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INDIVIDUALS AND LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

The purpose of the study, when considering the organizational context, is to take into account the parameters for understanding the organizational context- external and internal factors related to the economy, competition, market, social environment, culture, and values of the organization. The mere clarification of the organizational context is not enough to obtain the correctness of the process. The organizational context must be taken into account on an ongoing basis and the factors identified must be reviewed in terms of their relevance. The leader must notice all the changes in the environment that affect the activities of the organization. Only this way success will be guaranteed both in case of positive or minimized effects and in case of negative external and internal factors influencing the functioning of the organization.

Keywords

Leadership – Organization – Environment

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Leadership has been a major theme of research for almost a century and has spawned a lot of empirical and conceptual research. Despite the high level of efforts, however, the state of the field is such that many of the leaders' surveys are lacking context, i.e. a very little attention is paid to organizational variables that affect the nature and the impact of leadership. Some of the works tend to focus on interpersonal processes between individuals, leaders, and followers. Research that explicitly examines leadership in the context of the organization, especially the one of the strategic management literatures, seems incomplete for other reasons. It usually ignores the cognitive, interpersonal, and social richness of this phenomenon because it fails to cope with processes that explain or account for the results.

Leadership is an object of interest and the personality of the leader is usually associated with expectations for fundamental changes in the organization and in particular for solving its various problems. At the same time, the possibilities of leadership are limited by its organizational context: structure, system, environmental conditions, etc. Leadership must therefore be seen in the real context in which it takes place. The organizational context could also be influenced by leadership, for example, a leader who is changing the organizational structure. Thus, the organizational context can be both a dependent variable of leadership actions and a variable of influence on leadership.

The scientific literature increasingly calls for more attention to be paid to the role of the organizational context as a major factor, influencing leadership behavior and performance. Leadership in organizations does not take place in a vacuum, but in a specific environment and under specific conditions. The key question, therefore, is whether and to what extent the organizational context has been the focus of the scientific literature on leadership. According to some researchers¹ the situation is as follows: "many talk about it, but very little does much about it when it comes to empirical research." Progress in filling this gap, insofar as it exists, is essential for a better understanding of leadership phenomena. In general, in the field of organizational behavior, there is a relative lack of attention on how the larger organizational context affects the specific areas of individual and group behavior. These areas include motivation, communication, teams, and leadership. The need for more attention and research of the organizational context is noted by Mouday and Sutton who state that "organizational behavior should become the focus of organizational phenomena and provide useful guidelines for countering criticism that many studies of organizational behavior do not contribute much to the well-being of organizations and their organizations' members"². This finding is supported by the work of scientific researchers, which I discuss below. The researcher Burns found that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understandable phenomena on earth" because of the focus of leadership on leaders rather than on organizational and social structures of leadership³. According to the latter, Antonakis et al. "The context in which leadership takes place has not received much attention"⁴. Another author Tosi in an article titled "The organization as a context for theory of leadership: multi-level approach" emphasizes: "Current theory and research leadership - which

¹ Lyman W. Porter and Grace Mclaughlin, "Leadership and the organizational context: Like the weather?", Elsevier Inc. (2006): 562.

² Lyman W. Porter and Grace Mclaughlin, Leadership.....

³ James MacGregor Burns, "Leadership (New York: Harper Row, 1978).

⁴ John Antonakis; A. R. Cianciolo & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), The nature of leadership (Thousand Oaks: Sage, (2004), 48

allegedly interpersonal and dyadic - in most cases may be close to the limits of usefulness"⁵. Shamir and Howell add that: "... leadership research must reflect not only the personal characteristics and behavior of leaders but also the situational factors that influence the emergence and effectiveness of leadership"⁶.

Researchers Osborne, Hunt, and Yauh note in their article: "The purpose of this article is to explore a neglected side of leadership. The basic idea is quite simple. Leadership and its effectiveness largely depend on the context. Change the context and you have to change the leadership"; and summarize that "leadership is an emerging social construct embedded in a unique organization - this is contextual leadership" ⁷.

The so-called contextual studies of leadership, a rather broad area of the research on leadership, explore whether situational or contextual factors reduce or enhance the effects of leadership practices and describe how leadership is executed in specific contextual settings.

Katz & Kahn ⁸ identify three different models of organizational leadership:

- The first model refers to the administrative use of existing organizational structures for maintaining effective organizational operations. If problems arise to disrupt these operations, existing organizational mechanisms and procedures are in place to resolve them. Katz and Kahn note that "such acts are often perceived as so institutionalized that they require little or no guidance". This model of leadership is found at lower organizational levels.

- The second model of leadership, found at middle organizational levels, involves the application of formal structural elements. Such actions require a two-way orientation of the leader (i.e., to superiors and subordinates), as well as significant human relations skills.

- The third model occurs at senior levels of organizations and refers to the structural emergence or change in the organization as a reflection of the new formulations of the organizational policy.

Altogether, the distribution of individual leadership models between organizational levels that Katz and Kahn propose suggests significant qualitative differences between the nature of lower and senior management. Similar models clarifying the differences between levels of organizational leadership have been proposed in separate theoretical formulations by Jacobs and Jaques⁹, Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Fleishman and Reiter-Palmon¹⁰.

⁵ Henry L. Tosi, "The organization as a context for leadership theory: A multilevel approach", *The Leadership Quarterly*, num 2 (1991): 205-228.

⁶ Boas Shamir & Howell, J. M. Jane M. Howell, "Organizational and contextual influences on the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic leadership", *The Leadership Quarterly*, num 10 (1999): 257-283.

⁷ Richard N. Osborn, James G. Hunt & Lawrence R. Jauch, "Toward a contextual theory of leadership", *The Leadership Quarterly*, num 13 (2002): 797-837.

⁸ Stephen Zaccaro and Richard Klimoski, "The Nature of Organizational Leadership", *An Introduction*. Researchgate. (2001): 12-13.

⁹ Jacobs Zeidner (Ed.), *Human productivity enhancement* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

¹⁰ Michael D. Mumford, Stephen J. Zaccaro, Edwin A. Fleishman & Reiter-Palmon, *Cognitive and temperament predictors of executive ability: Principles for developing leadership capacity*, (Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1993).

According to Reeves-Ellington¹¹, leadership schools are established around three main lines that determine the evolution of leadership research in an organizational context:

"The first line is that leadership in the organization is entrusted to specific individuals and is identified through the traits of the leader¹². Research based on personal specifics examines the genetic basis of identifying leaders. It can be argued that this line of research is defined as a new school of leadership¹³.

The second line is that organizational leaders derive from positions of power¹⁴. The power of leaders comes from organizational context, structures, position and information¹⁵.

The third line is that in hierarchical organizations, leaders are at the top of the hierarchy¹⁶. In this framework, other leaders may exist further down the hierarchy, but without the strategic leader at the top of the organization, lower-level leaders are ineffective.¹⁷ Putting leadership in the organizational context, according to Tosi¹⁸, achieves two things. First, it places a different focus on the leadership/effectiveness relationship. Conventional theories of leadership explicitly postulate effectiveness as a function of some dimension (such as traits or behavior) of a leader in relation to the personal characteristics of the members or the nature of the work done in the group. The effectiveness of the organization is a result of the cumulative effects of the behavior or orientations of all managers.

According to Zaccaro¹⁹ Leadership ensures that strategic organizational intentions are based on the realities of the external and internal environment, that external and organizational realities are aligned, that these realities are transformed from data into sound

¹¹ Richard Reeves-Ellington, "Envirosapes: a multilevel contextual approach to organizational leadership", In *Multi-Level Issues in Organizational Behavior and Leadership*. Published online: num 10 Mar 2015: 337-420. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1475-9144\(2009\)000008015](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1475-9144(2009)000008015)

¹² Richard D. Arvey, Maria Rotundo, Wendy Johnson, Zhen Zhang, Matt McGue. "The determinants of leadership role occupancy: Genetic and personality factors", *Leadership Quarterly*, num 17 (2006): 1–20.

¹³ Bernard M Bass, *Transformational leadership: Industrial, military, and educational impact* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998) y Bernard M Bass. & Bruce J. Avolio, *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

¹⁴ Bernard M Bass and Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications (3rd ed.) (New York: Free Press, 1990); Amitai Etzioni, *Modern organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964); John R. P. French and Bertram Raven, *The bases of social power*, 1959 y Richard Reeves-Ellington, "Cross cultural organizational stress: The American University in Bulgaria", *Human Organization*, Vol: 57 num 1 (1997): 94–107.

¹⁵ Douglas J. Brown, Robert G. Lord, *Leadership and perceiver cognition: Moving beyond first order constructs*, (2001); 15-20; Jay A. Conger & Rabindra N., "Toward a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings", *Academy of Management Review*, num 12 (1987): 637–647 y Mary Uhl-Bien, George B. Graen, & Terri A. Scandura, *Implications of leader–member change (LXM) for strategic human resource management systems, Relationships as social capital for competitive advantage*. 2000.

¹⁶ James (Jerry) G. Hunt, *Leadership: A new synthesis* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991).

¹⁷ Richard Reeves-Ellington, *Envirosapes...* 390-400.

¹⁸ Henry L. Tosi, *The Environment/Organization/Person Contingency Model: A Meso Approach to the Study of Organizations* (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, forthcoming, 1992).

¹⁹ Stephen J. Zaccaro, Roseanne J. Foti, & David A. Kenny, "Self-monitoring and trait-based variance in leadership: An investigation of leader flexibility across multiple group situations", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, num 76 (1991): 308–315.

organizational strategies, and that these strategies direct organizational and human resources to the strategic goals of the organization. Leadership forms are one of several organizational environments that create structure and purpose. This definition of leadership in an organizational context creates the need for new approaches or synthesis to understand leadership.

Researcher Richard Reeves-Ellington²⁰ proposes a paradigm for exploring the realities of leadership in an organizational context through a multi-level understanding of the environment – of climate, knowledge, background, time, and leadership. Each of those, with the accompanying phenotypes (business and trade), is used differently at the different levels of management and leadership, by senior managers, mid-level managers, and entry-level managers.

Other researchers²¹ consider aspects of the organizational context that are relevant to the organizational structure: origin and history, ownership and control, size, technology, location, and dependence on other organizations. They present operationally defined scales as independent variables in the multivariate regression analysis, through which the main dimensions of the organizational structure can be predicted. The structure of the organization is closely related to the context in which it operates and much of the variation in organizational structures can be explained by contextual factors. Many such factors are tracked, including size, technology, organizational charter, or social function and interdependence with other organizations, which are critical to influencing the structure and functioning of the organization. There are few studies in which these factors are linked in a relatively systematic way to the characteristic aspects of the structure, as such studies would require a multifactorial approach both in context and in structure.

According to Porter & McLaughlin²² there is no universally coherent set of components that make up the context for a leader's behavior or other behaviors arising within the organizational environment. They discuss the type of culture or climate prevalent in an organization, the behavioral norms that reflect the culture of the organization, or the prevailing values of a culture or climate, for example, an emphasis on ethical behavior by presenting climate and culture as a phenomenon. Denison concludes that "these two research traditions should be seen as differences in interpretation, not as differences in phenomenon."²³

Researchers Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, and Turner emphasize dependence on the organization of its social grounds, especially from external resources and power, exerting influence on the structural characteristics and activities. Apparently "all these contextual factors, as and others, are of importance but without multivariate approach not is possible to be assessed relative to their importance"²⁴.

²⁰ Richard Reeves-Ellington, "Envirosapes: a multi-level contextual approach to organizational leadership", Emerald Insight... 337 - [http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1475-9144\(2009\)0000008015](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1475-9144(2009)0000008015)

²¹ Derek S Pugh, David J Hickson, Christopher R Hinings, Christopher Turner, "The Context of Organization Structures", Vol. 14 num 1 (1969): 91-114

²² Lyman W. Porter and Grace McLaughlin, Leadership... 564

²³ Daniel R. Denison, "What is the difference between organizational culture and organizational climate? A native's point of view on a decade of paradigm wars", Academy of Management Review, num 21 (1996): 619-654. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1996.9702100310>

²⁴ Derek S Pugh, David J Hickson, Christopher R Hinings, Christopher Turner, "The Context of Organization... 111-114

Effects of the state of the environment as a contextual variable are discussed and tested almost exclusively on the highest organizational levels and are focused on large-scale changes and crises involving senior management teams, executives, and boards. At lower levels, the only element considered is the availability of resources. Location - geographical, cultural and community conditions can significantly affect the organization. The time component of the organizational context refers to the long-term aspects of leadership effects or effects that vary depending on the stage of the life cycle of the organization, the stage of team development, or any other phenomenon depending on time.

Fiedler²⁵ concludes that an important factor determining the effectiveness of a leader, is the nature of the relationship between the individual leader and followers. Here is utilized the broader concept of organizational climate. It refers to the amount of trust in the relations between the members, the levels of tension and anxiety in the group, the relations between the leader and the members of the group, the cohesion levels of the group, the general satisfaction and acceptance of the leader by the group and the coincidence between individual, group, and organizational values.

The understanding of the context of an organization's process, because of which factors are defined, influences the existence of the organization, its goals, and ability for sustainable development. The process considers internal factors such as values, culture, knowledge, and effects of the organization's activities, as well as external factors such as the legal, technological, competitive market, cultural, social, and economic environment.

We can summarize that organizations are in specific ecological landscapes that affect the ability of individuals, their relationships, and their wider societies to remain stable or to influence the pace of change. Organizational understanding requires refinement of all components. Understanding the predominance of one organizational component over another or their interactions provides a macro vision of the organization. Multilevel spatial and leadership research provides a theoretical framework for organizing environmental data.

When considering the organizational context, not only the positive but also the negative factors and conditions must be taken into account, as they facilitate the understanding of the external organizational context - factors like legal, technological, competitive, market, cultural, social, economic environment and internal context factors related to the values, culture, knowledge and performance of the organization. The mere clarification of the organizational context is not enough to obtain the correctness of the process. The organizational context must be considered on an ongoing basis and the factors identified must be reviewed in terms of their importance and relevance. The leader must be vigilant and notice any changes in the environment that affect the company's business. Only in this way success will be guaranteed both in case of positive or minimized effects and in case of negative external and internal factors influencing the functioning of the organization.

The organizational context shapes the imperatives of performance, which simultaneously stimulate and define the parameters of appropriate leadership actions. This implies qualitative changes in the ways in which leaders acquire information in their roles and continue to make sense of that information. It changes if and when (and then how and what) leaders plan appropriate collective responses. The nature and role of key processes, such as how leaders influence and manage their followers, is changing. The extent of their

²⁵ Fred E. Fiedler, Joseph E. Garcia, Neu' approaches to effective leadership (New York: Wiley, 1987).

influence is also influential. The organizational context even changes the mechanisms by which leaders acquire their roles and develop their legitimacy. These effects go beyond the impacts typically modeled in situational contingency approaches in the leadership literature.

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