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Examining the Relationship Between Leadership Practices and Followership Styles in a Philippine State University

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between the leadership practices of academic heads and the followership styles of their subordinates at Cagayan State University for the academic year 2023-2024. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the study collected data via questionnaires from 26 academic heads and 110 faculty members across the university's main and satellite campuses. Leadership practices surveyed included authoritative, facilitative, situational, democratic, and laissez-faire styles, while followership styles were categorized as passive, pragmatist, conformist, alienated, and exemplary. Statistical analyses revealed that academic heads primarily employ situational and facilitative leadership practices, and subordinates predominantly exhibit exemplary followership. A significant positive correlation was found between facilitative and situational leadership and exemplary followership, indicating that leaders who empower, support, and adapt to situations are more likely to cultivate highly engaged and dedicated followers. These findings suggest that adaptive leadership practices can enhance organizational success and should be integrated into leadership development programs. Future research should explore the causal relationships between specific leadership behaviors and followership styles, considering additional variables such as organizational culture and individual personalities. By continuing this research, organizations can foster a more supportive and productive environment for both leaders and subordinates.

Keywords: Academic heads, Followership styles, Leadership practices, Subordinates.

Introduction

Leadership has become a fundamental cornerstone in building effective organizational functions. It plays a crucial role in the success of unions, institutes, associations, and other entities requiring governance. Leadership encompasses guiding diverse groups or cohorts towards a unified vision of achievement, effectively bridging gaps and preventing division and misguidance in society.

Leadership can be understood in various dimensions, including its nature, function, and process. Leaders play a key role in helping groups achieve their objectives. While the success of a group effort depends on many people and factors, the leader often receives credit for the group's success or failure. Thus, leadership is a two-way interaction between leaders and followers. Leaders influence followers through guidance, ideas, and support, while followers impact leaders through their contributions and feedback. According

to Keys (2020), this dynamic underscores the mutual influence within leadership.

Moreover, leadership inherently involves followers, as leaders need followers to exercise their authority. This reciprocal relationship allows followers to influence leaders and vice versa, based on mutual willingness rather than coercion. Davis (2020) emphasizes that while leaders lead, followers play a crucial role in the process, presenting challenges for both parties.

In some organizations, especially within the local context, there are notable challenges between leaders and followers due to differences in styles. Mapoy et al. (2021) highlight that Filipino leadership and management styles, deeply rooted in indigenous core principles, can be complex. Social acceptance, family, and kinship are significant in Filipino society, leading to unique leadership styles such as pakiramdam, takutan, kulit, and patsamba-tsamba. These styles profoundly impact schools, workplaces, and individuals' mental health. For instance, leaders using takutan (fear-based leadership) may cause stress and anxiety among staff. This approach often stems from the belief that the most hardworking and demanding individuals achieve the best outcomes.

At Cagayan State University, there is no systematic method to assess the leadership practices of academic heads and the followership styles of their subordinates. This gap can hinder effective collaboration due to unexamined leadership and followership dynamics. This study aims to evaluate the leadership practices of academic heads/deans and the followership styles of subordinates, potentially identifying constraints that impede successful collaboration. The goal is to enhance leadership and followership practices, fostering a positive environment for organizational success. This research will serve as a foundation for developing a competency development plan, proposing strategies to cultivate effective leadership and followership relationships.

Based on the study's background, the researcher investigated the relationship between the leadership practices of Cagayan State University's academic heads and their subordinates' followership styles. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the profiles of academic heads and their subordinates in terms of age, sex, and plantilla position?
2. How likely are the academic heads' practices to be authoritarian, democratic, facilitative, situational, or laissez-faire?
3. What are the followership styles of the subordinates?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the leadership practices of CagSU's academic heads and their subordinates' followership styles?

Theoretical Background

The study is grounded in several key leadership theories, including Frederick Taylor's Management Theory, Lewin's Participative Theory, and Mouton's Behavioral Theory of Leadership.

Frederick Taylor's Management Theory, also known as transactional leadership, emphasizes structure, group dynamics, and oversight. This approach is prevalent in business settings and involves a system of rewards and penalties. Supervisors reward productive employee behavior and impose consequences for failure, operating under the assumption that people act primarily to obtain rewards. This theory suggests that transactional thinking

limits altruistic behavior, as actions are driven by the pursuit of rewards rather than kindness (WGU, 2021).

Lewin's Participative Theory, also known as democratic leadership, is another cornerstone of this study. This model encourages staff involvement in organizational decision-making. The leader's role is to initiate discussions, consider all suggestions, and determine the best course of action. This theory asserts that everyone should actively participate in decisions affecting the team and organization, with the leader primarily facilitating the process (WGU, 2021).

Additionally, the study incorporates Mouton's Behavioral Theory of Leadership. According to this theory, effective leaders exhibit specific behaviors that enhance team performance. Behavioral theories focus on identifying these successful behaviors (Drew, 2023).

Management Theory is particularly relevant to this study as it addresses the system of rewards and penalties, which can inform a team-building plan by identifying motivational factors related to the leadership practices of CSU Heads, as reflected in their input and output data. On the other hand, Participative Theory is also applicable, as the study considers the follower styles of employees. Thus, this study is anchored in Behavioral Theory, which can be used to analyze both leadership practices and follower styles, focusing on the behaviors exhibited by both leaders and followers.

Literature Review

Leadership Incorporated with Collaboration

According to organizational and educational theories, leaders play a pivotal role in driving innovation processes (Bush and Glover, 2014; Fullan, 2016; Torfing, 2019). An extensive analysis of two decades of research on effective school leadership underscores the importance of actively supporting instruction and effective communication. It also highlights how school principals' leadership can positively influence the development of organizational climate, culture, trust, and collaboration (Daniels et al., 2019). This aligns with the understanding that leadership is deeply interconnected with collaboration, as adapted in Lockhorst, Kleijn, Noordegraaf, and Tartwijk (2022). Leadership practices in collaborative innovation contribute significantly across various domains.

For instance, Torfing (2016) conducted a theoretical exploration of leadership within the context of collaborative creativity. He identified three leadership styles that can foster collaborative innovation in the public sector: conveners, who promote interaction; facilitators, who encourage collaboration; and catalysts, who inspire creative thinking among participants. Both Torfing (2019) and Sørensen and Torfing (2016) emphasize the critical role of leaders in collaborative innovation and call for further research in this area (Torfing, 2019).

Previous studies have established well-known classifications of leadership techniques. These techniques can be categorized into top-down and bottom-up approaches. "Top-down" leadership refers to a style that exercises substantial control, often limiting instructors' perspectives. In contrast, "bottom-up" leadership emphasizes collaborative efforts and the incorporation of diverse viewpoints (Draaisma et al., 2018; Fullan, 2016).

Leadership Practices and Professional Needs Among Leaders

Leaders perform various essential responsibilities, such as fostering productive work environments that support organizational goals. Effective leadership in a continually evolving organizational

system requires flexibility and dynamic abilities. Consequently, the success or failure of the organization's initiatives and development programs is largely determined by the leaders' styles (Dones, 2020). Numerous potential challenges can create obstacles in the hierarchy of successful leadership, increasing the risk of vulnerabilities. Canivel (2010) identified that contemporary developments in international relations, science, technology, values, and the environment present specific challenges and barriers for education. The manner in which leaders address these challenges significantly affects both their performance and that of those they lead.

Leadership Styles and Perspective in the Philippine Setting

A study has revealed that Filipino leadership practices are notably distinct. In the classic literature on leadership, there are numerous examples of leaders attempting to predict, classify, and control every variable within their organizations. Most academic research describes leadership as an action, a relationship, and sometimes a behavior. Filipino leadership and management, rooted in deeply embedded indigenous core principles, can appear complex. Social acceptance, family, and kinship are significant aspects of Filipino society. Consequently, distinctive leadership styles such as pakiramdam, takutan, kulit, and patsamba-tsamba emerge.

These Filipino leadership philosophies profoundly impact schools and workplaces, as well as individuals' mental health. For example, leaders who use takutan (fear-based leadership) may cause stress and anxiety among their staff. These leaders often believe that the most hardworking, determined, and demanding individuals achieve the best results.

Follower Styles' Distinctive Definitions

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Kelly (2016) identified five distinct follower styles, highlighting an often-overlooked aspect of organizational dynamics: the role of followers. While leadership typically garners much of the attention, effective followers must also develop certain key traits. Consider a successful sports team, where both leaders and followers are crucial to the team's success, each bringing their unique skills and knowledge to the table (Young, 2016).

Effective followers exhibit two essential traits: critical thinking and proactive behavior. Critical thinking involves being aware of the surrounding environment and understanding what the team needs to succeed, focusing on organizational goals rather than personal interests. Proactive behavior entails taking the initiative to execute tasks without waiting for others, especially when they are the most qualified for the job.

Kelly (2016) proposed two continua based on these traits: critical, independent thought versus dependent, uncritical thought, and active behavior versus passive behavior. From these continua, Kelly developed five followership types:

Effective Followers: These individuals exhibit both critical, independent thought and proactive behavior. They act ethically, manage conflict and risk effectively, express their ideas, embrace change, and remain committed to the organization. Often taking on leadership roles, they advance organizational goals using their connections, knowledge, and influence. Initially, Kelly referred to this group as "The Stars."

Conformists: Despite being busy, these followers do not engage in critical thinking. They obey orders without question and avoid

conflict, doing whatever it takes to keep their employer satisfied. Originally, they were termed "The Yes-People."

Passive Followers: Similar to a disengaged child, passive followers lack initiative and decisiveness. They do not think critically or act proactively. Kelly called these individuals "The Sheep." This type of follower often results from micromanagement or a controlling, blame-oriented organizational culture.

Alienated Followers: These followers, though opinionated, often express their views from the sidelines. Feeling powerless and negative, they might be stuck in their roles for too long or resentful due to missed promotions. They tend to have seen too much negativity in their work environment.

Pragmatic Survivors: These followers can adapt their style to suit different situations, making them the organization's early warning system when the culture starts to shift negatively. They can read the signs of change before others and are valuable for maintaining a positive workplace culture.

These followership styles provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse ways followers contribute to organizational dynamics and success.

Subordinates/Followers as Dynamic Part of Leadership

The concept of followership is vital for the success of any collective endeavor, yet it often gets overlooked. Contemporary culture tends to emphasize leadership, overshadowing the essential but less glamorous role of followers. Advertisements frequently misrepresent followers as submissive and helpless, while leaders are attributed with all the qualities of success. For instance, a well-known biker has the motto "Always be a leader, never a follower" printed on his shoes (Gibbons and Cranwell, 2022).

Gibbons and Cranwell (2022) define followership as the response of individuals in subordinate positions to those in leadership roles. It involves a social dynamic between followers, leaders, and the group. Followership is not about subservience or blindly obeying orders; it is about engaging with the leader and providing constructive feedback to achieve the mission. Morally courageous followers must not fear voicing their concerns and should critically consider the reasons behind their actions. However, it is crucial to do so without undermining the leader's authority. This might involve asking the leader to step aside for a private discussion to share opinions. A good follower is one who can assess situations, adapt, and take responsibility for their actions. Once a decision is understood and questions are satisfactorily answered, followers should fully support the group's or leader's decision.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. It described the leadership practices of academic heads and identified the followership styles of their respective subordinates. Additionally, it examined the relationship between these two variables, making it correlational in nature. Creswell (2014) emphasized that this design allows researchers to identify patterns, relationships, and correlations between variables in natural settings, offering insights that can inform further research or practical applications.

Data Collection

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was the questionnaire method, comprising two distinct sets. For the leaders/academic heads/deans, Part I gathered demographic

information, while Part II featured a survey to assess their leadership practices. These practices were categorized as authoritative, facilitative, situational, democratic, and laissez-faire, based on frameworks from Centenary College and Stellar, and were revised and localized for the target respondents. This survey included sixty-nine (69) items rated on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely).

For the subordinates, Part I collected demographic data, and Part II featured a survey to determine their followership styles. These styles were categorized as passive, pragmatist, conformist, alienated, and exemplary, following the models of Kelley and Meritt. This survey consisted of forty-one (41) items, also rated from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely).

The study was conducted at Cagayan State University, the only state university in the Province of Cagayan, Philippines, established on June 11, 1978, through Presidential Decree 1436. The central administration is located at Andrews Campus, Caritan Sur, Tuguegarao City, with eight satellite campuses in Aparri, Carig, Gonzaga, Lallo, Lasam, Piat, Sanchez Mira, and Solana, and two extension campuses in Buguey and Calayan. Over the years, the University has been recognized for its performance in licensure examinations, administration and management, quality assurance, and academics.

The study involved 26 academic heads and 110 faculty members across the various campuses of Cagayan State University. Simple random sampling was employed to select the respondents.

Data Analysis

Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were utilized to describe the profile of the respondents. The leadership practices were analyzed using weighted means, which were interpreted according to the following guidelines:

Scale	Stat. Limits	Descriptive Value
1	1.00-1.79	Very unlikely
2	1.80-2.59	Unlikely
3	2.60-3.39	Somewhat likely
4	3.40-4.19	Likely
5	4.20-5.00	Very likely

The followership styles were also described using weighted means with the following interpretations:

Scale	Stat. Limits	Descriptive Value
1	1.99 or below	Passive
2	2.00-2.49	Pragmatist
3	2.50-3.49	Conformist
4	3.50-4.09	Alienated
5	4.10 or above	Exemplary

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test the relationship between the leadership practices and followership styles of the respondents at 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 displays the profile characteristics of the respondents. The mean age of the leaders/academic heads/deans is 43.38 years old, with a standard deviation of 8.46. Notably, 11 individuals, comprising 42.3 percent of the sample, fall within the age range of 33-40 years old. This suggests that the entry age of leaders/academic heads/deans aligns with established norms in the field, as indicated by The National Study of Academic Deans in Higher Education, which surveyed deans from 360 institutions (Matildo, 2022).

Similarly, the mean age of the subordinates/faculty is 38.38 years old, with a standard deviation of 10.02. A significant portion of the subordinates, 42 individuals representing 38.2 percent of the sample, fall within the age bracket of 25-32 years old. This finding corresponds with research suggesting that the predominant age bracket of Teachers in Higher Education is 31-40 years old (SCICPACE).

Regarding gender distribution among leaders/academic heads/deans, 16 individuals, accounting for 61.5 percent of the sample, are male, while 10 individuals, representing 38.5 percent, are female. This indicates a male-dominated leadership landscape within Cagayan State University. This observation is consistent with scholarly literature highlighting male-centricity in leadership roles, which may restrict the diversity of leadership models and standards (Dunn et al., 2014; Campomanes, Reguyal, & De Leon, 2017).

Conversely, among subordinates/faculty, 65 individuals, comprising 59.1 percent of the sample, are female, while 45 individuals, representing 40.9 percent, are male. This suggests a female-dominated workforce among Cagayan State University's subordinates/faculty, consistent with census findings indicating teaching as a female-dominated profession in the Philippines (Regalado, 2017).

Examining positions, the majority of leaders/academic heads/deans, 16 individuals or 61.5 percent, hold the rank of Associate Professors. This indicates a prevalent rank among academic heads/deans within CagSU. Conversely, among subordinates/faculty, 49 individuals or 44.5 percent hold the rank of instructors, reflecting a predominant rank among this group within the university.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents in terms of their profile

Profile Variables	Academic Heads	Faculty Members
Age (in years)		
25 to 32	1 (3.8%)	42 (38.2%)
33 to 40	11 (42.3%)	31 (28.2%)
41 to 48	6 (23.1%)	19 (17.3%)
49 to 56	5 (19.2%)	8 (7.3%)
57 or above	3 (11.5%)	10 (9.1%)
Sex		
Male	16 (61.5%)	45 (40.9%)
Female	10 (38.5%)	65 (59.1%)
Plantilla Position		
Instructor	1 (3.8%)	49 (44.5%)
Assistant Professor	7 (26.9%)	32 (29.1%)
Associate Professor	16 (61.5%)	23 (20.9%)
Professor	2 (7.7%)	6 (5.5%)

N	26	110
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2. Leadership Practices of the Academic Heads

The composite mean for all leadership practices is 4.51, indicating a "very likely" level of implementation across various leadership practices among the leaders/academic heads/deans at Cagayan State University. Specifically, situational leadership is highly practiced, with a mean score of 4.68, also classified as "very likely," while laissez-faire leadership is implemented to a slightly lesser extent, with a mean score of 4.29, still indicating a "very likely" level of application.

This suggests that situational leadership is the predominant approach among academic heads/deans at the university. The strong presence of situational leadership correlates with the university's current performance, indicating the successful attainment of institutional goals. Research suggests that academic leaders and deans who employ situational leadership are more effective in achieving institutional objectives, fostering faculty development, and maintaining a positive academic environment (Lewis & Dechant, 2005; Yukl, 2013).

Table 2. Likelihood of the leadership practices of the academic heads

Leadership Practices	Overall WM	Descriptive Value
Authoritative	4.35	Very likely
Democratic	4.59	Very likely
Facilitative	4.63	Very likely
Situational	4.68	Very likely
Laissez-Faire	4.29	Very likely

3. Followership Styles of the Subordinates

The table illustrates the distribution of subordinates according to their followership styles. It indicates that 71 individuals, accounting for 64.5 percent of the sample, exhibit exemplary follower characteristics, while 38 individuals, representing 34.5 percent, demonstrate alienated follower traits. Additionally, 1 individual, constituting 0.9 percent of the sample, is classified as a conformist follower. Notably, none of the subordinates are categorized as pragmatist or passive followers.

These findings suggest that subordinates within Cagayan State University predominantly exhibit the aforementioned followership styles, with exemplary followers being the most prevalent. This aligns with the university's performance, indicating that these subordinates contribute to the university's success by adhering to its Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGO). Research supports the notion that exemplary followers are highly motivated and dedicated to fulfilling the organization's mission and tasks (Chini et al., 2014).

Table 3. Distribution of the subordinates in terms of followership styles

Followership Styles	Frequency (%)
Passive	0 (0%)

Pragmatist	0 (0%)
Conformist	1 (0.9%)
Alienated	38 (34.5%)
Exemplary	71 (64.5%)

4. Relationship between Leadership Practices and Followership Styles

The significant relationship between facilitative leadership practice, denoted by an r-value of 0.548 with a probability of 0.000, and situational leadership practice, indicated by an r-value of 0.402 with a probability of 0.000, suggests that both types of leadership are closely associated with the followership styles of subordinates. Specifically, facilitative and situational leaders tend to foster exemplary followership among subordinates. This underscores the mutual dependency between academic heads and subordinates within an organization, highlighting the importance of their collaborative efforts in achieving organizational goals.

To enhance followership styles, Williams and Lee (2024) introduced an integrated framework that incorporates elements of both situational and facilitative leadership. According to their model, effective leadership involves employing adaptable tactics that combine directive and supportive behaviors based on the specific needs of followers and the situational context. Similarly, Johnson and Tuller (2023) examined the impact of facilitative leadership on subordinates' followership styles. Their study revealed a positive correlation between facilitative leadership and followers who exhibit high levels of engagement, innovation, and self-leadership. Facilitative leadership, characterized by empowering subordinates, active listening, and providing support, plays a crucial role in cultivating such favorable follower attributes (Johnson & Tuller, 2023).

Table 4. Correlation test results between the leadership practices of the academic heads and their respective subordinates' followership styles

Variables	r-value	p-value
Followership style		
Leadership practices		
Authoritative	0.106	0.270
Democratic	0.178	0.063
Facilitative	0.548*	0.000
Situational	-0.137	0.154
Laissez-Faire	0.402*	0.000
**significant at 0.05 level of significance		

Leadership practices have a direct impact on the followership styles of subordinates within Cagayan State University, highlighting their interdependence. Leaders and followers must collaborate to achieve organizational goals effectively, with leaders guiding and followers actively contributing. This study found a positive correlation between facilitative and situational leadership practices and exemplary subordinate followership styles, indicating that leaders who empower, support, and adapt to situations are more likely to cultivate highly engaged and dedicated followers. These findings can be applied to leadership development programs in other organizations, where leaders can be trained to use

facilitative and situational styles, including empowering faculty, fostering open communication, and adapting leadership approaches to varied situations and follower needs. Understanding followership styles enables leaders to recognize and appreciate different types, enhancing their communication and support strategies.

Future research should explore the causal relationships between specific leadership behaviors and followership styles, examining additional variables such as organizational culture and individual personalities. Longitudinal studies tracking professors and leaders over time could provide insights into how leadership and followership styles evolve and influence each other. By continuing this research, organizations can foster a more supportive and productive environment for both leaders and subordinates.

Recommendations

Academic heads should be provided by the administration with workshops, seminars, and trainings to hone their situational and facilitative leadership practices; subordinates should also receive workshops, seminars, and trainings to develop their exemplary followership styles. Additionally, the administration should oversee both academic heads and subordinates to sustain positive leadership practices and proactive followership styles. Future researchers should conduct further studies for validation.

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The author hereby declares no conflict of interest and this article is her original work.

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