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Effect of Cultural Intelligence and Learning Style on Leadership Effectiveness: Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Cultural Intelligence and Learning Style on Leadership Effectiveness among the leaders, particularly in banking sector. This study has proposed cultural intelligence and Learning Style as independent variables in this study. Leadership Effectiveness is the dependent variable. The study has reviewed various scholarly articles to examine the effect of cultural intelligence and learning style on leadership effectiveness. All the articles reviewed in this paper are empirical and conceptual papers design to collect quantitative data. Therefore, this conceptual paper intends to conduct the research among the bank leaders in Klang Valley in Malaysia. Based on the available literature it was found that cultural intelligence has a mixed result on leadership effectiveness. However, majority of the past research reported that cultural intelligence has a positive and significant effect on leadership effectiveness. From the review, it was also found that there is lack of studies examining learning style effect on leadership effectiveness particularly in Banking Sector. This study will contribute by establishing the link between cultural intelligence, learning style and leadership effectiveness simultaneously. Also, this study will be able to use by training and development of banking companies to design the training program to enhance, cultural intelligence and to adopt appropriate learning style to improve leadership effectiveness in Banking Sector, particularly in Malaysia. In this study, it was proposed to examine the effect of learning style and cultural intelligence on leadership effectiveness among the bank leaders simultaneously, while in the past cultural intelligence was conducted to examine the effect on leadership effectiveness, while there was a lack of literature on learning style and leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, Learning style, leadership effectiveness

1. Introduction

Leadership effectiveness is crucial, especially in current dynamic business environment and leaders need to utilise their CQ to improve performance and employee productivity (Afsar, Shahjehan, Shah, & Wajid, 2019). The intense competition faced by organisations in their operating context demands leaders to be highly effective in terms of productivity and fast decision making (Warrick, 2017). In order to be effective, leaders are expected to ensure their subordinates are committed, and motivated to face the challenges of changes (Owens & Hekman, 2016). It is pivotal for leaders to continuously enhance their CQ to improve leadership effectiveness by adopting appropriate learning styles to make fast and timely decisions (Nam & Park, 2019). Similarly, to compete effectively, the CQ must be improved in order to enhance the memory and knowledge base to avoid making mistakes during decision making at various locations of the world (Larsson et al, 1998). CQ is considered as important factor that could improve learning to improve leadership effectiveness (Neal, 2000; Freeman, 2011).

Recent studies found that leadership effectiveness is important in banking sector as leaders behaviours play an important role improving employee performance and their satisfaction (Hijazi, Kasim & Daud, 2017; Krishnan, Liew & Koon 2016; Lawal, Thompson & Thompson, 2016). Since leaders who assume the headship of their organization, they have a prime position in the development and performance of their respective organizations (Sharma, 2020). According to Bums (2014), changes in organizational structure, vision and leadership are unavoidable in any organization. The leadership style of a leader is individualistic, and it is distinctly different from other individuals in an organization (Burns, 2005). It separates a leader from another and it is this authoritative power that drives employee's performance, especially in the banking sector. It is thus important that leadership teams at financial institutions build their capacity as strong leaders to be able to lead their team members towards achieving their organizational goals and vision (Makitalo, 2017). Furthermore, it is crucial for leaders to instil confidence in each of their team members through CQ (Dibble, Henderson &

Burns, 2019). Thus, it is very important for someone who is a leader or a leader in a diverse environment to be able to adapt to cultural differences and bring together different styles and attributes to form his/her strategy for success (Adler, 2002). A truly experienced leaders must know how to use CQ and LS to drive the organisation forward and achieve challenging targets without neglecting specific cultural attributes (Solomon & Steyn, 2017). Research on the effect of national cultures on organisational cultures have shown that local cultures are highly influential to business environments (Hofstede, 1997; Adler, 2002), and in addition it was argued that greater differences in organisational attributes and practices exist when companies face great cultural distance between the two countries (Javidan & House, 2001). A study undertook by USA-based management consulting firm on thousands of companies in the USA revealed that companies which had done well consistently were actually competing on non-price differentiators and prioritising on growing revenue (or focusing on growing the top-line) over reducing costs (Raynor & Ahmed, 2013). Their study substantiated the need to focus on enhancing leadership effectiveness, particularly on improving sales, marketing and operational leaders' effectiveness by improving CQ through LS to grow the firm 's revenue (Raynor & Ahmed, 2013).

It is crucial to have highly capable, effective, smart and high-performing leaders or leaders to ensure a firm's business sustainability (Blanchard, 2018; Mui, Basit & Hassan, 2018). However, there are several management issues and operational challenges facing firms today in using leaders, particularly sales and marketing leaders. Managing and motivating sales and marketing leaders are challenging tasks and require a huge amount of time, money and efforts (Sinha & Zoltners; 2005). Hence, according to Corcoran, Petersen, Baitch, and Barrett (1995), leaders performance warrants rigorous examination when studying factors affecting a bank 's financial performance. In Malaysia, it is evident that there is lack of empirical research done so far to examine the effect of LS as a mediator on relationship between CQ and LE. In terms of CQ many researches in the past indicated that the cultural diversity for multicultural domestic work teams (Tsui & Gutek, 1999), multinational work teams (Earley & Gibson, 2002), global leaders (Van Dyne & Ang, 2006) and those in overseas work assignments (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005) were important cultural elements to enhance the leadership effectiveness. However, the available literature lacks to evaluate the effect of CQ on leadership effectiveness among banking leaders, both in Malaysia as well as in the global context. Current literature pertaining to CQ in Malaysia showed only handful published articles, which had investigated the effects of CQ on job performance and/or job adjustment among expatriates in Malaysia (Ramalu et al., 2012; Malek & Budhwar, 2013).

In previous studies, it seems that the understanding the effect of CQ and LS on leadership effectiveness in the Western countries were also not given enough emphasis (Alias, 2009; Baldauf, Cravens, & Piercy, 2001b). But the limited studies done to examine the effect of CQ on leadership effectiveness and LS on leadership effectiveness in developing countries have been producing inconsistent results due to differences in socio-cultural background, income, and culture (Piercy, Low, & Cravens, 2011, Kouzes and Ponser, 2018). Also, in the past, there were limited studies that examined the effect of learning style on leadership effectiveness (Srivastava, Bartol & Locke, 2006; Politis, 2001; Lee, Gillespie, Mann & Wearing, 2010). Hence, it would be worthwhile to conduct the present study to understand the effect of CQ and LS on leadership effectiveness. Based on the above-mentioned issues and problems, the present study seeks to bridge the research gaps, and thereby aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on leadership effectiveness. The present study attempts to identify the effect of CQ and LS on leadership effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definitions

CQ is a collection of mental, motivational and behavioural abilities (Presbitero, 2016). Also, it was reported that CQ is distinct from emotional and other intelligences in that such intelligences are culture constrained (Thomas et al., 2008) as they do not transfer across the cultural spectrum. One of the key definitions of CQ is 'C*ultural Intelligence is a specific form of intelligence focused on capabilities to grasp, reason and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity*' (Earley & Ang, 2003, p.337). Also, CQ is defined as '*ability to adapt effectively to new cultural settings*' (Ng & Earley, 2006, p.7). Ang et al. (2007) refers to CQ as an individual's capability to work effectively in a diverse cultural setting. Alternatively, CQ is referred as '*individual's capability to detect, assimilate, reason, and act on cultural cues appropriately in situations characterised by cultural diversity*' (Earley & Ang, 2003 p.297). On the other hand, CQ was defined as awareness and motivation about cultural differences to provide rooms for adaptation and adjustments where necessary (Van Dyne et al., 2012).

Louw, Muriithi and Radloff, (2017) describe leadership effectiveness as a process of interaction to influence subordinates and colleagues to attain the desired goal through effective dialogue with the employees and agreement with them on ways of achieving it. Similarly, Cooper and Nirenberg (2004) argued that that leadership effectiveness is all about achieving a shared objective by influencing one or many to accomplish the objectives. as accomplishing shared objectives by influencing one or many individuals who are willing and convinced to work for the objectives. Bass and Stogdill (1990) have worked on more than thousand definitions of leadership effectiveness and have resolute that effectiveness of leadership largely focuses on measurability of productivity and achievement of shared goals. More recently Kouzes and Posner (2018) argued that the leadership effectiveness comprises of five exemplary practices such as challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart.

The debate about learning styles has been ongoing for more than decades (Husmann & O'Loughlin 2019). According to Keefe (1982, p. 44), '*learning styles are cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to learning environment.*' Research into learning styles was originally associated with the theoretical domain of psychology (Barry & Egan, 2018). Another definition of Learning Style states that learning style is a preference method of study, attitude and strength of student in receive data and process

data (Felder & Silverman, 1988). Kolb (1984) and Honey and Mumford (1992) had opinion that learning style is defined a person regular or specific interest way in receiving information and developed knowledge. According to Simpson and Weiner (1989), academic performance deems to be the journey in enquiring a complete academic content and skills.

2.2. Theoretical Review

In terms of related theories in explaining the three key concepts, five exemplary leadership practices were the most dominant leadership effectiveness theory widely adopted among the scholars (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). These 5 practices are mostly considered as an advocate of transformational leadership and Kouzes and Posner (1988) investigated in-depth what transformational leaders do when they are in their best. The five (5) exemplary practices of leadership includes Modelling the Way, inspiring a Shared Vision, Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).In a review article investigating the reliability and validity of the Leadership Practices Inventory concluded that the instrument is essentially robust and practical in a variety of settings and populations (Posner, 2016).

Based on the insights from the prior intelligence research, the cultural intelligence model (Earley & Ang, 2003) proposed that cultural intelligence is a multi-faced aggregate construct and consists of four factors: (1) metacognitive cultural intelligence, which refers to an individual's higher mental thought capability to acquire cultural knowledge; (2) cognitive cultural intelligence, which refers to an individual's knowledge of cultures and intercultural variations; (3) motivational cultural intelligence, which refers to an individual's intrinsic energy that directed towards functioning in intercultural contexts; and (4) behavioural cultural intelligence, which refers to an individual's capability for flexibility in his behaviours during intercultural interactions. Both metacognitive and cognitive cultural intelligence are the intellectual elements of cultural intelligence, and therefore applies in developing the aspects that flow from different cultural experiences.

In terms of learning theories Kolb (1976) has introduced the theories of four stage hypothetical learning cycle that indicates learning is deemed to be a continuous and interactive process. The four stages of learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) is the four learning orientations form two orthogonal bipolar dimensions of learning. Firstly, comprehension tends to be information obtained from experience; it consists by bipolar orientations from Concrete Experience to Abstract Conceptualisation. Next, second dimension described is transformation, it is the process of transformation of information received. It constitutes of Active Experimentations and Reflective Observation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

2.3. Conceptual Framework

Cultural intelligence (CQ) tends to portray a general perspective about various cultural norms, practices, and values that enables to increase leadership effectiveness (Ahmad & Saidalavi, 2019). Also, they argued that CQ is one of the prime factors that influence leadership effectiveness in multicultural setting where there exists a very diverse workforce (Ahmad & Saidalavi, 2019; Osman-Gani & Hassan, 2018). Also, it was found that in situations which involved cultural diversity cross-border context, leaders with high level of CQ have an enormous influence on leadership effectiveness (Rockstuhl et al, 2011). Ng & Earley (2006) also added that global leaders with high level of CQ able to transform their experiences into positive learning outcomes that improve their overall leadership effectiveness. More recently it was found that CQ has significant effect on the intellectual capacity of leaders and by improving such intellectual behaviour of leaders causes to improve leadership effectiveness (Liao & Thomas, 2020). Ang et al. (2007) examined the relationship between the dimensions of cultural intelligence; meta-cognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioural CQ towards transformational leadership and found meta-cognitive CQ was the most significant predictor of transformational leadership. It was argued that Metacognitive CQ is significantly associated with leadership effectiveness (Solomon, & Steyn, 2017). Second dimension of CQ such as cognitive CQ was found to have a strong influence on leadership effectiveness (Kim & Van Dyne, 2012). Ansari et al (2012) asserted that motivational CQ has a positive and significant influence on transformational leadership. It was argued that Motivational CQ is significantly associated with leadership effectiveness (Solomon, & Steyn, 2017). A recent study also indicated that Motivational CQ positively associated with leadership effectiveness in terms of task performance (Pacheco & Stevens, 2018). Also, behavioural CQ was found to have significant and positive influence on leadership effectiveness (Göksoy, 2017). Van Dyne et al, 2012) found that behavioural CQ has mediated the preceding cultural interaction towards international leadership potentials. Since most of the research reported that leaders directly influence employee performance indicating leadership effectiveness, it shows that Behavioural CQ of leaders has a positive and significance effect on employee performance (Göksoy, 2017).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

- H1: CQ has a positive and significant effect on leadership effectiveness

The relationship between learning style and leadership effectiveness is merely established. Also, leaders can become more effective by selecting a specific learning style to acquire and disseminate knowledge (Boyle, 2005). Once leaders identify their learning style, it will help them to understand the process making them more effective in learning and acquiring knowledge (Brown, 1996). This also enables leaders to increase their own learning processes and skills, opening the opportunity to improved performance and personal development (Gilbert et al., 2008). Learning style also make it easier for the leaders to know how to attain the skills or knowledge involved in their everyday responsibilities (McGuire, 2001). As argued by Posner (2009), individuals who can learn from more than one category and thus have a greater repertoire of learning styles at their disposal are better able to learn about leading and becoming leaders. The reviewed research indicated that Kolb's Learning Styles such as concrete experience has positive and significant relationship with leadership effectiveness in terms of strategic decision making (Akyürek & Guney, 2018). They also found that the learning styles such as abstract, active and reflective observation has a positive and significant association with

leadership effectiveness in terms of effective decision making (Akyurek & Guney, 2018). With reference to the past literature, it is evident that each learning style poses challenges and also enable to exploit various opportunities for leaders to become more effective by adopting the most suitable learning style. For example, it was reported that the divergent learning style has the strength and liability of lie in leaders desire to search unceasingly for new possibilities and solutions (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). On the negative side the divergent learning style may diverge leaders from the problem or situation at hand and go off on a tangent, straying significantly from the task (Alvesson, 2019) making leaders become less relevant and ineffective. In terms of Convergers, they are very technical rather than interpersonal (Ata & Cevik, 2019). However, leaders with convergent learning style tend to make decisions without complete information causing those leaders become less effective (Harrison, 2016; Gemmell, (2017). However, the leaders with the learning style of convergers tend to be more effective when they work in groups (Labib, Canós & Penadés, 2017). In terms of assimilators, those leaders with assimilator learning style tend to gather information and data to make decisions, while they tend to think a lot and concerns about the people (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). Assimilators are less effective in decision making as assimilators normally will make decision when they only obtain the complete set of information (McCarthy, 2016). Leaders with accommodative learning style tend to responded quickly to respond the needs, especially when other are involved (Jena, 2016). Accommodators are very effective in their decision makings and focus on whole problem results improvement in leadership effectiveness (Avsec, & Szewczyk-Zakrzewska, 2017) Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

- H2: Learning Styles have positive and significant effect on leadership effectiveness
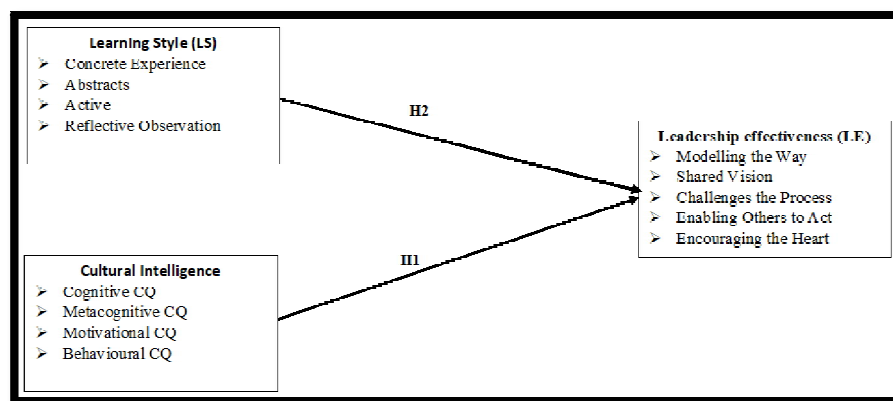

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Conclusion

Based on the review of the related theories, concepts and past literature, it can be concluded that cultural intelligence (CQ) and Learning styles are two crucial constructs that can influence leadership effectiveness in a banking environment, particularly in Malaysia. Cultural intelligence (CQ) reflected by the four aspects such as metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ and behavioural CQ has a positive and significant impact on the leadership effectiveness. Although there are very few studies that focus on examining the learning style and leadership effectiveness, it was argued in the past that learning style of leaders are important for them to become effective. Also, the overall effect of learning styles dimensions on leadership effectiveness. Therefore it is very important to empirically examine effects of CQ and LS on Leadership Effectives in banking sector, particularly in Malaysia to establish the link between CQ and LE through LS and thereby identify the appropriate human resource development interventions to develop leadership effectiveness through five exemplary practices of leadership proposed by Kouzes and Posner (1995).

This study will enable managers in banking sector to develop and design their human capital programs as well as in training programs to enhance the CQ and leaning style adoption among the managers, particularly Bank Leaders.

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