

Analyzing the Role of Organizational Climate on Courageous Followership and Authentic Leadership among University Graduates in Pakistan

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Abstract

In today's world, understanding the concept of followers is as important as the concept of leaders in the organization. Building the concept of followership and leadership, this study used the reversing the lens approach in leadership study and hypothesized that the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership enhances in the presence of organizational climate as moderator. The target sample for this study was graduate students from different universities in twin cities of Pakistan i.e. Rawalpindi and Islamabad (N= 171). This sample was chosen by convenience-based sampling due to Covid-19. The data were analyzed by using the SPSS and moderation analysis was also applied to this study. The results supported the hypotheses of the study by concluding that the organizational climate act as a moderator and influences the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership. Focusing on developing a good organizational climate will boost the impact of courageous followership behavior and authentic leadership in the students, and this would create a balanced and progressive society. Future researchers might need to consider the courageous followership behavior development and its role in enhancing authentic leadership in different work settings.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, Courageous followership, Organizational Climate, Courage

Introduction

In today's competitive environment, the follower's role is as important as the leadership role. Followers should also take charge and own their organization; they should take themselves as a copartner of their leader. Authentic leadership is defined as an interpersonal process as it includes not only the leader's effort but also includes follower's responses. The communication and interaction between follower and leader create authenticity (Eagly, 2005). Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, and Wu (2014) described that the leadership should adopt a positive, genuine, understandable, and ethical form of leader which would lead to authenticity in the leader. According to Datta (2015), authentic leaders would bring enhancement in organizational performance, this would also lower the dissatisfaction in followers and the leaders who practice authenticity would achieve personal success. According to Terry (2019), the followers would show high commitment towards the organization as well as demonstrate a high level of involvement when followers perceived their leader as an authentic leader. Followers can be trained by implementing or practicing authentic leadership behavior as it will create positive results.

Issues like harassment occur more frequently when do not raise our voices and stay quiet. In our society, one of the reasons is the stigma and taboo linked with the honor of a person or his/her family. According to the statistics given by the Dukhtar foundation (2020), 82% of harassment cases were filed by university students against their teachers. The students, who filed the complaint, took one step to stop this issue in their universities so that other students do not face the same. The issues can be solved when we make people aware of the concept of courageous followership in our society. It is time to apply the philosophy of Aristotle regarding leadership "First earn to follow, and then lead". Students need to practice courageous followership at the university level because it will also help them in their future. Authentic leadership is a way to see the subordinate role. If the students, at

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this level, practice being more courageous followers than passive followers, it would give them the courage to not only speak but to serve the organization more enthusiastically. Unfortunately, some more passive followers do not interfere and let the leader do whatever he wants than there is a possibility that they perceive their leader as destructive, and later, they behave in the same way. But adapting the courageous followership behavior would lead them towards authenticity. According to the Pakistan Institute of Management, the institute has trained more than 250000 managers since 1954, but there is no focus on developing the followership skills which is necessary to be a great leader. Therefore, in today's dynamic environment, followership is a very crucial part, and we need to focus on developing courageous followership skills in students.

Followership and leadership have been studied by many researchers but there is very limited research conducted in Pakistan in the education sector. Everyone wants to be a great leader but not a follower. A follower's contribution towards the organization can make the leader successful. Ghias, Hassan and Masood, (2018) suggested that the courageous follower can be practice at the university level so that the students can bring change in organizations. The previous researcher has studied the relationship of leader and follower in the corporate sector. However, none of the studies has been done involving the moderating role of organizational climate in the education sector of Pakistan according to the best of the researcher's knowledge. The gap of this study was indicated in the research done by Ghias et al. (2018) where they suggested that there should be a focus on the education sector regarding courageous followership behavior as this would help the youth to understand the importance of being a follower. According to Shehzadi, John, Qadeer, and Mehnaz (2017), there is also a lack of studies of followership in Pakistan's context. According to the gap identified in the literature, this study examines the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership with the moderating role of organizational climate.

The significance of this study is to create awareness, how courageous followership behavior is important at the student level and its role in leadership development. Furthermore, this study is significant as it highlights the role of a good organizational climate. The universities' leaders should enhance; promote a good climate for courageous followership and authentic leadership development. Having a courageous follower would lead towards authentic leaders in the future. Institutions to focus on developing the student who is more courageous followers then passive followers, and this would not only help the institute but other organizations as well because it would not only create the strong impact on the organizational climate, but it would also create future authentic leaders which is the basic need for the present time.

Literature Review

According to the leadership theory Gardner, Coglisier, Davis, and Dickens (2011) explain that people can effectively lead and follow in a way that enables their uniqueness and employees can show their distinctive identity and style, which creates a sense of excitement among leaders and scholars. Follower's performance, innovation, efficacy, and effectiveness would magnify the authenticity in leaders. Organization consequences would be more precise, and the engaged followers are more likely to be ambitious by authentic leadership (Liu, Fuller, Hester, Bennett, & Dickerson, 2018). Leaders may have higher awards than followers because the goals are being achieved but there is a hand of followers behind the success as the followers give the best solutions in worst situations (Colangelo, 2000). Chaleff (2009) describes the behaviors as the dimensions of courageous followers which include the courage to assume responsibility, the courage to challenge, the courage to serve, the courage to take moral actions, and the courage to participate in the transformation. According to Terry (2019) when the followers are involved in the organization, their opinions have listened then there are lesser chances of turnover intentions.

The climate of the organization is very important in the development of courageous followership behaviors. The climate of an organization is distinct from culture as it can be directly observed in an organization whereas culture is more of norms, values, and beliefs within the organization (Ekvall, 1996). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argued that the employees share a common perspective about their behavior expectation, and they assume that they would get the reward from the organization in turn it will enhance organizational climate. The organizational climate is built upon the interaction of group members and teams. Open climate should be provided to employees or teachers instead of a closed climate so that they can give their best performance (Raza, 2010).

Courageous Followership and Authentic Leadership

The researcher used leader-member exchange theory to study courageous followership and authentic leadership. The leader-member exchange theory has suggested that there is a dyadic relationship between leader and follower which results in the quality of leadership effectiveness and their quality is determined by cooperation between leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-bien, 1995). For this research, the leader-member exchange theory has been reversed, the focus of this approach is how followership behavior identifies the leadership behavior and its outcome, further this approach studies the leadership styles as followership outcomes (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). This research studies the relationship between student and teacher that if the student is courageous follower then in exchange the leadership behavior of teacher will lead to authenticity.

Numerous studies (Chou, 2012; Ghias et al., 2018; Van Vugt, Hogan & Kaiser, 2008) have investigated the link between leadership and followership. The proactive behavior of subordinates can be acknowledged, utilized, and rewarded by existing leaders, this will help in making the followers great future leaders (Ghias et al., 2018). Educating the students, it is important to introduce followers' role and followership at this level as an instructor Johnson (2009). If teachers do not tell at this level, the students will face difficulties while entering the world. Followership development became as important as leadership development. The followers should be motivated by their leaders so that they can participate in changing initiatives of the organization. The leaders must check and challenge themselves whether they value the acts of their courageous followers as they share a relationship with them.

H1: Courageous followership has a positive impact on authentic leadership.

Organizational Climate as Moderator between Courageous Followership and Authentic Leadership

There are several definitions of climate. Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2011) defined organizational climate as purpose, practice, as well as behaviors that can get rewarded, supported in the organization. Whereas, Hoy (1990) suggested that climate to an organization is like personality to an individual. Previous scholars studied the organizational climate as a moderator in their researches (Hofmann, Morgeson, & Gerras, 2003; Smith-Crowe, Burke, & Landis, 2003; Yıldız & Özcan, 2014). The researcher Smith-Crowe et al. (2003) suggested that the organization that serves a more positive climate would give knowledge to their subordinates about the appropriate behavior in the work setting even they can identify the climate by themselves when working in that environment. This would also indicate the safety knowledge in the subordinates. The employee and organization relationship would be established by authentic leadership (Wong & Laschinger, 2013).

Courageous followership has been studied by many researchers (Colbry-Povlosky, Womack, & Bugaighis, 2003; Ghias et al., 2018; Ricketson, 2008; Schwab, 2017) in previous years. Fletcher (2019) studied that active followership involves personalized dedication and having the courage to contribute to a collective network or system. The process requires individual responsibility and commitment. Followers should know the importance of their role by speaking up for their responsibility and show courage to make ethical and moral actions in the organization as courageous followership while communicating to their leader (Schwab, 2017). These theories also in agreement with Carsten and Uhl-Bien's (2013) study that the person who does not say yes to their leader and can say no if leader's behavior is unethical are more likely to perform their responsibility and these individuals have a very strong belief in the output.

The study by Hofmann et al. (2003) described that the quality of leader-member exchange relationship and organizational climate will create a safe environment in an organization. The moderation effect of organizational climate is positive in previous researches, for instance, the study of Yıldız and Özcan (2014) kept organizational climate as a moderator between transformational leadership and follower's creativity and the results showed the increase in leadership after introducing organizational climate as moderator. The literature suggests there are likely chances that the organizational climate as a moderator would enhance the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership.

H2: Organizational Climate moderates the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership.

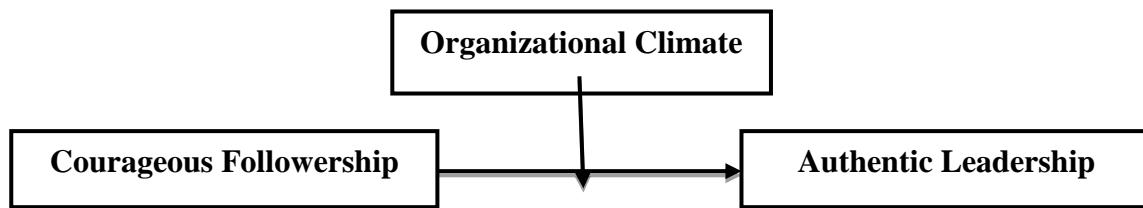


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

The population of this research is graduate students of public and private sector universities from twin cities Rawalpindi, Islamabad. Adopting convenience sampling techniques 220 questionnaires were distributed using Google Docs from which 171 questionnaires were returned and used in the analysis. Due to COVID-19 convenience sampling was used as it was not possible to visit our used physical documents due to SOPs for COVID-19. The overall response rate was 77%. The population consisted of a total of 65 males and 106 females with percentages of 38.0% and 62.0% respectively. 71.9% sample belonged to the age group of 20-25, while 19.3% belonged to the age group of 26-30, and only 8.8% belonged to the age group of 31-35. Among the participants, 74.3% had a Bachelors’s qualification, 15.8% qualified for master’s level, whereas 9.9% had M-Phil Qualification. SPSS software is used to analyze the data. Correlation, regression analysis, and moderation has been used to analyze the hypothesized relationships.

Measuring Instruments

The questionnaire on followership profile was developed by (Dixon, 2003) in the supervision of (Chaleff, 2009) based on the courageous followership behavior which includes; courage to challenge, the courage to take moral actions, and courage to participate in the transformation. This questionnaire was taken from the research of Ghias et al. (2018). The reliability of courageous followership consists of 19 items ($\alpha=0.92$) and its value is consistent with previous researches done by Ghias, Hassan, and Masood (2018) and Williams (2015). Peña-Suárez, Muñiz, Campillo-Álvarez, Fonseca-Pedrero and García-Cueto (2013) constructed the organization climate scale. The reliability of organization climate consists of 15 items ($\alpha=0.89$) and the value is consistent with previous findings of (Peña-Suárez et al., 2013). Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) was constructed by Northouse, (2019) which measures authentic leadership. The reliability of authentic leadership instrument consists of 16 items ($\alpha=0.90$) which is consistent with previous researches of (Wang et al., 2014) and (Butler, 2019). Therefore all the scales are above the acceptable values of 0.60 are considered good for human behavior (Peters, 2014).

Results and Discussion

To analyze the role of organizational climate on courageous followership behavior and authentic leadership, the Pearson correlation was used. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Correlation of all Variables (N=171)

Variables	I	II	III
I-Organizational Climate	-	-	-
II-Authentic Leadership	.573**	-	-
III-Courageous Followership	.209**	.574**	-

Correlation is significant $p \leq 0.05^*$, $p \leq 0.01^{**}$

In Table 1, the results show the significant and strong relationship between the variables. The Organization Climate and Authentic Leadership share a positive correlation ($r=.573^{**}$, $p<.01$). Organization Climate and Courageous Followership share a positive but low correlation ($r=.209$, $p<.01$). Authentic Leadership and Courageous Followership ($r=.574$, $p<.01$). These results state the strong relation concerning Cohen’s criteria (Cohen, 1988). Courageous followership as an independent variable strongly influences authentic leadership and the organizational climate would enhance the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership.

To analyze the relationship between the variable’s regression analysis was used. The regression assumptions were done to do the regression analysis for testing the hypothesis. To test the moderation hypothesis that organization climate moderates the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership, the hierarchical multiple regression was conducted as shown in

table 2, in the first step, model 1, which includes the impact of courageous followership. The results showed significant change on authentic leadership, $R^2 = .545$, $F(2,168) = 100.4$, $p < .05$

Table 2: Moderation Regression Analysis (N=171)

Model	R	R Square	Change Statistics	
			R Square Change	Sig. F Change
1	.738 ^a	.545	.545	.000*
2	.746 ^b	.557	.013	.030*

Correlation is significant $p \leq 0.05^*$, $p \leq 0.01^{**}$

In Model 2, Table 2, the moderator organization climate was added to the regression model which showed a significant amount of variance in the authentic leadership, $R^2\Delta = .013$, $F(1,167) = 4.809$, $p < .05$. As shown in Table 2, model 2 explains that introducing the organizational climate as a moderator, R square explains 1.3% variance of authentic leadership due to organizational climate and courageous followership.

Table 3: Moderation Analysis Coefficient (N=171)

Model		Beta Value (β)	Sig. F Change
1	(Constant)		
	OC	.474	.000
	CF	.475	.000
2	(Constant)		
	OC	.489	.000
	CF	.472	.000
	Mod	.114	0.03

Correlation is significant $p \leq 0.05$, $p \leq 0.01$.

Authentic Leadership (AL): Dependent Variable, Organizational Climate (OC): Moderator, Courageous Followership (CF) Independent Variable

According to Table no. 3, the hypothesis is accepted, where ($\beta = .475$, $p < .01$), with a significant impact of courageous followership on authentic leadership. This shows that the more authentic leader would have the benefit if he has more courageous followers on his side. If the person is a more courageous follower then he would not only help his leader to be more authentic but in turn, he will be an authentic leader in the future. This study complies with other previous studies. Ghias, Hassan, and Shah (2020) illustrated that honest, dedication, and accountability are very important and if the followers have this quality then they would speak when any unethical practices are done in the organization. The leaders who are truthful and shares an open relationship with their followers would reflect as an authentic leader (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

The students who are courageous follower would help their teachers to become more authentic leaders and they would show honesty towards their organization. Those students would become more efficient and effective future leaders. The students can inspire their teachers to adapt authenticity in their leadership. Lemoine et al. (2019) suggested in their study that the leader can inspire followers by their moral and ethical freedom and the followers are motivated to contribute to this system if lead by the authentic leader. If the focus of courageous followership is shifted towards the students then this would help them to become great leaders themselves and also it would delete the toxic leaders from our culture (Ghias et al., 2018).

These studies shown above confirm the first hypotheses for this study i.e. courageous followership and authentic leadership have a significant relationship with each other. The studies show positive results as this study was done on students who are the youth of Pakistan. Practicing courageous followership behavior at the student level would help them become an authentic leader in the future. Nowadays, students know what is wrong and what is right, they take the step if they face any injustice from their teacher. They know how to make decisions as they do not follow their leader blindly. In universities, students willingly participate with their teachers by sharing interactive sessions. These small practices contribute towards becoming courageous followers even in organizations. This is in line with the study done by Chou (2012), the organizational performance can be maximized when leaders understand the followership role of their millennials.

In this study, the organizational climate acts as a moderator and increases the relationship between courageous followership and authentic leadership. Hypotheses H2 proposed that the organizational climate moderates the effect of courageous followership and authentic leadership.

After introducing the organizational climate as a moderator in the study, the H2 is also accepted and supported by interaction values ($\beta=.489$, $p<.005$) and ($\beta= .472$, $p<.005$) respectively as indicated in table 3. The value of beta $\beta=.489$ indicates that there is a positive significant relation between courageous followership and authentic leadership and the presence of organizational climate which has the beta value of $\beta= .472$ which is significant at 0.005, indicates that the presence of cooperative organizational climate would encourage the followers to act more as a courageous follower and this also would be beneficial for leaders as it would bring authenticity in the leaders. This study is also in line with the study of (Yildiz & Özcan, 2014) who stated that transformational leadership and follower's creativeness would increase when the climate of the organization is more supportive and considerate. The results of the study of Khattak, Batool, and Haider (2017) also indicated that when organizations develop an open climate and implement transformational leadership it would enhance the creativity of the organization.

The student can openly question right and wrong decisions and can positive criticism regarding the decision of their teachers when the organizational climate is supportive, open, and helpful. The results can be more strengthened by the study of Raza (2010) that teachers' performance increases when a more positive, open, and cooperative climate is created. When the students show courage at this level then they would also practice this behavior in their practical life. These types of institutes are not only developing courageous followers but also producing future authentic leaders. The organizational climate provides an open and supportive environment by which students feel that they are free to share their opinions with their supervisors and this provides them the safety in their role and teachers can also feel that they have a safer environment in which they can share their opinions freely. The study of Smith-Crowe, Burke, and Landis (2003) also implies that if the organizational climate is effective and supportive then the involvement of leaders at the individual level would be more effective.

Practical/Academic Implications

The most important implication of this study is the development of courageous followership behavior in the institutes for enhancing leadership authenticity. The organizational climate also plays a vital role in developing courageous followership and authentic leaders. Instead of followers act as passive not speaking up nor questioning the wrong or unethical behavior of their leaders an organization climate of authenticity and courage is needed. The youth can bring the difference if they practice courageous followership behavior at the university level. More knowledge and understanding of followership and leadership in youth would help them to select the right leader for them in the future. The results of this study also enhanced the body of knowledge as very diminutive research on courageous followership has been done in Pakistan (Ghias et al., 2018; Shehzadi et al., 2017).

Limitations/Future Research Directions

The first limitation is that study is limited in the education sector due to which the geographical location became a constraint to the sample size. The results would have been more accurate if conducted on a larger level. The results of the study would have been different if the data were gathered on the organizational level. Another limitation to the study was time constraints with limited resources. The data was gathered through an online medium by using convenience sampling due to COVID-19, which also caused the difficulty as there was some sample that had the missing values. As this study was a cross-sectional study which also counts as a limitation to the study, however, doing the experimental study would give better findings.

The future researcher should explore the more followership aspect and adding more theories to followership. Future researchers can do this study on a larger sample by gathering data from all over Pakistan. The future researcher can work on more demographic variables. In the future, the research can be held based on qualitative data to get better results of the study and include those factors which were not part of this study. The future researcher can use a different type of sampling technique to get more specific results. In the future, this type of study can be done in public and private organizations, banks, or the health sector. As this study focuses on the youth of Pakistan, the future researcher can focus on the more experienced people (elderly people) because it might give different results as there is a major difference between the thinking of Youth and elderly people.

Conclusion

Students spent so much time learning about the leadership roles and leadership development but there is little knowledge giving on the role of followership. Even though the students are acting as a

follower throughout their student life. By introducing the concept of courageous followership, the students can realize their role towards the organization with more openness, responsibility, and accountability. In a country like Pakistan, a developing country, there is a need for courageous followers so that our leaders show more authenticity towards their leadership. The youth of Pakistan realize the importance of speaking up if something is going wrong or they know the potential of their leader. The courage to speak, the courage to serve, and acting on unethical behavior would not only build them as courageous followers, but they would understand their responsibility, accountability, and moral values on which they must select their leader. The empirical results of this study ratify that organizational climate moderates the relationship between courageous followers and authentic leaders. This study provides a clear understanding of the concept that the universities developing courageous followership behavior in their student would lead towards the authentic leader in the future and organizational climate would add value by increasing the chances of developing an authentic leader.

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