Gap Analysis on Military Followership

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ABSTRACT: Follower is a neglected and an understudied discipline in leadership despite its importance and significant role in leadership development. Hence, this study delved into the critical role of follower in developing leaders. Military modelled institutions are purveyors of institutionalizing the process of becoming a good follower first before one becomes a good leader. The study employed triangulation approach where quantitative through the use of gap analysis was utilized to compare the actual and desired performance of the followers; and qualitatively based on social constructivist approach drew the finer details on how followership is viewed and executed.   The gap analysis outcome showed that the desired followership style and actual followership style accounted for a significant difference to the five followership styles as evidence from chi- square result.

KEYWORDS: Followership,Followership style, Military, Gap analysis

I.   INTRODUCTION

[1] Leadership and management gurus asserted the importance of followerevident in their statement "learning the secrets and skill of great No. 2s remains the surest path to becoming No. 1". This emphasized the importance of understanding followers as an important aspect of producing leaders for it provides an opportunity for the leadership institutions to seek potentials and possibilities in producing leaders that will best fit their organization.

[2,3,4,5] At present, follower is still a neglected and an understudied discipline in leadership despite its importance and significant role in leadership development. [6] Scholars focused solely on how leaders lived and ruled in history but seldom had they paid attention to the significant part played by followers in the history of leadership. This understudied status of followership in the leadership discipline affirmed the lack of literature available on followership.

In this regard, this study intends to specifically address the dearth of literature on followership. Military modelled institutions are purveyors of institutionalizing the process of being a good follower first before one becomes a good leader.

[7] Gap analysis is a new method in the social researches though it has its own weaknesses and still in the process for improvement, the study explored its ability to explain phenomenon that would pave the way to the emerging need to explore followership. [8] Moreover, it measures the gap between actual and potential, and expectation and experience. [9] As mentioned by Aristotle in his philosophy of actual and potentiality, this study will treat self-evaluation to be the actual experience and the evaluation from other source of respondents will be the expectation. Thus, in the study the follower's perception on their followership style will be the actual and their potentiality will be measured by the leader's evaluation of their expected type of follower. The qualitative data also provide a substantial information between the gaps in the followership of the followers.

[10,11]The framework provided by Kelly to measure followership style is divided into two dimensions namely independent critical thinking and active engagement. Independent critical thinking is where the followers analyse information given to them then thoroughly weigh every situations and actions as they make judgment. [12]The second dimension which is active engagement, from the word active are dynamic followers who take initiative, and assume ownership as they go above and beyond the expectations with high quality output.   The interaction between these two dimensions is the strength of Kelley's model which resulted to five followership styles.

[10]One, pragmatist followers bargain to maximize own self-interest, adverse to risk, do their tasks in a mediocre manner as they perceived their environment as full of uncertainty where orders are always changing but still need to follow the rules and regulations. [13]They are followers who play safe where they question their leader's

decision but not too often and not too openly. Also, pragmatist followers are described as being attuned with the dynamics of the organization politics, maintain balance on the rules and regulations of the organization, and they are perceived to do work apathetically. Moreover, they are in the middle of the two dimensions.

Two, bystander followers are passive followers who rely on their leader's decision and letting them do the thinking, act when told to as they follow the crowd without asking "why?", and they go along with the flow and their group is their only choice. This means that they do not take initiative since they depend too much on their leader's decision and instruction. These followers are like robots that need to be programmed and activated if you want them to get to work.

[10]Three, conformist followers are team players but compromise their own personal needs in order to satisfy the organization as they are willing to fail than challenge the set rules and regulations. Hence, they seek an environment where they follow established order than be concerned with outcome, likewise uniformity in dress, behaviour and attitude is encouraged while disagreeing with the leader is punished. Furthermore, conformist followers are perceived to be lacking in their own ideas and submissive where ranks and positions become their basis for following. In comparison to pragmatist, the conformists act to please those in the position except that pragmatists perform half-heartedly and in mediocre manner. Conformists give their best to accomplish a task to avoid punishment. Also, conformists are low in independent critical thinking but high in active engagement.

[10]Four, alienated followers are those who are perceived to be difficult to deal with, stubborn, lack judgement and yet they are independent thinkers. They are the opposite of the conformist as they do not conform to the set rules and regulations and often fight for what they think which often receive punishment. Alienated followers are high in independent critical thinking and low in active engagement.

[10]And fifth and the last, the exemplary followers whom Kelley claimed as the best followers who are exceptional, have strong commitment to the goal, willing to take initiative, and assume ownership. He also claimed that exemplary follower is the best type of follower as they contribute more to the success of the organization as they are high in independent critical thinking and also high in active engagement.

In the military setting, followership is an essential component to becoming a leader. Before one becomes a full pledged leader lieutenant one must go through cadetship all the way from being a plebe until you become a first class cadet or fourth year student. The process of transition from one stage to another applies the concept of followership. A fourth class cadet called plebe or first year student in a military academy is considered the lowest ranking mammal that has to kowtow to everyone that s/he encounters with. The build-up to becoming a leader is jaw-breaking and followership must be lived in order to survive and ultimately become a leader. This happens in the first two months of the fourth class cadets in the academy especially in the Philippines. In these months, the fourth class cadets are being taught the rigors of military life through strict leadership and discipline in a confined area where they are cut off from interaction outside the academy. At this time, the "never quit" attitude is also tested since the training would bring out the followers' full potential by testing their limit.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study used both quantitative and qualitative approach employing the use of positivist approach which argued that knowledge is gained from the outside while constructivist approach emphasizes on the construction of reality through limited interaction in a given context. The use of a survey questionnaire culled from Kelley's article on followership was used to determine followership style of the fourth class cadets being exhibited in the military. Furthermore, an open-ended question was added at the end of the survey questionnaire to substantiate the quantitative result of the study which formed part as the qualitative data.

The survey questionnaire for followership style has equally divided items between the two major determinants of followership namely, independent critical thinking and active engagement. The questionnaire was made based from Kelley's article and was modified to fit the respondents and to include some variables absent from the original questionnaire. The original 20-item questions were stretched into 22-item questions for the reason that there are items that for researcher's judgment need to specify to fit the military environment. Moreover, the level of responses was retained but for easy understanding of the differences in degree of the responses the researcher provided one-is-to-one correspondence of qualitative interpretation for the seven levels of responses from one (1) being never to seven (7) as every time as compared to the zero (0) to six (6) levels. Moreover, despite the increase in the

number of items the division are still equal with each having 11-item determinants. The numerical value corresponds to the score given to that item to find the coordinates of the two determinants to identify the specific style of followership. The independent critical thinking composed of the horizontal line or the x-axis of the graph with the items 1, 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. On the other hand, active engagement referred to the vertical line or the y-axis composed of items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17. The coordinates will then be plotted to the graph to determine the followership style where exemplary followers are both high in active engagement and independent critical thinking, conformist followers have the coordinate of high active engagement and low independent critical thinking, alienated followers have low active engagement and high independent critical thinking, passive followers have both low active engagement and independent critical thinking while pragmatist followers fall in the middle of active engagement and independent critical thinking which are neither too high nor too low.

The original survey questionnaire has seven (7) qualitative degree of responses ranging from zero (0) indicating total disagreement to the statement to six (6) indicating total agreement. The researcher modified it to one (1) means never and seven (7) means every time to identify the frequency as to how often the respondent's exhibit the behaviours being described.

The study had the paired leader-follower respondents. The purposive sampling design was done in the three different military modelled institutions (Figure 2) namely Philippine Military Academy (PMA) in Baguio City, Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) in Zambales, and Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) in Cavite. In this study, military modelled institutions pertain to the above mentioned three academies thus, institutions and academies are used interchangeably.

There were 1255 respondents, 52% were squad leaders while the remaining 48% were the followers. This resulted to 100 paired leader-follower data as the table showed an almost equal number of followers and leaders which could be the reason for a low number of gathered paired data. The ideal ratio of a leader and follower is one is to three or eight (1:3-8) which means one squad leader is for three to eight followers but this still depends on the institutions. However, there are instances that fourth class will not only have one squad leader as there are times that assistant squad leaders perform the role of squad leader in the absence of the leader. Squad leaders pertain to the direct leaders of the fourth class responsible for their basic military training. Also, the squad leaders are the upper class cadets such as third class (second year students), second class (third year students) and first class cadets (fourth year students). The different military modelled institutions vary in squad leaders, for PMA squad leaders are the second class cadets, for PMMA they are the first class cadets while for PNPA they are the third class cadets.

The study is purposive since there is a need to have a paired respondents depicting the leader-subordinate relationship which means that only the fourth class cadets and their squad leaders were selected. The respondents were chosen due to the purity of their experience as fourth class (follower) and squad leaders.

[7] Gap analysis is new in the social science research and with the use of chi-square the researcher explored this method to determine whether there is significant difference in the perceived level of expected followership styles as determined by the leaders and the actual perceived followership style of followers. The use of the probability distribution table, alpha level of significance 0.05, computed degrees of freedom and computed chi-square value determine whether the null hypothesis was rejected or accepted. When the computed chi-square value is greater than the probability value at alpha significance 0.05 the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference between or among groups' behaviour. However, if the computed chi-square value is lesser than the probability value at alpha significance 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected which means that there is no significant difference between or among groups' behaviour.

The gathered qualitative data from both the follower and the leader provided rich information especially on the generated quantitative results. Moreover, it also provided a more conclusive study as both quantitative and qualitative research designs were applied.

II. GAP ANALYSIS RESULT

The gap analysis used both quantitative and qualitative data to have a holistic understanding of both leadership style and followership styles in both perspectives of the leaders and followers. The chi-square was utilized to get the significant difference between the leader's expectation and follower's actual followership style. In summary, the results showed that leader's expectation is significantly different to follower's actual followership style which rejects

the null hypothesis that expectation and actual have significant difference in determining followership style.

Leader's Expected Followership Style and Follower's Actual Followership Style

The result showed that the leader's expectation to the followers' followership styles and followers perceived followership styles shows significant difference. The chi-square value of 6.126 is lesser than the probability at alpha confidence level of 0.05 (p0.05) with a value of 7.82 (degrees of freedom 3) indicates significant difference. This means that the probability of 7.82% difference is due to chance only. The data on alienated shows that the expectation and the actual differs since the leader's expectation to have one (1) follower who is hard-headed and difficult turns out to be none but the followers perceived themselves to be conformist which is different from the expectation of the leader. This means that the followers perceived themselves to be conformist who follows the rules and regulations despite the

fact that s/he wants to question the rules and regulations set by the organization and even by their leaders which for the leader perceived to be alienated. This is perceived to be normal given their present situation that they cannot do anything about it as they mentioned in their statements in the qualitative data that "We will follow and follow until we follow no more. Just like the upper class had said "wait until you become"", "Sometimes I had to do whatever they ask but I know in my mind whether they are wrong or right. I just wait for my time to come as a leader and show my underclass how to be the right leader who have concern and intelligence in leading.", and "To follow and follow until you follow no more." These show that followers just go with the flow as they wait for their time to become leaders but the leaders perceived this attitude to be going against them and not performing to their full potentials which the leaders perceived to be a characteristic of hard-headedness.

Table 1. Leader's Expected Followership Style and Follower's Actual Followership Style

	Alienated	Pragmatist	Conformist	Exemplary	Total
Leader	1	7	0	92	100
Follower	0	6	5	89	100
Total	**1**	**13**	**5**	**181**	**200**

Leader's Expected Followership Style and Follower's Actual Followership Style (Exemplary)

The result in Table 2 shows that the leader's expectation of the exemplary followership style of the followers and the follower's actual practice of exemplary followership has no significant difference. The chi-square value of 715.845 is greater than the probability at alpha confidence level of 0.05 (p0.05) with a value of 3.84 (degrees of freedom 1) indicates no significant difference. This shows that the expectation of leaders to have exemplary followers was met since the followers perceived themselves to be exemplary followers.

The result indicates that good follower's performance since most of the followers in the qualitative data showed that they display exemplary followership style similar to the definition of the leaders of a good follower such as "Who complies without frequent follow up.", "Who is brave enough to say "no" if I tried to give him an order that is not aligned to the objective of

being a military man.", "A thinking plebe who can determine right from wrong.", "Who complies with the task given and follow orders perfectly and have initiative for the well-being of the organization.", "Who is responsible and disciplined.", "A good follower is a listener and a good listener is a good leader.", "One who knows how to listen and follow.", "Someone who listens and always try to improve.", and "listens to advices given by superior and he/she is distinguishing the morally and lawfully right from wrong." These statements described exemplary followers in the lens of the leaders which in the result of followership style they also exhibit. Also, the result on leaders' definition of a good follower highlighted listening skill as an important aspect of a good follower.

The listening ability of the followers is also important in their development of becoming good followers which provides a vital information in leadership process of developing followers.

Table 2. Leader's Expected Followership Style and Follower's Actual Followership Style (Exemplary)

	No exemplary	Exemplary	Total
Leader	8	92	100
Follower	11	89	100
Total	**19**	**181**	**200**

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The qualitative method serves as a powerful tool in providing voice for quantitative data making up a good tandem in research. Furthermore, the use of paired respondents gave the challenge of providing a stronger claim in describing the relationship of leader and follower through the use of gap analysis. This provided a new way of measuring the perceptions of respondents as paired respondents moved away from the common self- perceived evaluation of behavior into a more mirror-like process of perceiving and evaluating behaviors.

Despite the results, the study still needs further improvement and validation given its limitations. The researcher recommends further study on followership to include the other three upper classes namely third class (second year), second class (third year), and first class (fourth year) cadets to determine whether they exhibit exemplary followership style similar to the cadets at the lowest rank or yield a different result. This will provide detailed information not only in leadership but also in followership. Also, the use of correlational study in determining the influence of leaders to the followership style is recommended.

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