



The Influence of Followership on Organizational Identification and the Mitigating Effect of Communication Climate

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Abstract

Today's workplaces are in need of followers who are proactively engaged in leadership process and bring fresh ideas to organizations. The study aims to empirically investigate to how does followership interact with leadership and explore the factors which influence the impact of followership on organizational outcome. The two behavioral dimensions of Kelley's (1992) followership scale was adapted for analyses. The active engagement dimension of followership has positive impact on organizational identification, and communication climate was discovered as a critical element to mediate the influence. The paper suggests new insights on organizational management and provides a foundation for further followership research.

Keywords: Followership, active engagement, communication climate, organizational identification, Network centrality.

I. Introduction

Recently, we have observed an increasing number of organizations focusing on followership of individual employees. Workplaces are in need of employees who are proactively engaged in solving corporate issues regardless of roles or positions (Howell and Shamir, 2005). While the previous leadership theories have been caught attention in past years, the academic and practical focus on leaders have been gradually shifted to followers, as well as to the influence of followers and its outcomes within organizations. In previous leadership studies, employees have been often considered as recipients of the leader's influence, rather following leaders' decisions to assist leader's visions (Heller and Til, 1982). Followership has been defined as contribution of employees to follow the leaders' decisions and pursue directions designed by leaders (Blau, 1968).

However, a number of studies shed a light on new definition of followership such that followers should be more understood as one type of organizational role and must be viewed as partners of leaders (Potter, Rosenbach and Pittman, 1996). The sweeping view of organizational mechanism suggests that the impact of followers becomes a resource of social influence on leaders and

organizations (Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich, 1985). Since leadership is operationalized as sum of perceptions of the followers, followership theories emphasize the followers' beliefs and thoughts as antecedents playing integral part of the leadership (Bjugstad et al. 2006). It realizes as leadership as a decision-making process through social interaction with other employees in organizations (Berger, Ridgeway, and Zelditch, 2002). Leadership can be exerted only when followers support the leadership.

The significance of followership has shown its positive influence on organizational outcomes. Followership suggests that followers are more seen as co-contributors by taking an active and participative role in organizations (Baker and Gerlowski, 2007). Organizational identification refers to the degree to which individual employees put importance on their organizations (Ashford and Stewart, 1996)). According to Kelley (1992), effective followers can be identified with two representative dimension; Active engagement and Independent critical thinking. The current study argues that the two behavioral characteristics of effective followers influence them to perceive more positive communication climate which contributes to high degree of organizational identification and the influence of followership on communication climate may be interact with network centrality.

There is a little amount of research carried out into followership (Crossman and Crossman, 2011), especially the organizational outcomes of effective followers can motivate as well as the essence to manage individual followers to enhance performance. The strong organizational identification is highly likely to lead employees to form open and positive mindsets towards their organizations and the leaders (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994), which is highly contributed to smooth operation of leadership process and increase effort investment of employees (Baker, Mathis, and Stites-Doe, 2011), which increase the overall effectiveness of organizations. The result of paper will be contributed to suggest directions of managerial operation and to contribute to develop validity of followership scale by looking at the each dimension separately. The academic and corporate interests of followership lead to the following research question for the present study:

To what extent does active engagement and independent critical thinking dimensions of followership influence organizational identification and how does communication climate mediates the influence? And what effect does the network centrality have on the relationship between the followership and communication climate?

II. Followership and Organizational identification

Several literature looked into the attributes of the followership and how the behavioral propensities of followership are involved with the leadership process (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). Zaleznik (1965) categorized followers with 'dominance' and 'activity' characteristic dimensions explains the range of how much employees want to control the superiors or want to be controlled. Although his work has importance as it initiated follower-centered research, however, it is mainly focused on dysfunctional followers rather than the effective followers (Uhl-Bien et al. 2014). Chaleff (1995) shed a light to followership and redefined the concept as 'courageous followers', followers

with holding much more power than it is understood. The characteristics of followers were divided into several groups with two dimensions, the degree of support that the follower provides to leaders and the degree of followers' challenge against the leaders. However the research has less focus on the individual followers and defines followers solely in the relationship with leaders. Kelley (1988) was focused on functional follower and examined behavioral characteristics of effective followership. When other research considers functional followership as supporting leader role (Shamir, 2007), Kelley's followership research emphasizes the role of individual followers as an essential component to build successful organizations. Therefore, the present study will adapt Kelley's (1998) definition of followership and will examine whether the two characteristics of followership affect the organizational outcomes.

The two behavioral dimensions are pointed out as determining behaviors of effective followers. The first dimension is *Active engagement* (AE) how followers fully participate, engage in organization, and initiate projects without constant supervision. The second dimension is *Independent critical thinking* (ICT), which describes level of mindfulness, possibilities to contribute to cultivate organizations and thoughtfulness of accepting new ideas. These behavioral characteristics may interact with each other as followers can foster both behavioral tendencies, however, does not show correlation between with each other (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). The effective followers holding both of these behaviors are regarded as most effective and functional agents rather than subordinates to support leadership (Uhl-Bien, et al. 2014).

Kelley (1992) conceptualizes behavioral characteristics of effective followers, with two dimensions. The first dimension, AE, describes the degree to which employees actively take part in performing tasks, taking initiative and feeling ownership within organizations. Organizational identification refers to the perception of belongingness to organizations (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). It illustrates the degree to which employees identify themselves with organizations they belong to. In order to achieve success, it is appeared to be essential in many organizations to have members feel strong oneness with organizations in order to achieve organizational success (Pratt, 2000). Organizational identification is positively related to individuals' affective organizational commitment and job involvement (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986).

Employees with high level of AE are likely to perceive their own responsibilities for the job and make more effort to accomplish missions (Rothbard, 2001). Actively engaging employees are more proactive to engage in solving problems and initiate projects in organizations, so that they tend to more be committed and contribute to the organization (Salanova et al 2003). Proactive participation in organizational activities enables employees to have higher job engagement and commitment to the organizations (Bateman and Crant, 1993). Since proactive behaviors of actively engaging followers is more likely to commit themselves to organizations (Strauss, Griffin and Rafferty, 2009), AE is suggested to have positive relationship with organizational identification.

On the other hand, the ICT dimension illustrates the degree to which followers analyze the

information, seek to critical insights, evaluate situations, and make judgments of the consequences of decision making (Myers and Rocca, 2001). ICT followers analyze information and often provide criticism for innovative and creative moves (Banutu-Gomez, 2004). Critical thinking may stimulates employees to get more aware of problems in their jobs and to notice negative sides of their organizations (Blanchard et al. 2009). Hence, ICT dimension will be negatively related to organizational identification. Previous research supports that AE is positively related to organizational commitment while ICT is negatively related to organizational commitment (Lee and Tsang, 2001). Organizational commitment is a strong predictor for organizational identification (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Therefore, ICT will be negatively associated with organizational identification.

Hypothesis 1a. AE will have a positive relationship with organizational identification.

Hypothesis 1b. ICT will have a negative relationship with organizational identification.

III. Followership and Communication climate

It is argued that the two behavioral characteristics of followership is strongly related with individuals' perceptions of communication climate in organizations. According to Putnam and Cheney (1985), communication climate illustrates to 'the atmosphere in an organization regarding accepted communication behavior'. Communication climate is an psychological term how individuals interprets their working environment in terms of communicative components (Jones and James, 1979; Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel, 2001). It resides on group level as sum of the shared individuals' perceptions and interpretations (Jones and James, 1979). Communication climate consists of three elements of openness, the degree of receptivity of employees' opinion being accepted, trustworthiness, the degree of trustworthiness of disseminated information and participation in decision-making, the employees' experiences of their opinion being heard and taken seriously (Hoewan and Franssen, 2012; Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel, 2001).

AE is a positive predictor of the employees perceptions on communication climate. The proactivity and willingness of proactive engagement enables followers to experience strong self-efficacy to engage in social interaction and collaborate with colleagues more actively (Salanova et al. 2003). The experiences of confidence in expressing their opinions enable followers to formulate their perceptions of communication climate (Falcione, Sussman and Herden, 1987). Employees with AE are likely to actively participate and communicate, which influences to build positive perceptions on communication climate. Proactive communicator are of particular significance in communication within organizations and their suggestions are often well-heard by its audience (Nerlich, Koteyko and Brown, 2010). Hence, it is more likely that proactive followers can experience an open and accepting communication climate more often than others. Receptivity of management, perceived possibility of participating in decision making and trustworthiness of distributed information within organizations

are of important components consisting positive communication climate (Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel, 2001; Guzley, 1992).

ICT is associated with being able to think independently and to make constructive critiques. Critical thinking and capability to make critical remarks implies openness of communication (Gardner et al. 2005), which is an influential factor for perceptions of communication climate. Independent critical thinkers are likely to show more critical mentions to the colleagues. They feel recognized when their critical comments is accepted as constructive suggestions to (Farmer and Rodkin, 1996). When their critical suggestion is well-considered in organizations, they may become highly participative in order to achieve progressive plans (Kennedy, Fisher and Ennis, 1991). Since they are accepted to provide critiques to organizations, they are more likely to perceive communication climate as more positive, such as more participative, accepting and having a room for expressing different opinions. Therefore, it is expected AE and ICT behaviors of followership will be positively related with their perceptions of communication climate.

Hypothesis 2a. AE will predict positive perception of communication climate.

Hypothesis 2b. ICT will predict positive perception of communication climate.

Since communication climate is formed based upon the context constructed with a sum of employees' interpretations, it affects the employees' attitude of organizations (Muchinsky, 1977). According to Smidts, Pruyn and Riel (2001), an open and participative communication climate can positively affect employees to identify themselves with their organizations. Openness of management and employees' participation in organizational decision making may strengthen belief in management and organizations (Collinson, 2006). In an open and participative communication climate, employees have more opportunities to be engaged in organizational debates (Trombetta and Rogers, 1988), and may feel self-efficacy and self-worthiness due to their actions being taken seriously (Hoewan and Fransen, 2012) so that employees regard themselves as more of in-group members. Such a communication climate may encourage employees to be more committed to organization issues since they have strong trust in organizations and their participations are regarded as contributions to organizations. Hence, communication climate will have a positive relationship with organizational identification.

Hypothesis 3. Communication climate will be positively related to organizational identification.

As stated earlier, AE dimension will positively predict organizational communication whereas ICT dimension will negatively predicts. Also both of AE and ICT of followership are positively

related with communication climate. Since communication climate is expected to have association with organizational identification, it is proposed that communication climate will partially mediate the relationship between AE dimension of followership and organizational identification. When communication climate is involved as influencing factor, the main influence of AE on organizational identification will be decreased and the decrease influence will be further explained by communication climate. Hence, a partial mediating effect is expected. In terms of ICT, the influence of communication climate is suggested to change the negative impact of ICT on organizational identification as positive. Therefore, full mediation effect is expected. Grounded on the literature review, following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 4a. Communication climate will partially mediate the effect of AE on organizational identification.

Hypothesis 4b. Communication climate will mediate the effect of ICT on organizational identification.

IV. The Interaction effect of Network Centrality with Followership on Communication Climate

Network centrality refers to the degree of individuals holding a central position within networks (Tsai, 2000). It implies the visibility of an individual in a network and potential communication activity of the members. High network centrality of individuals is attributed to the strong social capital and social integration in the organizations (Campbell, Marsden, and Hurlbert, 1986). Developing social network at work can benefit employees to feel more easily to communicate with other organization members (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). It implies that willingness of social interaction generated by network centrality may encourage employees to perceive communication climate in organizations more positively.

Social network at work can provide employees the resources and employees with high-level of initiatives are likely to take advantage of their networks to speak out their opinions (Ashford and Black, 1996). Followers with AE characteristics can benefit from constructing central social position in networks to communicate better with other employees. Network centrality was argued to boost reciprocated relationships with group members by pro-social behavioral styles (Gest, Graham-Bermann and Hartup, 2001). Social position in networks enables employees to have more chances to speak out since they hold belief that their opinions will not be disregarded due to the established relationship with other communicators (Farmer and Rodkin, 1996). Therefore, actively engaging followers may have better opportunities to get the floor and pitch, which made them possibly perceive communication climate as more attractive and positive when they are in a prominent position of the networks. Being in central position in networks may boost the followers to experience higher chances to present their thoughts. Actively engaging followers with high network centrality perceive

more opportunity to make voices than the followers with lower network centrality since positioned in the core of networks gives them confidence that their opinions will be accepted (Morrison, 2002). It describes that high network centrality may boost the influence of AE on communication climate. As discussed earlier, AE of followership is suggested to have positive influence on perceptions of communication climate. Therefore, AE behaviors of followership may have interaction effect with network centrality on the communication climate.

Moreover, network centrality is likely to affect the influence of ICT on perception of communication climate. Employees with ICT behavior refers to analyzing the quality of arguments, clarifying issues, questioning credibility of sources and challenging the current status of organizations (Kennedy, Fisher and Ennis, 1991). Independent thinkers often tend to make self-reliant choices, be dependent on themselves (Cross and Madson, 1997). They show tendency of being indifferent to opinions from other colleagues, which lead them to have less social interaction (Brenson, 1994), and may lead them to stand on the edge of the network, even outside of the network. However, previous research argues that the independent critical thinkers can be supplemented and enhanced by stimulating interaction with others and paying attention of the shared thoughts of organization (Ten Dam and Volman, 2004). Independent critical thinkers can benefit from socializing with colleagues and accomplishing interdependent relationship with them in order to achieve the ground to communicate easily with others. Being central part of network may enable ICT followers to have more chances to say, which affects their own perceptions on communication climate as more positive (Ibarra, 1993). Therefore, network centrality is suggested to have interaction effect with the influence of ICT on communication climate.

Hypothesis 5a. There will be an interaction effect between AE and network centrality on communication climate.

Hypothesis 5b. There will be an interaction effect between ICT and network centrality on communication climate.

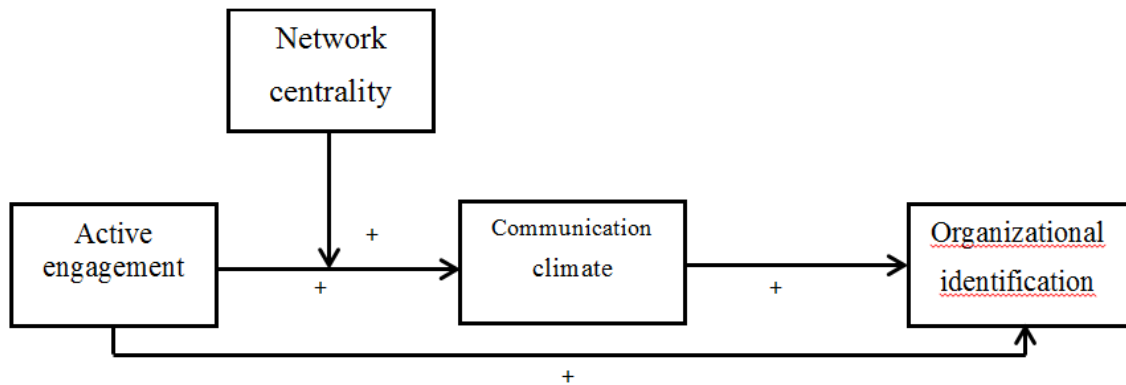


Figure 1a. Conceptual model of active engagement dimension in followership

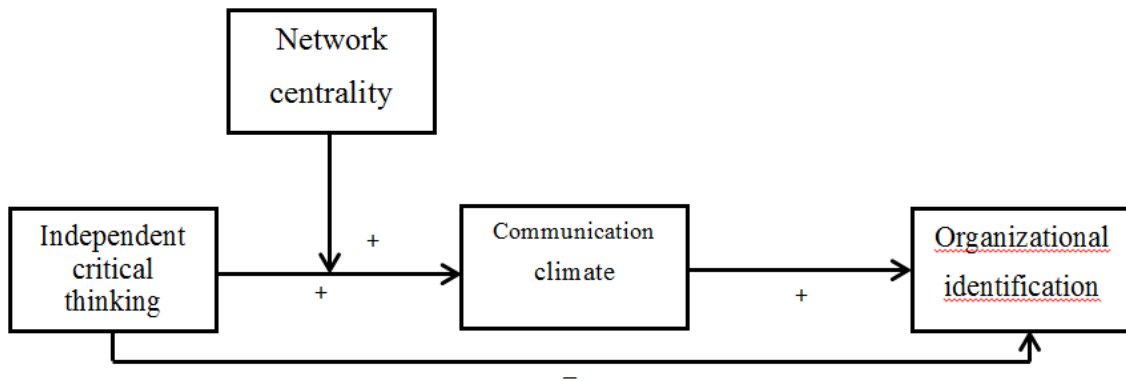


Figure 1b. Conceptual model of independent critical thinking dimension in followership

V. Method

Online survey was employed to examine the influences. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were informed the purpose. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to be completed. Respondents were recruited through email and SNS communities from 1st of May till 18th of May, 2014. 124 respondents who was currently working participated in an online survey. The survey was restricted to employees who have 5 or more co-workers in order to measure the influence of network centrality more precisely, since certain number of colleagues represents the possible communicators is prerequisite to networks. Respondents consist of 53 males (42.7%) and 71 females (57.3%). The average age of participants was 31.65 years old (SD = 9.895) and the average years of working was 3.25 years (SD = 4.297). In addition, 79.8% of respondents (n = 99) have a full-time job

while 20.2% of respondents (n = 25) have a part-time. The respondents were generally well-educated (86.3% possessed and university degree or post-graduate degree).

Measures

Followership. The followership was measured with 20 items developed by Kelley (1992). The two behavioral characteristics, AE and ICT represent different aspects of followership, and it was dealt with separately as respective variables in the research (Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore and Bullock, 2009). The current study will adopt the two behavioral characteristics of followership separately and look into how each of the characteristics influences the organizational outcomes. 20 items were measured with 5-point Likert scale (*see appendix 1.*). Reliability of total Followership items was $\alpha=.847$. As in the previous research of validating Kelley's scale (Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore and Bullock, 2009), factor analysis result shows that each of 13 items are loaded onto two dimensions, 'Active engagement' ($\alpha = .871$) and 'Independent critical thinking' ($\alpha = .651$).

Communication climate. It is measured with 15 items developed by Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel (2001) (*see appendix 1.*). Previous research defines communication climate as consisting of three dimensions (Hoevan and Fransen, 2012; Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel, 2001); Participation in the decision-making communication climate ($\alpha = .838$), Trust in the communication ($\alpha = .821$) and Openness of the communication ($\alpha = .778$). Reliability of the whole items was $\alpha = .706$.

Organizational identification. It is measured with the six items, developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992), which has been adopted in a number of studies (Liu, Loi and Lam, 2011), and the items were averaged into one construct ($\alpha = .628$).

Network centrality. Network centrality was measured with 'team-member network centrality' items. Neubert and Tagger (2004) measured team member network centrality by two questions; 'Please write the names of team members who are important sources of professional advice, who you approach if you have a work-related problem, or when you want advice on a decision you have to make (advice)' and 'Please write the names of team members you can count on, who you view as allies, who are dependable in times of crisis (support)'. Freeman's research (1979) asked the total number of direct contacts an employee has as measure of degree centrality. The current research adopted the 'team member network centrality' measures and combined with Freeman's methods (1979). The questions were paraphrased to adjust as asking the number of team members for the corresponding the questions. This measure was standardized by dividing the number of answered team member, across both questions, by total number of the team members and used as relative measures to compare values measured by different units by standardizing values with an unified unit (Bryman,

2012). The two questions were positively correlated ($r = .695, p < .01$), therefore, averaged into a composite measure ($\alpha = .614$).

VI. Result

First, correlation analyses were conducted to see whether each variable is correlated to one another. The result shows that AE has a positive relationship with communication climate ($b = .275, p < .01$), organizational identification ($b = .334, p < .01$) and network centrality ($b = .237, p < .01$). On the other hand, ICT does not have any significant association with communication climate ($r = .168, p > .05$), organizational identification ($r = .132, p > .05$) and network centrality ($r = -.068, p > .05$). There is no statistically significant main effect expected, when the variables are not correlated with each other. Regression analyses was conducted to confirm, which shows statistically not significant results (*see Appendix. 2*). Therefore hypothesis 1b, 2b, 4b, and 5b were rejected. Hence, the result of AE dimension will be reported in the current result section.

Direct effect of Active engagement on Communication Climate and Organizational Identification

Hypothesis 1a proposed that AE dimension predict organizational identification positively. To examine the main effect, simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The result ($F = 27.488, R^2 = .184, p < .001$) shows a main effect of AE ($b = .429, p < .001$) predicting organizational identification. Hypothesis 1a was confirmed. 18% variance of organizational identification could be predicted by AE dimension of followership.

Hypothesis 2a suggested the main effect of AE on communication climate. Simple regression analyses were conducted and the result ($F = 9.989, R^2 = .076, p < .01$) shows that AE is positively related to communication climate ($b = .275, p < .01$). Therefore hypothesis 2a was confirmed. It shows very weak relationship AE and communication climate, such that 7% variance of communication climate is explained by AE.

As hypothesis 3 suggested, the result shows ($R^2 = .112, p < .001$) that communication climate has a significant relationship with organizational identification. Hypothesis 3 was confirmed. Communication climate predicts 12% variance of organizational identification. Overall, the result shows that AE characteristics of followership, communication climate and organizational identification have a statistically significant and positive relationship respectively.

Mediation by Communication Climate

Hypothesis 4a proposed that the effect of AE of followership on organizational identification is partially mediated by the communication climate. Hypothesis 1a and 2a were confirmed and the findings suggested that communication climate is positively associated with organizational identification. To examine the partial mediation, multiple regression analysis with AE dimension of followership, communication climate and organizational identification was conducted.

The result shows ($F = 18.543$, $R^2 = .235$, $p < .001$) that the effect of followership on organizational identification is partially mediated by communication climate ($b = .364$, $p < .01$; $b' = .234$, $p < .001$). The mediation model explains 23% variance of organizational identification. The strong positive main effect of AE on organizational identification ($b = .429$, $p < .001$) was decreased when communication climate was included in the regression analysis ($b = .364$, $p < .01$). Therefore the relationship between followership and organizational identification seem to be mediated by communication climate. Sobel's Z values was $Z = 2.48$, and it shows significant of the partial mediation result ($p < .05$). Hence, Hypothesis 4a was confirmed.

Interaction effect of Active engagement and Network Centrality on Communication Climate

Hypothesis 5a suggested that the relationship between AE and communication climate is influenced by network centrality. Multiple moderation analysis was conducted to test an interaction term between AE and network centrality. The result ($F = 6.900$, $R^2 = .147$, $p < .001$) shows AE ($b = .281$, $p < .01$) and network centrality ($b = .258$, $p < .01$) have significant positive relations with communication climate. However, the interaction effect of AE and network centrality on communication climate was statistically not significant ($b = -.057$, $p = .522$), hence, hypothesis 5a was rejected.

VII. Conclusion

The findings showed only AE is a significant predictor of organizational identification. Employees showing high AE are likely to identify themselves as a part of an organization and feel belongingness to the organization. Actively engaging behaviors are perceived as a great benefit for improving communication climate of organizations. Employees who are actively engaged with organizational matters may perceive communication climate in the organizations as encouraging individuals' participation so that their opinions are taken seriously.

The result also shows that communication climate influences organizational identification and partially mediate the direct impact of AE behavior on organizational identification. Aligning with literature review, communication climate predicts the degree of organizational identification that individual employees may feel such that employees experience oneness to organizations when organization has a more open and participative communication climate. The mediation model fit increased explained variance of organizational identification with AE ($R^2 = .184$), when communication climate is involved ($R^2 = .235$) and the decreased influence of AE on organizational identification and participative communication explains further variance of organizational identification.

To explore the further relationship between the two behavioral dimensions of followership and communication climate perceived by employees, the moderating effect of network centrality was examined. The result shows no significant interaction effect between followership and network

centrality on communication and it is a significant predictor for communication climate. The rejected interaction effect of network centrality explained as network centrality has rather direct effect on communication climate. It has been suggested that actively engaging employees tend to develop social networks in organizations (Thompson, 2005). Followers who are proactively engaged with jobs and organizations are more likely to engage communications with members in the organizations (Yirmiya et al. 2006), therefore, proactive employees tend to construct a large network and become positioned central part of the network (Morrison, 2002). It needs to be further explored in future research with different research design and methods in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the findings, how network centrality does not influence the effect of AE of followership on perceived communication climate.

ICT dimension of followership does not have any association with communication climate, organizational identification and network centrality. The explanation for the result is that Kelley's(1992) model suggests more of the interactive effect of ICT and AE. It explains the two dimensions are mutually interactive. It was proposed that ICT characteristics can be more beneficial with high level of AE. The research argues that employees only with independent critical tendency are likely to criticize rather than support with constructive suggestion. Followers with high level of ICT with low AE may criticize organizations, and such a negative feedback can influence organizational climate, as well as prevent other members to proceed further suggestions (Myers and Rocca, 2001). may be more valuable for organizations when the followers also holding with AE characteristics. Hence, further research can focus on the interaction effect of these two dimensions and aims to construct more solid dimensions and variables in order to examine followership empirically.

Based on the findings, organizations are advised to invest in attracting employees with AE behavioral characteristics, or training for the development of such qualities in order to enhance employees' self-identification towards organizations. The proactive behavior of employees can be encouraged by empowerment and job enrichment (Campbell, 2000). In order to encourage enterprising qualities and integrity of employees, managers can encourage employees to be part of the process to create a shared goal and expectations (Shadur, Kienzle & Rodwell, 1999). Identifying core value of organizations and share it often with employees can boost employees to be initiative for new projects (Baker, 2007). When thoughts of employees do not align with organizations' goals, it is required to let them experience support of their dissent and possibility of change orientation of organizations with employees' fresh insights (Kellerman, 2008).

Furthermore, facilitating such an open and participative communication climate is suggested for successful management and organizational identification of employees. It illustrates that communication climate becomes an influential factor to enhance organizational identification of proactive employees. Organizations should encourage employees to exchange thoughts of organizational matters makes employees feel strong ties with each other, and the bond is expanded to

group and organizational level (Dickson, 2001). Communication climate can be improved by investing in physical and psychological support for employees. Physical support for employees such as providing working benefits may employees feel taken seriously (Porter and McLaughlin, 2006). The received benefits can encourage employees to evaluate communication climate more positively (Jones and James, 1979). Management need to consider collecting feedback from employees and apply the internal measures not only to improve organizational issues, but also to present that organizations do not limit employees' freedom to express and let employees experience that their opinions contributes to improvement of organizations (Allen, Shore and Griffeth, 2003). Therefore, managers should more pay attention to show care for individual situation and needs in order to enable them to perceive communication climate as more supportive and welcoming for employees to be engaged in.

Although the current research did find some insightful results, it had to cope with some limitations. Causal relationship among variables are hardly able to be discussed since cross-sectional research design has difficulties in establishing causal effect. Additionally, methods to measure network centrality is combination of two separate measurement, yet to be empirically validated. The measures of each variables are self-reported, which could interfere with the outcomes which induces respondents to social desirability bias rather than answer how they truly think (Nederhof, 1985). However, the strength of the discovered mediating effect of communication climate, weighs confidence in the internal validity. In order to strengthen the theoretical argumentation of the present study, future research may consider assumed causal effects adopting experiment or longitudinal research design and to develop more solid measurement of network centrality and followership.

Organizational identification enables employees define themselves with organizations, and it increases job satisfaction and enhance their performance of employees (Ashford and Stewart, 2008). In order for employees to achieve high level of organizational identification, it is encouraged to create supportive communication climate so that employees feel comfortable to state suggestions, to feel appreciated by organizations and consequently feel included in the organizations (Smidts, Pruyn and van Riel, 2001). The present research establishes the empirical foundation for further academic research of followership and contributes to direct management of human resources.

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Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are invited to participate in a master thesis research project that is being carried out under the auspices of the Corporate Communication department, which forms part of the University of Amsterdam. I aim to conduct scientific research into communication within organizations.

The title of the research project for which we are requesting your assistance is the antecedents and effects of social interaction within organisations. People who are currently over 18 years old and employed can participate in this project. The objective of the research is how followership influences organizational outcomes.

In the course of the current research, you are encouraged to participate in survey. This will take approximately 10 minutes.

As this research is being carried out under the responsibility of the Corporate Communication department, University of Amsterdam, we can guarantee that:

1. Your anonymity will be safeguarded, and that your answers or data will not be passed on to third parties under any conditions, unless you first give your express permission for this.
2. You can refuse to participate in the research or cut short your participation without having to give a reason for doing so. You also have up to 24 hours after participating to withdraw your permission to allow your answers or data to be used in the research.
3. Participating in the research will not entail your being subjected to any appreciable risk or discomfort, the researchers will not deliberately mislead you, and you will not be exposed to any explicitly offensive material.
4. No later than five months after the conclusion of the research, we will be able to provide you with a research report that explains the general results of the research.

For more information about the research and the invitation to participate, you are welcome to contact the project leader at any time: Hyunsu Lee and Pernill van der Rijt, ASCoR, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam; +31 (0)20 525 3680; P.G.A.vanderRijt@uva.nl.

Should you have any complaints or comments about the course of the research and the procedures it involves as a consequence of your participation in this research, you can contact the designated member of the Ethics Committee representing ASCoR, at the following address: ASCoR secretariat, Ethics Committee, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam; 020-525 3680; ascor-secr-fmg@uva.nl. Any complaints or comments will be treated in the strictest confidence.

We hope that we have provided you with sufficient information. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your assistance with this research, which we greatly appreciate.

With kind regards,

Hyunsu Lee

Thank you for participating in this short survey. The topic of the survey is social interaction within organizations. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Informed consent for participation

I hereby declare that I have been informed in a clear manner about the nature and method of the research, as described on the previous page. My questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree, fully and voluntarily, to participate in this research study. With this, I retain the right to withdraw my consent, without having to give a reason for doing so. I am aware that I may halt my participation in the experiment at any time. If my research results are used in scientific publications or are made public in another way, this will be done such a way that my anonymity is completely safeguarded. My personal data will not be passed on to third parties without my express permission. If I wish to receive more information about the research, either now or in future, I can contact Hyunsu Lee (ardorsden@gmail.com) and Pernill van der Rijt (P.G.A.vanderRijt@uva.nl, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam). Should I have any complaints about this research, I can contact the designated member of the Ethics Committee representing the ASCoR, at the following address: ASCoR secretariat, Ethics Committee, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam; 020-525 3680; ascor-secr-fmg@uva.nl.

I declare that I have read these statements and I agree to take part in this study.

Q. Which of the following statements describes your current work situation the best?

Employed

Self-Employed

Internship

Unemployed

▶ For whom chose 4. Unemployed: end of survey with the message “Sorry, you are not eligible target for the survey. Thank you.”

▶ For whom answered as Employed, Self-employed or Internship:

Q. How many co-workers (or employees) do you have in your organization?

(Indicate in numbers)

▶ For whom answered as ≥ 5 : Survey continues

▶ For whom answered as < 5 : End of survey with the message “Sorry, you are not eligible target for the survey. Thank you.”

Q. How long have you been employed by your organization? (In years)

Q. The following questions are about social interaction within your organization. Please indicate to what extent the following statements apply to you.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

- 1. Does your work help you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you?
- 2. Are your personal work goals aligned with the organization’s priority goals?

- 3. Are you highly committed to and energized by your work and organization, giving them your best ideas and performance?
- 4. Does your enthusiasm also spread to and energize your coworkers?
- 5. Instead of waiting for or merely accepting what the leader tells you, do you personally identify which organizational activities are most critical for achieving the organization's priority goals?
- 6. Do you actively develop a distinctive competence in those critical activities so that you become more valuable to the leader and the organization?
- 7. When starting a new job or assignment, do you promptly build a record of successes in tasks that are important to the leader?
- 8. Can the leader give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing that you will meet your deadline with highest-quality work and that you will 'fill in the cracks' if need be?
- 9. Do you take the initiative to seek out and successfully complete assignments that go above and beyond your job?
- 10. When you are not the leader of a group project, do you still contribute at a high level, often doing more than you share?
- 11. Do you independently think up and champion new ideas that will contribute significantly to the leader's or the organization's goals?
- 12. Do you try to solve the tough problems (technical or organizational), rather than look to the leader to do it for you?
- 13. Do you help out other coworkers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit?
- 14. Do you help the leader or group see both the upside potential and downside risks of idea or plans, playing the devil's advocate if need be?
- 15. Do you understand the leader's needs, goals, and constraints, and work hard to help meet them?
- 16. Do you actively and honestly own up to your strengths and weaknesses rather than put off evaluation?
- 17. Do you make a habit of internally questioning the wisdom of the leader's decision rather than just doing what you are told?
- 18. When the leader asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional or personal preferences, do you say 'no' rather than 'yes'?
- 19. Do you act on your own ethical standards rather than the leader's or the group's standards?
- 20. Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or reprisals from the leader?

Q. How many team members do you have in your team? (Indicate in number)

Q. Please indicate how many team members do you consider as important sources of professional advice, who you approach if you have a work-related problem, or when you want advice on a decision you have to make. (Indicate in number)

Q. Please indicate how many team members can you can count on, who you view as allies, who are dependable in times of crisis. (Indicate in number)

Q. The following questions are about your belongingness towards the organization. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

- 1. When someone criticizes our organization, it feels like a personal insult.
- 2. I am very interested in what others think about the organization I work for.
- 3. When I talk about the organization I work for, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.
- 4. The successes of the organization I work for, are my successes.
- 5. When someone praises the organization, it feels like a personal compliment.
- 6. If a story in the media criticized the organization, I would feel embarrassed.

Q. The following questions are about your organizational environment. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

- 1. When my colleagues tell me something, I trust them to tell me the truth.
- 2. When my supervisor tells me something, I trust him/her to be candid and honest.
- 3. My supervisor is open to suggestions I put to him/her.
- 4. If you say something here, you are taken seriously.

- 5. If the general management of our organization tells us something (about how we are doing our job), I trust them to tell us the truth.
- 6. My colleagues are open to suggestions I put to them.
- 7. Our general management is open to suggestions we put to them.
- 8. At the organization, I have ample opportunity to have my say.
- 9. Employees at our organization I work for should be involved more in the decision-making in the organization.
- 10. The information we receive here is often about trivial matters.
- 11. In conversations with colleagues you often hear more about our organization than you do from the management.
- 12. The objectives of our organization are probably only known by those who formulated them.
- 13. Most of what you hear through the official channels of our organization (Such as social networks, magazines published by the organization or any other internal channel) has long ceased to be topical.
- 14. If you hear information that concerns you, then it is usually 'via-via'.
- 15. If I put a question to a colleague from another department or office, then I usually get an answer quickly.

Please answer the following questions to help me to understand your feedback better. No information will be used solely for research purpose.

Q. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Q. What is your age? (Indicate in years)

Q. What is your current country of residence?

Q. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Lower level education (e.g. Primary school)

Secondary education

Vocational degree (MBO, technical or vocational training)

University graduate degree, HBO

Post graduate degree

Other, namely:

Q. What is your total gross income per year?

Less than €15,000

€15,000 to €29,999

€30,000 to €44,999

€45,000 to €59,999

€60,000 to €74,999

€75,000 to €89,999

€90,000 to €104,999

€105,000 to €119,999

€120,000 to €134,999

€135,000 to €149,999

€150,000 or more

Q. In what industry/ sector do you work?

Construction

Communication

Culture

Mining and quarrying

Financial institutions

Health and social work

Trade, commercial services

Catering

Industrial

Agriculture, forestry and fishing

Energy

Education

Public utilities

Government services, public administration

Transport

Business services

Other, namely:

Q. Do you have a full or part-time job?

Fulltime (32 hours per week or more)

Part-time work (less than 32 hours per week)

Q. What is your current position (corporate title) in the organization?

Intern

Staff / Personnel

Assistant manager (Junior manager)

Senior manager (Section head)

General manager (Department head)

Senior executives (Executive managing director/ Senior vice president)

President

Other, namely:

- End of the survey -

Appendix 2. Analysis result

Table 1.

Summary of simple regression analysis of followership, organizational identification and communication climate

Variable	Organizational identification				Communication climate			
	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>SE B</i>	β
Active- engagement	27.488	.184	.082	.429**	9.989	.076	.087	.275*
Independent- critical thinking	2.163	.017	.090	.132	3.542	.028	.089	.168
Communication- climate	15.368	.112	.085	.334**				

* $p < .01.$, ** $p < .001.$

Table 2.

Multiple regression analysis for mediation

Variable	Organizational identification			
	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>SE B</i>	β
Active engagement	18.543	.235	.083	.234*
Communication climate	18.543	.235	.083	.364*
Independent critical thinking	3.012	.047	.089	.148
Communication climate	3.012	.047	.089	.174

* $p < .01.$, ** $p < .001.$

Table 3.

Multiple regression analysis for moderation (Hypothesis 5a, 5b)

Variable	Communication climate			
	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>SE B</i>	β
Active engagement	6.900	.147	.088	.281**
Network centrality	6.900	.147	.085	.258**
Interaction term (Active engagement \times network centrality)	6.900	.147	.094	-.057
Independent critical thinking	4.088	.093	.088	.193
Network centrality	4.088	.093	.087	.248
Interaction term	4.088	.093	.083	-.052

(Independent critical thinking × network centrality)

* $p < .05.$, ** $p < .01.$

