

# **MOTIVATION TO LEAD: LINKING LEADER REGULATORY FOCUS, LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS, AND MOTIVATIONAL AND CULTURAL MODERATORS**

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## Abstract

*The majority of the leadership literature, taking leader behaviors as given, examines the effectiveness of leadership under various boundary conditions and mechanisms. This line of research has cumulated tremendous knowledge about leadership phenomenon in the workplace. However, much less is known about what and how supervisors' individual dispositions motivate them to lead.*

*Rather than treating leadership as a given, this proposed study attempts to explore how leader's trait regulatory focus (promotion versus prevention) might influence his or her leadership behaviors. It investigates the mainstream theories of transformational and transactional leadership. Moreover, recent development of motivation has stress the importance of people's regulatory focus in shaping their motivations and behaviors. Higgins (2000) articulates the human nature of approaching pleasure and avoiding pain, and develops the theory of self-regulatory focus. This theory distinguishes two major functions of self-focus in relation to desired end-state: promotion focus and prevention focus. This study posits that supervisor promotion focus is positively related to transformational leadership (H1) and that leader prevention focus is positively related to transactional leadership (H2).*

*Furthermore, the study proposes two supervisor's beliefs as potential boundary conditions of the relationships between regulatory focus and leadership styles: creative self-efficacy and traditionality. Research has examined these motivational and cultural beliefs from workplace subordinates, but very limited efforts focus on supervisors, leaving a void in our understanding leadership phenomenon. Creative self-efficacy is defined as the belief one has about the ability to develop creative outcomes in the workplace (Tierney & Framers, 2002). Traditionality, rooted in the Confucian societies, encompasses such elements as respect for authority, and conservatism and endurance. Individuals with high traditionality believe that hierarchical relationship should be maintained and interpersonal conflict should be prevented (Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007).*

*This study further proposes that creative self-efficacy enhances the relationship posited in H1 (H3), that traditionality enhances the relationship posited in H2 (H4), that the relationship in H1 is strongest when creative self-efficacy is high and when traditionality is low (H5), and that the relationship in H2 is strongest when creative self-efficacy is low and when traditionality is high (H6).*

*Kark and Van Dijk (2007) developed an important conceptual framework integrating theories of motivation and leadership. In their generic model, they proposed that leaders' trait regulatory focus, along with their values, influences their motivation to lead and subsequently the leadership they display and follower outcomes. But our literature review indicates limited research explicitly testing their model. Our proposed study aims to fill that gap.*

Keywords: leadership; regulatory focus; creative self-efficacy; traditionality; motivation

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