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The Relationship between the Leader Behavior of Immediate Superior and the Psychological Contract Violation as Perceived by Frontline Sales Personnel during an Organizational Change

Emmanuel Ozoa & Chizanne Sarabia-Larena

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between the Consideration Leader Behavior (CLB) of the immediate superiors and the perceived psychological contract violation (PPCV) of Filipino frontline sales personnel. CLB is a set of relationship-oriented behavior which is comparable to Jocano's (1999) concept of leaders as Gabay. Pearson PMCC was used to test the relationship between the Leader Behavior and PPCV of the immediate superiors of the 74 frontline sales personnel of the Coca-Cola FEMSA Negros Region. Result shows the respondents view their leaders to have high consideration and initiating structure leader behaviors. The respondents have neutral perception with regards to psychological contract violation. Moreover, a negative relationship exists between the leader behavior of immediate superiors and the level of perceived psychological contract violation of the respondents. The findings of this study imply that a superior's degree of manifestation of consideration leader behavior is linked to the level of PPCV of their members.

Keywords: Frontline Sales Personnel, Negros Island, Leader Behavior, Gabay, Perceived Psychological Contract Violation

INTRODUCTION

The general relationship between business organizations is competition. They have to compete with each other to get as most as possible of the market share. Because of this, business organizations have to constantly innovate, change, and adapt to out-do their competition. In effect, what is common among successful business organizations is that they have relentlessly made changes and stayed dynamic in the way they operate to remain competitive or even dominant.

One by-product of the phenomenon stated above is that these necessary changes have vital effects within the organization, especially with regards to the behaviors of the personnel. One aspect that most often is affected by changes made by an organization is the psychological contract between the organization and the employees (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). During the hiring process, an informal reciprocal agreement takes place between the company representative and the employee. There is an exchange of promises from both sides and these promises comprise a psychological contract between the organization and the employee that must be fulfilled. It is quite common that the circumstances and the nature of the changes made by the organization may result in some promises made to the employees difficult or even impossible to fulfill, and this can have adverse effects on the behavior of the employees. When employees perceive that some of these promises are not fulfilled, it produces a perception of psychological contract breach. The perception of a breach may lead to a feeling of psychological contract violation depending on the circumstances that refer to the degree of the breach and the nature of the unfulfilled promises that disrupt an individual's belief of mutual obligation (Ballou, 2013; Schaupp, 2012; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Leaders play an important role in lessening the effect of organizational change by helping create an atmosphere of psychological safety (Belias & Koustelios, 2014).

If major changes in the organization have the tendency to result to a perception of psychological contract violation and if leaders play an important role in mitigating the detrimental impact of major organizational changes, then the findings of the reviewed literature tend to show that a superiors' leader behavior can be linked to the perceived psychological contract violation of their subordinates. This study would, therefore, go in this

direction and aims to prove a correlation between these two psychological variables. This aim could be accomplished if this study would be done in the context of a recent major change that occurred in an organization. There is a need to study these two psychological variables – and in the direction stated above – in the Philippine setting since these topics have not yet been thoroughly studied here in the Philippines. The result of this kind of study may be able to provide empirical support to the proposition that a relationship exists between the two variables.

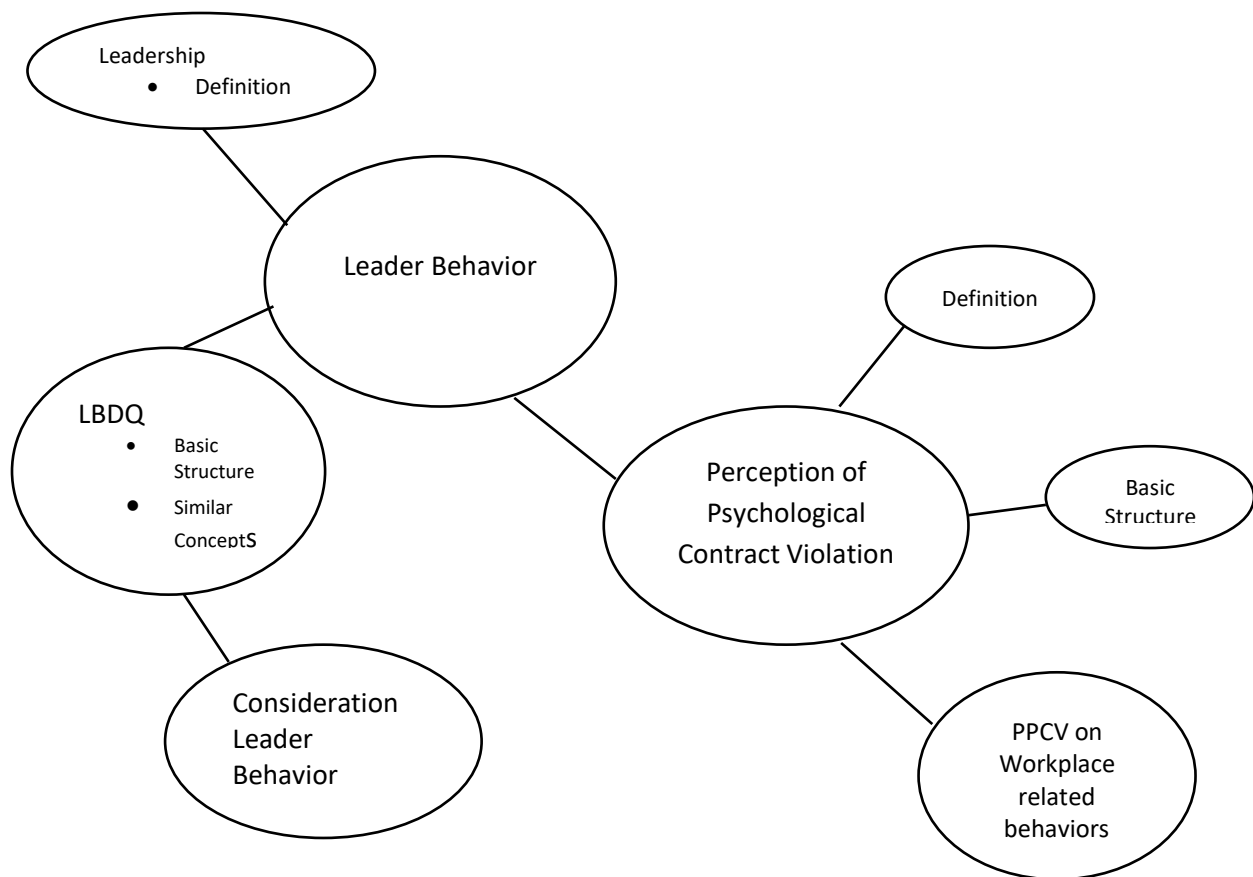


Figure 1: Literature Map

Leader Behavior

Leadership is the ability to influence and guide people using different situationally applicable techniques to accomplish challenging goals (Forsyth, 2010; Yukl, 2010; Owen, Hodgeson, & Gazzard, 2004; Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). Leadership involves an assortment of capabilities that must be utilized together (Melendez, 1996).

Back in 1945, the Ohio State University initiated an intensive study on leadership in an attempt to identify various dimensions of leader behavior. In the process, they created the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) in 1957 which helped them narrow down the various dimensions down to two, which are Initiating Structure, which is a set of task-oriented behaviors and Consideration, which is a set of relationship-oriented behavior (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011; Yukl, 2010). A person who scores high in initiating structure is the type of person who jump-starts the process of getting the job done. The main concern of this person is the accomplishment of the objective of the organization, most of the time, disregarding the feelings or conditions of the members. This person is concerned with and makes everyone value the quality of the work, makes everybody understand their roles and responsibilities, always conscious of how to get things done, innovates and offers alternative solutions, initiates or makes sure tasks are started, and encourages the meeting of deadlines. On the other hand, a person who scores high in consideration is a person who exhibits concern for the members of the group and their feelings. This person finds time to listen to others, makes sure people are comfortable around him/her, shows interest in others as persons, compliments others for their work, is approachable, and uses a democratic approach in the

decision-making process. These two dimensions are independent of each other, so it is possible that a person can get high scores on both. Ideal leaders are those who score high on both dimensions (Cunningham, 1966). Other terms are also used by other researchers for concepts similar to the one identified by the Ohio State University study such as “task leadership” for initiating structure and “relationship or social leadership” for consideration (Macapagal, Ofreneo, Montiel &, Nolasco, 2013; Mujtaba & Balboa, 2009).

When this concept of a two-dimensional behavioral approach to the study of leadership is applied in the Philippine context, it would appear that Filipinos tend to prefer leaders who are high in consideration dimension. The study conducted by Mujtaba and Balboa (2009) on 192 Filipinos and 87 Americans to compare their task and relationship leadership orientations has shown that Filipinos have significantly higher scores in relationship orientation while Americans have more or less similar scores in task and relationship orientations.

According to the study by Jocano (1999), Filipinos tend to value certain social leadership traits akin to the consideration dimension identified by the Ohio State University study. The top traits possessed by their superiors and managers that they prefer are being kind, approachable, helpful, and understanding. In the same study, Jocano has put forward the idea that the behavior of being a *Gabay* (guide) is the role that Filipino workers expect from their leaders. A *Gabay* is attributed to show *maka-magulang na pagpapansin* (paternalism) – a father-like concern for the state of the group; *makamag-anak na pananaw* (familism) – a management style wherein the leader inspires a collective behavior wherein the group is seen as one big family, and each one in the group is concerned for each other’s wellbeing; and *makapansariling*

pagmamasid (personalism) – a leader's personalized care in catering to the needs of one's subordinates.

Perceived Psychological Contract Violation

Psychological Contract is a person's belief of the existence of mutual obligation with another party – usually an employer – which is predicated on the perception that an exchange of promise has been made in which the parties are bound (Rousseau, 2000). It is distinct from a legal/economic contract because it is not a formal written contract between the two parties but an implied relationship based on mutual contributions; therefore, it is not bound by any laws of a state (Muchinsky, 2007). When in some future time, some of the promises given are not fulfilled for some particular reasons, this will lead to a perception of Psychological Contract Breach. There are two root causes of psychological contract breach, namely: 1) Reneging- when the company or its representative, who knows the existence on an obligation willfully, did not fulfill the said obligation and 2) incongruence- when each party has different interpretation of the promises given (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Perceived psychological contract violation is an intense emotional reaction of a person, which may result after perceiving a psychological contract breach. Our understanding of the concept of perceived psychological contract violation is derived from the study conducted by Robinson and Morrison (2000), in which they concluded that the feeling of violation might occur depending on the interpretation process that a person undergoes immediately after perceiving a breach.

Several studies have made the connection between leadership and the perception of psychological contract violation among workers. A study by Tang, Restubog, and Cayayan (2007) found that a high leader-member exchange buffers the negative effects of psychological contract breach. The lowering of the effects of psychological contract breach is linked to lowering the tendency of the occurrence of psychological contract violation. Studies conducted by Erkutlo and Chafra (2013) and Katrinili, Atabay, Gunay, and Cangarli (2010) also show that the relationship of leadership and psychological contract violation is linked to several work-related behaviors such as workplace deviance and organizational citizenship behaviors. Several studies also show the connection between psychological contract violation and work-related behaviors such as job satisfaction (Ballou, 2013; Schaupp, 2012; Newstroom, 2011; and Coyle-Shapiro, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

This research is built on the Filipino concept of leadership called *Gabay*. In the Philippine context, a leader who manifests high on consideration is seen as a *Gabay*, a Filipino leader who consistently manifest behaviors of paternalism, familism, and personalism. For the Filipino workers these are the ideal set of behaviors that they expect from their leaders (Jocano, 1999). This study proposes that Filipino employees who have leaders who manifest these behaviors will have low level of perceived psychological contract violation. On the other hand, a leader who manifests low on consideration could be seen as having poor relational ability with one's members and giving no importance on the values of reciprocity, therefore they could be seen as *walang utang na loob* (no sense of debt of gratitude) and *walang pakikisama* (does not value

being one with fellow workmates) which are the leader behaviors that Filipinos abhor. Filipino employees who have leaders who manifest these behaviors will have high level of perceived psychological contract violation.

The concept of psychological contract is only thinly studied in the Philippines based on the literature reviewed and there are even fewer of studies specific on perceived psychological contract violation. This study is an attempt to address this gap by doing a study on perceived psychological contract violation among workers in the Philippine setting. In order to understand another aspect of psychological contract, this current study will link perceived psychological contract violation with the leader behavior of the immediate superiors based on the assessment of these workers in order to establish whether a relationship exists between these two variables. There is a need to conduct this research in order to help emphasize the importance of the quality of leadership in an organization and how it relates to essential work related behaviors of the workers that could affect the organization's productivity.

Organizations that are in the process of conducting wholesale change, especially those in the Philippines, would greatly benefit from the findings of this research if they are able to adequately apply them. This research would hopefully be able to guide them that the quality of leadership and the management of the perception of psychological contract violation are critical factors in ensuring the success of planned organizational change.

The researchers have endeavored to gain an objective understanding of the two variables, Leader Behavior of the immediate superiors and level of PCV in the context of a major organizational change, by conducting a field research among frontline sales personnel of the Coca-Cola FEMSA Negros Region. This organization was chosen in order to take advantage

of the fact that at the time of the data gathering phase of this study; they have just recently undergone major organizational change (Business unit, n. d. and Coca-Cola FEMSA today, 2014). A necessary requirement for the nature of this research is the situation that the target organization should have just recently undergone major organizational change in order to achieve the research objective. Therefore in the context of a major organizational change, the aim of this research is to know how these frontline sales personnel judge the consideration leader behavior of their immediate superior and for them to assess their own level of perceived psychological contract violation with the aid of standardized survey questionnaires.

This study's research objective could only be achieved by conducting an inferential statistical tool that would compute for the relationship of two variables. In order to do this, the result of the survey was treated using correlational analysis in order to know the degree and direction of the relationship between the two variables.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was gathered using a questionnaire packet. The nature of this study requires that the respondents must be regular frontline sales personnel from an organization which has recently undergone a recent major organizational change. 74 frontline sales personnel from the Coca-Cola FEMSA Philippines Negros Region fall under this set of criteria. This study was conducted across four provinces which encompasses the jurisdiction of the selected organization. These provinces are Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, and Bohol. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to Sex, Age, Highest Educational Attainment and Tenure.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents, n=74.

Category	f	%
Sex		
Female	14	18.9
Male	60	81.1
Age		
35 years old and below	58	78.38
36 years old and above	16	21.62
Educational Attainment		
College graduate	73	98.6
Non-College graduate	1	1.4
Tenure		
10 years and below	65	87.9
11 years and above	9	12.1

In the collection of the data, a request of permission to conduct a study was given to the Sales HR Manager of the Coca-Cola FEMSA Philippines Negros Region, in which the said manager was also informed of the nature of the study. The researcher secured an informed consent from the respondents after they had been oriented about the study in a formal letter which was given to them. The respondents were asked to answer all the items in both questionnaires and not leave any item unanswered. They were told that writing their names were optional but rests of the demographic characteristics had to be filled up. They were assured that all information will be held in strictest confidence and they have the right to have access to the final results of the study. The respondents were given a Participant's Packet in which the following were its content: Two copies of the informed consent (one for the respondent and one for record keeping purposes), Questionnaire Packet, and a blank non-transparent sealable envelope where they will place the two fully answered questionnaires. The

researcher made sure that the data collection did not disrupt the work schedules of the respondents. They were further assured that the results of the study will not be used against them in any way and will remain confidential.

The data for this study was collected using a questionnaire packet composed of three parts. The Dependent Variable of this study is the perceived psychological contract violation of the respondents and was measured using the Perceived Psychological Contract Violation Inventory (PPCVI). The PPCVI has a Cronbach $\alpha = 0.92$ which was developed by Elizabeth Wolfe Morrison and Sandra L. Robinson (2000). It is composed of four items such as *"I feel a great deal of anger toward my company"* and *"I feel betrayed by my company."* Each item is answerable with a five-point Likert scale, 1=Strongly Disagrees, 2=Disagrees, 3=Neither Agrees nor Disagrees, 4=Agrees, 5=Strongly Agrees. The Independent Variable of this study is the leader behavior of the immediate superior as perceived by the subordinates and was measured using the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). Each dimension has the following calculated reliability: .83 for the Initiating Structure scores, and .92 for the Consideration scores. The LBDQ was developed by the staff of the Personnel Research Board of the Ohio State University in 1957 as one of the project of the Ohio State Leadership Studies, then directed by Dr. Carrol L. Shartle (Halpin, 1957) but still remains relevant as it was used by recent studies (Polatcan & Titrek, 2014; Holloway, 2012; Sancar, 2009; Can, 2009). It is composed of 40 items such as, *"Does personal favors for group members"* and *"Assigns group members to particular tasks."* Each item is answerable using a five-point Likert scale with the following choices: A=Always, B=Often, C=Occasionally, D=Seldom, E=Never. Each letter has corresponding

numerical values which are the following: A= 5, B=4, C=3, D=2, and E=1 except for three items in the consideration dimension wherein items 12, 18, and 20 have reversed scoring.

The demographic profile of the respondents such as sex, age, highest educational attainment, and tenure was also gathered in this questionnaire packet as they serve as Control Variables for this study.

In order to test the hypothesis of the study, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used, aided by SPSS, in order to determine the relationship between Consideration aspect of leader behavior of the immediate superiors and PPCV of the Negros Region Coca-Cola FEMSA Philippines Frontline Sales Personnel. The critical value for this test of relationship is 0.3017.

RESULTS

This section of the paper presents the results of this study.

The data in Table 2 shows that the computed r for the relationship of consideration leader behavior and perceived psychological contract violation is -0.311 with a p -value of 0.007. The Pearson Critical Value table shows that the critical value for the specified degrees of freedom of 70; at 0.01 level of significance is 0.3017. Because the computed r -value is greater than the critical value for the specified degrees of freedom and the p -value is lower than 0.01 level of significance, the result shows enough evidence that there is a significant negative relationship between Leader Behavior and Perceived Psychological Contract Violation. This means that there is a tendency for the felt violation to decrease as the consideration leader behavior increases.

Table 2. Relationship of Leader Behavior Consideration Scores and PPCV. (N=74).

Variable		Leader Behavior Consideration	PPCV
Leader Behavior			
	Consideration Pearson Correlation	1	-0.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.007
PPCV	Pearson Correlation	-0.311**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007	

** . Correlation significant at 0.01 level. (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

This study endeavored to find out if the consideration leader behavior of immediate superiors is correlated with the perceived psychological contract violation (PPCV) of frontline sales personnel. A high prevalence of PPCV tends to occur among organizations that have undergone a major organizational change (Robinson & Morrison, 2000), so to study the correlation between these two variables in such a condition, this study was conducted on an organization that has just recently undergone a major organizational change. Studying the correlation between these two variables, especially under the context of organizational change, has not yet been conducted in the Philippines. The result of this study may be able to point out the critical role that the quality of leadership plays in such situations and how it is linked to essential work-related behaviors such as the perception of psychological contract violation.

After processing the gathered data using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, the findings show a significant negative correlation between the leader behavior of the immediate superiors and the perception of psychological contract violation among the frontline sales personnel. In the context of the objective and design of this study, it could be inferred that in a major organizational change, a high level of consideration leader behavior

(CLB) of the immediate superior can be linked to a low level of perceived psychological contract violation (PPCV) among the frontline sales personnel. This finding supports the hypothesis of this study.

The negative relationship between CLB and PPCV would support this study's view that Filipino workers have a preference for leaders that manifest a high level of CLB. This study suggests that in the Philippine context, a leader who manifests a high level of CLB is seen as a Gabay. In the same way, participants showed low levels of PPCV because they consider their immediate superiors as their Gabays. The result of this study could be considered as giving support and credence, as shown in the theoretical framework that the Filipino workers prefer leaders who manifest the characteristics of a Gabay.

This finding would also grant the fact that the prevalence of PPCV really does occur when there is a major organizational change, as reported by Robinson and Morrison (2000). The negative relationship between the two variables would also lend credence to the findings of Belias and Koustelios (2014) that leaders play a major role in mitigating the detrimental effect of a major organizational change. This would align as well with the study of Tang et al. (2007) who reported that high leader-member exchange would buffer the detrimental effects of perceived psychological contract breach and also those of Erkutlo and Chafra (2013) and Katrinili et al. (2010). Furthermore, the finding of this study could also be considered giving support on those studies linking psychological contract violation with work-related behaviors such as job satisfaction (Ballou, 2013; Schaupp, 2012; Newstroom, 2011; & Coyle-Shapiro, 2002).

If organizational planners apply the findings of this study practically, it could have an impact on how they will initiate major changes in their organization. They could become more sensitive to the various effects of these changes and plan the way they will implement these changes in such a way as to minimize their possible detrimental effects. With regards to leadership, if organizational planners will learn from the findings of this study, they will have a deeper understanding on the importance of how the manifested behaviors of their supervisors and managers impact the work-related emotions of their subordinates, which could, in the long run, have significant impact of their effectivity in their work. Therefore, it would be logical to say that companies should not be impersonal. Managers, supervisors, and other positions that handle people should also be leaders, not just emotionless conductors focused on running an operation with machine-like precision. The company as a whole should foster an atmosphere wherein everyone should get the feeling that they are an essential member of the company. The company could use its regular publication or the like in recognizing accomplishments or contributions of various members. In this manner, they can also disseminate the different relevant messages and get feedback. The use of other media is also as important, such as posters, bulletin boards, movie boards, streamers, and the like, as reminders that would keep this message perpetually present in the minds of every member of the company. This should be raised to the policy level that emanates from the strategic apex, and there should be an alignment of thinking, understanding, and priority down the line. It is important that the middle line, along with the technostructure and support staff, can understand the rationale behind this policy so that they will be able to understand its importance and make sure its impact would be felt by everyone, especially the operating core. This could be done through training-seminars,

inter-office memos, and embedding this policy to the corporate culture by incorporating it to its values, mission, and vision.

But the readers of this report must be cautious in generalizing the findings of this study because of the limitation of its sample. The finding of this study is not generalizable to all workers and all organizations since the sample has been chosen purposively and is not statistically representative of the general population. This study would recommend to future researchers that to address this limitation, their sample should be statistically representative of the general population by using the random sampling method.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to find out if there is a significant correlation between the immediate superior's consideration leader behavior and the perceived psychological contract violation of the frontline sales personnel in the context of a major organizational change. The result shows that there is enough statistical proof that there is a negative correlation between the two. It further supports the hypothesis as well as the concept of Gabay. It is also in line with many of the previous researches correlating PPCV to leadership and other work-related behaviors. It is recommended by this study to conduct further research on the topic on a more generalizable sample because if these lessons are applied to the dynamics of organizations, it could have important implications in managing organizational change and in the selection process, adult learning and training of organizational leaders.

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