

The relationship between communication apprehension and leadership styles in a job recruitment process

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 2021-08-03

Revised 2021-08-11

Accepted 2021-09-06

Keywords

Communication Apprehension

Leadership

Organization

Management

Communication

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, many organizations seek to accelerate the employees' communication effectiveness. However, only a few put efforts into reducing communication apprehension and understanding their potential in leadership. This paper seeks to investigate the correlation between communication apprehension and leadership styles, and consequently tries to investigate its impact on individuals' success in a job recruitment test. A total of 114 participants were gathered in an online survey from a government institution's recruitment process. The inferential statistic tests (ANOVA) were used to determine differences in leadership styles and their communication apprehension based on respondents' success in the recruitment process. Results showed that respondents who have high communication apprehension would display task-oriented leadership behaviors and were tended to be more focusing on their role and performance, while the lower communication apprehension indicated more relation-oriented leadership behaviors. Moreover, applicants with a relational leadership style would likely pass a job recruitment test and were more likely to have a successful result in a recruitment process than ones with a task-oriented leadership style. Additionally, this research also gives a glimpse of communication apprehension study in non-western countries. The findings suggest a need for organizations in addressing these issues in order to develop their employees' communication capacity. Limitations and future research are also discussed in this paper.

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1. Introduction

Research showed that communication is pivotal for effective organizational processes, whether it is in public or private organizations. Hence, many organizations spend a lot of effort in boosting communication effectiveness. [1] stated that one of the significant gaps for communication improvement might be communication apprehension, which is a study area that has been the focal point of generous consideration from communication scholars. However, only a few of them put efforts into helping their employees and reducing the barriers in communication—communication apprehension: the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication [2].

This anxiety about communication has been proven to impact one's career negatively. For example, in their article, [3] showed that the negative impact of communication apprehension could range from their occupational choice (less communicative position), job satisfaction (less satisfied in

communication-related tasks), to their advancement (having less promotion). In a recent study, [4] found that in a selection process, people who have apprehension would show negative trait argumentativeness and positive trait verbal aggressiveness. Although it was limited in associating the verbal and oral communication apprehension, this research described that people with communication apprehension tend to be perceived less favorable in the recruitment process.

In addition, research demonstrated that the more an individual communicates, the more that individual is seen to be believable, relationally alluring, incredible, a leader, and to have perspectives like those of the perceiver [3]. This could indicate that one's communication apprehension would affect their communicative behavior in their leadership. Moreover, people with CA are less perceived in a leadership position, or even worse, might not have a chance in that position.

Several research have been conducted in explaining leadership communication and [5] describe two leadership approaches which are commonly seen in the communication behavior perspective, those leadership styles are "task-focused communication moves the group along toward its goal; relational communication holds the group together. Some people concentrate on getting the job done, while others are much more concerned about relationships within the group. Task-oriented individuals are the pistons that drive the group machine. Relationship-oriented members are the lubricant that prevents excessive friction from destroying the group". These styles show the communication behaviors as the center of the leadership and put communication as a focus on explaining individuals' leadership. In addition, as communication apprehension and communication skills for an employee could be seen in the early stages of a recruitment process [6], it might also be applied for investigating the leadership styles. Moreover, people with high CA are tending to choose and express less communicative behaviors [6] and this indicates that leadership behaviors are related to communication apprehension. Therefore, there is a link between communication apprehension which could affect individuals' leadership style.

Consequently, this study tries to examine the relationship between CA and leadership styles and its impact on the success of the applicant in the recruitment process with the following question and hypotheses:

RQ: Is there any difference in communication apprehension in leadership style for successful candidates in a recruitment process?

From the research question, the hypotheses for the study are:

H1: There is a positive relationship between people with high CA and task-oriented leadership style.

H2: People with relationship-oriented leadership style will have more success in recruitment.

Given the condition, this study addresses the question and hypotheses through understanding the relationship between communication apprehension and leadership style in a job selection process and how it could affect the success of the applicants in the recruitment process. A quantitative approach is employed in gathering, testing, and analyzing data. The results are discussed with related studies in understanding more about the relationship between CA, leadership behaviors, and job recruitment. Additionally, this research also attempts to describe a communication apprehension study in an eastern cultural context, while most of them are conducted in western countries. For example, a recent study by [7], has studied countries including Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, Rwanda, Spain, and the UK, and this showed that communication apprehension is mostly being investigated in western culture. Therefore, this study also would like to make a contribution in advancing and testing the communication apprehension theory within the Asian region as opposed to studies that have been conducted mostly in western countries [7]. Limitations and suggestions for future study are also discussed in this paper.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study borrowed the concepts of communication apprehension which being developed by McCroskey. In addition, leadership theories focusing on leadership communicative behaviors are also used in constructing the theoretical framework for this study. Initially, scholars tried to identify types of CA as a duality between trait and situational or state CA [8]. However, since no component

of personality characteristics that could be seen as universally accepted across all circumstances, and also no circumstance has yet been distinguished in which we can foresee a universal behavior from all people, [8] argued that it is pivotal that we view the types of CA on a continuum of trait and situational poles in four different forms.

One of the concepts illustrates communication anxiety as a trait factor for the individuals themselves [2]. As a trait factor, communication apprehension would show "a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts" [2]. Therefore, individuals express anxiety while consistently communicating across time. Terrible communication in the childhood experience is retained in the memory to shape a generally lasting mental format, which compounds ones' uneasiness with and weakness in communicating [9]. An individual with anxieties will stay away from communication most of the time, to avoid the communication experiences [10]. The next type is generalized-context CA "relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward communication in a given type of context" [8]. For example, some people might have high apprehension in public speaking with less apprehension or no apprehension in interpersonal communication. Another type of CA is person-group CA, "a relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people" [8]. This type could be seen when a person has fear in communicating with certain individuals or groups (for example police officers) while that person shows no anxiety with others. On the other hand, people can experience communication apprehension in the state-trait context, which includes interpersonal communication, small group communication, and/or public settings [3]. [2] emphasized that situational communication apprehension is not pathological and is considered as a common response to the potential threats for conducting communicative behaviors. In addition, [11] argued that even a professional could still have a certain degree of anxiety while having communication.

Research in an organizational environment described negative results on both individuals and organizations for the behavior of shyness or low willingness to communicate [12]. This concept of communication anxiety has been showing similar patterns which included the reluctance in communicating with others [13]. [3] argued that managers may fail to recognize communication apprehension as a concept and a theory in organizational settings as they dispersed across various disciplines and focused on the U.S. population or mainly in western countries. Communication apprehension studies in organizations ranged from occupational choices to employee promotions [3]. In occupational choices, a study by [6] showed that CA affects the occupational choice of future employees. They described that people with high CA are more likely to choose a job that has minimal communication requirements. Conversely, people with low CA attempt to apply for a job with high communication requirements. Richmond [14] also attempted to study CA in an organizational context. She found that CA could impact the job screening process. The high CA applicant was perceived to be less task and socially attractive which was also projected to be less satisfied in their job, low-quality relationships with managers and peers, and would not have advancement for their career.

Although this study has been conducted for employees that have already joined the company, studies in a recruitment process still need to be addressed since CA has impacts in an organizational environment including job applicant screening, occupational choices, job satisfaction, employee retention, and advancement career [3]. Even before applying for a job, people with CA are planning to choose a minimum required for communication at work [6], [15]. Moreover, people with high CA were perceived to be failed in a job screening process [14], [16]. Consequently, even when they were accepted, people with communication apprehension would likely build a strong relationship with coworkers and show less communicative behaviors which make them less likely to be promoted in their company [3]. Leadership Styles [17] stated that leadership could influence the performance of an organization in three different levels of analysis. First, leaders could influence their employees to become motivated and engaged in organizational processes at the individual level. Secondly, at the group level, leaders build teamwork dynamics. Finally, leaders could shape the culture and strategy at the organizational level. Therefore, leadership holds an essential role in an organization.

Leadership mainly focused on organizational goals. Initially, the research relied on how to understand the traits of the leader [18], [19]. [20] stated that this trait approach in leadership emphasizes identifying and measuring the leaders' characters. However, the results were not strong enough in categorizing the leaders' traits which could be seen as effective leadership [21].

Consequently, the leadership styles approach was offered in understanding leaders' behaviors and this approach sees leadership could be learned by anyone [22]. In addition, [23] argue that leadership is mainly relying on communication. Communication skills for the leaders could shape how the organizational processes run into effectiveness through their navigation among the employees. This indicates that adequate communication skills of the executives could lead to an effective performance while the lack of communication could hinder the organizational performance.

A study by [24] showed a correlation between communication apprehension and leadership emergence. In their research, argumentative communication traits and communication apprehension were predictors of leadership behaviors. This would inform us that in an organizational setting, CA would affect their career advancement as a leader. The topic of leadership has been studied from many angles. [23] investigated the personal characteristics of a leader, the traits approach. This approach focuses on a leader's cognitive abilities, personality, motivation, social appraisal, and problem-solving skills. These traits will help to achieve success as a leader. However, the traits approach lacks empirical evidence in explaining ones' leadership characteristics. Therefore, this approach sees individuals as born leaders and argues that leaders are born with leadership characters instead of learning skill sets. Later studies emphasize leadership based on behaviors that vary depending upon the situation (situational approach), communicative behaviors (functional approach), and leader-follower relationships (relational approach).

To have a better understanding of leadership approaches, leadership styles are offered, which stressed the leaders' behaviors. There are two models of leadership style we will focus on in this study, task-oriented leadership and relationship-oriented leadership. [25] identified that task-oriented leadership mainly uses one-way communication in how things need to be executed. In an article by [26], they described a task-oriented leader as an individual who defines the roles of the followers. The leader ensures that they meet the goals of the group and strategize the means of doing so. Besides, task-oriented leaders are focused on the duties and roles of their subordinates. Furthermore, task-oriented leadership shows a positive correlation with job satisfaction at the beginning of a career while later, it shows a negative effect [27].

Meanwhile, a relational-oriented leader inspires their followers by earning their respect [26]. This leadership is measured by variables including idealized attribution, idealized behavior, individualized concern, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation [28]. [28] also stated relationship-oriented behaviors express support for and focus on the best interests of subordinates, as well as building their bond. In comparing the leadership styles, [29] argued that relation-oriented leadership is mainly communicative, while task-oriented leadership is much less communicative. [30] illustrated that relationship-oriented leadership produces a more significant effect than task-oriented leadership in predicting organizational commitment, extra-role performance, and job satisfaction. From the review, we could see there is a link between CA and leadership style. By using these theories, the study aims to investigate those relationships and their impact on individuals' success in a job recruitment process.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Respondents were gathered from a national job recruitment process in an Indonesian government institution. It is also beneficial to conduct this study in a governmental recruitment process as it could gather applicants at the national level. Participants were asked for their voluntary involvement in this study and being informed that this survey is not part of the recruitment and also will not affect their test result. The feedback was consisting of 114 individuals (47 males, 67 females) who ranged from 21 to 34 years old with a mean of 25.78 and a median of 25. Respondents represented a cross-section of educational levels (6 vocational, 100 bachelors, 8 masters) and educational disciplines (49 natural sciences and 65 social sciences). Questionnaires were informed in a shortened website link to the applicants after sections of the recruitment process. After that, applicants were instructed to open the link and fill in all the required questions and they were assured of confidentiality in the online form.

3.2. Procedures

An online survey was conducted, consisting of three sections: background questions, Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), and Leadership Style. Demographic information gathered data are including sex, age, educational level, and background. The instruction will be given to help participants respond to the questionnaire. A web-based program was used to present the questions. In addition, confidentiality was assured to protect anonymity. The inferential statistic tests (ANOVA) will be used to determine differences in leadership styles and their communication apprehension based on respondents' success in the recruitment process. In addition, a correlational test also will be used in understanding the relationship between the variables.

3.3. Measures

Communication Apprehension will be measured in 24 items adapted by [3]. The respondents were responded in a 5-point Likert-scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). This questionnaire consists of four contexts of communication apprehension (groups, meetings, interpersonal, and public speaking). This tool has been used widely in communication apprehension research and showed excellent reliability and validity [3]. The instrument shows an overall CA reliability score of 0.95. Meanwhile, in communication apprehension contexts, the reliabilities are including group, 0.933; meetings, 0.922; interpersonal, 0.928; and public speaking 0.951 respectively.

In this study, the Leadership Style Questionnaire developed by [31] was used to measure the task and relation-oriented leadership styles of the respondents. There were 20 questions with a Likert-type scale (1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Occasionally, 4=Often, 5=Always) measurement in this section. The odd-numbered items were reflected the task-oriented leadership dimension while the even-numbered items were indicated the relation-oriented leadership dimension. The range of the score is from 20 to 100 for each leadership style. The obtained reliability for this instrument shows a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.878.

3.4. Analytic Procedures

The inferential statistic tests (ANOVA) will be used to determine differences in leadership styles and their communication apprehension based on respondents' success in the recruitment process. In addition, a correlational test also will be used in understanding the relationship between the variables.

4. Results and Discussion

In this research, 114 participants were gathered in this online survey during a recruitment process. Demographic data for the respondents are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Demographic variables	Category	Total	Percentage
Sex	Male	47	41%
	Female	67	59%
Educational Background	Social Science	65	57%
	Natural Science	49	43%
Educational Level	Vocation	6	5%
	Bachelor	100	88%
	Master	8	7%
Overall CA	Low	18	16%
	Medium	81	71%
	High	15	13%
Educational Field Background	Language	10	9%
	Economic	31	27%
	Health	4	4%
	Media and Art	8	7%
	Social	16	14%
	Engineering	45	39%
Job Recruitment	Passed	96	84%
	Failed	18	16%

Leadership Style	Task	27	24%
	Relationship	87	76%

From Table 1, we could see that sex and educational background are fairly equal with 41% males and 59% females and 57% social science and 43% natural science, respectively. On the other hand, most of them passed the recruitment process (84% passed, 16% failed) and most of the participants hold a bachelor's degree (88%). Moreover, participants are identified with relation-oriented leadership style (24% task-oriented, 76% relationship-oriented leadership), while 18 participants were categorized as having low CA (16% [36.8% males, 63.2% females]), 81 participants with moderate CA (71% [37.5% males, 62.5% females]), and 15 people with high CA (13% [66.7% males, 33.3% females]) respectively. Standard deviation criteria were used in order to classify the respondents as having low, medium, and high CA [32]. Low CA was categorized as a range of scores for more than one standard deviation below the mean on the PRCA-24. Consequently, moderate CA was a core within one standard deviation of the mean, while high CA was a range of scores for one standard deviation above the mean.

The first hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between people with high CA and task-oriented leadership style, which was tested by comparing the means for the leadership style with the CA score. [6] argued that people with high CA would prefer minimal communication with their co-workers and this would predict that they will focus on their tasks rather than building their relationship with others.

H₁: There is a positive relationship between people with high CA and task-oriented leadership style.

Table 2. One-Way Analysis of Variance for CA in Task-Oriented Leadership Style

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.970	2	2.485	12.156	.000
Within Groups	22.691	111	.204		
Total	27.661	113			

An ANOVA test in Table 2 showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores between low, moderate, and high CA and task-oriented leadership style ($M = 2.485$, $F = 12.156$, $p < .001$). The post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the greater the mean score for CA, the greater they would likely have a task-oriented leadership behavior. Taken together, these results suggest that high levels of CA do affect task-oriented leadership behavior. These results show that people with high CA would predict as task-oriented leaders in their workplace. Therefore, H₁ was supported. Results confirmed that there was a relationship between individuals with high CA and task-oriented leadership. These results were supported by the findings of previous studies, that people with high CA have been viewed as having lower competence, lower leadership, lower attractiveness, and lower sociability [3]. These results are also supported by [3], [33], [34], [35], that people with communication apprehension tend to do less communicative behavior and consequently will rely on their task-oriented behavior. Meanwhile, people with lower CA would likely show a more relationally oriented communication style [3], [33]–[35]. They are more likely to involve in arguing issues through a discussion in public [35]. In summary, lower CA people would express relation-oriented leadership while individuals with high CA show task-oriented leadership behaviors.

The second hypothesis suggested people with a relational leadership style would predict a successful job recruitment process. On contrary, people with high CA are perceived to be less attractive as they are socially less communicative which negatively impacts their interview process [3].

H₂: People with relationship-oriented leadership will have more success in a recruitment.

Table 3. One-way Analysis of Variance of Leadership in A Successful Recruitment Process

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Leadership Style	0.882	1.000	0.882	6.920	0.010
Residual	14.276	112.000	0.127		

The statistical test was conducted in investigating the differences between successful job admission and relationship-oriented leadership behavior. Table 3 shows the variety of leadership styles in the admission process, and we could see that there was a mean difference between relational behaviors and job admission success ($M = 0.882$, $F = 6.920$, $p = 0.010$). In addition, a Pearson correlation analysis (Table 4) suggests that applicants with task leadership styles have a more unfavorable result on their job recruitment process ($t = -0.241$, $p = 0.01$). In other words, applicants with a relational leadership style tend to be admitted in a job recruitment process. Consequently, H2 was supported.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations Analysis on Task Leadership Style and Admission

Source		Admission Result	Leadership
Admission Result	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Leadership	Pearson's r	-0.241	—
	p-value	0.010	—

Moreover, in analyzing the research question for investigating the difference between communication apprehension and leadership style in a recruitment process, a model was tested. Multiple regression was run to predict a successful job recruitment process from communication apprehension and leadership style (Table 5).

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis on CA and Leadership Style

Model	Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	P
1 (Intercept)	2.127	0.187		11.371	< .001
CA Score	0.041	0.062	0.061	0.662	0.509
Leadership Style	-0.207	0.079	-0.241	-2.625	0.010

The multiple regression model statistically significantly predicted admission success, $F(3,111) = 3,662$, $p = 0.029$, adj. $R^2 = 0.045$. The analysis shows that there is a positively significant model between CA, leadership behavior, and a successful job recruitment process in the model ($p = <0.001$). In other words, applicants with a relational leadership with lower CA tend to be admitted in a job recruitment process. Conversely, people with high CA with task-oriented leadership behavior would have less success in the admission success. In retrospect, CA has been associated with people's willingness to take on leadership opportunities [36]. This would indicate that even the high CA admitted in the organization, would likely have low career development. [3] also found that only a few people with high CA could advance to top positions in organizations since the higher position would require high communication skills to deliver their organizational processes. Moreover, this result was supported in research by [9] and [11], which showed people with high CA were less likely to pass an employment test.

Additionally, this study also shows communication apprehension in eastern culture has a similar pattern with a general assumption, where people with high CA tend to be less talkative and engage in fewer communication behaviors [3], [6], [33]–[35]. It also describes that communicative behaviors tend to have more value, even though in a high-context culture [37]. Consequently, while most of the research has been conducted in western countries [3], [7], this study tries to illustrate communication apprehension and leadership behaviors for individuals in the Asian region.

5. Conclusion

The study contributed to understanding communication apprehension and leadership in a job recruitment process. People are tended to display their communication behaviors such as active communication, flexibility in making decisions, showing concerns to others, and disclose ideas and feelings, which were more likely to have a successful result in a job selection process. People with high CA tend to show a task-oriented leadership style while individuals with lower CA are more likely to have a relation-oriented leadership style. Consequently, these characteristics would affect their success in a recruitment process, while people who hold more communicative (lower CA) and relational leadership tend to pass the job admission. Although people with high CA could have

passed the recruitment process, it is also should be known that they still potentially have poor, absent, or ineffective communication. Therefore, it is pivotal for the organizations to be able to manage the CA so they could relatively have employees with effective communication skills. Additionally, this study also contributes to enriching the communication apprehension studies in a non-western context and provides a glimpse of communication apprehension in an eastern country, Indonesia.

The importance of communication skills, communication apprehension, and leadership may have been known in various disciplines, especially in management scholars and practices that have shown an increasing interest in developing the capabilities of effective employees. The present findings suggest that communication apprehension may be seen as one of the key factors to organizational and professional success. In practice, this study suggests the organization to be able to identify communication apprehension within their employee and also to address this issue. Even though it is not necessarily required at the beginning of the recruitment process, the PRCA test could also be conducted after they joined the organization or even in a certain period to gain the employee's communication apprehension condition. Through the identification of their communication apprehension and leadership styles, the employer could have a better understanding of the candidates' weaknesses and strengths in communication skills. Consequently, it is pivotal for the company to have training that could improve their members' communication effectiveness in order to support the organizational processes. Therefore, the employees could have a better opportunity in future organizational advancement.

On the other hand, there are several limits to this research. First, the scope of the respondents. In this study, the survey respondents were only applying for one institution. Even they have several options for open positions such as accounting, design, public relations, or engineer, the main theme or the specific work field of the organization could be attracting a less diverse of people, and this would affect the generalization in understanding the study. Secondly, a qualitative approach—which explores in-person with one-on-one interviews—may have provided a more detailed explanation between communication apprehension and leadership style. An in-depth interview may have allowed for the researcher to dig deeper into the participant's true communication behaviors and leadership styles. Furthermore, a similar study that tries to explain a more specific job recruitment process, such as in the interview process will also enlighten our understanding of communication apprehension and leadership.

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