

The General Review of the Leader's Self Enhancement on the Organization

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Abstract

One of the self-evaluating motives is that of self enhancement and it is a focus on making oneself happy and to maintain personal self-esteem. Leaders with a self enhancement bias are linked to low interpersonal relationships and low performance. People do not like to work with self-enhancers because they come across as egotistical, hostile, insensitive and lacking empathy; this result in poor relationships which then leads to poor performance. However, the self-enhancing leader could also help to encourage the growth of an organization. This research reviews the several effects of self enhancement on leaders. In conclusion, self-enhancing leaders who focus on self enhancement could be effective leaders if applied in the right situation.

Keywords: Leadership, Self-enhancement, Interpersonal relationship, Performance.

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Introduction

Self-enhancement is defined as the desire or observed reality of seeing oneself and by extension one's actions, traits and attitudes and working towards bettering it (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). People who have a self-enhancement bias are more likely to identify themselves as better than others along with a variety of other positive dimensions that

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will be favourable to the self. They see themselves more positively than others would perceive them to be. They believe they are above the average so they only take credit for the successes but avoid blame for their failures. In a competitive situation, people with self-enhancement bias will detract from the accomplishment of other individuals to boost their perceived worth. When explaining the in-group performance, they will engage in self-serving attributions (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). The concept of self-enhancement bias is the way a person maintains a favourable of seeing the self as efficacious and competent. They are actively overseeing and actually doing some task. Hence, they believe their intervention makes things better even in random events, where their intervention does not possibly lead to a better outcome. Interestingly, people with high self enhancement bias are more likely to be gamblers as their belief in the efficacy of their personal intervention makes them more willing to wager money. In business, they often actively manage mutual funds and they believe their intervention, such as finding the best fund and the actions of the fund manager, contribute the success of the organization. People who have a self enhancement bias attribute negative information about themselves to external factors. Also, they tend to remember the flattering things and forget the unflattering things (“The self-enhancement bias”, 2015).

Self-enhancement bias occurs more frequently in Western cultures (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). The level of self enhancement bias is higher in Western than East Asian cultures (Kurman, 2007). The individual’s motivation to enhance one’s self or one’s group is dependent on the culture in which they were raised. Thus it is no surprise that the tendency to be self-enhancing is weaker in collectivist cultures in contrast to more individualistic cultures (Kurman, 2007). For instance, the Japanese are less likely to enhance themselves above that of their group than Canadians (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). The typical Western individualistic society that stresses on the uniqueness and well-being of the individual attributes the success situation as being more important than the failure situation; whereas Japanese stresses on the importance of fitting in, restraining one’s self and maintain social harmony (Kurman, 2007). In addition, self-enhancement bias could be the consequence of motivation, information processing and cognitive processes. Miller and Ross (2007) claims that the self-enhancement motive could be explained in terms of cognitive and non-motivational explanations with the results being formed by the cognitive operations of prior beliefs and expectancies. On the other hand, Kunda (2009) argued that motivation plays a role in determining whether cognitive processes or representations will be used on given occasion to arrive at their desired conclusions. However, the existing data shows that only the people who want to develop self- enhancing cognitions will develop self-enhancing cognitions (Hieder, 2008).

Some researchers claim that self-enhancers have poor mental health; they dislike others around them and fail to take advantage of opportunities to learn from experience and are insensitive to social feedback. Self-enhancers can be narcissistic (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). Narcissistic leaders are more likely to evaluate themselves more positively than others on agentic traits such as extraversion or intelligence but to score themselves less on communal traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Narcissism and its corollaries such as, broadly speaking, to intrapsychic and interpersonal traits are related to self-enhancement (Leikas, Lonqvist, Paunonen and Verkasalo, 2008). People who are high in narcissism have a strong sense of entitlement and a constant need for attention and admiration (Benotsch, Bogart & Pavlovic, 2007).

They use singular personal pronouns in speech so they fail to listen attentively to others (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). Those leaders consider themselves exceptional performers across disparate domains (Beersma, Hoogh, Neuvicka, Velden & Vianen, 2011). For instance, they overestimate themselves in term of intelligence, creativity, academic abilities and leadership capabilities. They tend to take advantage of any opportunities to be respected, admired and in the center of attention (Campbell, Campbell & Marchisio, 2011).

Self-enhancement influences the perception and behavior of the individual (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). The tendency for individuals to self-enhance result in a few consequences in term of several different areas of life, which are the attributions of life outcomes, differences in behavior, sources of identity investment and behavior in interpersonal relationships (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). There are also several outcome of a self enhancement leader on the organization.

The interpersonal relationship

Self-enhancement is a “mixed blessing”, wherein it does provide some beneficial intrapersonal effects but also has its fair share of detrimental interpersonal effect (Bond, John, Kenny, Kwan & Robins, 2007). According to Leikas, Lonqvist, Paunonen and Verkasalo (2008), leaders with a self[’]s enhancement motivation get lower ratings from their peers on the communal traits of honesty and benevolence. Also, these kinds of leaders get lower leadership grades and are negatively associated with poor leadership performance (Leikas, Lonqvist, Paunonen & Verkasalo, 2008). They are generally incapable of establishing intimate and deep relationships and their relationships can range from merely appealing to abusive types (Mustamil & Yazdi, 2014). Referring to a growing body of social psychological evidence, it would indicate that self-enhancement focused leaders generally produce negative effects on interpersonal processes and relationships, an example of this is reduced camaraderie, increased animosity and social exclusion (Kam, 2012). People do not like others who are self-enhancement focused because they are typically seem as arrogant, hostile, insensitive, lacking empathy and face social exclusion due to their lack of desire to fit into the general group (Kam, 2012). A high self-enhancement bias is attributed to be highly detrimental to a leader’s ability to lead, thus the interpersonal relationship between the leader and the subordinates may suffer greatly (Yukl, 2010). There is few research that argues that the negative impact of the self-enhancement motivated individual on interpersonal relationships undermines the leader’s potential to influence subordinates (Kam, 2012). Subsequently, studies have presented that leader-enhancement is negatively linked to affective outcomes such as organizational commitment, satisfaction with supervision and subordinates’ job satisfaction (Kam, 2012). Self-enhancement is also linked with the deception and self-serving attribution which may offend and alienate others (Ames, Anderson & Gosling, 2008). Self-enhancement damages a person’s relationship with others since it hinders effective social functioning. Self-enhancement is proportional to vertical task and vertical relationship conflict. It is also associated with faulty risk assessment, reduced motivation to develop oneself and the discarding of feedback as well (Kam, 2012). As a result, it exhibits a negative relationship between the self-enhancing leader and leader effectiveness (Fleenor, 2010).

The self enhancement leader focused leader reports a lesser need for intimacy from their peers, even with peers that are under distress (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). The leaders do not show warmth and empathy to their followers even in an uncertain context (Hoogh, Nevicka, Vianen & Velden, 2011). The insecurity of the self-enhancer leader is compensated by a lack of empathy, the leader's overstated sense of self-importance and self-grandiosity and a concomitant need for admiration effectively acting as a shield (Rhodes, Pullen, 2008). The power of leaders with a self-enhancement bias is derived from institutionalized power which is through titles, formal positions, as a part and parcel of the organizational hierarchy. The employees defer to the leader because of their role and formal authority instead of the leadership. The leader's authority is derived from the organizational structure. The leaders make sure of his or her symbolic power to gain follower endorsement of views and actions (Sankowsky, n.d.). They tend to abuse the power of symbolic status by getting their followers to buy into offensive behavior (Stein, 2013). Leaders with self-enhancement bias develop an illusion of their own influence; they overestimate their own personal efficacy (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). As a result, the overestimation of power reduces the inhibiting of behavior which occasionally leads to the negative consequences of the loss of power (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). The self-enhancer leader tend towards exploitative and manipulate behavior, they act as if they are entitled to receive the services of others (Sankowsky, n.d.).

Leader effectiveness

Leader self-enhancement causes low interpersonal relationship and negatively impact leadership performance due leadership being an inherently interpersonal phenomena and the effectiveness of leaders are highly dependent on interaction with their subordinates (Kam, 2012). According to Yukl (2010), self-enhancing leader's behavior might reversely related to the leadership processes in which leaders and subordinates have a mutual understanding and agreement about the job content like "what needs to be done and how to do it" because the close and harmonious relationship between leaders and the subordinates is essential in the interpersonal influence process. Moreover, the inflated perception of the leader's transformational behavior was easily engaged in a higher levels of conflict with their subordinates which consequently lowered the leader's performance too (Kam, 2012). The leader that lacks social sensitivity may inhibit the group's performance (Chabris, Hashmi, Malone, Pentland & Woolley, 2010). The study of Leikas, Lonqvist, Paunonen and Verkasalo (2008) shows that a high self-enhancement bias implies low task performance adjustment in a leader. They tend towards impressive vision and bold actions; however they will blame others when things go wrong (Sankowsky, n.d.). If the leader is confronted with failure, they blame others no matter if it's on a small scale or large scale performance, or even the collapse of the entire (Sankowsky, n.d.). The leader will ignore or avoid the situation that might expose them to unfavorable information in the first place (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). For instance, the leader will selectively choose the social comparison or the situation that makes one look better and more likely to result in self-enhancing outcomes (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). They tend to give themselves too much credit for past accomplishments (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). Self-enhancing leaders encounter a high risk of failure because they tend to engage tasks that they believe they can successfully complete but in reality are actually "out of their league" (Kam, 2012). The followers might experience a loss of psychological well-being since the leaders generally blame the failure on the followers (Sankowsky,

n.d.). The over-estimation behavior leads the leader to receive low performance ratings from the subordinates, supervisors and external observers in assessment centers (Kam, 2012).

This kind of leaders can undermine follower's independent and deliberate thinking and inhibit the flow of information (De Dreu, Nijstad & van Knippenberg, 2008). Information inhibition will hinder the group performance since the qualities of decision are reduced when the group fails to focus because of the unshared information (Beersma et al., 2011). Furthermore, the performances of creatives are hard to interpret because subordinates find it difficult to disentangle the self-enhancing leader's objective on creative performance. Leaders may not be adept to the coming of creative ideas due to the fact that they are more likely to overestimate their own creativity relative to others (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). The leader tends to have ideas that are subjective to the similar constraints as most people, however, it make them less likely than others to recognize that their ideas are not especially novel (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). For instance, creative judgments were influence by the perception of the leader where the leader is matched to the prototypical traits of a highly creative person (Elsbach & Kramer, 2009). Self-enhancer leaders are associated with a sociopathic sense of power, they believe they can operate the things with their own ability, do not need help and deserve all the credit for any success of the organization (Stein, 2013). However, the absent of any delegation of authority can cause the managers to experience the tension and exhaustion as the leader's actions discourages the competent employees (Lieberman, 2014).

Positive effect of the leader self-enhancement

Self- enhancing bias can actually be motivating and helpful (Mcleod, 2011). The leaders with self-enhancing bias take the full credit for the success without acknowledging any external factors (Mcleod, 2011). Self-enhancement encourages self-esteem and leads to a pro-active orientation, thereby creating leaders that can selectively recognize or interpret ambiguous information in the manner that makes the leader seem more accomplished, successful and capable (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). For example, the leader with a self-enhancement focus believes that one alone can control the destiny, and that leader is going to put in more effort than the leader that thinks random events and accidents of birth are the only way to get ahead (Mcleod, 2011). There are many studies that prove that self- enhancement promotes well-being (Kam, 2012). For instance, these leaders are more able to handle and get better from highly stressful events (Kam, 2012). It can inspire the leader to go the further mile and to push through challenging circumstances (Mcleod, 2011). Besides that, when the leader begin to acquire more influence, it can help the leader understand the commonly pragmatic tactics to accomplishing most tasks (Fong & Pfeffer, 2007). The leaders are readily able to adapt to the fast-paced changes in the global economy and consumer demands as it is as easy as dealing with their own ever changing demands and towering expectations (Kam, 2012). Through a self-enhancement motivation, leaders are able to counter self-doubt and consequently bolster their sense of self-efficacy in order to promote the leadership qualities that the subordinates' can look up to in a time of constant organizational changes. Hence, the subordinates will show loyalty to the leaders (Kam, 2012). Self-enhancement also helps comprehend the less commonly discussed aspects of leadership, that is decision

making that is seldom being evaluated or questioned which phenomenon surprises people who expect to see more attentive evaluations of outcomes.

In addition, leaders with high self-enhancement bias reduce production blocking to reach a highly efficient exchange of ideas (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). They might be less patient to listen as attentively to other's ideas and the turn taking part (Goncalo, Flynn & Kim, 2010). This self-focus reduce the production blocking while it has the effect of increasing the group's creative output (Flynn, Goncalo & Kim, 2010). Therefore, they will interrupt their teammates to express the ideas which lead to increases in the total number of ideas expressed (Goncalo & Kim, 2010). Furthermore, the leader obstructs the group's ability to reach closure, synthesize new ideas and complete tasks on time if the leaders join the competition. During the competition, the leader might lead the group to uncover new sources of information and new perspectives which can recombine to generate novel ideas (De Dreu, Nijstad & van Knippenberg, 2008).

Followers prefer to have a high self enhancement leader over a low self enhancement leader in an uncertain context because the high self-enhancement leaders are perceived to reduce the uncertainty. (Hoyt, Reid & Simon, 2009). The uncertain context or unstable contexts are usually when the organization is facing difficulty (Hoogh et al., 2013). The self-enhancing leader show the least level of stress and anxiety when faced with situational stressors hence it could help the team members to reduce their anxiety in an uncertain context due to calming effect of seemingly having someone in control (Hoogh et al., 2013).

Leader self enhancement adjustment

Leadership's author Stephen Covey and Jim Collins have mentioned that it is danger to allow one's ego to drive decision making. People are less aware about their own weaknesses as they climb higher up in the management hierarchy ("The self-enhancement bias", 2015). This is because the higher position, and the presence of fewer people of authority above them in the organization to provide performance feedback and to challenge their inflated view of themselves and their actions. Even if it is solicited; people are not likely to give candid feedback to their superiors. The leader needs to use a "mirror" to find and remove an irritating object in the eye, the mirror has to be an equivalent mirror of unfiltered feedback from the subordinates to see the leadership deficiencies clearly. In order to improve the leadership ability, it is thus very important to first seek out unfiltered feedback. If the leader is without unfiltered feedback, it is like trying to get something out of the eye without knowing exactly where it is and results in an unnecessarily long and uncomfortable procedure with a very low success rate, doing more harm than good. The greatest way to receive unfiltered feedback is through regular, anonymous employee engagement surveys. Engagement surveys are better than 360 degree evaluations because engagement surveys tell the real story of how the employees of the organization are reacting to their leaders and this survey is a direct reflection of leadership effectiveness. Leaders can't improve their leadership by blindly poking around trying to grasp at various ideas. It can breed resentment among the subordinates if things are always done by chance ("The self-enhancement bias", 2015).

Discussion

Self-enhancement motivation is when people perceive themselves more positively than others and by extension of that one's action, traits and attitudes are perceived as superior to everyone else's. They believe the success of the organization is a direct result of their contributions, and they detract the accomplishment of others; however, they do not take responsibility for the failures, they will blame others for the failure whether it is a small or large mistake. In the overall concept of self-enhancement is that the individual maintains a favorable view of themselves as a competent and efficacious person. Self-enhancers believe they are better because they naturally avoid the negative information about themselves and they are likely to remember the flattering things but forget the unflattering things. Self-enhancement usually happen in individualistic cultures thus, it more focused on Western culture than Asian culture. Individualistic cultures stresses on the enhancement of one's self over one's group. Narcissistic leaders are usually self-enhancement leaders who are see themselves more positively in comparison to others, and this is mainly agentic traits like extraversion or intelligence but less in communal traits like agreeableness and conscientiousness. These leaders have a strong sense of entitlement and a constant requirement for attention and admiration. They consider themselves as an exceptional performance, and are incapable of listening attentively to others. Self-enhancement influences the perceptions and behavior of the individual. This research paper provides a great deal of leverage in the understanding of the impact of self-enhancing leaders in interpersonal relations in power and in the influence of behavior. There are also several effects of self-enhancement focused leaders on the organizational.

Self-enhancement leaders are incapable of establishing intimate and deep relationships with their peers. The relationship usually ranges from mildly appealing to abusive types. The relationships of the leader with the peers are less of companionship, and more of hostility and social exclusion. The followers do not like to collaborate with self-enhancer leaders because this kind of leader seems arrogant, hostile, insensitive, lacking in empathy and thus face social exclusion. In addition, it is associated with deception and self-serving attribution that offends and alienates others. Self enhancement is proportional to the vertical task and vertical relationships which links to the negative outcomes in organizational commitment, job satisfaction and satisfaction with supervision and subordinates. Therefore, the negative interpersonal relationship with the subordinates leads to the detriment of the leader's leadership and weakens the leader's influence. The low levels of interpersonal relationships are linked with a low level of leadership performance and task performance. Moreover, leaders with high self-enhancement do not show understanding for peers either in a distressing situation or uncertain context. The leader's authority is derived from the organizational structure, followers defer to the leader's role and formal authority instead of their actual leadership charisma. Also, leaders with a self-enhancement bias are more prone to abusing the symbolic status power to gain the follower's conformation of view and actions. They develop an illusion of their own influence and overestimate their own personal efficacy; in return it leads to loss the power.

The low interpersonal relationship phenomenon is accompanied by the low leadership performance because the effectiveness of leadership highly depends on interaction with subordinates. For example, leaders and subordinates should reach a mutual understanding

and agreement about the job content. Furthermore, the leader's inflated perception makes it easier to be engaged in conflict with their subordinates, which consequently lowered the leader's performance. Moreover, self-enhancement motivated leaders do not give credit where it is due in the past accomplishments of the group which also contributes to the low performance. They tend towards impressive vision and bold actions, but are insistently avoidant when confronted with failure, as they will place the blame of the failure on others or they will avoid exposing the unfavorable information. Self-enhancing leaders inhibit the flow of the information which weakens their followers' independent and deliberate thinking. The quality of decisions is low due to the lack of enough shared information which is connected to low performance levels. Creative ideas are less likely to be generated under the self-enhancer leader, unless the leader is a highly creative person themselves because the creative judgment is influence by the perception of the leader. Furthermore, the overestimation of the leader's own competence makes the leader believe that they do not need help and can cause the leader to experience the tension and exhaustion while also discouraging the competent employees.

On the other hand, self-enhancement can be helpful and motivational. For example, leaders tend to put more effort since they believe that they are the only ones who can control their own destiny. Self enhancement bias makes the leader more able to handle highly stressful events hence it inspires the leader to go the extra mile and to push through challenging circumstances. Therefore, it helps the team members to reduce their anxiety in an uncertain situation as they are reassured that someone knows what to do. In an uncertain context, subordinates prefer a high self enhancement leader because these types of leaders are perceived to be better able to reduce the uncertainty as they can selectively recognize or interpret ambiguous information. Self-enhancing leaders are able to increase the group's creative output through the interruption of their team members when expressing their ideas. Positive conflicts are able to help the organization to generate innovative ideas. Self-enhancement tendencies contribute to a few successful leaders such as Richard Branson, the CEO of Virgin.

Leaders should learn to interrupt and prevent the negatives outcomes of the self-enhancement bias by modifying their behavior in particular self-monitoring or self-confrontation. For example, the leaders need to have an equivalent mirror of unfiltered feedback from the subordinates in order to see their leadership deficiencies and through that improve their leadership ability. Leaders can also receive unfiltered feedback through engagement survey, which is a relatively quick and accurate direct reflection of leadership effectiveness.

Conclusion

Every successful organization and business needs effective leaders. Leadership acts as a catalyst that makes every element work together; without this catalyst, the others resources will be undeveloped. The effective and well trained leaders is paramount to providing an agreed upon goal for the company's success. During formulating and communicating new strategic directions, leaders are invaluable as well as the communication and motivation employees to increase the dedication to organizational goals are extremely important. Effective team leaders can also remove the managerial burden of the organization and free up time for the developing ways to help the business

grow and prosper. Self-enhancement leaders are mixed blessing leaders who could help the organization or hinder the organization. Self-enhancement leaders are usually linked to poor interpersonal relationship with the team members and poor task performance. The overestimation of self-competence has caused poor task performance and interpersonal relationships. Besides, leaders are less influential to the employees, though the team members will still deter to the leader due to the position of power. Self-enhancement leaders are associated with low performance because they inhibit the flow of information which reduces the quality of decision making. The leader may prefer ideas which are similar to themselves because they perceive themselves more positively over others. Therefore, if the employees have very innovative ideas it needs to depend on whether the leader is an innovative person. On the other hand, self-enhancing leaders could be an effective leadership in certain situations such as in an uncertain context and unambiguous context. They are very motivated too because they believe that they are controlling their destiny, going to the further extends of their capabilities and pushing themselves through challenging circumstances. In conclusion, there is no way to define self-enhancement biased leaders as definitely good or bad, as it depends on the situation. Self-enhancing leaders should make use of their strength as a self-enhancer and eliminate or minimize the negative results of self enhancement bias in order to help the organization to grow and prosper.

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