

Mr. Right & Superman: Effect of Implicit Followership Theories on Employee's Career Success

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Abstract

Implicit followership theories (IFTs) are defined as individuals' personal assumptions about the traits and behaviors that characterize followers", and it is an extension of implicit leadership theories (ILTs) supported by the social cognitive theory and cognitive information processing theory. From the followers-centered perspective, this paper analyzed the leadership process of how leaders and followers perceive, decide, and act. From the perspective of implicit followership, using the Hierarchical regression modeling (HRM) and the data collected from 19 large Chinese enterprises, the paper concluded that leaders' positive IFTs had significantly positive impact onto followers' career success, and also confirmed the mediation effect of psychological empowerment as well as the three-way interactive moderation effect of leaders' positive IFTs, leader-member exchange, and perceived organizational support. In particular, the findings of this paper break the conventional view that in-group members will definitely succeed. The study not only extended the application of cognitive theory in leadership studies, but also enriched the content of social exchange theory.