Chapter 82
Differentiating between Leadership Competencies and Styles:
A Critical Review in Project Management Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Literature reveals a number of confusions within the area of project management regarding the use of terminology and differing interpretations, concerning leadership competencies and leadership styles. In project management literature, many empirical studies have examined the influence of leadership competencies or styles, but yet any substantial review study has rarely been conducted to differentiate between leadership competencies and styles. This study aims to differentiate between leadership competencies and leadership styles in project management literature. This study found that the project manager's leadership terms including competence, competency, competencies, and styles have frequently been used in project management literature. Furthermore, literature has been synthesized to provide more familiarity and understanding on leadership competencies and styles. Findings indicate that leadership competencies and styles are two different things but a few characteristics are common between both the terms. Furthermore, leadership competencies are more suitable for task-oriented activities and leadership styles are more appropriate for relationship-oriented factors. This study has implications for the future directions to identify differences between project manger's average and superior performance through comparison of leadership competencies and styles.

INTRODUCTION

During last one decade, a number of terms in the context of project manger's leadership have been used frequently, collectively and interchangeably that includes competence, competency, competencies, styles, profiles, dimensions, and factors. These terms are being used simultaneously in project management literature which have different concepts, complexity and meanings. Therefore, these terms need to be clarified in order to circumvent an ambiguity in the research. (Higgs, 2003) argued that leadership has been studied more than any other aspect of human behavior through different leadership schools of thoughts. The project manager's leadership is very important in achieving project success. Yang, Wu, and Huang (2013) suggested that project manager's leadership competency/style may be examined by future research which have been disregarded as project success factors in earlier studies. The leadership competencies play various roles during implementation of different project activities which have mostly been disregarded in the leadership literature (Higgs & Rowland, 2005).

Chen (2010) analyzed leadership competencies and leadership styles of managers in design industries in Taiwan, by focusing on product design, visual communication, interior design, and fashion design businesses. Chen (2010) suggested that future research must be carried out to achieve more comprehensive understanding between leadership competencies and leadership styles. Moore, Cheng, and Dainty (2002) and Armstrong (1996) conducted comprehensive review studies to differentiate the terms relating to competence, competency, or competencies. The focus of Turner and Müller (2005) study was to examine the contribution of project manager's leadership and competence towards project success. However, any study has rarely been conducted to differentiate between the project manager's leadership competencies and to what extant both terms are different. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are leadership competencies and styles in project management literature?
2. Do leadership competencies and styles are different?

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on project manager's leadership competencies and leadership styles but rarely a substantial study has been conducted to differentiate between these two leadership components. In this context, a few most relevant studies conducted in these areas are discussed to understand similarities and dissimilarities between leadership competencies and styles. Therefore, the objective of this article is to: a) explores literature to define leadership competencies and leadership styles; b) synthesize literature on key leadership competencies and leadership styles; and c) examine how leadership competencies and styles are different. The review of literature reveals that project manager's leadership competencies and/or leadership styles may directly or indirectly influence on project success but the literature ignored to clearly differentiate between the leadership competencies and styles of project managers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Competency

The word "competency" and "competence" are defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English as: the ability (to do, for a task); legal capacity, right to take cognizance (of court, magistrate,

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