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An Exploratory Study of Full Range Leadership Model and Nonverbal Sensitivity

Marius Constantin ROMASCANU¹, Virgil GHEORGHE², Dan Florin STANESCU³

Abstract: The current study aims at investigating the relations between full range leadership model and the nonverbal sensitivity. Specifically, the study is focused on transformational leadership, described as enhancing motivation and positive emotions of the followers, inspiring and creating a vision of the future and raising the awareness for the transcendent collective interests. The study was conducted using a survey method of 103 (30 male and 73 female) master students from a Romanian public university. All participants already had a job when we conducted the research although their work experience was limited. The relevant data were gathered using the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) and The Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The results showed significant positive correlations between transformational leadership and total scores of nonverbal sensitivity, whilst passive leadership style indicates significant negative correlations with total scores of nonverbal sensitivity. No significant correlations were found between transactional leadership and nonverbal sensitivity. Furthermore, the body channel of nonverbal sensitivity was positively related with leadership effectiveness. The implications with regard to theoretical research and organizational practice are also discussed.

Keywords: full range leadership model, nonverbal sensitivity.

1. Introduction

Concerns about the nature of leadership, its predictors and effects are known for a long time. Although some of the most profound and revealing lessons about leadership can be found in ancient texts, such as the Chinese philosopher Confucius (Oven, Hodgson & Gazzard, 2006, p. 8), one of the most widely accepted definition was developed by Burns: “leaders

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inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p.19).

Burns delineates two basic types of leadership: transactional and transformational, the latest being defined as a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation (Burns, 1978).

In 1985, Bass, extending the theory developed by Burns (1978), proposed an integrative theory of organizational leadership. This theory, called “The full range leadership theory” (Bass & Avolio, 1994), includes the three typologies of leadership behavior, and it is considered to be one of the most widely researched paradigms in the leadership field. Also, this theory has showed substantial validity for predicting a number of leadership outcomes including leader performance and effectiveness ratings in addition to follower satisfaction and motivation (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Sashkin, 2004).

According to Bass and Avolio (1994), "the full range leadership theory - or FRLT - comprises nine factors reflecting three broad classes of behavior: transformational leadership, with five distinct factors (1. idealized influence - attributed; 2. idealized influence - behaviors; 3. inspirational motivation; 4. intellectual stimulation; 5. individualized consideration); transactional leadership, with three distinct factors (1. contingent reward; 2. management-by-exception active; 3. management-by-exception passive) and laissez-faire leadership” (Antonakis & House, 2002, p. 9-10).

Transformational leaders motivates others to do more than they or originally intended and often even more than they thought possible. "Such leaders set more challenging expectations and typically achieve higher performances. Transformational leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership. Transactional leadership emphasizes the transaction or exchange that takes place among leaders, colleagues, and followers" (Avolio & Bass, 2002, p. 1).

From a descriptive perspective, Laissez-faire leadership refers to leaders who avoid making decisions and who are focused on problems that need to be corrected (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1995; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999); Transactional leadership is mostly based on an exchange of action and reward, leaders making decisions based on the rules and regulations (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1995; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999); Transformational leadership is related with leaders charisma and with the ability to enact a vision of a more satisfactory future state, guiding the followers to go beyond their own interests and, at the same time, considering the moral and ethical implications of their actions and goals (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1995; Avolio,
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Bass, & Jung, 1999). Kark & Shamir (2002) previous research has showed that those transformational behaviors are related to leadership effectiveness (Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996) and high employee performance (Barling et al., 1996).

Transformational leadership considered being the most effective of the three leadership styles in relation to follower effort, commitment, performance, and satisfaction (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1995).

One of the earliest lines of research of investigations into the nature of effective leadership was focused on identifying different personality traits and individual characteristics that are linked to successful leadership across a variety of situations (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004).

Regarding those individual characteristics Barge and Hirokawa (1989), stated, “in order for an individual to function as a leader, she or he must possess various encoding and decoding skills...so as to facilitate the group’s ability to understand and deal with existing barriers and problems appropriately,” (p.172). This approach point out to the fact that there are a range of communication skills required to manage different dimensions of group dynamics.

Awamleh and Gardner (1999), discuss the importance of effective nonverbal communication and its relation to charismatic leadership, especially related with idealized influence: “charismatic leaders are purported to project a power, confidence, and dynamic presence through the delivery factors of eye contact, fluency, gestures, facial expressiveness, eloquence, energy, and voice tone variety” (p.346). In addition, “followers expect charismatic leaders to be articulate and skillful in communicating their ideas and feelings” (p.359). Bass (1988) adds, “Charismatic leadership manifests itself in nonverbal emotional expressiveness. Expressive persons can use nonverbal cues to move, inspire or captivate” (p.47).

The nonverbal sensitivity, according to Hall (2006) is defined that “people's ability to infer the meanings of non-deceptive nonverbal cues conveyed in the face, body, and vocal channels” (p. 63). A general definition of nonverbal behavior proposed by Knapp and colleagues (2013) - "a communication effected by means other than words” (p.8) - signifying people ability to accurately encode and decode nonverbal cues, is playing a significant role in people's ability to create and maintain interpersonal relationships (Burgoon & Baceue, 2003; Riggio, 2005).

This ability allows us to perceive subtle cues and provides insight to appropriate social behaviors in a given circumstance, and offers for transformational leaders opportunities for "address each follower's sense of
self-worth in order to engage the follower in true commitment and involvement in the effort at hand" (Avolio & Bass, 2002, p. 1).

2. Objective and hypothesis

Current study aims at investigating the relations between full range leadership model and the nonverbal sensitivity. Specifically, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1. The transformational leadership will be positively related with the nonverbal sensitivity;

H2. The passive / avoidant style will be negatively related with nonverbal sensitivity;

H3. Nonverbal sensitivity will be positively related with different leadership outcomes such as leadership effectiveness or satisfaction with leadership.

3. Research Methods

In order to get the relevant data we have used the following instruments: Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS, Rosenthal et al., 1979) and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ, Bass & Avolio, 2004).

The instruments were administered on a convenience sample consisting of 103 participants, of which 30 were females and 73 were males. They were all master students from a Romanian public university with limited work experience (between 1 and 3 years); ages were between 21 and 30 years (M=22.88, SD=4.28).

PONS (Rosenthal et al., 1979) is an instrument used to measure nonverbal sensitivity to different cues. For the current research we have used the face and body form of Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS), consisting in 40 slides (20 silent face-only and 20 silent body-only items) of two second each. The participants are invited to choose the correct answer from a dual predefined answering sheet.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2004) is a structured, verbal questionnaire, consisting of 45 items, covering what is known as the "full-range" leadership model. The MLQ aim to measure nine dimensions of leadership, grouped into transactional, transformational, and passive avoidant leadership styles: Builds Trust (IA), Acts With Integrity (IB), Inspires Others (IM), Encourages Innovative Thinking (IS), Coaches People (IC) for Transformational leadership style; Contingent Reward (CR) and Management-by-Exception (Active - MBEA) for Transactional
leadership style; Management-by-Exception (Passive – MBEP), Laissez-faire (LF) for Passive / Avoidant leadership style.

4. Results

As showed in Table 01, the highest score was obtained at Transformational Leadership scale (M=55.18, SD=7.26), followed by Transactional Leadership (M=21.06, SD=3.30) and Passive/Avoidant Leadership (M=11.63, SD=3.05). Regarding the nonverbal sensitivity, both body and face scales reported similar scores (M=14.73, SD=1.78; M=14.09, SD=1.73). Also, the analysis of Skeweness and Kurtois showed that data distribution is normal.

Hypothesis one (H1) predicted that the transformational leadership would be positively related with the nonverbal sensitivity. In test the current hypothesis correlations between the respective scales were calculated. The results show a positive significant correlation between the total score of PONS and transformational leadership scale (r=.229, p<0.05).

The second hypothesis (H2) predicted that the passive / avoidant leadership style will be negatively related with nonverbal sensitivity. The total score of PONS indeed showed negative significant correlation with Passive/Avoidant Leadership (r=-.230, p<0.05). Moving one step further, the Laissez-faire (LF) scale of Passive/Avoidant Leadership showed negative correlations with all PONS scores (Total score: r=-0.326, p<0.01; Body sub-scale: r=-0.280, p<0.01; Face sub-scale: r=-0.201, p<0.05).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 01. Descriptive statistics (N=103)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
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<td>Transactional Leadership</td>
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<td>Passive/avoidant Leadership</td>
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<td>Body</td>
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<td>Face</td>
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The third hypothesis (H3), predicted that nonverbal sensitivity will be positively related with different leadership outcomes such as leadership.
effectiveness or satisfaction with leadership. The results showed significant
correlations only in case of leadership effectiveness ($r=.218$, $p<0.05$).

Following an exploratory approach, several significant gender
differences were observed. Table 02 presents the comparison between male
and female participants regarding transformational leadership scale and sub-
scales, leadership outcomes and nonverbal sensitivity.

Thus, females score was significantly higher than males on
Transformational leadership scale ($t(102)=-2.916$, $p<0.01$) and on two of its
sub-scales, namely Inspires Others ($t(102)=-2.290$, $p<0.05$), and Encourages
Innovative Thinking ($t(102)=-2.290$, $p<0.05$).

The same differences were observed also for two leadership
outcomes: Effectiveness ($t(102)=-2.510$, $p<0.05$) and Satisfaction with the Leadership ($t(102)=-2.111$, $p<0.05$).

The last significant difference was observed for the PONS total
score ($t(102)=-2.275$, $p<0.05$), again females scoring higher than males.

**Table 02.** Independent sample test (gender)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspires Others (IM)</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>-2.290</td>
<td>.024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages Innovative Thinking (IS)</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>.327</td>
<td>-3.652</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership scale</td>
<td>.590</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>-2.916</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>-2.510</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with the Leadership</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>-2.111</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total score PONS</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td>.395</td>
<td>-2.275</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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</table>
5. Discussion

The positive correlation between the total score of PONS and transformational leadership is not surprising and indicates that a high accuracy in decoding the nonverbal messages significantly influences various modalities of interaction regulation and is relevant in understanding of various social relations and interactions. Those results are in line with the fact that transformational leaders utilize intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and enhanced self-efficacy (Nwoke, 2010). According to Avolio (1999), “transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations with new methods and perspectives... There is no public criticism of individual members’ mistakes” (p.46).

Moreover, current findings support the argument that transformational leaders are more likely to have high nonverbal sensitivity level (Schyns & Mohr, 2004; Groves, 2006).

In previous studies, passive/avoidant leadership style was characterized as the absence of leadership, the avoidance of intervention and exchange with subordinates (Bass, & Avolio 1994; Northouse, 2004), mirroring the results that supported the second hypothesis, that the total score of PONS negatively correlate with passive /avoidant leadership (Agle & Sonnenfeld, 1994; Lowe, Kroecck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

The body scale of PONS showed positive correlation with leadership effectiveness (identifies leaders who are able to be efficient). This finding that support the third hypothesis is congruent with previous researches, emphasizing the significance of nonverbal communication for effective leadership (Holladay & Coombs, 1993; Gardner, 2003; Groves, 2006; Bellou & Gkorezis, 2016), as Bass (1990) postulated, “Communications distinguish leaders who are successful and effective from those who are not” (p. 341).

Regarding the gender differences observed, previous studies (Hoffman, Kessler, Eppel, Rukavina, & Traue, 2010), showed that women are better at recognizing subtle facial expressions even when these expressions are showed for (Hall & Matsumoto, 2004). At the same time, females try harder to do well at things involving interpersonal skill because it is gender stereotypic to do so and this, not their knowledge, leads females to do better than males in this domain (Ickes, Gesn & Graham, 2000).

There are various studies (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996; Stempel, Rigotti & Mohr, 2015) that found transformational leadership characteristics to have mainly a female connotation, females being perceived as more...
transformational that men, whereas transactional leadership is perceived as gender neutral. Women were more likely to show transformational leadership and to give rewards (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), as they are seen less hierarchical, more cooperative and more willing to enhance the self-esteem of others (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

Moreover, transformational behaviors and extra effort are perceived as being more typical of female leaders (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Van Engen, 2003).

6. Conclusion

Researchers have long been interested with leadership concepts and its predictors and effects. Previous research on communication and the entire full range leadership model has been almost exclusively focused on transformational leadership (Zorn, 1991), the research being focused on the benefits resulting from effective communication skills. It is well accepted that a leader’s style is not based on communication skills alone, however, the relationship is an important one, and deserves more attention (Fairhurst, 2001; Zorn, 1991).

Although this study advances the existing knowledge about nonverbal sensitivity and the full range leadership model, several limitations should be noted. The use of a sample of convenience in this research limits the study’s ability to generalize these findings and the correlational approach does not allow us to go beyond the data that is given.

In this study, it has been shown that the transformational leadership styles identified in the full range leadership model have significant relationships to nonverbal sensitivity. Having in mind that the nonverbal sensitivity varies among individuals (Rosip & Hall, 2004; Hall, Murphy & Mast, 2006) and can be developed and trained (Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers & Archer, 1979), we therefore underline the importance of tailored within the organizational setting.

More research should be done on the different ways of developing those abilities related to the decoding the nonverbal cues, together with a stronger focus on laissez-faire leadership, as mentioned by Judge and Piccolo (2004).

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Nwoke, N. C. (2010). Full-range leadership: an examination of Bass’s model in the home healthcare agency environment, Capella University, ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor.


