

## Moderating Role of Decision-Making Situations between Leadership and Decision-Making in Services Providing Organizations

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### Abstract

*The present research investigated moderating role of decision-making situations between leadership styles and decision-making styles in services providing organizations of Pakistan. The study was based on Full Range Leadership Theory of Bass and Reggio (2006) which comprise of three leadership styles including transformational, transactional, and laissez faire style. The study incorporated five decision-making styles including rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous style. The study comprised of three decision-making situations including certainty, risk and uncertainty. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Decision Situations Scale and General Decision-making Styles Questionnaire were administered on 1200 employees. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that certainty moderated between transformational style and rational style. Uncertainty moderated between transformational style and spontaneous style. Certainty moderated between transactional leadership and rational style. Uncertainty moderated between laissez faire and dependent, avoidant decision-making style. Overall, the present study contributes to style, situational and contingency theories of leadership.*

**Keywords:** *Decision-Making Situations, Leadership Styles, Decision-Making Styles.*

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### Introduction

The Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) comprising of transformational, transactional and laissez faire leadership style (Bass & Avolio, 2002; Bass & Reggio, 2006) is one of the well-researched theories of leadership. Transformational leadership characteristics are vital for today's rapidly changing business environments (Stephen & Roberts, 2004). However, besides this substantial research, some aspects remained less research and were considered in the recent years e.g. decision-making of the FRLT (Riaz, 2009). Similarly, the research on the decision-making of the FRLT appeared with inconsistent findings (Rehman & Waheed, 2012; Riaz, 2009; Tambe & Krishnan, 2000). The most prominent reason behind the

inconsistent results of the studies on the decision-making of the FRLT rests in the theory itself. Because the theorists (Bass & Reggio, 2006) suggested that the decision-making styles of the transformational and transactional leaders are situation specific and thus varying across contexts. Thus, the present study bridges this gap and focused on the moderating effect of decision-making situations in the relationship between leadership styles and decision-making styles—contrary to the past research which solely focused on investigating the role of leadership styles in the prediction of decision-making style (Riaz, 2009; Tambe & Krishnan, 2000).

In organizations, numerous situations compel leaders to make decision regarding various organizational processes (Kamberg, 2001). Usually, managers face three type of situations in which decisions are taken. The decision-making situations include certainty, risk and uncertainty. These three decision situations are characterized by low, moderate and high level of ambiguity respectively (Griffin, 2011). Transformational and transactional leaders shift their decision-making styles according to the demands of the situation (Bass & Avolio, 2002). The situational approaches to leadership are based on the premise that an effective leader should adjust his or her style according to the demands of the situation. More specifically “in a given situations, the first task for a leader is to determine the nature of the situation” (Northouse, 2007, p. 95) and “leaders cannot use the same styles in all the contexts; rather, they need to adopt their style to their unique situations” (p. 96). Consequently, decisions of the leaders are situation specific (Bass & Reggio, 2006). It is worth noticing that choice of a decision-making style is directly linked with the decision-making situation (Scott & Bruce 1995) because decisions are just responses to the situations requiring managers to react in terms of decisive actions. Thus one i.e. decision-making style cannot be separated from the other i.e. decision-making situation. An appropriate match between the decision-making style and decision-making situation determines managerial decision effectiveness.

The present study integrated the style and situational approaches of leadership and explained FRLT from a contingency perspective. So far “only a few research studies have been conducted to justify the assumptions and propositions set forth by the situational approach” (Northouse, 2007, p. 97). Thus, the deficiency in the literature on the situational leadership makes its theoretical bases questionable (Graeff, 1997; Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002) in spite of the fact that situational approaches carry practical strengths. Graeff (1997) and Yukl (1998) suggested that situational approaches to leadership are more flexible in nature—stressing on the leaders to change their styles according to the situational requirements. The style approaches and the situational approaches are widely used in the training of the leaders in organizations (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Northouse, 2007). Hersey and Blanchard (1993) found that situational leadership approaches were incorporated in the training programs of the 400 out of 500 successful companies. The present study also answers the criticism that style approaches fail to find a universally effective style of leadership across all situations (Northouse, 2007). The present study is an attempt to illustrate that leaders face diverse situations including certainty, risk and uncertainty (Griffin, 2011) and consequently cannot use a single rigid style to all situations; instead, they adjust their style by keeping in view the nature of the underlying situations (Northouse, 2007).

## Literature Review

Managers use primary, secondary and least preferred decision-making style across three decision-making situations. Only few people limit themselves to a single style of decision-making. Most of the people use two or three decision-making styles (Rowe & Mason, 1987). Decision researchers also favor the use of many styles in decision-making instead of sticking to one rigid style (Singh & Greenhaus, 2004). In fact, by definition, the style-shift from one to the other splits a style from the traits which are relatively more stable and long lasting (McCrae & Costa, 1990). Thus, managers have a dominant style of decision-making which they most frequently use in their decisions. The dominant style is also known as primary style of decision-making. Beside the dominant style, the managers use other styles of decision-making as backup styles. Thus, managers have a secondary style of decision-making which they use when primary style is not effective. Similarly, the managers have a least preferred style of decision-making which they use most

infrequently (Driver et al., 1993). Thus, the selection of decision-making style is determined by the certainty, risk and uncertainty in decision-making.

In certainty the leader has complete knowledge of all possible alternatives and their associated consequences. Thus, clear information and low levels of ambiguity makes it ideal to use rational style as primary style (Scott & Bruce 1995). In certainty managers usually make competent decisions by using rational style. Thus, in times of certainty, using high speed intuitive or spontaneous style is neither needed nor appropriate. However, besides certainty managers have to take many decisions under risk and uncertainty in spite of the fact that certainty is ideal for making decisions (Greenberg & Baron, 2000). Thus, in the beginning, it is more appropriate to change the risk and uncertainty into certainty before making a decision. Risk and uncertainty can be converted into certainty by collecting relevant information (Griffin, 2011). Usually, two types of decision-making styles can be used as dominant style while converting the risk and uncertainty into certainty. Information can be collected either from relevant people or from the other sources. Thus, rational decision-making style can be used as a primary style for collecting relevant information from dual sources. Risk and uncertainty require prompt decisions in limited time. Thus, it is more appropriate to use intuitive or spontaneous decision-making style to make a quick decision. Although spontaneous style also helps in making speedy decisions but it is viewed negatively because, managers miss important information while making decisions in haste (Spicer & Sadler-Smith, 2005). Thus, a better alternative is intuitive style which also involves high speed decisions. Researchers (Bergstrand, 2001; Callan & Proctor, 2000; Kuypers, 1997) suggest that in complex and uncertain situations, it is more suitable to make use of intuitive style. On the basis of the existing literature, following hypotheses are formulated.

- H<sub>1</sub>. Certainty is likely to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership style and rational decision-making style.
- H<sub>2</sub>. Risk is likely to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership style and intuitive decision-making style.
- H<sub>3</sub>. Uncertainty is likely to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership style and spontaneous decision-making style.
- H<sub>4</sub>. Certainty is likely to moderate the relationship between transitional leadership style and rational decision-making style.
- H<sub>5</sub>. Uncertainty is likely to moderate the relationship between laissez faire leadership style and dependent decision-making style.
- H<sub>6</sub>. Uncertainty is likely to moderate the relationship between laissez faire leadership style and avoidant decision-making style.

## Methodology

### Participants

A purposive sample of 1200 employees (300 supervisors and 900 subordinates) were collected from services providing organizations (see Figure 16). Supervisors were further divided into medical superintendents from hospitals ( $n = 100$ , 33.33%), managers from banks ( $n = 100$ , 33.33%), and head of departments from universities ( $n = 100$ , 33.33%) was selected. Similarly, every medical superintendent, bank manager, and head of department was cross-rated by his or her three subordinates on leadership styles. Thus, a total sample of 900 subordinates participated in the study. Medical officers in the hospitals ( $n = 300$ , 33.33%), officers in the banks ( $n = 300$ , 33.33%), and lecturers in the educational departments ( $n = 300$ , 33.33%) rated their supervisors' leadership styles on the scale. The present study is based on cross-sectional survey research design. The sample was collected from the province of the Punjab and the federal capital Islamabad. During the selection of the sample from the supervisors, full time job experience of at least one year and supervision of five employees was ensured. Similarly, it was ensured every subordinate rating his or her supervisor has worked under his or her supervision for a time period of six months. At

least four to six months of job experience are necessary for culture learning and socialization (Ashforth et al., 2007).

**Instruments**

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). The scale comprised of 36 items and three subscales including transformational, transactional and laissez faire leadership style. These subscales are measured by 20, 12 and 4 items respectively. Decision Situations Scale comprised of 27 items and three subscales including certainty, risk and uncertainty. Every subscale consisted of 9 items respectively. General Decision-making Style Questionnaire was developed by Scott and Bruce (1995). The scale comprised of 25 items and five subscales including rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant and spontaneous decision-making style. Every style is measured by five items. All scales are based on 5-point Likert response pattern and scores are interpreted in terms of low and high scores. Items were positively worded.

**Procedure**

The researchers obtained list of banks from State Bank of Pakistan, list of universities from Higher Education Commission Pakistan and list of hospitals from Ministry of Health Punjab and Federal Ministry of Health Islamabad. After obtaining the informed consent, questionnaires were distributed. The researcher remained attentive and vigilant during the completion of the scales and assisted the participants when they faced some problems in understanding some questions. After the completion of the scales, the researcher checked the questionnaires in order to conform that information was not missing and questions were not left blank either intentionally or unintentionally. In case, if some questions were left blank, the researcher requested the participant to provide the missing information. In the end, the researcher thanked the concerned authorities and the immediate participants in the organizations for their cooperation in the study.

**Analyses**

Present study examined the moderation of decision-making situations between leadership styles and decision-making styles. Descriptive statistics, alpha reliability coefficients, skewness and kurtosis values are computed for all variables. Hierarchical regression analysis is computed to examine the moderating effect of decision situations.

Table 1: Psychometric Properties and Pearson Correlation in Variables

Variables	1	2	3	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15
1 Transformational	(.71)	.83***	-.28***	.15**	-.17**	-.16**	.18**	.18**	.03	.01	.21***
2 Transactional		(.71)	-.10	.43***	.16**	.02	.15**	.12*	-.07	-.01	-.10
3 Laissez-faire			(.77)	.02	.17**	.17**	-.09	.18***	.16**	.30***	.07
6 Certainty				(.75)	-.21***	-.14*	.41***	.13*	.18**	-.24***	-.20***
7 Risk					(.77)	.56***	-.08	.13*	.10	.24***	.21***
8 Uncertainty						(.79)	-.12*	.17*	.16**	.32***	.25***
11 Rational							(.76)	-.20**	.22***	-.05	-.05
12 Intuitive								(.80)	.18**	.28***	.67***
13 Dependent									(.72)	.28**	-.10
14 Avoidant										(.76)	.18**
15 Spontaneous											(.70)
<i>M</i>	220.24	109.47	27.14	35.28	27.25	22.45	18.72	17.27	17.17	14.11	15.81
<i>SD</i>	37.48	16.22	8.26	6.22	5.77	5.42	2.86	3.49	3.86	3.26	3.84
Range	101-188	87-144	12-46	11-38	09-40	18-43	12-25	13-23	11-22	09-23	10-25
Skewness	-.48	-.51	.17	.03	-.52	-.28	.16	.27	-.06	.56	.28
Kurtosis	.22	-.09	-.44	.35	.83	.44	.19	-.85	-.73	.83	.35

Table 1 show that all scales have greater than .70 reliability coefficients which indicate satisfactory internal consistency. The values of skewness and kurtosis for are scales are also less than +1 and -1 which indicates that date is normally distributed. Results of the Pearson correlation show that the relationships among variables are in desired directions.

Table 2: Moderation Analysis

Independent Variable	Moderator	Interaction	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	Outcome
$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$			
Transformational leadership style	Certainty	Transformational x certainty			Rational style
1.90***	2.72***	3.77***	.05	26.55***	
Transformational leadership style	Risk	Transformational x risk			Intuitive style
1.62***	1.21***	2.12***	.03	11.90***	
Transformational leadership style	Uncertainty	Transformational x uncertainty			Spontaneous style
1.33***	1.84**	1.55***	.02	4.86*	
Transactional leadership style	Certainty	Transactional x certainty			Rational style
.89*	1.44*	1.55***	.02	6.57**	
Laissez-faire leadership style	Uncertainty	Laissez-faire x uncertainty			Dependent style
1.62***	1.21**	2.12***	.03	11.90***	
Laissez-faire leadership style	Uncertainty	Laissez-faire x uncertainty			Avoidant style
1.32***	1.26*	1.76*	.01	4.31*	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Results indicate that certainty moderated between transformational leadership style and rational decision-making style. Risk moderated between transformational leadership style and intuitive decision-making style. Uncertainty moderated between transformational leadership and spontaneous decision-making style. Certainty moderated between transactional leadership style and rational decision-making style. Uncertainty moderated between laissez-faire leadership style and dependent decision-making style. Uncertainty moderated between laissez-faire leadership style and avoidant decision-making style.

## Discussion

The present study was based on the Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Reggio, 2006). The study examined moderating effect of decision-making situations between leadership styles and decision-making styles. Each situation requires unique decision-making style because every style—due to its unique nature—is not suitable for all three types of decision situations. For that reason, leaders change their decision-making styles according to the requirements of the situation (Bass & Avolio, 2002). Situational diversity is the core reason that leaders do not restrict themselves to a single decision-making style while making decisions (Rowe & Mason, 1987). Majority of leaders are predisposed to adopt a dominant style of decision-making which is known as primary style other than they employ backup style by adjusting their styles according to situational demands (Driver et al., 1993). The change in style is dependent on the demands of the situation. Singh and Greenhaus (2004) illustrate that decision makers are not limited and they must not limit their selves to one strategy while making important decisions. Continually involving in multiple decisional strategies is pretty effective.

The hypothesis “certainty is likely to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and rational decision-making style” was supported in the present study. Availability of time and knowledge about the alternatives and outcomes decreases the chances of a bad decision and maximize the chance of an ideal decision (Griffin, 2011; Cook & Hunsaker, 2001). Rational decisions require more time and careful

planning in the evaluation and selection of alternatives to make an ideal decision. Managers objectively process entire information to make a decision (Chater et al., 2003; Hendry, 2000; Mangalindan, 2004). Therefore, certainty is an ideal condition for making rational decisions. It is because; under the conditions of certainty entire information is available regarding the alternatives and outcomes of a decision (Griffin, 2011). Similarly, intuitive style is more appropriate under risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity (Bergstrand, 2001; Callan & Proctor, 2000; Kuypers, 1997). Organizations face numerous circumstances when issues become so intricate, crucial, and sensitive that consulting and weighing various alternatives become impossible. For example, under the conditions of high uncertainty, risk, complexity, and conflicting situations, it becomes too hard to screen out all the options (Lindblom, 1959). Consequently, intuitive style remains the sole option to make decisions.

Intuitive decision-making style is more suitable during the process of change (Andersen, 2000; Hansson & Andersen, 2001) and change is soul of transformational leadership (Stephen & Roberts, 2004). The process of change in the organizations creates the conditions of risks and uncertainty. Thus, the hypothesis "risk is likely to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and intuitive decision-making style" was supported in the present study. Change is the hallmark of effective leadership practices. Transformational leaders have the ability to produce 'constructive or adaptive change' and taking risks when anarchy and instability provides some opportunities for change (Bedeian & Hunt, 2005). In the center of the storms, transformational leaders are ready to take risks frequently (Bass & Reggio, 2006). The successful companies never feel reluctance in taking risks and fear in trying new thing and experimenting new ideas (Peter & Waterman, 1982). Transformational leaders seek new ways, different perspectives and share risks (Stone & Patterson, 2005). Similarly risk perception is positively associated with intuitive decision-making (Bohm & Brun, 2008). Intuitive decision makers conceptualize risk as a whole instead of analyzing components of risk (Hablemitoglu & Yildirim, 2008). Intuitive style leads towards effective decisional choices (Bergstrand, 2001).

The decisions leaders make vary in risk and uncertainty (Certo et al., 2008). Risky decision-making can be characterized as a decisional situation with objective or given probabilities. Conversely, decisions under uncertainty involve decisional scenarios in which probabilities are subjective or unknown. Most of the time important decisions involve uncertainty rather than risk (Wu et al., 2004). In the times of extreme uncertainty like crisis and emergencies (Natale, O'Donnell, & Osborne, 1990) spontaneous decisions are required. Thus, the hypothesis "uncertainty is likely to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and spontaneous decision-making style" was supported in the present study. For such type of scenarios leaders are trained to make "out of box" solutions of the problems and to understand organizational issues from a broader perspective. Leaders are prepared for risk taking and decision-making in various scenarios (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2001). Transformational leaders are courageous, visionaries, change agents, value driven, lifelong learners, and are able to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty (Luthans, 1989). Transformational leaders conceptualize problems from a broader perspective and analyze the problem as a whole (Bass, 1994) which is the soul of spontaneous decision-making style (Scott & Bruce, 1995). At times of uncertainty, focusing on the issue as a whole and avoiding engagement in the parts of the problem saves time which is the need of the decision-making under uncertainty.

Transactional leadership style is second important style of leadership on the FRLT (Bass & Avolio, 2003). The hypothesis "certainty is likely to moderate the relationship between transactional leadership style and rational decision-making style" was supported in the present study. Transactional leadership is based on the promise to "follow the rules" (Daft & Lane, 2002). Similarly, under the conditions of certainty, decisions are made with pre-established rules, policies and procedures (Greenberg & Baron, 2000; Harrison, 1987; Moorhead & Griffin, 1998). Daft and Lane (2002) argue that transactional leadership style is more appropriate for traditional management practices involving smooth procedures. Leaders are dynamic and active in taking corrective actions before the things went wrong by introducing rules to prevent errors whereas passive leaders do not react spontaneously and let the problems become more intricate before intervening (Bass & Avolio, 2000). Transactional leaders are more competent to make decisions under the

conditions of certainty. Although certainty is an ideal condition for decision-making (Greenberg & Baron, 2000) but certain situations are exceptional (Cook & Hunsaker, 2001) and most of the important organizational decisions are made under risk or uncertainty (Griffin, 2011). In this regard, transactional leadership can be described as 'not bad' but 'insufficient condition' for developing the leadership potential to the maximum (Avolio, 1999).

Laissez faire style is the most passive and ineffective style of leadership on the FRLT (Bass & Avolio, 2003) according to underlying theory and research respectively. The laissez faire style lies on the non-leadership dimension of the Full Range Leadership Theory (Jones & Rudd, 2007). Laissez faire leaders constantly perceived uncertainty while making decisions and consequently remain detached from decision scenarios (Bass, 1990). Uncertainty creates high levels of ambiguity and increases the chances of making bad decisions (Griffin, 2011). Past literature is evident that dependent and avoidant decisions are bad decisions and result in negative consequences (Loo, 2000; Nygren & White, 2002; Scott & Bruce, 1995). Thus, laissez faire leaders—constantly overwhelmed with the perceptions of uncertainty—simply avoids the decisions or transfer their responsibility to others (Scott & Bruce, 1995). Therefore, the hypothesis “uncertainty is likely to moderate the relationship between laissez faire leadership style and dependent decision-making style” and the fourth hypothesis “uncertainty is likely to moderate the relationship between laissez faire leadership style and avoidant decision-making style” were supported in the present study. Avoidance under the conditions of uncertainty is one of prominent work values across 50 countries of the world (Clark, 2004).

## Conclusion

The present study was conducted to examine the decision-making styles (Scott & Bruce, 1995) of transformational, transactional and laissez faire leaders (Bass & Reggio, 2006) under the conditions of certainty, risk and uncertainty (Griffin, 2011). The present study focused on the “style approach” to leadership. The style approaches to leadership focuses on the behavior of the leaders in different contexts (Northouse, 2007). Although different behaviors of the leaders, their antecedents and outcomes are well-researched in the past literature but the incorporation of the contexts while describing leadership behaviors remained less researched. Thus, the present study concentrated on role of decision contexts while describing the leadership styles and decision-making styles of the transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leaders based on FRLT (Bass & Avolio, 2003). The study addressed the theoretical assumption that decision-making styles of these leaders are situation specific (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

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