



# Respected Leaders:

A Question of Accepted Influence, Perceived Legitimacy and Personal Identification

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## Background

Influence is the key function of leadership (Yukl, 2002). Usually, this is understood from the leader's perspective and the influence he or she has on his or her subordinates. The subordinate's perspective of leadership, however, is largely overlooked even though the degree to which subordinates are open towards a leader's influence is pivotal for the success of leadership.

This work aims to introduce the construct of *Respect for Leaders* in organisational research. Respect for Leaders is understood as the degree to which a leader's influence is voluntarily accepted and sought by subordinates (cf. Dillon, 2003). Established constructs of organisational research, such as *Affective Commitment* towards, *Identification* with, and *Personal Power* attributed to the leader are proposed to be closely related constructs as they also cover certain aspects of the *openness towards leadership* phenomenon.

We conducted three studies to test the scale's psychometric properties and its convergent validity with the above constructs.

## Study 1

### Sample

The purpose of this study was to generate a first pool of items and limit them to a standardized scale with sound psychometric properties. 145 professional participants were surveyed online, 57% of which were female. The average age was 29 (SD = 9.2), with 8 years of professional experience (SD = 8.3). All participants have had at least two leaders in their professional career and were subordinate to a leader at the time of the survey.

### Measure

Items were developed on the basis of a first content analysis of respondents' answers to the question "What characterized your relationship with leaders, you respected and with those you did not respect?". After generating a pool of potential items encompassing the different aspects mentioned by the respondents, we checked for redundancies and tautology. Six items remained. These items were subjected to participants who had to indicate from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much in how far each item was true for their current leader.

### Results

The findings were analysed via Principal Component Analysis and Item Analysis. The Principal Component Analysis of the items revealed - in agreement with our initial reasoning - only a single factor solution. The factor explains 65.5% of the variance. Table 1 presents the formulations and factor loadings for the various items.

Table 1 Respect for Leaders: Item formulations and Item loadings (N = 145)

Item	Loading	Formulation
1.	.87	For me, my leader represents a positive role model at the workplace.
2.	.87	I trust the judgement of my leader in work issues.
3.	.82	In a lot of matters concerning work I gladly seek advice from my leader.
4.	.84	At work I enjoy being able to learn from my leader.
5.	.62	Due to the influence of my leader I feel very constricted in my professional development (reverse).
6.	.82	I owe respect to the way my leader accomplishes her/his professional functions.
Total	3.90	

Due to the one factor solution, we can assume that, indeed the essence of Respect for Leaders is the degree to which subordinates are open towards their leader's influence.

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, item-total correlations and intercorrelations of the items. The internal consistency (cronbachs  $\alpha$ ) lies at .89.

Table 2 Respect for Leaders: Item Analysis and Intercorrelations (N = 145)

Item	M	SD	Item-Total (Corrected)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	3.2	1.2	.78	-					
2.	3.4	1.0	.79	.71**	-				
3.	3.4	1.1	.71	.64**	.71**	-			
4.	3.3	1.2	.75	.69**	.70**	.68**	-		
5.	3.8	1.2	.49	.42**	.45**	.33**	.37**	-	
6.	3.6	1.2	.73	.69**	.61**	.54**	.58**	.54**	-
Total	3.2	0.7							

\*\* p < .01

## Study 2 & 3

The focus of Study 2 and 3 was an analysis on the convergent validity of the Respect

for Leaders construct with closely related constructs which, in our point of view, also encompass the notion of openness towards leadership to some degree. We recruited both samples via a multi-site (different websites) multi-entry (banner, text-box, newsletter) strategy. Thus our samples contain employees from very diverse backgrounds with respect to branches, positions etc.

### Sample Study 2

539 employees were surveyed, 50% of which were female. The average age was 37 (SD = 9.4) with 15 years of professional experience (SD = 9.6). All participants have had at least two leaders in their professional career and were subordinate to a leader at the time of the survey.

### Sample Study 3

542 employees were surveyed, 44% of which were female. The average age was 36 (SD = 9.2) with 15 years of professional experience (SD = 9.7). All participants have had at least two leaders in their professional career and were subordinate to a leader at the time of the survey.

### Measures

The Respect for Leaders Scale was presented together with *Affective Commitment* towards the Leader (Meyer & Allen, 1991), *Identification* with the leader (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and *Personal Power* attributed to the leader (adaptation of Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Indications on all scales again had to be made from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much with respect to how far each item was true for participants' current leader.

### Results

Over both Studies, Respect for Leaders correlates significantly with the more indirect measures of openness to a leader's influence.

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and internal consistencies of Study 2.

Table 3 Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations and Internal Consistencies of Respect, Affective Commitment, Identification and Personal Power (N = 539)

Scale	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Respect	3.0	1.1	(.92)			
2. Affective Commitment	2.7	0.8	.62**	(.71)		
3. Identification	2.1	0.8	.44**	.54**	(.77)	
4. Personal Power	2.9	1.1	.76**	.60**	.45**	(.74)

Note. Cronbachs alpha is indicated in brackets

\*\* p < .01

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and internal consistencies of Study 3.

Table 4 Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations and Internal Consistencies of Respect, Affective Commitment, Identification and Personal Power (N = 542)

Scale	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Respect	3.1	1.1	(.92)			
2. Affective Commitment	2.8	0.9	.72**	(.77)		
3. Identification	2.2	0.8	.52**	.59**	(.79)	
4. Personal Power	2.9	1.1	.81**	.70**	.51**	(.73)

Note. Cronbachs alpha is indicated in brackets

\*\* p < .01

## Discussion

The Respect for Leaders Scale shows sound scale and item characteristics. It is internally reliable and covers the phenomenon of openness to leadership with not only face valid items but also proved to be convergent valid with more indirect, affective, and power related constructs.

Having obtained very satisfactory results at this stage, future studies which investigate a more direct link of openness towards a leader (e.g., via observational data) seem desirable as they will bolster our confidence in the scale and could underline even more strongly the importance of subordinates' openness to leadership for the aspect of leadership success.

## Literature

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