

Level of Conceptualization for Leadership

1. Intra-individual process
2. Dyadic process
3. Group process
4. Organizational process

Level emphasized determines the type of criterion variable used to evaluate leadership and type of mediating processes used to explain effective leadership

Intra-Individual Processes

- Most definitions of leadership involve the influence processes between individuals
- Some researchers use psychological theories of decision-making, motivation, and cognition to explain the behaviour of a individual leader
- Potential contribution is limited because it does not include what most theorists consider to be the essential process of leadership: the influence process
- Trait studies do not include behaviour and influence process, it is difficult to determine why some traits or skills are related to leadership effectiveness or advancement

Dyadic Processes

- Focus on the relationship between a leader and another individual who is usually a follower
- Implicit assumption that leadership effectiveness cannot be understood without examining how leader and follower influence each other over time
- Key questions: how to develop a cooperative trusting relationship with a follower and how to influence a follower to be more motivated and committed
- Research provides important insights about leadership; it often underestimates the importance of the context in which a dyadic relationship occurs
- Developing a cooperative relationship with one subordinate may be dysfunctional if it is done in a way that undermines relationships with other subordinates

Group Processes

- Key topics: nature of the leadership role in a task group and how a leader contributes to group effectiveness
- Theories of group effectiveness provide insights about leadership processes and relevant criteria for evaluating leadership effectiveness
- Extensive research on small groups has identified important determinants of group effectiveness such as which behaviours can be linked to decision quality and decision acceptance
- Meetings are a special context for study
- Key question: what leadership functions are necessary to make these group meetings more effective
- Key question: how does leadership emerge in formal and informal groups: why are some members more influential than others, what determines who will be chosen as a leader, and why do some leaders lose trust and confidence in followers

Organizational Processes

- Organizational level of analysis describes leadership as a process that occurs in a larger “open system” in which groups are subsystems
- Survival and prosperity depend on effective adaptation to the environment, which means marketing its outputs (products and services) successfully, obtaining necessary resources, and dealing with external threats
- Adaptation is improved by anticipating consumer needs and desires, assessing the actions and plans of competitors, evaluating likely constraints and threats and identifying marketable products and services that the organization has unique capabilities to provide
- Efficiency: transformation process used by the organization to produce its products and services
- Efficiency is increased by finding more rational ways to organize and perform the work and by deciding how to make best use of available technology, resources, and personnel
- Examples of leadership responsibilities include designing an appropriate organization structure, determining authority relationships, and coordinating operations across specialized subunits of the organization