models are one valuable to both leaders and followers (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009a). One gap with the trait models is that traits are not specific to followership. Followers were categorized according to their personality traits that supported successful leaders. “Good followers” have some of the same traits as good leaders but there are also traits specific to followership. All the trait-based models blur this distinction (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009a). Therefore, there is a need to research for a comprehensive model to understand followership and to clarify how and where followership is different (and the same) as leadership.

The traits associated with followership include effective (Miller, Butler, & Cosentino, 2004), exemplary (Banutu-Gomez, 2004), courageous (Chaleff, 1995), and engagement (Kellerman, 2007) followership. Other traits also included commitment, initiative, creativity and innovation, having a sense of direction, drive and intensity (Chong & Wolf, 2010). Followers often emulate leaders. They seemed to gravitate towards leaders who demonstrated traits that they valued (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). If the follower values ‘commitment’ and they perceive the leader as committed, they will follow the leader effectively. In a way, followers will endorse leaders who they see are embodying the values of the groups with whom they strongly identify with (Hogg, Martin & Weeden, 2003). “Value congruence” made followers and leaders comfortable with one another and facilitated establishment of common ground (Bugstad, 2006). These traits are hard to be separated from the traits of effective leaders. These traits are not specific solely to followership.

Kelly (1992) is one of the earlier researchers to study on follower behaviour. He categorizes follower behavior into five styles using a two-dimensional taxonomy. They

include exemplary (active and independent, critical thinking); conformist (active and dependent, uncritical thinking); passive (passive and independent, uncritical thinking); alienated (passive and independent, critical thinking); and pragmatist (medium on both dimensions). Although incomplete, these styles are helpful in pointing out to leaders possible problems with follower behavior (Clements & Washbush, 1999). Another recent work is Carsten, Uhl-Bien, WestPatera, & McGregor (2010) who explored followership schemas and contextual influences that relate to these constructions. While some individuals socially construct definitions around passivity, deference and obedience, others emphasize the importance of constructively questioning and challenging their leaders. With regard to personal qualities that are thought to make followers effective, major themes such as obedience, expressing opinions, and taking initiative were found to be most disparate across different groups of followers. Results also revealed that contextual factors may affect both followership constructions and behavior in the follower role.

In a study on followership contextual influences, Shamir (2004) depicted five main follower motivations. All the motivations listed encourage followers to be obedient, practice deference and conformist (Collinson, 2006). Position-based followers respect leaders' formal position in a social institution. Calculated followers believe that being obedient will help them achieve their goals. Safety-based followers hope that leaders can provide for their needs for safety. Meaning-based followers dislike chaos and look to leaders to provide meaning and order. Finally, identity-based followers seek to enhance their self-esteem by identifying with powerful and popular leaders.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research was to determine the definition of followership and distinct follower characteristics that effectively support organizational leaders as well as influences on followership definition.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study focused on employees in any public or private organization in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The sample comprises of a purposive sample of 10 full time workers in public and private organizations. The respondents were from manufacturing, education, financial to health care service sectors. The employees vary from young adults (below 25 years of age) to older adults (above 40 years of age). In this study, it does not require older and more experienced workers such as in the study of leaders. The rationale for selecting followers in the public and private sector was: (a) they constitute an under-researched group; (b) there was geographic access for the researchers; (c) availability and cooperation of the followers in the various sectors. This sector diversity provides an opportunity to obtain different values which are inherent in different groups affecting followership effectiveness as the main purpose of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2012).

Previously, data for the study of followership effectiveness was defined by university students rather than by organizational employees. The generalization of followership was defined by research conducted among students in Management and Human Resource courses who may all have different expectations and perceptions as compared to actual organizational employees. The students would not have much work experience and exposure to organizational leadership. Many of these generalizations of followership may not be of importance to employees and they may not have taken the viewpoint of organizational employees. Therefore, it is useful for further studies with more participation from work employees from a more representative spread of age and work experience.

Initial contacts to include the employees in the interview were made via e-mail, telephone and networking through friends. The respondents were invited to participate in an interview regarding their role as a follower in their organizations. Interviews ranged from 25 minutes to an hour in length and were based on semi-structured interview questions. These questions were designed to elicit participants' background information, their definition of followership, perceptions of the benefits and/or drawbacks of being in a follower role, and the characteristics and behaviors of effective followers. The interviews were tape-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim for coding. Then, the research team analyzed the data by using an inductive analysis approach to categorizing the data. Coding the data included indexing the interview transcripts; reducing the data to categories by expanding and collapsing the categories; and using constant comparative to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation. At times, data was broken apart to be scrutinized further and at times combined to be analyzed in relevant ways to assist researchers in generating theories and frameworks of followership effectiveness. From this process, three broad themes for the nature of followership and four contextual influences that emerged from the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the respondents have worked at least one year with their current employer. The average tenure among respondents with their current organizations was approximately three years. About 50 % of the respondents mentioned that they interacted with their current leader at least one hour per week while 20 % interacted about 11 to 20 hours and 30 % interacted more than 30 hours per week. About 80% of the followers worked in the same office or location as their leaders. The individuals hold non-supervisory, supervisory, and middle management positions. Respondents were asked to think of their role as a subordinate to the current individuals to whom they reported. Some respondents would rather not discuss their current leaders so they were asked to think of their role and interactions with a leader from their past experiences.

A total of 10 respondents participated in the study, whose narratives are featured in some way in the findings. There were six men and four women participants. Pseudonyms were used to safeguard their identities. Analysis across participants' responses revealed different perceptions in definitions of the follower and the nature of followership. More specifically, some followers defined followership as obedience, while others defined followership as speak up but with respect, and being partners. Those in the group of obedience are passive while those who view themselves as being partners are proactive followers.

Obedience

Half (50%, n=5) of the respondents revealed that they strongly support a traditional view of followers which is being passive and just follow through with orders. This group of respondents seemed to promote conformist follower selves where they see themselves as the perfect and ideal follower. For example, when asked what followership meant to them, these respondents said:

“...it is taking orders and carrying out orders.” (Waiter)

“...to support my boss and help to achieve organizational goals.” (Teacher)

“...I am there to support the leader...to do my job for the leader and the organization.” (Navy commander).

This group of respondents tends to interpret that being courteous, respectful, yielding in opinion and judgment are the normal characteristics of a follower. Prescribing to others that these are essential qualities of an exemplary and good follower, the role of followership is reduced to the simple conformist ideal-type and may neglect negative aspects of followers' behavior (e.g. disagreeing with the values of the leader). Conforming to the leader's requests or orders is the blueprint of followership. They will not object to the leader's request even though they may disagree with the leader's views or principles:

“...I try to fulfill the principal's requirements and wishes even though sometimes I don't feel I ought to do that. I don't want to be seen as a stubborn and rebellious follower. I don't want to be known as a bad follower.” (Teacher)

“When the principal gives the order, we have to follow, *Saya yang menurut perintah* (we who are following orders), even though it is not correct, we have to follow also.” (Teacher)

In addition, individuals with a passive perspective emphasized that they are happy to follow as it liberates them from making decisions and need not bear responsibility for the outcome of the task. They also reiterated that their leaders must know best, have more knowledge and expertise since they have been appointed as leaders. For example, one respondent said:

“...good things, good ideas, we follow is very good. Much experience and knowledge can be obtained. Boss has a lot of idea. We don't have to think. The principal can think for us for the good of the students. The next time, we can also use his ideas.” (Teacher)

From (1977) as in Collinson (2006) showed that certain individuals have the fear for freedom where they perceived that being told what to do and what to think would give them security and less threatening than the responsibility of making decisions for themselves. Another downside is as if the followers are shirking responsibility by saying, “Well, he

or she's the boss!" Chaleff (2008) postulated that in the knowledge era, society have grown beyond authoritarian models that does not allow followers to avoid accountability. Followers cannot plead innocence and ignorance in the knowledge workplace.

Individuals with a passive perspective also tend to rationalize that whatever the leader is doing is usually for the welfare and improvement of the organization. They tend not to give honest feedback to the leaders for fear that the leader would be offended or think lesser of them. Followers in this group are seen as docile, weak, practice conformity, and fail to excel although this could be far from the truth. Chaleff (2008) suggested that followers need to be braver in voicing out constructive criticism if they believe that the leader is not acting in the best interests of the organization.

“...everything that the leader does is done for the organization. Those are good things, not bad things. His ideas are usually to improve the organization and the people in the organization. Even though we disagree, we just follow his ideas.” (Teacher)

Speak up but with respect

The next group of respondents (30%, n=3) revealed more active participation of followership. They would voice out their ideas and opinions when it was asked by their leaders or when they see that they can make a contribution. However, they still hold on to the belief that leaders have greater knowledge and expertise than them. As a result, they would suggest ideas to the leader if they disagree but it is up to the leader to make the final decision. They feel proud and emphasized that they have made some contribution to the leadership process.

“...For example, I made a suggestion to my principal to change the venue to assemble the students. At first, the students were asked to gather and line up at the assembly site which is hot. I suggested that the teachers should stand outside the classrooms and the students line up just outside their classes. However, the principal just kept quiet and didn't answer. A week later, he adopted the idea. I feel proud that my idea is accepted. Which leader would want to follow the ideas of a follower.” (Teacher)

This group of respondents thinks that it is important to make contributions in terms of ideas and views but still remain loyal and respectful towards the leader's decisions. In many situations, no matter how much partnership or empowerment exists, the leader has ultimate authority and responsibility (Chaleff, 2008). In the Malaysian culture and management system, the powers and accountability is often not transferable. The organization's culture does not support followers voicing out their opinions. On the other hand, followers who voice out may be punished or may face negative reaction from their leaders as well as colleagues. Previous research suggests that followers may face retaliation if they speak out against their leaders or organizations (Near & Jensen, 1983; Carsten et al., 2010).

“...even though we disagree with the boss, we still have to follow him. We need to be honest in giving our opinion but at the end of the day we still have to follow his decision. He has the prerogative... he is the boss.” (Bank officer)

Being Partners

A third group of respondents (20%, n=2) revealed a more proactive assumption of followership. The followers are not passive recipients of the leaders' influence but instead, they play an active role in the leader-follower relationship. They will take initiatives to make idea contributions, offer feedback and advice to their leaders. They think that it is their responsibility as a follower to inform and alert the leaders to problems and solutions that may arise even before they happen or before they were asked to do so. Followers approach their work related tasks and relationships with a sense of ownership, openness, and non defensiveness to foster more autonomous work motivations (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). On a positive note, they conjure up images of being dynamic, disciplined and self responsible. Chaleff (2008) called this group of followers as 'courageous followers' who assume responsibility for themselves and their organizations.

“...when I see a problem, I will inform my head of department. It is my duty to tell him, to warn him of what might happen... he may not agree with me but it is my responsibility as a worker to tell him. I am paid to do my job.” (Navy commander)

Followers would enact their true selves. They are self determined, achievement-oriented and are highly motivated. They are also characterized by self-awareness, internalized regulatory processes, balanced information processing, authentic behavior and relational transparency (Kernis, 2003). However, some leaders may see this group of respondent as challenging their leaders' authority and ideas.

“...I need to be honest with the boss. Lives are at stake. Someone can die if I don't inform my boss.” (Nurse)

“...if I am on the right track...if it is something against the rules and regulations and against my opinion, I won't follow. The boss is not always right. There is no need to say 100% yes and not all the time. There are certain moments... I may disagree with the boss. I will discuss with the boss to settle things.” (Teacher)

“For example, recently, my boss made certain assumptions about me that I didn't do my work. He listened to the other staff members. He misquoted me so I confronted him and talked to him. He said that he had made the assumption. He can't just do that. He should ask me first and confirm with me. After I had explained to him, he apologized to me. He said that he gained some new knowledge from me. After that, our working relationship became better. He didn't have any hard feelings.” (Teacher)

Most of the respondents mentioned that although they would discuss with and offer feedback to their leaders, they would do it privately and avoid correcting their leaders in public.

“I would not correct the leader openly, certainly not in public. I would go to see him in his office.” (Teacher)

“I will tell him in a polite manner.” (Lecturer)

“I would try to tell him nicely and not show that I am better than the leader. We have to *jaga muka dan jaga hati* (save the leader’s face and heart).” (Navy commander)

Other respondents said that offering feedback and suggestions also depends on the situation. If the feedback doesn’t involve hurting anyone’s personal feelings, both the leader as well as other employees, they would mention it in public.

“For example, when some teachers didn’t submit exam data, the principal asked me to announce the teachers’ names. I didn’t do it but the principal herself did it.” (Teacher)

“If the leader request for ideas to improve the organization or work processes, yes... I would readily give them in the meetings. But not about telling on others who didn’t do their duty.” (Nurse)

Motivations of Followers

Analysis across participants’ responses revealed four main influences that motivate followers to be obedient and conformist or to have voice and be partners. They include maintaining good relations; religion, rules and regulation; achieve performance goals and leadership style.

Maintain good relations

Some of the respondents said that they sometimes become tongue-tied or just kept quiet so as to maintain good relations with the leader, to work harmoniously, to be seen as a team player, and not to antagonize the leader. Silence is seen as a safe strategy. Others try to gain a sense of security or control over a situation through flattery. Sometimes, they engaged more in flattery than dialogue. While silence may appear the safe choice and flattery the protection from self harm, it often leaves the relationship with leader or peers as a dishonest relationship and without honest dialogue (Chaleff, 2008). Followers are not willing to take risk to speak the truth as speaking up is seen as leading to a fall out of favour with their leaders.

“I keep quiet. Keeping quiet is better than lying. What is the point of disagreeing with the leader which means creating more havoc. I think keeping the harmony is better.” (Teacher)

“...I just keep quiet... he likes to scold when he disagrees with my ideas. He will dislike me. I don't want to be disliked for telling the truth. *Kita kena sayang boss!* (We have to love the boss!) I praise him instead. Even though he knows that I may not be truthful in my praises, he still loves to hear it. He is smiling after hearing it.” (Lecturer)

“... to maintain good working relations so that I can work comfortably here. I don't want tense situations and be regarded as having a negative outlook by the leader as well as colleagues. To have good relations, I have to follow what the leader wants.” (Teacher)

“...I just like to do my work in peace and without any disturbance.” (Factory operator)

Religion, rules and regulations

Interestingly, the interviewed employees appeared to share more followership traits with their public sector counterparts than with their private sector counterparts. One example of this was where majority of the respondents from the public sector reported that they have to obey the leader regardless the situation as it is stated and regulated in the bureaucratic protocol. A central problem in the leader-follower relationship is its tendency to become a parent-child relationship, a relationship in which the follower is dependent and unable to relate to the leader on an equal footing (Chaleff, 2008).

“I don't go against my boss if what he asks me to do is not against Islam, not against religion or the organization.” (Navy commander)

“...there are so many things that needed to be followed because there are so many rules and regulations. I do what I am supposed to do. I am doing my job, it is my core business. If I follow, the leader can't find fault with me and can't take action against me.” (Teacher)

In highly centralized bureaucratic organizations, followers are taught to obediently follow or suffer punishment, demotion or loss of job as consequences of disobedience. Expulsion for nonconformity whether physically or psychologically is a very real threat. In a Malaysian society, the situation is further amplified with older or people in higher authority being placed in a highly respected status and not to be 'questioned'. The conditioning begins at a young age when children are dependent on their parents for survival and guidance. If they didn't obey their parents, they would have experienced considerable anxiety. Organizations often reinforce this anxiety until followers often do become timid creatures (Chaleff, 2008).

Achieve performance goals

Some of the respondents revealed that they practice obedience so as to obtain material gains and career success. They try to be ‘valuable’ to their leaders. They are also willing to work longer hours, meet tight deadlines, travel extensively and be geographically mobile to enhance their identities as obedient and loyal followers to authorities. They conform because they are ambitious, and striving to go up the career ladder. Some of these conformists are young knowledge workers. Conforming individuals tend to be preoccupied with themselves as valued objects in the eyes of those in authority (Collinson, 1992). Grey (1994) showed in his study how some ambitious individuals tend to treat all organizational and even personal relations as a means to the end of career progress.

“...If we don’t follow, our *LaporanPenilaianPrestasiTahunan* (LNPT), yearly performance appraisal report would be affected. To get the leader’s trust and confidence in us is difficult. If he doesn’t trust us, he will label us as stubborn and will not give duties to us. Then we will get poor marks for our annual performance report.” (Teacher)

“...I am studying for my Masters during weekends. I am still doing my job well and holding a position, everything is up to date. My boss can’t find fault with me. She allows me to leave early to go for classes at the university. On Saturday, she excuses me from co-curricular classes. I am grateful to her. Until today, I didn’t face any problems from her.” (Teacher)

“...there will be no obstacles... I can get what I want, for example, courses, knowledge, military exercises, can do research... I have nothing to lose. (Navy commander)

However, not every follower would obey the leader for personal ambition and gain.

“... of course if I *ampu* (please) the boss, I can get a high performance appraisal but I won’t do that. It’s not my character. I don’t like to do that.” (Teacher)

Leadership style

Respondents mentioned leadership style as a contextual influence on their definition of followership and the way they behaved in being the follower. If the leader is supportive, open minded and empowering subordinates to be involved in decision making, they would be more active in giving feedback and advice to leaders. Majority of the respondents mentioned their preference for people-centered leadership. Interviewees used terms such as encouraging, democratic, participative, empowering, approachable, team-leader, have good communication skills, and so on to illustrate their leaders. They also spoke about their leaders accepting their ideas. In turn, they are able to influence their leaders’ ideas and decisions.

“...I need to follow orders but I can give my opinion. I can have a different opinion from my boss.” (Navy commander)

“... my boss welcome my ideas. He is very open-minded.” (Nurse)

If the leaders are domineering and authoritarian, the subordinates would reserve their opinions and comments as leaders tend not to accept their ideas.

“...if the boss doesn't take my ideas even though he has no ideas, there is no satisfaction in the work. I have got ideas but my boss doesn't want to listen. He doesn't even allow us to share our ideas.” (Bank officer)

“...my boss pulls a long face and showed his dislike in his face. It is a form of rejecting our ideas.” (Teacher)

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of this study was aimed at exploring the follower characteristics that effectively support organizational leaders as well as motivations of followership. Data was collected from employees in public and private organizations in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, ranging from sectors of manufacturing, education, financial to health care services. The findings suggested three groups of follower characteristics including obedience, speak up but with respect and being partners. Findings also revealed four motivations being maintaining good relations; religion, rules and regulation; achieving performance goals and leadership style.

Followers in the obedience group are passive while those who view themselves as partners are proactive. “Follower” in the passive group is synonymous to “subordinate” who reports to a leader and acts as a supporter or an opponent. On the other hand, “follower” in the proactive group shares a common purpose with the leader, believes in what the organization is trying to accomplish, wants both the leader and organization to succeed, and works energetically to this end (Chaleff, 2008). In the industrial era, passive or obedient followers with dominant leaders were able to work well in getting the job done. In the information-age, where organizations are more flattened into hundreds of decentralized units where need to be proactive to act rapidly to highly varied information. This requires an entirely different relationship between leaders and followers who sometimes have more specialized knowledge than their leaders.

The findings of this study do raise questions regarding some interactive effects between followers and leaders. The degree of passiveness and proactiveness of followers in dealing with organizational challenges cannot be determined. Neither can the extent of interaction between followers and leaders be identified. Further studies will have to be conducted to ascertain more conclusive results. For example, how do individuals respond when their definitions of followership as proactive are inconsistent with the traditional context? Would they be facing stress, dissatisfaction and burnout in the work place?

Suggestions for better practice in followership include a need to nurture followers from the beginning at the recruitment stage. In addition, the career paths of followers who show aptitude for leadership should be supported and developed. Finally, followers who show originality, innovative, and people-focused should be developed and not just reward passive and obedient followers who only want to maintain status quo. The leaders should nurture a culture that allows a plethora of viewpoints not just preserve existing views.

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