

# Leadership Behavior and Acceptance of Leaders by Subordinates: Application of Path Goal Theory in Telecom Sector

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**Abstract**—This article is a part of a research study carried out for the Ph.D dissertation. one of the aspect of the research was to explore the relationship between leadership behavior and acceptance of leader by the subordinates. The moderating variables of study were situational factors i.e. subordinates' characteristics and environmental characteristics. Path-goal theory was tested in telecom industry of Pakistan by conducting research on the 60 middle and 140 lower managers of four mobile companies. Data analysis revealed significant relationship of subordinate acceptance of leader with leadership behavior and situational factor .It was also found that leadership behavior affects subordinates' acceptance of leader and can be used as predictor of acceptance of leader. Management of the cellular companies may be benefited from the findings of this research, so there are some recommendations for them at the end of this article.

**Index Terms**—Path goal theory, subordinates' characteristics, environmental characteristics, leaderships' behavior, acceptance of leader.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. What Is Leadership?

The term leadership has different connotations to different people that create ambiguity of meaning. According to [1] this ambiguity emerges from the fact that the concept entails a multifaceted interaction among the leader, his subordinates and the particular situation

Leadership is a universal phenomenon and has been defined and studied from a wide variety of perspectives and disciplinary approaches as narrated by [2] this has resulted in different theories of leadership.

Reference [3] reported that a few years ago, fifty-four leadership experts from thirty-eight countries reached a consensus that leadership means an ability to influence, motivate and enable others in a way that they contribute towards the efficiency and accomplishment of the mission/goals of organizations which have employed them. A leader is a person who exhibits ideas, vision, values, influences others, and makes tough decisions. If a person possesses these key attributes then he can act as a leader as in [4] "leadership occurs when particular individual exerts

influence upon others for the achievement of goal in an organizational setting by enhancing the productivity, innovation, satisfaction, and commitment of the work force".

Sometimes leadership is seen as a process while some times as a relationship. Some scholars view it as the outcome of a set of traits/attributes, while there are others who regard it as a social process that emanates from relationships among the group. This difference in perception always results in different estimation of the leadership's character e.g. as defined in [5] leadership as the process by which ideas and a vision are developed, then living by values that support those ideas and that vision, influencing others to embrace these values in their own behaviors, and making hard decisions about human and other resources but [6] defined leadership as a relationship through which leaders influence their followers. To [7] leadership is a series of functions that have to be carried out in order for the group to be effective. Where the group's task may need to be clarified, resources may be required, occasionally the spirits of group members may need lifting, and the group's output must eventually be evaluated.

Thus leadership is the art or a process of influencing people and motivating them to work willingly and enthusiastically towards the attainment of common goals through maximum application of his/her capabilities and in this process leader facilitates progress and inspires the group to attain goals, which the organization has set for itself.

Reference [8] says that despite the fact that leadership is recognized as an important skill a mystery prevails as to what it actually is and how it can be defined.

### B. Effective Leaders

When the subordinates believe in leader, Idealize him, unconditional follow him and accepts him blindly than we say he is an effective leader. Reference [9] say that the leaders that can be called effective when they are helpful to a group of people for defining their goals and finding certain ways through which these goals can be achieved

### C. Leadership Behavior

Leadership behavior is the behavior; a leader exhibits.

### D. Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

The Path-goal theory of leadership is widely recognized contingency approach to leadership. The concepts and terminologies used in Path-goal had already been used [10] at University of Michigan's Institute of Social Research, before it was developed and published as a theory [11], [12].

Path-goal theory of leadership is based on Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation with its concepts of expectancy, outcomes, valence and instrumentality. [13]

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“The theory was stimulated by Evan’s paper in which the relationship between the Ohio State measures of leader consideration and leader initiating structure and follower perception of path-goal relationship (instrumentality and expectations) were assessed.”

In 1971, House formulated a more elaborated version of the theory that included situational variables as well. The theory has been further refined and extended over the years [13]-[15].

Reference [16] believes that path-goal theory tries to elucidate the reason behind the working of contingent rewards and how these rewards effect the subordinates’ satisfaction and motivation. While [8] is of the view that the re-enforcement of change in the subordinate by the leader is a prominent aspect of path-goal leadership.

The Path-goal theory states that a leader must be able to manifest four different styles of behavior which are

**Directive:** when leader provides specific guidelines to subordinates on how they have to perform their tasks. Further, leader sets standards of performance and provides explicit expectations of performance.

**Supportive:** when the leader demonstrates concern for subordinate well-being and is supportive to individuals.

**Participative:** when leader solicits ideas and suggestions from subordinates and invites their participation in decisions that directly affect them.

**Achievement oriented:** when leader sets challenging goals, emphasizes improvements in work performance, and encourages high levels of goals attainments [17]:

Leaders can affect a subordinate’s performance, motivation and satisfaction in several ways, such as: by clarifying the subordinate’s role as what is expected from him/her; linking rewards to the subordinate satisfactory performance; and increasing the size and value of the rewards

*E. Acceptance of Leader*

This concept refers to the state where subordinate complies with the directives and orders of his leader and is always ready to accept the decisions made by the leader. He is at high comfort level with his leader and feels pleased while working with him.

Participation in decision-making always increases acceptance of leader’ though involving entire group requires lot of efforts and time but ensures high level of acceptance of decisions and leader also, resulting in efficient execution. The acceptance of orders by subordinates’ depends upon the surrounding/situational conditions. Further, the compliance of orders is linked the extent such orders are: understood; consistent with the mission of the organization; compatible with the personal interests of the subordinates and to the extent to which subordinate is physically and mentally able to comply with them.

The effective administrative authority leads to willing rather than forced compliance. But each subordinate has a “zone of indifference” maintained by the interests of the group. Reference [18] found that the zone of acceptance increased to the extent SUBORDINATES is given autonomy.

II. METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of the middle and

lower managers working as regular employees in different companies of the telecom (cellular) industry of Pakistan

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 60 middle managers &140 lower managers working in Mobilink, Ufone, Telenor and Warid. (15 middle managers and 35 lower managers from each organization).

For the collection of data a number of questionnaires were used. The acceptance of leader was measured through a 10 items scale [19]. The leadership behavior was measured through a set of 20 questions: Five questions measuring directive and participative leadership behavior; seven questions measuring supportive leadership behavior; and three questions measuring achievement-oriented leadership behavior. The subordinates’ and environmental characteristics were measured through a set of 45 questions with eight questions measuring task structure; nine questions measuring role ambiguity; ten questions measuring stress; five questions measuring need for achievement; four questions measuring need for autonomy; four questions measuring perception about abilities; and five questions measuring locus of control. These questions (instruments) were used in combination with general demographic questions seeking information about attributes such as age, gender, qualification, rank, salary range, experience and length of service under current supervisor for data collection.

Researcher approached the Human Resources Departments of the major cellular companies, explained the purpose of the research, with a request to provide number of regular employees on the pay roll of company and working as middle managers along with supervisors/lower managers working in their work unit whom they were directly supervising. Both technical and non-technical areas of the company were included in the study. After seeking the necessary permission from Human Resources Department/company, researcher personally approached the participants of study for the collection of data.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected was analyzed according to the Nine hypotheses specifically formulated for the study.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between leadership behavior and subordinates’ acceptance of leader.

TABLE I: PEARSON R, CRITICAL VALUE, R-SQUARE AND PERCENT OF COMMON VARIANCE OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

	Count	Correlation	p value	R-Square	% VOC
Directive	150	.392	.000	.153	15.3
Supportive	152	.370	.000	.136	13.69
Participative	152	.200	.013	.040	04.00
Achievement Oriented	152	.369	.000	.136	13.69

The Table I exhibits the correlation coefficient between leadership behaviors and acceptance of leader. The correlation coefficients are significant so the null hypothesis

was rejected. And it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between leadership behavior and subordinate acceptance of leader. The directive leadership behavior has strong relationship as compared to other facets of leader behavior with acceptance of leader as 15.3 percent variance in acceptance of leader is due to directive leader behavior.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between linear combination of four leadership behavior, (directive, supportive, participative and achievements-oriented) and subordinate's acceptance of leader.

The Table II shows the linear regression analysis for linear combination of four leadership behaviors (directive, participative, supportive and achievement oriented) and acceptance of leader by subordinates. It was calculated by adding the scores of four leadership behavior. The regression equation for predicting the acceptance of leader is:

$$\text{Predicted acceptance of leader} = 15.605 + .12 \text{ leadership behavior}$$

The analysis shows that 16.2% variance in acceptance of

leader is due to leadership behavior.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between attributes of subordinates (age, gender, qualification, rank, experience and length of service under the current supervisor) and subordinate's acceptance of leader.

The Table III indicates the regression analysis for attributes of subordinates as predictor of acceptance of leader. The analysis shows that the attributes of subordinates accounted for 3.9 percent of the variation in acceptance of leader. Since the *F* value was not significant so the null hypothesis was accepted.

The beta values and *t*-values are all insignificant but had negative moderate correlation except for qualification and experience which have +ve correlation with the acceptance of leader.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant relationship between situational factor (task structure, role ambiguity, stress, need for autonomy, locus of control, need for achievement, & perception about ability) and subordinates' acceptance of leader.

TABLE II: LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AS PREDICTOR OF ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

<i>t</i> value	<i>P</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>F</i> -Ratio	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
9.415	.000	15.605	29.064	.403	.162

TABLE III: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS: AGE, GENDER, QUALIFICATION, RANK/DESIGNATION, EXPERIENCE, AND LENGTH OF SERVICE UNDER CURRENT SUPERVISOR AND ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i> Ratio	Sig	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Age	-1.854	-1.720	.088	-.121			
Gender	-.264	-.300	.765	-.016			
Qualification	.167	.617	.538	.079			
Rank	-.208	-.236	.814	-.021	.726	.651	.039
Experience	.345	.675	.501	.028			
Service	-.262	-.415	.679	-.032			

TABLE IV: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS: TASK STRUCTURE, ROLE AMBIGUITY, STRESS, NEED FOR AUTONOMY, LOCUS OF CONTROL, NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT, PERCEPTION ABOUT ABILITY AND ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>F</i> -Ratio	Sig	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Locus of Control	.101	.802	.424	.302			
Ability	.221	1.667	.098	.370			
Task Structure	-.016	-.192	.848	.192			
Role Ambiguity	.096	1.603	.112	.272	9.092	.000	.347
Stress	-.324	-4.103	.000	-.431			
Achievement Need	.225	2.083	.039	.445			
Autonomy Need	.016	.105	.916	.267			

TABLE V: GENDER WISE DIFFERENCE REGARDING ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Significance
Male	105	24.5905	.144	135	.886
Female	32	24.4688			

TABLE VI: AGE WISE DIFFERENCE REGARDING ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Significance
Age group(20-40)	127	24.5118	.936	149	.351
Age group(41-60)	24	25.5833			

The Table IV shows the results of multiple regression analysis of situational factors and subordinates acceptance of leader. The regression equation was significant so the null hypothesis was rejected. All individual situational factors had no significant relationship with subordinates' acceptance of leader except stress. Moreover, task structure and stress had negative contribution to the acceptance of leader which means that these variables increases acceptance of leader.

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no gender wise significant difference in the acceptance of leader.

Table V shows analysis of gender difference with acceptance of leader by subordinates. The results reveal that *t* value is not significant so the null hypothesis was accepted. It is concluded that there is no gender wise significant difference in acceptance of leader.

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no age wise significant difference in acceptance of leader in employees.

Table VI shows analysis of age difference and acceptance of leader. The results reveal that *t* value is not significant so the null hypothesis was accepted. It is therefore concluded that there is no age wise significant difference in the acceptance of leader.

H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference in the acceptance of leader of employees having different qualifications.

TABLE VII: DIFFERENCE REGARDING ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER OF EMPLOYEES WITH DIFFERENT QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications	<i>N</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Significance
B.A/B.Sc	40			
M.A/M.Sc	73			
M.Phill	9	4	1.437	.225
PhD	4			
Others	25			

Table VII presents analysis of subordinates' acceptance of leader having different qualifications. The results reveal that *F* value is not significant so the null hypothesis was accepted. It is therefore, concluded that there is no significant difference in the subordinates acceptance of leader having different level of qualifications.

H<sub>08</sub>: There is no significant difference in the acceptance of leader of employees having different experiences.

TABLE VIII: DIFFERENCE REGARDING ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER OF EMPLOYEES WITH DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

Experiences	<i>N</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Significance
> 1 Year	15			
1-5 Years	76			
6-10 Years	44	4	1.085	.366
11-20 Years	12			
21 -30 Years	4			

Table VIII shows analysis of acceptance of leader by subordinates with varying length of experience. The results reveal that *F* value is not significant so the null hypothesis was accepted. It is therefore, concluded that there is no significant different in the acceptance of leader by subordinates with varying length of experience.

H<sub>09</sub>: There is no significant difference in the perception of lower and middle management regarding acceptance of leader.

TABLE IX: DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTION OF LOWER AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT REGARDING ACCEPTANCE OF LEADER

Rank	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Significance
Lower Managers	115	24.3391	-.111	150	.192
Middle Managers	37	24.4324			

Table IX presents analysis of difference in the perception of lower and middle managers regarding acceptance of leader. The results reveal that *t* value is not significant so the null hypothesis was accepted. It is concluded that there is no significant difference between lower and middle management regarding acceptance of leader.

#### IV. FINDINGS

- 1) There is a significant relationship between leadership behavior and subordinate acceptance of leader.
- 2) There is a significant relationship between linear combination of four leadership behaviors (directive, supportive, participative and achievements-oriented) and subordinate's acceptance of leader
- 3) Leadership behavior affects subordinates' acceptance of leader and can be used as predictor of acceptance of leader by the subordinates
- 4) There is no significant relationship between attributes of subordinates (age, gender, qualification, rank, experience and length of service under the current supervisor) and subordinate's acceptance of leader.
- 5) There is a significant relationship between situational factor (task structure, role ambiguity, stress, need for autonomy, locus of control, need for achievement, & perception about ability) and subordinates' acceptance of leader
- 6) The regression equation for situational factors (Locus of control, ability, task structure, role ambiguity, stress, achievement need and autonomy need) and subordinates acceptance of leader was significant except stress.
- 7) Task structure and stress had negative contribution to the acceptance of leader which means that these variables increase acceptance of leader.
- 8) There is no gender wise significant difference in the acceptance of leader
- 9) There is no age wise significant difference in acceptance of leader among employees.
- 10) There is no significant difference in the acceptance of leader of employees having different qualifications
- 11) There is no significant difference in the acceptance of leader by employees having different experiences
- 12) There is no significant difference in the perception of lower and middle management regarding acceptance of leader

#### V. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Path goal theory holds that depending upon subordinates'

and task characteristics, an effective leader will use each of the four types of leader behaviors in different situations. Findings of the study concluded that leadership behavior had significant relationship with acceptance of leader. The analysis reveals that directive leader behavior has strong relationship with acceptance of leader which is in conformity with path goal theory which states that subordinates are more satisfied with directive leader behavior when task is not structured. Further highly structured tasks are less satisfying than unstructured tasks [14]. The attributes of subordinates had no significant effect on the acceptance of leader by subordinates. However, male employees had higher mean score than female employees and employees in age group (41-60) had higher mean score than those in age group (20-40). Similarly, middle managers had higher mean score as compared to lower managers on acceptance of leader. The beta values and t-values of age, gender, rank, and length of service under the current supervisor had moderate and negative correlation with acceptance of leader whereas; qualification and experience had positive correlation with acceptance of leader.

The situational factors do affect the subordinates' acceptance of leader. All the situational variables except stress had no significant relationship with subordinates' acceptance of leader. Further, situational factors: task structure and; stress had negative correlation with subordinates' acceptance of leader which means that these variables increase acceptance of leader. The path goal theory assumes that highly structured tasks are less satisfying than unstructured tasks. This study confirms this assumption because task structure was negatively related to the acceptance of leader. This study also confirms path goal prediction that when task is dissatisfying, routine or structured subordinate will be dissatisfied, as there was an inverse relationship between task structure and acceptance of leader.

Path goal theory assumes that directive leader behavior increases subordinates' acceptance of leader by clarifying roles and responsibilities, thus helping subordinates to perform their work smoothly. In this study it was found that stress had inverse relationship with acceptance of leader. It means highly stressed subordinates had greater acceptance when manager displayed directive leadership behavior.

This study concluded that directive leader behavior had most significant relationship with acceptance of leader having 15.3% variance followed by supportive and achievement oriented leader behavior having 13.69% variance in acceptance of leader. So this study confirms the assumptions of path goal theory and supports findings of studies [14], [19], [20].

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

As the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between leader behavior and subordinates' acceptance of leader. The situational factors also affect the subordinates' acceptance of leader. That's why there are some recommendations for the management of the cellular companies.

- 1) Revisit the job descriptions and work structure to avoid role ambiguity and stress

- 2) Try to manage the expectation of employees so that acceptance of leader can be enhanced
- 3) Revise the promotion policies and compensation structure which ensures the culture of performance, justice and fair play.
- 4) Introduce participatory management to ensure involvement of subordinates in decision making
- 5) Design and develop training programs to train managers on the role of situational factors (environmental and subordinate characteristics) in the organizational effectiveness and subordinates acceptance of leaders.

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