

An Empirical Study on the Integrated Model of Followership and Leadership Styles in Japan

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This study explores an integrated model of followership and leadership styles that functions optimally. Utilizing Kelley's (1992) model of followership and Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory, Bjugstad et al. (2006) proposed a theoretical framework linking these constructs. However, empirical exploration remains limited in the literature. The analysis focused on variables, such as demographic factors, affective commitment, followership, and leadership. Affective commitment was measured as a reflection of follower productivity, given its known impact on job performance. All proposed hypotheses were rejected, indicating that exemplary and conformist followership styles are associated with higher productivity, independent of leadership styles. Active followership enhances affective commitment among followers. Post-hoc analyses revealed that followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) positively influence affective commitment, while their combination with leadership (relationship behavior) yields negative effects. These findings highlight the complex dynamics between followership and leadership in promoting affective commitment within organizations.

Followership refers to the idea that followers share organizational goals with leaders and act toward those goals to directly or indirectly influence the leader and the organization (Nishinobo & Furuta, 2013). In today's highly competitive business environment, effective followership behavior is essential for organization's success. Previous research has demonstrated that followership behavior positively affects organizational outcomes (Herdian et al., 2022; Matsuyama & Mori, 2022). However, the interaction between follower and leader style is rarely discussed and adds good depth to our understanding of them. Recent studies on followership have begun to shift this perspective, highlighting how followers can actively influence leaders, particularly in terms of their behavior (Oc & Bashshur, 2013).

In recent years, empirical research on followership has primarily used Kelley's (1992) followership measurement scale to examine independent and dependent variables associated with Kelley's followership model (Matsuyama and Mori, 2022). However, the relationship between followership and leadership style has not been clarified empirically. This unexplored area presents an opportunity for future research to investigate how alignment or mismatch between followership and leadership styles may impact role-based followership theory. It is believed that followers' characteristics and behaviors shape leaders' attitudes and behaviors (Yang & Zhang, 2023). Given the accepted notion that there is no leadership without followers (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014), it is worthwhile to examine the interaction between leadership and followership behaviors.

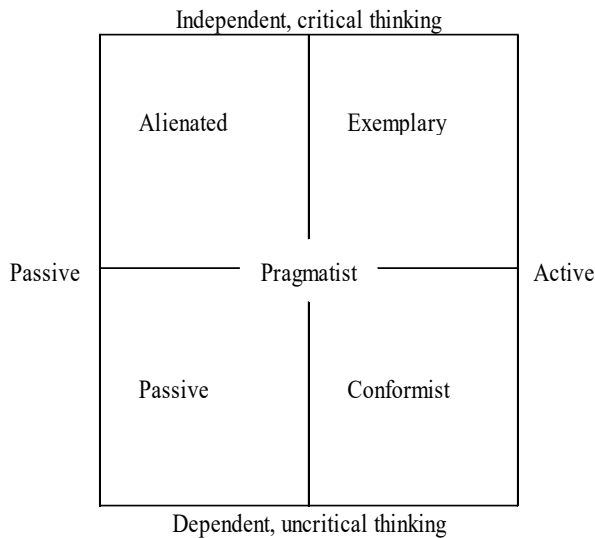
This study aims to investigate an integrated model of followership and leadership styles that functions optimally. Using Kelley's (1992) followership model and Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory,

Bjugstad et al. (2006) proposed a combined framework for understanding these concepts. However, an empirical examination of this integrated model has yet to be conducted (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Clarifying this model through empirical research could lead to significant practical advancements such as enhancing the efficiency of recruitment, assignment, and training within human resource management. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature on the role-based approach to followership and leadership processes. Since leadership is inherently a relational process (Uhl-Bien, 2006), we explored the impacts of this integrated model of followership and leadership styles.

Theory and Hypotheses

Kelley's Followership Theory

Kelley (1992) categorized follower types along two dimensions; Independent, critical thinking and Active. Followers who exhibit independent, critical thinking consider the implications of their actions, demonstrate a willingness to be creative and innovative, and may offer constructive criticism. Conversely, followers who are dependent and uncritical tend to comply with the directives of their leaders. The second dimension, active, is used to determine the level of ownership that the follower demonstrates (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Kelley employed these two dimensions to classify into five distinct follower types (Figure 1). Kelley emphasized the uniqueness of exemplary followers and advocated for individuals to strive for this classification. Bjugstad et al. (2006) used only the four-quadrant subset, excluding pragmatists, in their integrated model. The following characteristics represent four types of followership as Kelley (1992) described. We briefly describe the characteristics of Kelley's four types of followers.

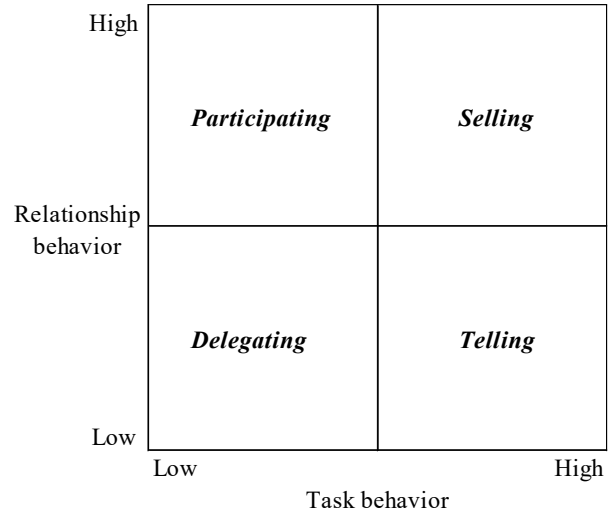
Figure 1*Kelley's Types of Followership Styles*

Exemplary followers are distinguished from other types by their balanced approaches to both dimensions. These individuals exhibit independent and critical thinking, demonstrate innovation and creativity, remain receptive to constructive criticism, and are willing to evaluate their leadership critically. Alienated followers possess critical thinking skills; however, they exhibit a negative disposition toward fulfilling their roles and tend to deviate from their colleagues in terms of behavior and attitude. Conformist followers are the 'yes people' of the organizations. They were obligated to accept their leaders' orders. Passive followers rely entirely on their leaders' judgment and thinking and lack passion, initiative, and a sense of responsibility. They require constant direction.

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory

Situational leadership theory is a popular theory based on task behavior, the relationship behavior of a leader, and a follower's maturity (Johansen, 1990). The leader is directed to adopt one of four styles based on the degree of relationship- and task-oriented behavior required by the situation (Bjugstad et al., 2006). These four leadership styles include Telling, Selling, Participating, and Delegating (Figure 2). Here, we briefly describe the characteristics of Hersey and Blanchard's four situational leadership quadrants:

Telling is an appropriate leadership style when an individual or group has low ability, willingness, and needs. Other one-word descriptors of this leadership style include guiding, directing, and structuring. Selling is a leadership style that differs from itself. The leader not only provides guidance but also provides the opportunity for dialogue and clarification to help the person buy in psychologically to what the leader wants. Participating is a

Figure 2*Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Quadrants*

leadership-style leader's major role in encouraging and communicating. Other descriptors of this leadership style include collaborating, facilitating, or committing. Each of these implies high relationships and low task behavior. Delegating is a leadership style that includes observation and monitoring. Some relationship behavior is still needed, but it tends to be less than average. It is still appropriate to monitor the pulse of what is going on, but it is important to allow them to take responsibility and implement it on their own (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

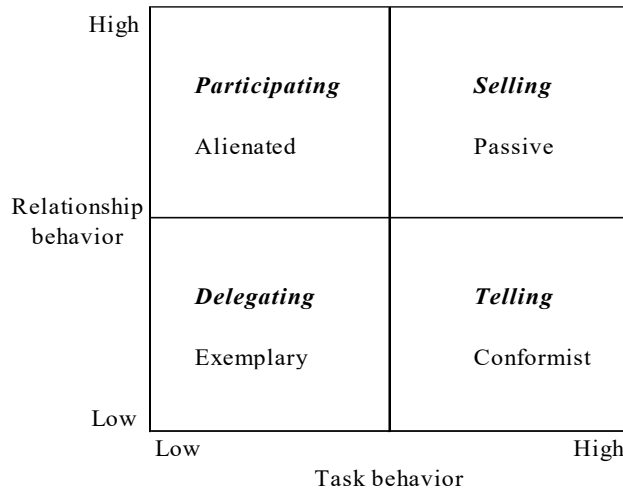
An Integrated Model of Followership and Leadership Styles

Bjugstad et al. propose a concept that integrates Kelley's followership style with Hersey and Blanchard's leadership style, aiming to enhance follower productivity in practical settings (Figure 3). Table 1 outlines the recommended behaviors for both leaders and followers in each quadrant of the integrated model of followership and leadership styles put forward by Bjugstad et al. (2006).

According to Bjugstad et al. (2006), a leader's participation style, which is a low task and high relationship behavior, seems to fit best with a follower's alienated style, which is low active and independent critical thinking behavior. Alienated followers are capable but need more consideration to create mutual respect and trust and eliminate some of their cynicism.

Hypothesis 1: When a leader has a participative style, the affective commitment of followers with an alienating style is statistically higher than that of followers of other styles.

A leader's selling style, which is a high task behavior and relationship behavior, seems to fit best with a follower's passive style, which is a low active and independent critical thinking behavior. The telling style is arguably a

Figure 3*Integrated Model of Followership and Leader-*

good match for passive followers, who need direction and guidance. With the support of leaders, passive followers can enhance their production and receive encouragement (Bjugstad et al. 2006).

Hypothesis 2: When a leader has a selling style, the affective commitment of followers with a passive style is statistically higher than that of followers of other styles.

A leader's delegating style, which is low task and relationship behavior, seems to fit best with a follower's exemplary style, highly active and independent, critical thinking behavior. Exemplary followers can be positioned in the delegating-style quadrant, where the leader turns over responsibility for decisions and implementation. Exemplary followers are up to the challenges of this category and should flourish for the benefit of the organization. By meshing the styles of leaders and followers, organizations can maximize their strengths and minimize the weaknesses of leader-follower relationships (Bjugstad et al., 2006).

Table 1*Behaviors Recommended for Optimum Matching of Styles*

Leadership Quadrant	Leader Behaviors Recommended	Follower Behaviors Recommended	Followership Quadrant
Participating	The inclusion of followers in decision-making causes alienated followers to take ownership	Becoming more involved through participation. Changing insider vs. outsider mindset	Alienated
Selling	Explaining decisions and clarifying expectations to engage passive followers	Doing as requested	Passive
Telling	Detailing expectations and monitoring performance to direct conformist followers	Showing that results are important	Conformist
Delegating	Turning over decision making responsibility and implementation	Demonstrating results with increased responsibility	Exemplary

Hypothesis 3: When a leader has a delegating style, the affective commitment of followers with an exemplary style is statistically higher than that of followers of other styles.

A leader's telling style, high task, and relationship behavior seem to fit best with a follower's conformist style of highly active and low independent, critical thinking behavior. Conformist followers with their attitudes can be placed in the telling style quadrant, which characterizes a leadership style that focuses on providing specific instructions and closely monitoring performance (Bjugstad et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 4: When a leader has a telling style, the affective commitment of followers with a conformist style is statistically higher than that of followers with other styles.

Methods**Participants**

We surveyed 524 full-time employees of a Japanese trading company (Mage= 38.59, SD = 9.54, female; 31.3%) who completed the study, yielding a response rate of 69.22%. The survey was conducted from August 22 to 31, 2014. The web survey screen provided explanations of ethical considerations and guarantees of anonymity, and consent for participation in the survey was confirmed.

Measures

We measured all variables using a 5-point scale (from 0: never to 4: always). Respondents were requested to answer the questions honestly. We conducted confirmatory factor analysis to confirm that the dimensions of followership and leadership captured the concepts we wanted to measure. Second, exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the job satisfaction scales used in this study. Third, a one-way ANOVA and Tukey's multiple comparisons were conducted to test the hypotheses. Finally, a post-hoc analysis was conducted using hierarchical multiple regression analysis to determine which followership behaviors, leadership behaviors, and their interactions affected followers' productivity.

We measured followership using eight items adapted from Nishinobo and Furuta's (2013) measurement scale.

This scale has 30 items however the research partner company requested a reduction in the number of items. We selected questions with high factor loadings from Nishinobo and Furuta's (2013) scale. Finally, the items of followership included four items of followership (active) and four items of followership (independent, critical thinking). For each dimension, Kelley's (1992) followership measurement scale was used for one out of four items, and three items were from Nishinobo and Furuta's (2013) measurement scale.

We measured leadership using eight items adapted from Takahara and Yamashita's (2004) scale. This scale was developed using four items for leadership (task behavior) and leadership (relationship behavior), using the LBDQ-XII. This scale achieved reliable results for a major pharmaceutical company in Japan. Therefore, we used the leadership scale in this study. Affective commitment was measured following Kitai (2014). Bjugstad et al. (2006) showed that a combination of followership and leadership styles can increase followers' productivity. According to Robbins (2005), organizational commitment positively affects job productivity. Several researchers have also demonstrated a positive relationship between organizational commitment and productivity (e.g. Katz & Kahn, 1966; Randall, 1987; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Results

The average age of the participants was 38.59 years ($SD = 9.5$). There are nine departments in this company, the rest being indirect departments such as human resources and accounting. In terms of gender, there were 360 men (68.7%) and 164 women (31.3%), years of service are 115 (21.9%) with 0 to 4 years of service, 154 (29.4%) with 5 to 9 years, 86 (16.4%) with 10 to 14 years, 64 (12.2%) with 15 to 19 years, 67 (12.8%) with 20 to 24 years, 33 (6.3%) with 25 to 29 years, and 5 (1.0%) with 30 years or more (Table 2).

We conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses to ensure a distinct factor structure of leadership and followership. A two-factor leadership model was $\chi^2(13) = 38.320$, $p < .000$, CFI = .990, GFI = .979, AGFI = .955, RMSEA = .061, and a two-factor followership model was $\chi^2(26) = 71.138$, $p < .000$, CFI = .974, GFI = .973, AGFI = .952, RMSEA = .058. A two-factor model of leadership and followership provided a good fit for the data. Therefore, we adopt a two-factor structure of leadership and followership.

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability coefficients for each variable used in this research. Consistent with previous research (Nishinobo, 2014; Nishinobo, 2021), affective commitment was positively correlated with followership and leadership variables. The reliability of the variables ranged from .80 to .91. For subsequent analyses, we used the mean value of the items comprising each factor as the variable score.

Procedures and Experimental Design

Kelley (1992) classifies scores above midpoint 2 of a 5-point Likert scale as a high group and below midpoint 2

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	%
Gender		
Male	360	68.7
Female	164	31.3
Division		
1st	101	19.3
2nd	112	21.4
3rd	53	10.1
4th	17	3.2
5th	40	7.6
6th	53	10.1
7th	33	6.3
8th	35	6.7
Others	80	15.3
Service (years)		
0–4	115	21.9
5–9	154	29.4
10–14	86	16.4
15–19	64	12.2
20–24	67	12.8
25–29	33	6.3
more than 30	5	1

as a low group of each followership dimension. Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory is the same. However, the data obtained in this study showed a large bias in the number of combinations of followership and leadership styles (See Table 4). Therefore, we subtracted the median from the values for each dimension of followership and leadership, and divided the participants into high and low groups. Using the median value, we can roughly classify followership and leadership behaviors into high and low organizational groups (See Table 5).

Test of the Integrated Model of Followership and Leadership

To test Hypotheses 1 to 4, we performed one-way ANOVA (see Table 6). The analysis results showed that none of the hypotheses were supported. However, exemplary and conformist followership styles tend to be more productive, regardless of the leadership style. In other words, it was suggested that followership (active) may increase affective commitment. Therefore, we conducted a post-hoc analysis of the effects of followership and leadership behaviors and their interactions on affective commitment rather than on followership and leadership styles. First, we conducted a Z-transformation to avoid multicollinearity owing to correlations between the main effects and interactions (Aiken & West, 1991).

However, the post-hoc analysis also suggested the main effects of followership (active) on affective commitment ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$) and leadership (task behavior) ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$). Next, the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) positively affected affective commitment ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$). In contrast, the in-

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Followership: active	2.81	0.56	(.80)				
2. Followership: independent, critical thinking	2.07	0.72	.386**	(.84)			
3. Leadership: task behavior	2.83	0.82	.420**	.052	(.87)		
4. Leadership: relationship behavior	2.68	0.87	.485**	.160**	.701**	(.91)	
5. Affective commitment	2.96	0.66	.496**	.214**	.354**	.376**	(.91)

Note. *N* = 524. Cronbach Alphas appear in parentheses within the diagonal. ***p* < 0.05.

Table 4*A Cross-Tabulation Table of the Followership and Leadership Styles Divided by Midpoint*

		Followership style				Sum
		Conformist	Passive	Alienated	Exemplary	
Leadership Style	Telling	14	3	2	19	38
	Selling	154	7	1	272	434
	Participating	4	0	1	12	17
	Delegating	12	5	3	15	35
	Sum	184	15	7	318	524

Note. Each variable value is divided into high and low groups, with the median as the dividing line, and classified into followership and leadership styles.

Table 5*A Cross-Tabulation Table of the Followership and Leadership Styles Divided by Median*

		Followership style				Sum
		Conformist	Passive	Alienated	Exemplary	
Leadership Style	Telling	9	18	10	23	60
	Selling	46	37	26	141	250
	Participating	13	9	14	23	59
	Delegating	12	55	53	35	155
	Sum	80	119	103	222	524

Note. Each variable value is divided into high and low groups, with the midpoint as the dividing line, and classified into followership and leadership styles.

teraction between followership (active) and leadership (relationship behavior) had a negative effect on affective commitment ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$) (Table 7). The results partially supported those of Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore, & Bullock (2009). The results of our multiple regression analysis confirmed that the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) had a significant positive effect on affective commitment, and the interaction term between followership (active) and leadership (relationship behavior) had a significant negative effect on affective commitment. A graph of the significant interactions is shown in Figures 4 and 5.

Discussion

While the interaction between followership and leadership is widely acknowledged, there remains a significant gap in research regarding the impact of this interaction on follower productivity. This model illustrates how the fields of followership and leadership can be synthesized for practical applications aimed at enhancing follower productivity. Building on Bjugstad et al.'s (2006) integrative model, we hypothesized four combinations of followership and leadership styles that relate to follower productivity and conducted statistical analyses to test these hypotheses. Our findings indicate that the integrated followership and leadership style model proposed by Bjugstad et

Table 6*Results of One-Way ANOVA, Dependent Variable is Affective Commitment*

Leadership style	Followership style	Frequency	Mean	SD	F-value	Tukey's multiple comparison
Telling	Conformist [?]	9	2.78	0.57	9.66***	Exemplary > Alienated
	Exemplary	23	3.27	0.44		Exemplary > Passive
	Alienated	10	2.66	0.63		
	Passive	18	2.36	0.63		
Selling	Conformist	46	3.21	0.55	7.52***	Conformist > Passive
	Exemplary	141	3.27	0.57		Exemplary > Alienated
	Alienated	26	2.90	0.41		Exemplary > Passive
	Passive [?]	37	2.85	0.56		
Participating	Conformist	13	3.18	0.44	1.27	
	Exemplary	23	2.90	0.88		
	Alienated [?]	14	2.70	0.80		
	Passive	9	2.64	0.69		
Delegating	Conformist	12	3.03	0.42	8.66***	Exemplary > Alienated
	Exemplary [?]	35	3.13	0.69		Exemplary > Passive
	Alienated	53	2.57	0.64		
	Passive	55	2.56	0.54		
All	Conformist	80	3.13	0.53	34.03***	Conformist > Alienated
	Exemplary	222	3.21	0.63		Conformist > Passive
	Alienated	103	2.68	0.62		Exemplary > Alienated
	Passive	119	2.63	0.59		Exemplary > Passive

Note. ★ indicates the followership style that fits best with each leadership style, as assumed by the previous study.

*** $p < 0.001$.

Table 7*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis on Affective Commitment (Post-Hoc Analysis)*

Variable	Affective commitment model		
	1	2	3
Gender	-0.16***	-0.12**	-0.13**
Division	-0.01	0.03	0.03
Followership (active)		0.38***	0.39***
Followership (independent, critical thinking)		0.03	0.03
Leadership (task behavior)		0.12*	0.13*
Leadership (relationship behavior)		0.10	0.08
Followership (active) × Leadership (task behavior)			0.15*
Followership (active) × Leadership (relationship behavior)			-0.15*
Followership (independent, critical thinking) × Leadership (task behavior)			0.05
Followership (independent, critical thinking) × Leadership (relationship behavior)			-0.05
Adjust R ²	0.02**	0.29***	0.29*
F-value	7.32***	35.90***	22.77***

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$. VIF < 3.02.

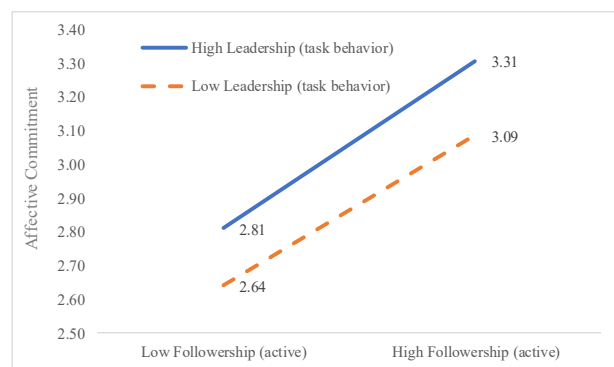
al. (2006) is not the most effective approach for improving follower productivity.

There are two reasons why these hypotheses were not supported. First, Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory has faced significant criticism regarding its theoretical foundations (Avery & Ryan, 2002; Blake & Mouton, 1981; Graeff, 1983; 1997; Johansen,

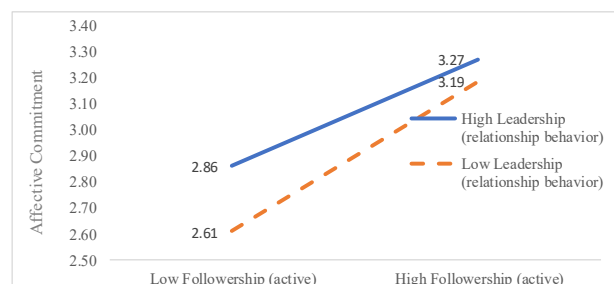
1990; Nicholls, 1985). Furthermore, Hersey & Blanchard (1969a; 1969b), who explored the theory's origins, lack empirical support. As Norris & Vecchio (1992) and Fernandez & Vecchio (1997) point out, the key to validating situational leadership theory is establishing measurement methods that do not introduce bias. Therefore, future research should investigate various leadership and follow-

Figure 4

Interaction Between Followership (Active) and Leadership (Task Behavior) on Affective Commitment

**Figure 5**

Interaction Between Followership (Active) and Leadership (Relationship Behavior) on Affective Commitment



ership theories. There is an ongoing discuss about the integration of followership with different leadership theories (Küpers & Weibler, 2008). For example, combining servant leadership with followership may enhance productivity, including among followers exhibiting alienated and passive styles of followership (independent, critical thinking). Second, this study utilized affective commitment as a variable to measure follower productivity. However, Blanchard et al. (2009) found that follower active engagement among followers is closely linked to affective commitment. In the future, it will be essential to measure follower productivity using variables such as work output.

On the other hand, the post-hoc analysis revealed that followership (active), leadership (task behavior), and the interaction of followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) had a positive effect on affective commitment positively influenced affective commitment. Furthermore, the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (relationship behavior) had a negative effect on affective commitment. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the impact of followership behaviors and styles, as well as the combination of various leadership theories, on followers' productivity.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature. First, we demonstrated that an integrated model of followership and leadership styles aimed at enhancing follower productivity was not empirically supported. However, the post-hoc analysis suggests that specific followership and leadership behaviors, as well as their interactions, may influence followers' productivity. This finding aligns with previous studies (Novikov, 2016; Amanollah et al., 2013; Nishinobo, 2015) and contributes to the role-based approach to followership.

Second, this paper contributes to the understanding of the leadership process by empirically demonstrating the mutual influence between followers and leaders. The leadership process refers to the dynamic interaction between leaders and followers. However, previous research has primarily examined leader behavior as an independent variable (Hamada & Shoji, 2015). This study adopted an approach that emphasizes the reciprocal influence between followership and leadership. Our analysis revealed that the interaction between followership (active) and leadership (task behavior) had a positive effect on followers' productivity, while the interaction between active followership (active) and leadership negatively impacted productivity.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. The limitations of this study and future research, are outlined in four points. First, collecting and analyzing data will be essential in the future, not only for Japanese companies but also for various countries and industries. Second, this study analyzed the results of followers' responses. Future research should examine followers' behaviors as perceived by their leaders. Third, as mentioned above, we must consider various combinations of leadership and followership, such as the impact of combining servant leadership with followership on follower productivity. Furthermore, it is important to identify the variables to be used when analyzing productivity. Fourth, Kelley (1992) classified followership types using the midpoint of a five-point scale; however, in this study, the classification of followership types was significantly biased. Therefore, the following types were classified using the median. Consequently, future research should aim to collect data from more than 10,000 valid respondents.

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