

TOWARDS A MODEL OF LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This paper proposes the integration of the Model of Culture Fit proposed by Aycan, Kanungo & Sinha (1999) with the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership developed by House (1971) and Locke's (1968) Goal Setting Theory. The Culture Fit Model explains human resource practices of leaders on the basis of organizational culture variables without considering the impact of societal culture and values in initiating human resource practices. The Path-Goal Theory conceptualizes the leader's role as that of providing direction and support for employees in attaining their goals and those of the organization. Goal Setting Theory proposes that intentions and goals of individuals determine their performance. Conceptual parallels that seek to explain employee performance on the bases of culture, leadership style and goal setting are identified and interaction effects among the various dimensions analyzed. The resulting model of leadership and organizational performance proposed in this paper examines the interconnectedness of societal culture and values, leadership and motivation in relation to performance in organizations. The integration of the models should therefore further understanding of the social and cultural processes that enhance organizational performance, Implications for theory and practice as well as directions for future research are presented.

INTRODUCTION

The development of corporate organizations, leadership, motivation and organizational performance are among the most widely discussed topics in contemporary management literature. Recently there has been a growing recognition particularly in developing societies that most European/American theories of management and behaviour do not always produce the desired results because of divergent cultural and values orientation (Elkjaer, 2004). It is a widely held assumption that the failure of development efforts in developing societies results from the absence of good leadership. For example, the failure of democratic leadership in the African continent has been attributed to the lack of democratic values among leaders and followers alike.

A major thrust evident in the literature has been to develop models and typologies to delineate the characteristics of organizational culture, for example, the Organizational Culture Profile (Gray, Densten & Sarros, 2003) and the Competing Values Framework (Quinn, 1988). In addition, research to examine the relationship between leadership and organizational culture is well developed (e.g., Quinn, 1984; Schein, 2004). However, there is a lack of theory to elucidate the impact of societal culture and values in initiating and sustaining leadership, motivation and performance in organizations. Societal culture and values indeed underpin leadership, motivation and performance problems in organizations.

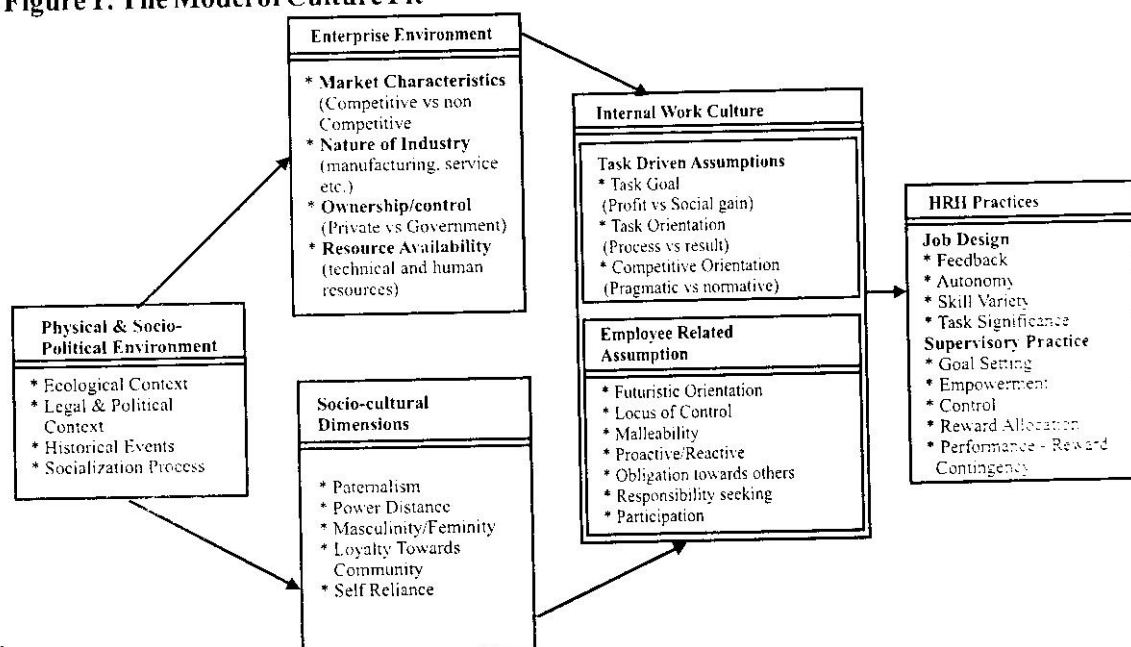
The purpose of this paper is to extend previous theory by examining the interconnections between societal culture and values, leadership, motivation and performance in organizations. This is because the success of leadership, motivation and performance theories is predicated on the dynamic social processes within which the theories are applied. The development of an integrated model of Leadership and organizational performance should facilitate the identification of leadership practices that will result in the improvement of organizational performance. This paper investigates the links between societal culture in terms of the Model of Culture Fit (Aycan, Kanungo & Singha, 1999), leadership from the Path-goal theory perspective (House, 1971) and motivation and performance based on Locke's (1968) Goal Setting theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Model of Culture Fit

The Model of Culture Fit (Figure 1) proposed by Aycan, Kanungo & Sinha (1999) suggests that the socio-cultural environment represents the shared value orientations among people in a given society. The attributes of this dimension and the extent to which they differ across cultures have been largely examined by previous research such as individualism-collectivism (Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 1983; Schwartz, 1994; Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1966; Triandis, 1982; Trompenaars, 1993).

Figure 1: The Model of Culture Fit



Source: Adapted from Aycan, Kanungo & Sinha (1999). Organizational Culture and Human Resources Management Practices: The Model of Culture Fit. Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology, Vol. 30 No. 4, July, p. 503

The model suggests an emphasis on the value of internal work culture, but also emphasizes human resources management practices. The internal work culture consists of the prevailing managerial assumptions and beliefs (Schein, 1992) regarding two basic organizational elements: the task and employees. Managerial assumptions about the task deal with the nature of the task and how it can be attained; those concerned with employees deal with employee nature and behaviour. The model posits that managers pursue human resources management practices based on their assumptions pertaining to the nature of the task and the employees. These assumptions are, however, influenced by different environmental forces. For example, the task-driven assumptions are determined by the enterprise characteristics including ownership status private sector versus public sector; industry service versus manufacturing etc. Employee related assumptions, with which this paper is concerned, are influenced by forces in the socio-cultural environment.

Societal and organizational level culture: The interface between these two dimensions of culture had been largely neglected in previous research (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1982). However, the two bodies of research were first integrated in the Model of Culture Fit developed by Kanungo & Jaeger (1990) and further extended by Medonca and Kanungo (1994). Empirical test of the Model was partially carried out by Mathur, Aycan and Kanungo (1996) and further tested by Aycan, Kanungo and Singha (1999). The Model of Culture Fit proposes that societal values influence human resources management practices through the mediation of internal work culture. Thus, managers determine the ways in which human resources are used based on their assumptions regarding employees' needs, wishes and capabilities. These assumptions are derived from the socio-cultural environment from which the organizations draw their human resources. For example, in societies where the culture is characterized by high uncertainty avoidance and power distance, managers assume that their subordinates are risk averse and reactive and therefore closely supervise and guide their employees. It is important to note that the distinction made between societal and organizational level culture provides a unique opportunity to examine how organizations within the same socio-cultural context may differ.

Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

The Path-goal theory of leadership developed by House (1971) currently enjoys robust support in the literature. The core argument of the theory is that the leader's job is that of assisting his/her followers in the accomplishment of their goals and providing the needed direction and support to ensure that their goals are congruent with the overall objectives of the group or organization. The theory argues that effective leaders influence their subordinates' satisfaction and performance by making their need satisfaction contingent on effective job performance. First, the leader ensures effective performance by making the performance-to-outcome expectancy and the values of those outcomes contingent on the performance of the subordinate. Employees who perform their jobs well have a higher need fulfillment than those who perform poorly. Second, effective leaders according to the theory reinforce the effort-to-performance expectancy by supplying the information, and other resources necessary to help employees attain their goals (House & Mitchell, 1974).

According to the theory, leaders motivate subordinates and employees in a given situation by adopting one or more of the four leadership styles indicated below:

1. **Directive:** This involves clarification of behaviours that provide psychological support for subordinates. The leader defines performance goals, the means to attain the goals and the standards for judging the performance of the subordinates. This approach also uses appropriate means of rewards and disciplinary actions.
2. **Supportive:** The leader provides psychological support for subordinates; is friendly and approachable and makes the work more pleasant for subordinates. In addition, he treats subordinates with equal respect and demonstrates concern for the status needs, and well-being of subordinates.
3. **Participative:** Leadership behaviour in this instance encourages and facilitates subordinates' involvement in the decision making process outside their normal work activities. The leader consults with subordinates and asks for their suggestions. These suggestions are seen by subordinates as the bases for arriving at decisions.
4. **Achievement-oriented:** The leader sets challenging goals for employees and expects them to perform at their highest level, while continuously seeking improvement in employee performance. The leader also demonstrates a high degree of confidence that employees will assume responsibility and accomplish challenging goals.

According to Path-Goal theory, an effective leader is one who is capable of selecting the most appropriate behavioural style (or styles) for a given situation. Leaders may use one or more styles at the same time. For example, a leader may be supportive and participative in a specific situation. As a contingency theory, the model specifies that each of these four leadership styles will be effective in some situations but not for others. The path-goal theory specifies two kinds of situational variables that influence the leadership style and effectiveness: (1) employee characteristics and (2) characteristics of the employee's work environment. According to Wofford & Liska (1993), several contingencies have already been studied within the path-goal framework and more of such contingencies could further be studied. For our purposes, however, we shall only examine four of the major contingencies that have been isolated in research with substantial support. These contingencies include: Skill-experience and locus of control and task structure and team dynamics for employee and environmental contingencies respectively.

Skill and experience: A combination of directive and supportive leadership will be effective for employees who are or perceive themselves to be inexperienced and unskilled. In general, participative and achievement oriented leadership styles are more appropriate where employees are skilled and experienced (McShane & Von Gilnow, 2000).

Locus of control: Evidence from research indicates that people with an internal locus of control believe that they have control over their work environment whereas those with an external locus of control believe that their performance is due to luck and fate. Consequently, employees with internal locus of control prefer participative and achievement-oriented leadership and may become frustrated if they find themselves under directive leadership whereas those employees with external locus of control will be more satisfied with directive and supportive leadership (Spector, 1982).

Task structure: According to Keller (1989), directive leadership should be adopted where the employee's task is non-routine since this leadership style minimizes the role ambiguity associated with these complex task situations particularly for inexperienced employees. This style is ineffective in routine and simple tasks since the leader's guidance will serve no useful

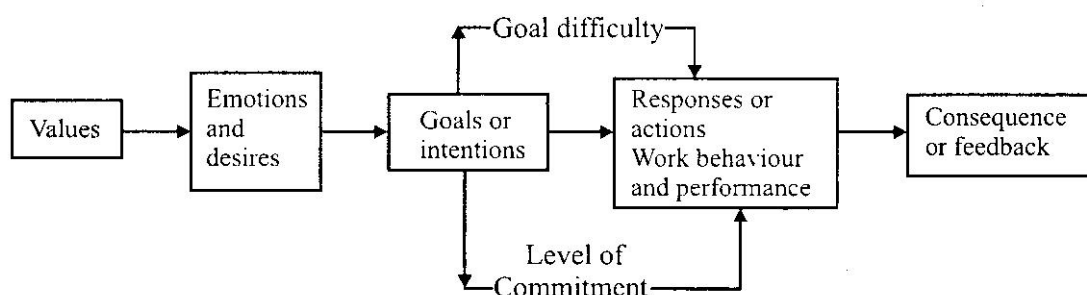
purpose and may be seen as undue interference in the performance of the employee's functions. Employees in highly routine and simple task situations may require a supportive leadership style to enable them cope with the tedious nature of the job and lack of control over the pace of work. Participative leadership style is appropriate for employees performing non-routine tasks because the lack of rules and procedures gives them more control in accomplishing challenging goals. In routine task situations, this leadership style is ineffective because employees lack discretion over their work.

Team dynamics: Supportive and possibly achievement-oriented leadership style may not be effective in highly cohesive teams with performance-oriented norms since the cohesiveness and norms of the teams substitute for supportive and directive leadership interventions respectively. In teams with low cohesiveness, leaders should use the supportive style. Where performance norms are low, the leader should apply the directive style to counteract team norms that differ from the formal objectives of the team. For example, a leader may use legitimate power if team members have a "take it easy" approach rather than completing a project on schedule (McShane & Von Gilnow, 2000).

Goal-Setting Theory

This model is based mainly on the work of Locke (1968). Goal setting is one of the most widely practiced models of motivation in the workplace (Wilk & Redmon, 1998). The basic premise of the model is that people's intentions or goals play an important part in determining behaviour. Locke accepts the significance of perceived value, as indicated in expectancy theories of motivation and argues that these values give rise to the experience of emotions and desires. According to Locke, people strive to achieve goals in order to satisfy their emotions and desires. Thus, goals guide people's responses and actions. Goals direct work behaviour and performance, and result in certain consequences or feedback. Goal setting is the process of motivating employees and clarifying their role perceptions by establishing performance targets. Goal setting potentially improves employee performance in two ways: (1) by increasing the intensity and persistence of effort and (2) by giving employees a clearer role perception so that their effort is channeled toward behaviours that will improve work performance. The process by which goal setting influences employee performance is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: A diagrammatic representation of the Goal-setting Theory



Source: Mullins, L.J. (1999). Management and Organizational Behaviour, (2nd Ed.). Allahabad: Wheeler Publishing, P. 325.

According to Locke, the combination of goal difficulty level and the employee's commitment to achieving the specified goal regulates the effort that the individual expends in pursuit of the goal. The model suggests that individuals with specific quantitative goals, such as a performance target or deadline for the completion of a task will perform better than people with no goals set or vague goals such as "do your best". Employees with difficult goals will perform better than those with easier goals.

Goal setting in organizations has been variously applied through a formal process known as Management by Objectives (MBO) and its variants but generally, they identify organizational objectives which are clearly communicated to the employees (Poister & Streib, 1995). Organizational behaviour scholars have identified six conditions that are necessary for accomplishing maximum task effort and performance. These include:

1. **Specific goals:** Individuals expend more effort on a task when they are given specific goals rather than "do your best" targets. This is because specific goals have measurable targets and communicate precise performance objectives to which employees direct their efforts.
2. **Results-oriented goals:** Results-oriented goals increase performance outputs more than process-oriented goals because it is directly linked to the individual employee's output. For example, the number of customers served by an employee in a retail outlet per hour. Process-oriented goals apply to the work processes used to get the job done. An example of a process oriented goal would be to find a way of reducing the time that it takes for a customer to describe his or her problem. It has been observed that process-oriented goals encourage employees to think of alternative ways of getting the job done, but seem to prevent them from choosing a particular alternative and getting done with the job. Thus, results-oriented goals are more effective than process-oriented approaches to task performance (Locke & Latham, 1990).
3. **Challenging goals:** Challenging rather than easy goals elicit more intense and persistent effort from employees. In addition, challenging goals have the potential of satisfying an employee's need for achievement or growth needs when the goal is achieved (Gellatly & Meyer, 1992). In some organizations, stretch-goals, that is goals that are challenging enough to stretch the employees abilities and motivation toward peak performance are used to improve productivity. However. Stretch-goals can only be effective when they do not overstress the employee in trying to attain the performance target (Thompson, Hochwarter & Mathys, 1997).
4. **Goal commitment:** When a challenging goal is too difficult to accomplish, the tendency is for effort and persistence to slack-off because employees are no longer committed to achieving it. At that point, work effort cascades dramatically. This process is similar to the effort -performance expectancy proposed by Expectancy theory. The less the effort -performance expectancy that the goal can be achieved, the less committed (motivated) the worker is to the goal (Klein, 1991). An optimal level of goal difficulty that is challenging still extracts commitment towards goal achievement (Tubbs, 1993). On the contrary, if unrealistic goals are set in the beginning employees will be discouraged and commitment will decline.

Self-efficacy is another variable that influences employee goal commitment. High self-efficacy individuals are confident that they will achieve positive results with difficult goals. Evidence exists in the literature that high self-efficacy individuals are more likely to accept their goals because they believe that they can choose successful strategies to attain their goals (Latham, Winters & Locke, 1994). Employees with low self-efficacy have a tendency to panic when given a unique goal where the means to achieve that goal is not obvious.

5. **Participation in goal formation:** Commitment to goals can be achieved by allowing employees to participate in the formation of goals. Participation in goal formation encourages commitment because employees accept the goals as their own rather than in situations where the goals are assigned to the employees.

Participation can equally increase the quality of goals, because employees have valuable information and knowledge that may not be initially known to those who developed the goals. For example, some organizations encourage their employees in a work area to review the unit's future performance. This practice encourages employees to accept the goals and bring their competences, knowledge and resources to accomplish the goals (Chowdhury, 1993).

6. **Goal feedback:** Feedback is another necessary condition for effective goal setting.

Feedback allows employees to know whether their goals have been achieved or assess whether their efforts are appropriately directed toward achieving the goal. In addition, goal feedback also encourages motivation by conveying information to employees that their growth needs are being satisfied (Robinson & Weldon, 1993).

Goal setting has been one of the most robust models of motivation with adequate empirical support in the literature. In addition, the model has found wide application in various organizational settings (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000). The model, however, does not work for every employee in all kinds of situations.

One of the limitations of the model is that when goals are tied to monetary incentives, some employees are motivated to select easy goals rather than difficult ones (Wright, 1994). Therefore, employers are encouraged to separate goal-setting from the pay-setting process. A second concern is that goal setting can interfere with performance on new and complex tasks (DeShon & Alexander, 1996).

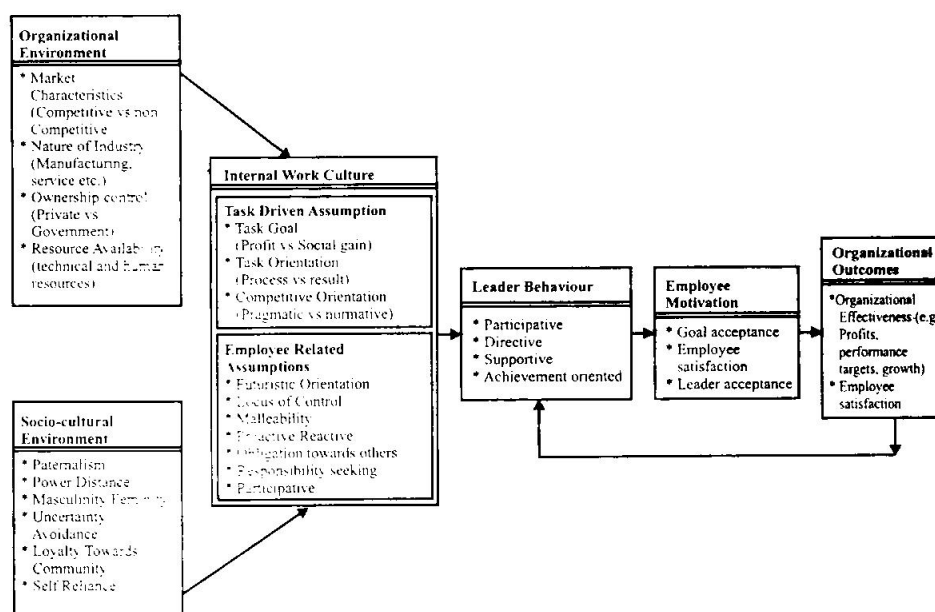
INTEGRATION OF THE MODELS

A better understanding of the relationship between culture, leadership, motivation and employee/organizational performance can only be achieved if we understand how leadership behaviour influences employee motivation which in turn determines performance. The integration of the Model of Culture Fit, Path-goal theory of leadership and Goal Setting theory of motivation and performance provides an opportunity to elucidate the impact of culture on leadership and organizational performance. Several conceptual parallels underpin the three models. The three models present typologies that tend to account for organizational performance. First, the Model of Culture Fit focuses on organizational performance in terms of internal work culture (Medonca and Kanungo, 1994). Second, the Path-goal Model suggests

that organizational performance is dependent on the leader's ability to provide the necessary direction and resources that are required to ensure that the goals of employees are congruent with those of the organization (House, 1971). Third, the Goal Setting Model suggests that organizational performance is determined through goals that are based on employee related contingencies (Locke, 1968). The three models attempt to capture the dynamic process associated with internal operations as well as the interactions of organizations with the external environment. Finally, the three models acknowledge that organizational members must balance conflicting demands. For example, the Model of Culture Fit emphasizes the importance of culture in shaping the manager's or leader's assumption regarding subordinates which forms the basis of his/her human resources management practices. Path-goal model suggests that organizational performance is dependent on the leader's ability to fulfill the roles required by the four major contingencies skill-experience, locus of control, task structure and team dynamics (Wofford & Liska, 1993), while goal setting theory emphasizes employee intentions and the level of goal difficulty as determinants of organizational performance.

Figure 3 presents a visual representation of the integration of the three models. A fundamental assumption which underpins the three models is the importance of human relations and socialization processes for effective organizational performance. In addition, the three models acknowledge that organizational members must balance conflicting demands for effective organizational performance to be achieved. The Model of Culture Fit emphasizes the importance of the internal culture of an organization in shaping managerial assumptions about employees which influence their human resources management styles. Path-Goal theory emphasizes the importance of managerial leadership behaviours in ensuring that employees' need satisfaction is contingent on effective job performance. Similarly, the Goal setting theory implies the importance of managerial leadership behaviours in the goal setting process. Thus, the three models recognize that managerial leadership behaviour is important in determining organizational performance. Furthermore the models share an open systems conceptualization that is characterized by flexibility in leadership styles and the conditions upon which the task performance outcome is predicated.

Figure 1: Model of Leadership and Organizational Performance



The present model proposes that the organizational environment and the socio-cultural environment influence the internal work culture of an organization which in turn mediates the leadership and managerial practices in an organization. This is possible through the prevailing managerial assumptions about the nature and behaviour of employees which constitute the internal work culture (Schein, 1992). The leadership style in an organization is determined by the assumptions of managers regarding employees and these assumptions are based on the socio-cultural values of the society from which the employees are drawn. For example, in societies high in uncertainty avoidance and power distance, leaders assume that employees are reactive and risk averse (Hofstede, 1980). Based on these assumptions, managers are more likely to closely supervise and guide employees thus granting them less autonomy in the performance of their tasks. The implication of this is that where the leader's assumptions are not congruent with the socio-cultural characteristics and values of employees, motivation and morale are low and result in declines in performance and productivity. According to the Path-Goal model, participative and achievement oriented leadership style is more effective in motivating skilled and experienced employees to perform better (McShane & Von Gilnow, 2000). Similarly, the Goal-Setting model suggests that participation in goal setting increases commitment to the goal because employees take ownership of the goal compared to goals that are merely assigned by the leader. It would seem that today's employees increasingly expect to be involved in decisions that affect them. The leadership practices (in the fourth quadrant) outlined by the three models are based on rational goals which are determined by the organizational context (market characteristics etc.), and the Socio-cultural context (power distance, etc.). These in turn influence the task driven assumptions (task goal etc.) and employee driven assumptions (locus of control, etc.). Consequently, the task driven and employee driven assumptions are theoretically consistent in the recognition of the importance of socio-cultural variables in determining leadership practices. The present model like that of Aycan and associates makes a distinction between socio-cultural and organizational culture dimensions. For this reason, it is expected that leadership assumptions may differ across organizations that are in the same socio-cultural environment. For example, Mathur, Aycan and Kanungo (1996) showed that managerial assumptions (and consequently internal work culture) varied in public and private sector organizations within the same socio-cultural environment. They account for these differences by noting that private organizations were more profit driven than public sector organizations. Their findings showed that employee characteristics differed in both types of organizations. Typically, private sector employees were more educated, more willing to take risks, more accommodating of change, more assertive and more participative than employees in the public sector. These findings bring to question the approaches in the extant literature that have treated societal culture as if it were homogeneous in national boundaries (for example, Hofstede, 1980 and Triandis, 1982).

The Model of Leadership and Organizational Performance proposed in this study recognizes the fact that the socio-cultural environment within a given society might differ substantially as to have noticeable influences even among organizations in the same socio-cultural context. In Nigeria, for example, there are marked cultural differences between the northern and southern parts of the country. These differences might be attributed to variations in the values upon which the various subcultures are based. In the north there is a preponderance of Muslims and Islamic values reflect upon the culture whereas Christian ethics and values determine to a large extent the prevailing culture in the south.

The model suggests that the leadership practices in turn influence employee motivation and organizational performance. This is theoretically consistent with the propositions of the three models that are being integrated. For example, both the Path-Goal and Goal-Setting Models recognize that participative leadership practices encourage commitment to goals thereby enhancing task performance and productivity. Although, the Culture Fit Model recognizes that human resources management practices and supervisory practices are outcomes of the internal work culture and employee related assumptions, it fails to provide the theoretical linkage between these practices and employee motivation and performance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

There are several theoretical and practical implications that result from examining the relationships among socio-cultural factors, leadership practices, motivational and performance outcomes. Integrating the Culture Fit, Path-Goal and Goal-Setting Models may enhance our understanding of the social processes that determine organizational performance. The Culture Fit Model provides a theoretical guide that explains the dynamic processes which lead to human resources management and supervisory practices. In contrast, the Path-Goal and Goal-Setting Models emphasize the social processes that explain leadership and motivation respectively. The integration of the three models may assist organization members to appreciate the complexity of performance efforts in different socio-cultural contexts where multiple functions are being undertaken simultaneously.

Drawing on the Culture Fit Model to augment the Path-Goal and Goal-Setting Model could extend our understanding of leadership behaviours and how such behaviours influence employee motivation and organizational performance. Clarifying socio-cultural variables that influence managerial leadership roles which influence motivation and performance could have important implications for organizational growth and development.

The new Model of Leadership and organizational performance should be operationalized as a basis for managerial leadership development. Such a development could assist leaders to strategically select behaviours to optimize organizational productivity. In addition, the model could assist in the diagnosis of adequate leadership and performance problems in organizations, for example, where a culture of non-participative leadership style leads to loss of knowledge sharing that could improve productivity (Crossan & Hulland, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The Culture Fit Model was developed to account for the influence of culture on human resources management and supervisory practices in organizations, while the Path-Goal and Goal-Setting Models were developed to account for leadership and motivational practices in organizations respectively. Integrating the three models in the Leadership and Organizational Performance Model could provide the means to understand how the market characteristics and socio-cultural factors in an organization's environment could enhance the internal work culture and employee related assumptions of a leader to adopt a particular leadership style or combination of leadership styles that would enhance the motivation and performance of subordinates. Further theoretical development is required to clarify the processes by which

implicit leadership assumptions become explicit. In addition, such developments could provide the foundation for the identification of the conceptual, interpersonal and technical skills that organizational leaders require in enhancing performance outcomes. In conclusion, by proposing the Model of Leadership and Organizational Performance, we hope to stimulate development of theory and encourage further empirical research into these important aspects of organizational behaviour.

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