

Attribution Model of Leadership

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ABSTRACT:

A theoretical framework called the Attribution Model of Leadership focuses on how followers assign various qualities, behaviors, and attributes to leaders. This model, which was created in the area of social psychology, looks at how people interpret leadership by attaching certain skills and traits to those who hold positions of authority. According to the paradigm, individuals acquire opinions about leaders based on their experiences and observations, and these judgements have an impact on their attitudes, actions, and responses to leaders. We will examine the main ideas of the Attribution Model of Leadership in this abstract, including the idea of attribution theory and how it relates to leadership. We'll look at the elements that affect how people perceive different leadership qualities, including behaviors, communication patterns, and decision-making processes. We will also go through the effects of various attributions, such as how they affect followers' motivation, satisfaction, and organizational results. For leaders, managers, and organisations, understanding the Attribution Model of Leadership is essential because it offers insightful knowledge about the dynamics of leader-follower interactions and the elements that affect how people see leadership. Understanding how attributions affect followers' attitudes and behaviors enables leaders to devise methods to improve their leadership effectiveness, establish credibility and trust, and foster a helpful and happy workplace. Organisations may also use the information from this model to create leadership development programmes that foster the necessary leadership traits and complement their mission and objectives.

KEYWORDS:

Attribution, Behaviors, Employee, Leader, Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars and practitioners alike have been interested by the complex and diverse phenomena of leadership for ages. How others see and understand the behaviors and characteristics of persons in leadership positions is one of the fascinating parts of leadership. The Attribution Model of Leadership examines how people assign certain skills and attributes to leaders based on their observations and experiences in order to provide insightful information on this perceptual process. The Attribution Model of Leadership is built on Fritz Heider's psychological theory of attribution, which was first introduced in the 1950s. According to this hypothesis, people are always trying to figure out what motivates other people's behaviours. When it comes to leadership, followers participate in a process where they attribute certain qualities and deeds to their leaders, which in turn affects their attitudes, feelings, and behaviours towards them[1], [2].

Attributions may be internal or external in the context of leadership. When followers think that a leader's actions and choices are the result of their inborn talents, abilities, or personality traits, this is known as internal attribution. On the other hand, external attributions happen when followers blame situational or outside causes for a leader's behaviour. The Attribution Model of Leadership investigates a number of variables that affect attributions. Followers' perceptions of leaders are influenced by their actions, communication methods, decision-making processes, and behaviours. Furthermore, the assumptions that followers make about their leaders are influenced by their own ideas, values, and prior experiences. For both leaders and organisations, understanding the Attribution Model of Leadership has important consequences. Leadership effectiveness may be improved by leaders who understand the

function of attributions. Leaders may influence the perceptions that followers have of them by fostering certain behavior's and communication techniques, which in turn affects how much trust, confidence, and commitment they have in them[3], [4].

The Attribution Model of Leadership provides an analytical framework for examining the leader-follower relationship and its effects on organizational results. Organisations are able to create leadership development programmers that cultivate the required leadership attributes and are in line with the organization's overall goal and vision by understanding how attributions affect followers' motivation, contentment, and performance. We will go into the numerous facets of attribution theory as it pertains to leadership in this thorough examination of the Attribution Model of Leadership. We'll look at case studies and real-world examples to show how attributions function in various leadership situations. We will also go through the difficulties and biases that might emerge in the attribution process, as well as how leaders can resolve these problems to create stronger and more positive leadership relationships. Overall, the Attribution Model of Leadership sheds light on the complex processes via which followers create opinions and attitudes about their leaders and offers insightful information on the dynamics of leadership perception. To better understand and use the power of attributions to build effective and influential leadership experiences inside their teams and organisations, leaders and organisations need to untangle these complexity.

The Attribution Model examines the variables that affect attribution in leadership and the effects of these attributions on many facets of the leader-follower relationship. The attributions made by followers may have an impact on their levels of commitment, trust, and contentment with their leader, which can then have an impact on their desire to comply with instructions and perform organizational duties. The Attribution Model also explores the idea of "attributional ambiguity," which describes circumstances in which followers are unsure about the motivations behind their leader's deeds or choices. Such uncertainty might affect followers' general performance and well-being inside the organisations by increasing stress and decreasing motivation. The approach also looks at how leaders themselves could use attributions, especially when evaluating their own performance and leadership skills. The way that leaders see their own activities and results may have a big impact on their self-efficacy and confidence, which in turn shapes how they behave as leaders and make decisions.

We will also talk about how organizational culture and communication affect attributions as we go further into the Attribution Model of Leadership. Followers' perceptions of their leader's actions and choices may be influenced by how an organisations communicates its values, aims, and expectations. The trust and cohesiveness within the organisations may be increased by fostering an open and encouraging communication environment. For understanding the complexities of leadership perception and the attribution process, the Attribution Model of Leadership provides a deep and thorough framework. We learn a lot about the dynamics of leader-follower relationships and their effect on organizational results by looking at how followers assign traits and behaviors to their leaders. This information may be used by leaders and organisations to improve leadership efficiency, strengthen connections with followers, and foster a happy and productive workplace. We shall explore further into the Attribution Model's importance for leadership development and organizational success as we continue our investigation of it[5], [6].

II. DISCUSSION

The attribution model of leadership describes the collaborative processes by which leaders and their staff arrive at causal explanations for staff performance in situations involving achievement, and how those explanations determine subsequent leader and staff behaviors as well as the quality of the leader-staff relationship. The attribution theory, which examines how people identify reasons for events and how those attributions affect people's emotions, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors, is a major influence on the model. Understanding how leaders and people respond to employee performance is crucial for helping managers manage feedback and performance procedures since organizations' success heavily rely on maximizing employees' performance levels. This entry's introduction explains how the attribution model of leadership has changed over the previous three decades. It proceeds with an

overview of the empirical studies done on the different model components before proposing important management applications as its conclusion[7], [8].

Fundamentals

The attribution model of leadership, which was developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s in an attempt to better understand leader behavior's, focused on the leader's causal justifications for staff success. According to the model, managers can identify the factors that influence an employee's performance on a task by looking at how well or poorly (a) other employees performed on the task (consensus); (b) how frequently the employee performs equally well or poorly on the task across times and situations (consistency); and (c) how well or poorly the employee performs on other tasks (distinctiveness). This covariation study establishes whether the leader places an internal or external attribution on the performance level, depending on whether they ascribe it to the employee's internal or external characteristics. For instance, if an employee consistently performs poorly on a task, performs poorly on other tasks as well (low distinctiveness), and other employees typically perform well on the task (high consensus), the leader is likely to make an internal attribution and attribute the employee's poor performance to factors like a lack of ability or skills[9], [10].

Due to the complexity of this covariation research, diligent leaders often employ causal schemata or categories like skill, effort, task difficulty, and luck to swiftly arrive at conclusions. And economically reach causal hypotheses on employee performance. These four typically used the location of causation and stability are two causal aspects where explanations vary. In contrast to stability, which refers to whether employee performance is ascribed to stable or unstable reasons, locus of causation relates to whether employee performance is attributed to internal or external factors. An internal, stable cause is aptitude; an internal, unstable cause is effort; an external, stable cause is task complexity; and an external, unstable cause is luck. The leadership attribution model then proposes that leader attributions for employee performance impact leaders' expectations for further performance and leaders' behaviours towards the employee in a systematic manner. Leaders are more inclined to direct their remedial efforts towards the individual if they assign internal blame and towards environmental causes if they assign external blame in response to the bad performance of their workers. When leaders assign blame internally as opposed to outside, they are more inclined to discipline staff members for subpar work. Additionally, when leaders link employee success to constant factors that are expected to last over time, they are more inclined to anticipate that future performance will be comparable to that of the present. For instance, if a work is tough and cannot be made easier, the boss anticipates poor performance from the employee and may take harsh measures, such as demotion or firing, as a consequence.

The rewarding or punishing responses are most potent when leaders make erratic, internal attributions (i.e., effort). When leaders attribute bad performance to factors that are harder to manage than effort, they penalise workers' alleged lack of effort more severely than when they do the opposite. In general, the leadership attribution model contends that employee behaviours (i.e., performance) result in leader attributions, which in turn result in leader expectations and behaviours. The model also acknowledges that these relationships may be influenced by a number of different variables, including, for example, the leader's and the employee's individual traits, organisational policies, the strength of the relationship between the two, the leader's familiarity with the performance task, and the leader's expectations for employee performance.

An Interactive Extension of the Model

While subsequent study asserted that workers similarly attribute their own performance, it was discovered that the original model mostly focused on leader attributions for employee performance. This introduced the viewpoint of the employees to the model. By extending the model to the dyadic level, it is suggested that accurate predictions may be produced based on the degree of agreement or disagreement between leaders and workers on their causal explanations. To arrive at internal or external, stable or instable, attributions for their own performance, such as ability, effort, task complexity, and luck, workers, like leaders, either participate in an effortful covariation study or adopt shortcuts.

Even while leaders and followers experience a similar objective reality, it's interesting to note that, according to the interactive attribution model of leadership, managers and followers often assign different blame. This is because perceptual biases like the actor-observer bias and the self-serving bias have an impact on both leaders' and workers' attributional processes. The actor-observer bias shows that whereas observers tend to ascribe actor behaviour to the actors' own preferences, actors tend to explain their own behaviour to situational reasons. According to the self-serving bias, individuals prefer to blame their failures on other people or external circumstances while attributing their successes to their own character traits. Together, the two biases encourage workers to blame their subpar performance on external variables (such as peers or the environment), while leaders are predisposed to blame workers' internal dispositions (such as ability or motivation).

These different attributions may result in significant amounts of conflict between managers and workers over time and with repeated contacts. For instance, a manager could blame a worker's poor job performance on incompetence while the worker blames faulty equipment. In this case, when the leader reprimands the employee, the individual is probably upset about being held responsible for the incident and about the leader failing to see the equipment issues. In the end, this can lead to a decline in output and satisfaction as well as the rapport between managers and staff. Leaders are more likely to label an employee as being in their "out-group" when they consistently hold them accountable for subpar performance. This results in the employee having fewer access to resources and less room for growth. Workers may then choose to withdraw (e.g., by being absent or resigning) or participate in damaging work behaviours (e.g., theft, harassment).

Employees may also experience learned helplessness as a consequence of inconsistent attributions, which is characterised as worry, tension, apathy, and guilt brought on by recurrent failures that are ascribed to internal, stable reasons. Employees who feel helpless are more likely to give up, put in less effort, and eventually quit their employment. According to the leadership attribution model, when leaders attribute employee failures to effort and workers attribute failures to talent, leaders may generate such learned helplessness in their subordinates. In such situation, the boss is more likely to discipline the worker, which the worker will see as inappropriate and as a further instance of uncontrolled failure, increasing their experience of learned helplessness. The different conclusions that managers and workers often reach may have negative effects.

Importance

A lot of empirical study has been done to look at how leaders attribute their staff members' performance, particularly when it comes to bad performance. In general, this study offered solid support for the fundamental relationships between worker behaviours, leader attributions, and leader behaviours across a range of studies. The suggested relationship between the informational cues of consensus, uniqueness, and consistency and leader attributions and behaviours, such as disciplinary measures, training choices, and feedback delivery, was for instance supported by a number of empirical research. The relationship between the four main attributional explanations of talent, effort, task difficulty, and luck as well as leader responses is also well supported. For instance, leaders who attribute abilities tend to respond less severely to their workers' bad performance than leaders who attribute efforts.

Leaders also tended to be more forgiving when bad performance was attributed to external as opposed to internal causes. The model's presumptions that other individual or environmental variables, such as task interdependence and supervisor control, consistently affect the nature of the suggested correlations are also supported by empirical evidence. Less empirical attention has been paid to the model's interactive extension, which includes both leader and employee attributions. The actor-observer bias and the self-serving bias are well supported in the organisational and psychological literature, and research indicates that leaders and workers regularly display these biases in their attributional processes.

However, there hasn't been much empirical study of the interactions between employee and leader attributions that match or don't match. According to the scant research that is currently available, employees' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their leader are significantly lower when they are predisposed to making incompatible attributions because of their divergent attribution styles

(i.e., tendencies for similar causal explanations across situations and over time). The most recent study reveals that individuals may attribute behaviours to interactions they have with others, such as their leader, in addition to internal and external behaviours. Relationships between leaders and their employees may be significantly impacted by these so-called relational attributions. The attribution model's continued advancement is another sign of the model's acceptability and validity.

Managerial Applications

The leadership attribution paradigm has important ramifications for management practise overall. It is crucial for leaders to make correct attributions since they have an impact on the decisions they make about how to discipline, reward, grow, and respond to the employee. Only then are leaders able to deal with issues in a way that maximises workers' potential for future success. Leaders must be conscious of biases, including the actor-observer and self-serving biases, and comprehend how they might affect their decision-making. In addition, the attribution model of leadership advises that in order to minimise errors, leaders should be proactive and rigorous in their information-seeking regarding potential reasons for staff performance. For instance, executives should ensure that they have trustworthy and accurate information on the reasons for the employee's poor performance before instituting disciplinary procedures that would have serious consequences for the employee's future.

Offering each employee special attention and learning about their skills is one approach to do this. Inadequacies and conceivable personal limitations. For instance, a boss can be more forgiving with an employee who, although being aware of the employee's family issues, misses a crucial deadline. Leaders should make an effort to determine what factors workers attribute to their success. It is essential for leaders to have a trustworthy connection with their staff in order to enable open and honest two-way communication. Only then will workers feel free to express their own ideas and problems. To increase the likelihood that a shared attribution will occur and to maximise employee buy-in into any remedial measures (such as enrollment in skills training, work redesign, or job transfer), leaders and employees should publicly discuss crucial events together.

III. CONCLUSION

The Attribution Model of Leadership offers an insightful framework for comprehending how others see and interpret the actions and characteristics of leaders. We can learn a lot about the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours of followers by looking at the attributions they provide to leaders. These insights have a big impact on leadership effectiveness and organisational results. The Attribution Model emphasises that followers' perceptions of leaders are impacted by their actions, communication preferences, and decision-making processes as well as by their intrinsic attributes or features. Leaders who are aware of this process may purposefully alter their behaviour and communication to foster favourable perceptions and strengthen their bonds with followers. The Attribution Model also emphasises how attributions affect followers' motivation, satisfaction, and output. Leaders may increase follower engagement, commitment, and loyalty by encouraging attributions of leadership efficiency and justice. On the other hand, unfavourable attributions might cause a decline in trust, a decline in work satisfaction, and a decline in organisational citizenship behaviour.

Organisations may use the Attribution Model's findings to create leadership development programmes that foster the necessary leadership attributes and complement their values and objectives. Organisations may build a culture of trust, responsibility, and good performance by encouraging a positive attributional environment and fostering open communication. However, it is crucial to be aware of any biases or difficulties that can occur throughout the attribution process. Inaccuracies and misperceptions in how people assign behaviours to leaders may result from attributional biases, such as the basic attribution mistake or the halo effect. To reduce the likelihood of miscommunication, leaders should be aware of these biases and work to provide clear and consistent signals about their intentions and behaviours. In general, the Attribution Model of Leadership provides insightful information on the dynamics of leader-follower relationships and the variables that affect how others see leadership. Leaders may increase their performance, foster trust, and foster a healthy organisational culture by having a solid knowledge of the attribution process and its repercussions. The Attribution Model

continues to advance our knowledge of leadership and direct the creation of efficient leadership practises in organisations via more study and practical implementation.

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