Investigating the Relationship between Leader Personality and Rating Behavior

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Abstract

The goal of this symposium is to discuss factors that can affect 360-degree performance ratings. Derek Lusk and Karen Fuhrmeister contributed a study exploring personality and self-other discrepancies in 360-degree ratings.

Introduction

Multisource feedback (hereafter "360") has been increasingly popular since its emergence (Church, 1995; Hazucha, Hezlett, & Schneider, 1993; London & Beatty, 1993). Because single-source supervisor ratings often lead to criterion deficiency (e.g., Cooper, 1981; Oh & Berry, 2009), researchers and practitioners often turn to 360 to compile additional inputs from self, subordinates, peers, and other resources (e.g., clients) to more comprehensively capture job performance (Conway & Huffcutt, 1997; Craig & Hannum, 2006).

Despite the popularity of 360 practices, however, there is a lack of agreement upon the value of multisource feedback. Particularly, numerous researchers (e.g., Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Mount, 1984; Thornton, 1980) find significant differences between self-ratings and ratings provided by others (e.g., supervisors, peers, and direct reports). Nevertheless, a few others challenge the existence of true rater disagreements (e.g., Bliese, 2000; LeBreton et al., 2003) and advocate aggregating inputs from multiple sources. According to Bracken et al. (2001), the primary goal of 360 is to motivate behavior change through feedback. Therefore, it is critical to understand the personal attributes, such as self-awareness, of leaders to develop tailored interventions that ensure performance improvements. Past research on rating biases suggest that self-ratings can be unreliable due to factors such as self-serving attribution bias, actor-observer effect, and self-enhancement mechanisms (Farh & Dobbins, 1989a; 1989b). Yet, being aware of one's strengths and limitations is important for leadership effectiveness.

Early research on managerial self-awareness using limited samples of managers from specific industries (e.g., navel officers, hospital administrators) shows significant relationships between self-awareness and leadership effectiveness (e.g., Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992; Van Velsor et al., 1993). According to Church (1997), high-performing managers show higher congruence between self-ratings and ratings from direct reports. Besides implications for positive leadership behaviors, a recent study by Tang, Dai, and De Meuse (2011) also reveals a close relationship between self-other disagreements and leadership derailment behaviors.

Despite the close relationship between self-awareness and leadership effectiveness, questions remain concerning the mechanisms by which individuals differ in self-awareness. The purpose of the present study is to provide empirical evidence for the value of examining disagreements between self-ratings and those provided by other sources. Specifically, we explore the relationship between leader personality and leader-other disagreements.

Method

Our sample included 1,252 managers and executives who completed the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; R. Hogan & Hogan, 2007), the Hogan Development Survey (HDS; R. Hogan & Hogan, 2009), the Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI; R. Hogan & J. Hogan,

2010), and a 360-degree instrument (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2009). The HPI is a measure of everyday, normal personality tendencies, the HDS measures characteristics that can derail or inhibit performance, and the MVPI assesses an individual's core drivers and values. The 360 tool used in the present study measures leadership behaviors as defined by a four-domain model, which includes Self Management, Relationship Management, Business Skills, and Strategic Skills. The feedback process involved collecting the target manager's self-ratings on these performance domains, along with performance ratings from other sources such as subordinates and peers.

Our first step was to compare mean rating differences by rater group. We conducted an analyses of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey post-hoc comparisons for scores in each 360 performance domain. Results indicated significant differences between self-ratings and ratings from other sources across the four domains. As an example (Table 1), we found a significant difference between leader self-ratings and ratings from peers, managers, and subordinates on the Business Skills domain.

Next, to examine the relationship between leader personality and rater disagreements, we computed self-peer, self-manager, and self-subordinate disagreements by subtracting ratings from each source from self-ratings. This approach allows us to account for both the magnitude and direction of rater disagreements. Then, we identified the best combination of predictive personality dimensions by conducting a stepwise multiple regression. We used manager personality dimension and sub-dimension scores as the independent variables and rater disagreements as the dependent variables.

Results

Results indicated that taking into consideration a number of personality dimensions significantly predicts rater disagreements for each 360 performance domain. For instance, we computed a stepwise multiple regression to identify the best combination of personality characteristics for predicting leader-subordinate disagreement on the Business Skills performance domain. At step 1, HPI Ambition entered the equation with a positive correlation and highest relative importance, $F(1,623) = 45.14$, $p<.001$. At step 2, HPI Caring, a sub-dimension of Interpersonal Sensitivity (FFM Agreeableness), entered the equation with a negative correlation and next highest level of relative importance, $F(2,622) = 29.47$, $p<.001$. At step 3, the primary dimension HDS Bold entered the equation with a positive correlation and next highest level of importance, $F(3,621) = 25.19$. At step 4, HPI Even Tempered, a sub-dimension of HPI Adjustment (reverse scored FFM Neuroticism), entered the equation with a positive correlation and next highest level of importance, $F(4,620) = 21.87$.

After 10 steps, the linear combination of personality dimensions and sub-dimensions was significantly related to leader-subordinate disagreement, $F(10,614) = 12.98$, $p<.001$. The multiple correlation coefficient was .42, indicating that approximately 17.4% of the variance of leader-subordinate disagreement can be accounted for by the linear combination of 10 personality variables. These findings show that leader-subordinate disagreements on leader business performance – defined as having the experience, capability, competitive drive, and operational leadership skills to meet team objectives – are the result of overly competitive and self-confident leaders that overestimate their competence and performance while failing to support and show concern for subordinate needs. Ultimately, these leaders lack strategic self-awareness around their reputation and leadership effectiveness.

This research facilitates the understanding of individual differences in leader self-awareness. Moreover, the significant relationship between leader personality characteristics and self-other disagreements suggests that certain individual characteristics, such as being ambitious and overconfident, may contribute to these differences and a tendency to lack self-awareness. These findings may not only help explain self-other disagreements on 360 measures, but also provide further information to use in the development process. During the symposium, we will share our findings and discuss steps to improve the leadership development process.

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Table 1. *Business Skills ANOVA & Tukey Results by Rater Group*

Group A	M	SD	Group B	M	SD	A-B Mean Diff.	Std. Error	Sig.
Self	6.155	.754	Peer	6.263	.661	-.108	.032	.006
			Manager	6.363	.771	-.208	.032	.000
			Subordinates	6.530	.732	-.375	.032	.000
			Other	6.328	.553	-.173	.028	.000

Note: Self *N* = 1233, Peer *N* = 755, Manager *N* = 753, Subordinates *N* = 717, Other *N* = 1252; ANOVA (df = 4) F = 35.872, p < .001