

Conceptualizing Leadership Behaviors and Its Relationship With Competitive Advantage: A Perspective of RMG Bangladesh

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The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between leadership behaviors and competitive advantage. It is important to study leaders' behavior as leadership plays a vital role like how managers are leading their team and how their leadership style is affecting the firm's performance. Leaders help to enhance the performance of an employee. Literature review highlighted that leadership behaviors have been addressed duly and they emerged as a separate theme from the literature. However, they have not been conceptualized into a comprehensive framework, which is addressed in this study. Therefore, the present study has developed a conceptual model indicating the relationship between different leadership behaviors, emotional intelligence and competitive advantage. The model has been developed for the Bangladesh's RMG industry due to the paucity of research on leadership behaviors in the industry.

Keywords: leadership, competitive advantage, emotional intelligence, Bangladesh, RMG

INTRODUCTION

The RMG industry is one of the major contributors in the growth of Bangladesh economy. RMG industry of Bangladesh also plays a pivot role in shaping the economic structure. In today's era, RMG make a significant contribution in the economic development. In Bangladesh, RMG sector is booming and its growth is remarkable. It helps to gain a competitive edge (Dicken, 1998; Jones, 2002). McGinnis & Vallopra (1999) defined competitive advantage as the ability of an organization to build a stronger position over its rivals. According to Porter (1985), it is a value that an organization creates for the customers through differentiation or cost leadership. Competitive advantage has been suggested as a way for developing countries to 'take off' during the development process (Porter 1985). There are some aspects such as quality, performance, delivery and lead time which are the sources of competitive advantage (Li et al. 2006). Whereas, Harrison and Hoek (2002) concluded that competitive advantage achieved through meeting the customer's demand and supplying the services on needed time. Porter (1985) stated that technology is the major factor which helps to achieve competitive advantage. Technology affects competitive advantage if it has a significant role in determining relative cost differentiation. Thus, advanced technology affects cost and it helps to complete the task in lesser time and less employee needed to complete the project. On the other hand, it is the leadership that also one of the most significant factors that gives companies competitive advantage. Leadership is a complex (Douglas 2012) and popular (Rowold and Borgmann 2013)

phenomenon. Generally, Leadership is defined as- the process of influencing followers to fulfill the desired results (De Jong et al. 2007). Yukl (2006) defined leadership as “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization”. According to Igbaekemen (2014) leadership is “the art of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of goals”. Leadership plays an essential role in creating good culture and atmosphere in an organization (Alghazo & Al-Anazi 2016). Skoogh (2014) stated that leadership has played significant role since the dawn of history of mankind. Leadership has increasingly become a major research focus in corporate sector and higher education sector (HES). Past studies showed that different leadership styles play a momentous role in promoting both organizational outcomes and employee wellbeing (Samad et. al 2015). Hurduzue (2015) stated that effective leadership style could promote excellence in the development of members of the organization. The performance of a work team commonly depends upon the leaders’ effort, potential and ability to influence others (Delfgaauw et. al. 2018). In firms, employees work in a team and perform a variety of tasks. A team's ultimate performance depends on how well leader lead them in their tasks as well as on the division of tasks among the employees. For example- allocating more important tasks to more talented employees will often improve a team's performance. Once performance increased then it helps to gain the competitive advantage. Thus, it can be postulated that effective leader assists his/her employee and motivate them, towards the fulfillment of an objective. Many studies have been conducted, which have focused on the variables like- emotional intelligence, task oriented leadership behavior, people oriented leadership, change and competitive advantage and RMG industry. But, the relationships between these variables have not been studied in the context of Bangladesh RMG industries.

One of the purposes of this article is to conceptually derive the hypothesized relationship between the variables identified through a review of literature. Variable include leadership behavior (task oriented, people oriented and change oriented), emotional intelligence and competitive advantage. A leader’s gender has been conceptualized as a mediating factor mediating the relationships. Therefore, in a nutshell the article aims to develop a comprehensive conceptual model testing the relationship between leadership behaviors and firm’s competitive advantage via emotional intelligence. The developed model is suitable for Bangladesh RMG industry as there is a lack of research studies conceptualizing and validating the model for RMG industry of Bangladesh. Though, the paper is a part of doctoral dissertation and its scope is limited only to the development of conceptual model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Behaviors

Leadership has been a central, but sometimes controversial topic in organizational research and very few studies conducted on relationship leadership behavior (Chemers, et. Al.2000). Research confirmed that leader’s behavior influences group and individuals. It means Leadership behavior has significant impact on employee performance, employee behavior and well-being (Inceoglu, et. Al 2018; Gooty et. al. 2010). Consistency of leadership behavior influenced the strategy implementation process (O’Reilly et. al. 2009). Kotlyar (2011) examined how leader’s behavior influences decision making process. Researcher found that leader’s behavior helps to reduce conflict among teams and pragmatic leaders were more effective to encourage member’s commitment. Effective team decision making requires member’s commitment towards decision (Amason, 1996). But Vries (2001) contradict the statement by stating that leadership moderators, the effects are weak. Whereas task oriented, change oriented and relation oriented behaviors’ also plays significant role (Yukl, 2019). Few studies explained that CEOs (chief executive leadership) plays vital role to achieve better performance (Finkelstein & Hambrick 1996) which means CEO’s behavior are directly linked to firm performance. CEO can motivate employees to accomplish goals and they can use rewarding and punishment approach as well (Yukl 1998). One of the researches suggested leadership effectiveness measured through the achievement of organizational outcomes and transactional behavior indirectly effects individual’s performance (Cavazotte, et. al. 2012).

Leadership Styles

Chammas and Hernandez (2019) compared transformational and instrumental leadership and found both directly influence on employee performance. Hsiao and Chang (2011) found similar result in the context of transformational leadership, it has significant positive relationship on organizational performance. Liangding, et. al. (2007) also highlighted that transformational leadership not only affects commitment and organizational trust but also motivates employees and boost their confidence by mediation of reciprocity. It is clear from the review that transformational as well as charismatic leadership became an integral part of leadership theory and both theories has a massive impact on leadership as a scientific domain (Avolio et. al. 2013). Managing an organization effectively we need an effective leader. There is different style of leadership such as- laissez faire, transactional and transformational leadership. Dahie, et. al. (2017) studied about the role of leadership style and they revealed that, transformational and transaction style both has positive relationship with employee commitment. Similarly, Kehinde (2014) established that the leadership styles have positive relationship on performance of employees. It was suggested that managers should use transformational leadership.

Basit (2017) conducted the study on the impact of leadership style on employee's performance. Study revealed that democratic leadership style and laissez faire have more influence on employees' performance. It also revealed that autocratic leadership is poorly co-related with the employees' performance. It means there is positive relation in democratic as well as laissez faire style whereas negative relationship is found in autocratic leadership. Yahaya and Ebrahim (2015) identified the relationship of transactional, transformational and laissez- faire on organizational commitment. This framework found all style players a significant role towards the uplift of organizational performance. They stated that these styles upgrade the abilities and characteristics of employee. Thus, it can be thought that it all is related to each other. Leadership is formed based on a social interaction between followers and leaders

According to Effendi (2002) "leader carries out its activities quest guide, guiding, directing and controlling the thoughts, feeling, and behaviors of a person or a number of people to achieve a number of goals". "The influence of leadership style and motivation of employees' job satisfaction also plays vital role in an organization (Mustaqim, 2016). There are two variables- leader motivation and leader behavior which simultaneously affect the relationship of employees' job satisfaction.

Generally, followers are willing to be influenced by different characteristics of their leader, such as agreement with their followers, influencing power, direction and support they need (Blanchard et al. 1985). It found most of the undergraduate and post graduate as well as PhD students prefer supporting style, coaching, directing, respectively. Few more studies have investigated on relationship of leadership style and there is the link exist between culture and performance have been examined independently (Ogbonna2000).

Burke, et. al (2006) studied which type of leadership behaviors are functional in teams. Results suggested that use of task-focused behaviors is moderately related to perceived team effectiveness as well as team productivity. Apart from this they revealed that, both people focused and task leadership is correlated in the context of team performance outcomes. There is such behavior for example perceived effectiveness, team learning, analyzing productivity etc. will increase the team performance. Gameda (2020) also supports the concept of leadership styles, work engagement as outcomes and results supports that transformational leadership style had a significant. Positive relationship with innovative work behavior and employees' work engagement, whereas transactional leadership style had a significant positive relationship in the employees' task performance. But it contradicts with laissez-faire leadership style, because it had negative relationship with task performance and Work engagement. Besides, work engagement partially mediated the relationship between leadership styles and work outcomes.

Competitive Advantage in Apparel Industry

Apparel industry has been the key export industry of Bangladesh for the past 25 years. The consensus of many researchers is that the success and failure in apparel sector mostly depends upon efficient (SCM) supply chain management practices (Şen, 2008). Sustainable competitive advantage is no longer embedded in physical assets or capital, but in an effective channeling of intellectual capital (Halawi, et. al.2005).

Strategic leadership plays significant role to build the sustainable competitive advantage and it has been found that there is significant positive impact of strategic leadership capabilities on sustainable competitive advantage (Mahdi and Almsafir, 2013). Technology is one of the main factors which create competitive advantage and influence industry as a whole by providing strategically benefits (Porter 1985). In Ethiopian context there are five factors that determine competitiveness of garment industry such as- demand conditions, supporting industries, role of Government, structure and industry's strategy etc. The study also found that factor conditions and chance factors both act determinants for the competitiveness in garments industry (Hagos, et. al. 2018). Whereas, Vargas (2014) identified leader's behavior and ability, environment, prior firm performance, strategy and stage of organization life are the factors for small businesses which help to achieve competitiveness. Elrehail (2019) concluded that HR practices had a significant effect on competitive advantage. Empirical support like- incentive, motivation leads to complete task on time and fulfill firm's goal by achieving competitive advantage. Gautam and Lal (2020) Analyzed competitiveness and trade performance in Indian textile industry and found that India has attained comparative advantage While Vietnam showed drastic improvement in textile products. Moreover, Vietnam and china improved its comparative advantage.

Role of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

EI is learnable skill and an element of social intelligence which enables an individual to understand, monitor and respond appropriately to emotional cues in self and others (Salovey and Mayer 1990). Emotional interactions at work have a significant impact on employees' behavior. Workplace needs an emotionally intelligent individual "who are able to identify, manage, and focus their emotions effectively, and cope successfully with the demands of daily life" (Nafukho & Muyia, 2014; Farnia & Nafukho, 2016). Another study showed that both the EI and the different EI competencies affect the adoption of various HR practices (Molina, et. al. 2019). Flexible strategy with innovative HR practices plays a significant role in firm performance, Xiu et al. (2017) found strong effect on employee productivity who have adopted innovative HR practices in an organization. In addition, the authors also found that female leadership increases strategic flexibility performance relationship.

Task Oriented Leadership Behavior

One of most prominent leadership styles is task oriented. According to Anzalone (2017) task-oriented leader focuses on the task. He is less concerned with catering of employees' personal needs; he is concerned with finding step-by-step solutions for meeting goals. According to Larman (2015) relationship-oriented leader focus on tasks, as well as fulfilling the needs of every employee by giving bonus etc. "Task-oriented leadership style appears more effective as compare to relationship oriented style" (Oni 2017). Task-oriented leaders' effects group efficacy with positivity among members of the group whereas, relationship oriented leaders effects cohesion between group's members (Chambel and Curral, 2009). They found task-oriented and relationship-oriented behavior have positive effect on development of group performance. But Ruzgar (2018) contradicted that and concluded there is no significant effect of task Oriented leadership style on Self Oriented dimension of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX).

Change-Oriented Leadership Behavior

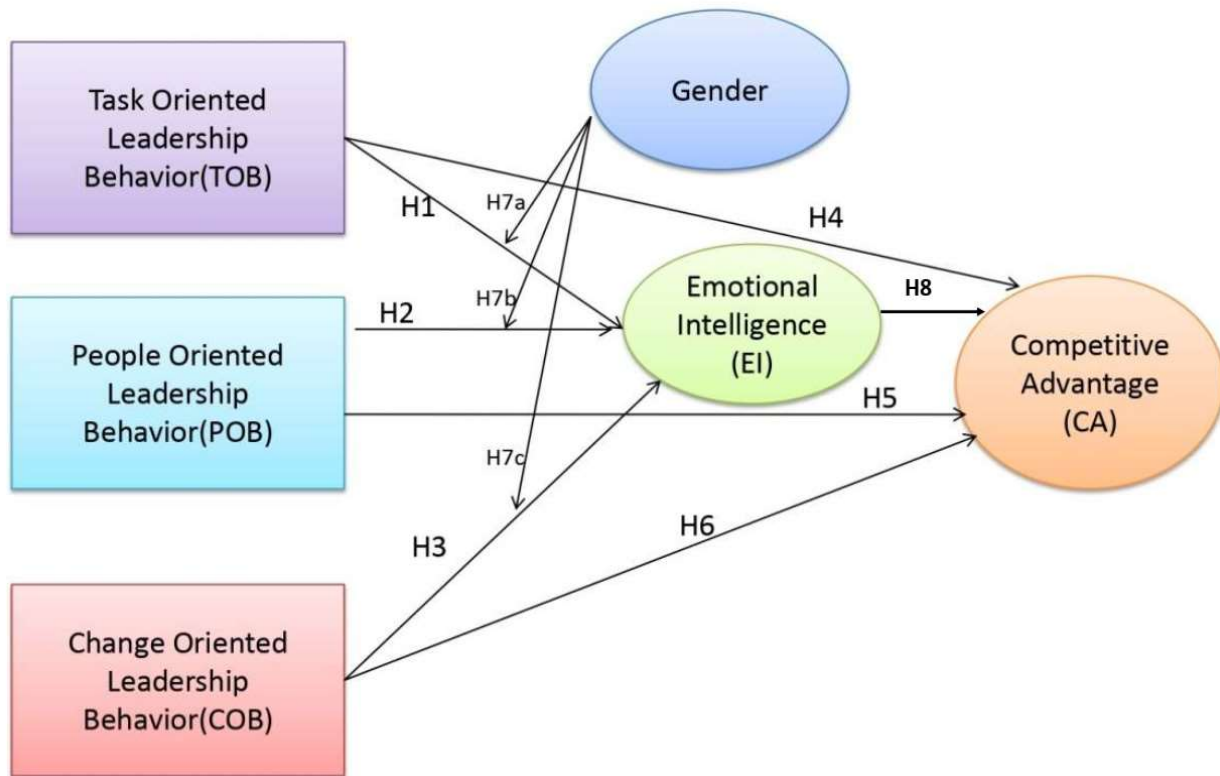
The change oriented leadership also plays significant role in an organization and in this context Bossche et al. (2013) found mediating effect between change-oriented leadership and team performance. Their objective was to identify the influence of change oriented leadership and result supported that more change oriented leader have high team learning with positive team performance. Thus, it concluded that all are linked together once change oriented leader is an organization then team satisfaction build. Once team members are satisfied, they work efficiently; as a result, team performance will increase. Rezaei & Ortt (2017) commented that overall firm's performance also depends on entrepreneurial orientation factor. Further, the study indicated that (EO) are related in different ways to the performance of a firm. But positive relationship found between EO and the overall performance of the firm. (Atuahene-Gima & K, 2001) Customer orientation reflects firm strategy as well as employee performance, "firm's orientation toward the

promotion and support for the collection, dissemination, and responsiveness to market intelligence to serve customer needs". Thus, customer orientation (CO) has been recognized as important factor which influence firm performance (Feng, et. al. 2019).

Research Gaps from the Literature Review

A thorough review of literature had been undertaken to conceptually find out the variables which have been utilized by the researchers in the field of leadership and its relationship with competitive advantage for Bangladesh’s RMG industry. It has been highlighted that the literature has adequately addressed the concepts of leadership behavior and competitive advantage though not specifically for the RMG industry of Bangladesh. Another, major gap emerged out include lack of research assessing the interwoven relationships between the identified variables. Thus, this study has utilized variables from the literature and has developed a comprehensive conceptual model assessing the relationship between leadership behaviors and firm’s competitive advantage (refer fig. 1). Leadership behavior is defined in terms of task oriented behavior (Anzalone, 2017), people oriented behavior and change oriented behavior (Bossche, et al. 2013). Other variables incorporated in the model include gender (Xiu, et al. 2017) and emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

**FIGURE 1
A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**



The proposed hypothesis derived from the above conceptual model is:

H1: Task oriented leadership behavior (TOB) has a significant positive influence on EI (Emotional Intelligence).

H2: *People oriented leadership behavior (POB) has a significant positive influence on EI (Emotional Intelligence).*

H3: *Change oriented leadership behavior (COB) has a significant positive influence on EI (Emotional Intelligence).*

H4: *Task oriented leadership behavior (TOB) has a significant positive influence on CA (Competitive Advantage).*

H5: *People oriented leadership behavior (POB) has a significant positive influence on CA (Competitive Advantage).*

H6: *Change oriented leadership behavior (COB) has a significant positive influence on CA (Competitive Advantage).*

H7a: *Gender moderates the relationship between TOB and EI of a manager. H7b:* *Gender moderates the relationship between POB and EI of a manager. H7c:* *Gender moderates the relationship between COB and EI of a manager*

H8: *EI mediates with TOB, POB, COB to CA.*

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Extending the existing literature, this research developed a conceptual framework including the variables- Task oriented, People oriented, and Change oriented leadership behavior; emotional intelligence, gender and competitive advantage.

In task-oriented leader should focuses on the task and he should choose those tasks which would be beneficial and effective for the development of an organization. Task-oriented leader effects group efficacy with positivity among members of the group. The change oriented leadership also plays significant role in an organization. For instance- if there is a need to change some strategy so leaders should always be ready with proactive approach. As we know that future is uncertain and change can be required because of external factor. So, in this case change oriented leadership come in front and tackle the situation accordingly. But all depends upon the leader's behavior, if leader think in positive way and guide their team members at every step. As a result, organization performs well and achieves its goals in an effective way. Research confirmed that leader's behavior influences group and individuals. It means Leadership behavior has significant impact on employee performance, employee behavior and well-being. There is another variable competitive advantage which plays significant role in RMG sector. There are several factors which helps to achieve competitive advantage such as- quality, performance, delivery and lead time etc. and technology is one of the top most source of competitive advantage. While taking decision leader should stay strong with emotional intelligence because emotional interactions at work have a significant impact on employees' behavior. Every firm needs emotionally intelligent individuals who are capable to manage things in an effective manner. Individual should have capability to focus their emotions and cope up stressful situation successfully in daily life.

The developed conceptual model has combined different leadership behavior together. Further through this we can see the effect of emotional intelligence on firm's competitive advantage. Therefore, the model answers the question- how to gain competitive advantage via integration of three leader behaviors (TOB, POB & COB) which influence leader's emotional intelligence. The model hypothesized the influence of leadership behaviors & emotional intelligence on firm's competitive advantage. It also captures the role of gender influencing the leadership behaviors and emotional intelligence relationships.

The relationships have been conceptualized keeping in view the Bangladesh's RMG industry. Therefore, the specific model might not be applicable for other industries. Further, it is conceptual in nature,

and it needs empirical investigation for its validation in the context of RMG industry of Bangladesh. Another research area emerging from the study is to define the variable competitive advantage as it has not been detailed in the model. It can be accessed through the lens of Porter's competitive advantage model.

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