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Leadership Behaviors and Occupational Stress: The Power of Empowerment

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Abstract: Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman & Phillips (1990); LePine, Podsakoff & LePine (2005) argue that given that the potential ramifications of stress for companies and their employees are so substantial, it is crucial that managers act to aid their employees in the development of skills and to reduce stress in the job itself. Leadership has been proposed as a way to help employees deal with the adverse work experiences, which cause stress. Given the potential sources of stress in organizations, and the vast set of styles and behaviors included in the notion of leadership, we content that for managers to act successfully against stress, we need a more detailed analysis of the particular behaviors leaders may exhibit, in order to help employees, cope with the different sources of stress. With this in mind, we analyzed a set of six components (potential stressors) and five sets of leadership practices to find how each stressor responded to a particular set of leadership practices. Results from Pearson correlations supported the idea that, different stressors can be dealt with specific leadership behaviors. Furthermore, regression analyses underlined the power of empowering employees as a main source of helping them cope with job stress. Results and practical implications of the study are presented.

Key words: leadership behaviors; occupational stress; power of empowerment

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1. Introduction

While the definition has long been debated, stress at work can generally be defined as an aversive or unpleasant emotional and physiological state resulting from adverse work experiences, particularly experiences that are uncertain or outside the employee's control (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985; Hart & Cooper, 2001). The environmental conditions or demands that evoke the stress process are called stressors, and the negative consequences of stress, such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, are called strains (Jex, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Past research has examined several sources of work stress or stressors, including aspects of the employee role, particular job demands and characteristics and facets of the physical work environment (Hart & Cooper,

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2001; Kahn & Byosiere, 1992). Other stressors are more interpersonal in nature. For example, Spector & Jex (1998) described the interpersonal conflict at work stressors, which capture the degree to which other people are rude to a given employee. Similarly, Spector & Jex (1998) include in their organizational constraints stressors items tapping inadequate leadership, and lack of social support. Harvey & Brown (2006) argued that the major stressors in the workplace today include changes in technology, downsizing, sudden reorganization and unexpected changes in the work schedules, lack of participation in decision-making, and lack of employee empowerment. Furthermore, organizational justice, or more precisely lack of justice, has been proposed as a source of stress (Judge & Colquitt, 2004).

The negative effects of occupational stress (i.e., strains) affect the employees' health and have job and organizational consequences as well. Occupational stress contributes to low motivation and morale, diminished concern for colleagues and the organization, and a loss of responsibility (e.g., Greenberg & Baron, 2000); Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman & Phillips, 1990), sick leave, accidents, low job satisfaction, low quality products and services, poor internal communication and conflicts (e.g., Schabracq & Cooper, 2000; Murphy, 1995; McHugh, 1993), absenteeism (Johns, 1997), high turnover (Ongori & Agolla, 2008), and decrease in job performance (Gilboa & Shirom, 2008). "The potential ramifications of stress for companies and their employees are so substantial that it is crucial that managers act to aid their employees in the development of coping skills and to reduce the excessive stress in the job itself."

2. Literature Review

2.1 Types of Interventions to Deal with Occupational Stress

Managers in various organizations are in dilemma over what interventions need to be employed to minimize the problems and costs associated with occupational stress. There are many interventions used in managing stress in organizations but the interventions, which are commonly used, include the primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions (Ongori & Agolla, 2008). Primary interventions emphasize the identification of the possible causes of stress and their subsequent risks to employees. Basically, primary interventions include redesigning jobs to modify workplace stressors, increasing workers decision-making authority (Jackson & Schuler, 1983) or providing co-worker support groups (Defrank & Cooper, 1987; Kolbell, 1995) rather than providing training to employees or, taking care of individuals who are already suffering from the effects of stress, which are the aim of secondary and tertiary interventions respectively.

Summarizing these ideas and under the premise that stress is caused primarily by an individual's sense of powerlessness towards adverse work conditions, Conger & Kanungo (1988) created a model including primary interventions to deal with job stressors.

2.2 Conger and Kanungo Model of Empowerment

Conger & Kanungo's (1988) seminal work on empowerment, proposed a model of 5 stages that goes from potential stressors or conditions leading to a psychological state of powerlessness (i.e., organizational factors, supervision, reward systems and the nature of job), to strategies and techniques to deal with the stressors (i.e., participative management, goal setting, feedback, modeling, contingent rewards, and job enrichment). The model proposes that the use of the strategies will lead, through an increase in self-efficacy, to strengthen desired employee behaviors, such as initiation and persistence of behavior, to accomplish task objectives. According to the authors, the employment of the techniques and strategies is aimed not only at removing some of the external

conditions responsible for the sense of powerlessness, but also (and more important) at providing subordinates with self-efficacy information. As a matter of fact, the theory behind these ideas can be traced to Alfred Bandura (1977), who conceptualized the notion of self-efficacy beliefs and their role in an individual's sense of personal power in the world.

2.3 Differential Stressors

Following the theoretical work of Lazarus and his colleagues (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), it has been suggested that the appraisal of any stressor reflects two basic dimensions. The first dimension, associated with threat or hindrance, is hypothesized to be negatively associated with performance, and the second dimension, reflecting challenge, tends to be positively related to performance. Threat and challenge appraisals synergistically interact to produce stress appraisals. Stressors have been found to vary on the quantity of hindrance and challenge they have. Stressors which possess a higher challenge component are more likely to respond to common practices of reducing stress, such as empowering the employee, than stressors with a major proportion of hindrance. For example, role overload has been found to have a higher proportion of the hindrance dimension, and as so the more difficult to deal with commonly proposed strategies aimed at increasing self-efficacy.

2.4 Leadership and Occupational Stress

Leaders may play a crucial role in reducing stress at work, and in helping employees to cope with stress. The positive effects of perceived supervisor support have been well documented and increasingly researched in the literature. Supervisory support is the degree to which employees perceive that their supervisors offer support, encouragement, and concern (Burke, Boruchi, & Hurley, 1992). The degree of perceived supervisory support may well positively affect job stress. In fact, research suggests that supervisor characteristics and behaviors, such as consideration and feedback, can reduce job stress (Dubinsky & Skinner, 1984). The extent to which supervisors rely on output controls such as emphasizing performance standards, or otherwise having a "results orientation," has been found related negatively to job stress (Lusch & Jaworski, 1991). In general, closeness of supervision has been found to reduce role stress, although the results are sometimes mixed (Dubinsky, Yammarino, & Jolson, 1994). Other leadership behaviors and styles have been found to relate to job stress. Ryska (2002) found main and interaction effects between leadership style and emotional exhaustion, daily job stress, and personal accomplishment.

According to the differential stressors argument, we propose that it is possible that leader efforts (i.e., leadership behaviors) to reduce or to cope with subordinates' job stress will have different effects depending on the type of stressor trying to intervene. Our reasoning is the following, if leadership behaviors were aimed to empower the employee, it could be expected that an increase in self-efficacy will have a stress reduction effect. However, following Lazarus & Folkman (1984), the size of the effect of leadership on a specific stressor, will depend on the amount of challenge and hindrance the stressor contains. Empowerment and other leadership behaviors will be highly successful in reducing the effects of the stressor, when the stressor presents a high component of challenge, but very low or null if the stressor presents a high hindrance component.

Considering the myriad of sources of stress documented, and the many techniques and strategies proposed to deal with them, what seems to be missing in the literature is a more precise understanding of the relationship between particular stressors and the particular ways to deal with each stressor. We content that it is likely that some solutions might be more adequate for some stressors than for others.

Our purpose is to study several stressors and to consider the possible relation each of them may have with several particular leadership behaviors. We achieve that by including in our study several stressors and several

more particular leadership practices, than most early studies have considered. As far as we know, our study is unique in this sense. Most studies, so far, have included either only a few or only one stressor or have studied a very ample set of leadership behaviors.

3. The Study

3.1 The Management Standards

To include a set of stressors in our study, we used "The Management Standards". The Management Standards represent a set of conditions that reflect high levels of health, well-being and organizational performance. These conditions are split into six discrete but related areas, or potential job stressors: Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role, and Change (Edwards, Webster, Van Laar & Easton, 2008). The "Demands" condition includes issues like work-overload, work patterns, and the work environment. "Role" includes whether people understand their role within the organization and whether the organization ensures they do not have conflicting roles. "Managerial Support" includes encouragement, sponsorship, and resources provided by the organization and line manager. "Relationships" include promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior. "Change" includes how organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization. "Control" covers how much say a person has in the way they do their work.

3.2 The Leadership Practices Model

The leadership behaviors, for the study, were drawn from the Kouzes & Posner (1987, 1988) model of leadership practices of effective leaders. Kouzes & Posner (1987) created their model based on the concept that leaders could be identified by their ability "to get extraordinary things done in organizations" and that certain practices (i.e., sets of leadership behaviors) were common to successful leaders. The five practices used by leaders, as identified by Kouzes & Posner (1987, 1988), are: (1) *Challenging the Process*, the extent the leader questions assumptions, experiments, and takes risks. This practice involves leadership behaviors aimed at (a) seeking new solutions to problems, and searching for opportunities, and to (b) encouraging innovation and taking risk; (2) *Inspiring a Shared Vision*, the degree the leader describes an exciting view of the future. This practice involves leadership behaviors aimed at (a) creating and communicating a vision of the future and (b) enlisting others to share that vision; (3) *Enabling Others to Act*, the amount of cooperative and participative decision making used by the leader. This practice involves leadership behaviors aimed at (a) fostering collaboration and cooperation within a group and (b) strengthening others' capabilities to perform; (4) *Modeling the way*, the extent the leader consistently practices his or her espoused values. This practice involves leadership behaviors aimed at (a) setting an example, behaving in ways consistent with stated values and (b) planning small wins, and enabling followers to experience tangible success; (5) *Encouraging the Heart*, the degree the leader gives positive feedback, publicly recognizes individual contributions and celebrates team achievements. This practice involves leadership behaviors aimed at (a) recognizing contributions, holding and communicating high expectations, linking performance and rewards, and (b) celebrating accomplishments.

3.3 Hypotheses

As mentioned before, leadership has been proposed as a mean to affect occupational stress. Therefore, we predicted the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The five leadership practices will be positively related to perceptions of existence of the six components of the Management Standards.

Hypotheses on the relationship between specific stressors and specific leadership behaviors were set for only five of the six potential stressors (i.e., Role, Managerial Support, Relations, Change and Control) and for only four of the five leadership practices (i.e., Vision, Enabling to Act, Modeling, and Encouraging). We did not set specific hypotheses relating the component "Demand" to a specific set of leadership behaviors. This component includes role overload for which research findings, at least as its relation to performance is considered ambiguous. Gilboa et al. (2008) results of a meta-analysis conclude that past studies (e.g., LePine, LePine, & Jackson, 2004; Spector & Jex, 1998) have reported positive, negative, and no associations between overload (demands) and job performance, possible to indicate that it may represent a challenge and/or hindrance to the focal individuals. In a similar manner, we did not find enough agreement in the literature to set specific hypotheses concerning the relationship between the leadership behavior: "Challenging the Process" and the potential stressors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990).

Inspiring a Shared Vision. We argue that a well-articulated, and inspiring vision will enable followers to determine their role in that vision, reducing role ambiguity and perhaps role conflict. In the same vein, we propose that a well-articulated and inspiring vision will enable followers to perceive their involvement in achieving the organizational vision as a challenge, thus as a motivator, rather than as a hindrance to performance, facilitating their involvement in change. According to this reasoning we set the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Inspiring a Shared Vision will be positively related to Role

Hypothesis 2b: Inspiring a Shared Vision will be positively related to Change

Enabling Others to Act. When enabling others to Act, leaders set cooperative goals, and reach for integrative solutions and build trust. We argue that by setting cooperative goals leaders may promote role clarity and change, and that by building trust leaders promote relationships. We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: *Enabling others to Act will be positively related to Role*

Hypothesis 3b: *Enabling others to Act will be positively related to Change*

Hypothesis 3c: *Enabling others to act will be positively related to Relationships*

When enabling others to Act, leaders, also, share power and information, thus facilitating autonomy and consequently promoting a sense of control. By sharing power and information leaders may create a sense of managerial support. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3d: *Enabling others to Act will be positively related to Control*

Hypothesis 3e: *Enabling others to Act will be positively related to Managerial support*

Modeling the Way. When Modeling the Way leaders create a basic philosophy, share and set values, promote better relationships, and lead by example. We argue that by setting a basic philosophy and sharing values leaders may facilitate role clarity, while by leading by example they promote trust and relationships. Finally, by breaking tasks into small parts leaders may facilitate change. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: *Modeling the Way will be positively related to Role (clarity)*

Hypothesis 4b: *Modeling the Way will be positively related to Relationships*

Hypothesis 4c: *Modeling the Way will be positively related to Change*

Encouraging the Heart. When Encouraging the Heart leaders link rewards with performance, recognize contributions, coach, celebrate accomplishments, create social networks, and involve themselves personally. We argue that by recognizing contributions leaders may promote role clarity, by coaching, celebrating, and being involved, they may promote "Relations", and by linking rewards to performance they may promote "Change". Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a: *Encouraging the Heart will be positively related to Role*
Hypothesis 5b: *Encouraging the Heart will be positively related to Relationships*
Hypothesis 5c: *Encouraging the Heart will be positively related to Change*

4. Method

4.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants were middle managers working in four manufacturing companies in Mexico. One hundred and fifty-four indicated their willingness to participate in the study. One hundred and twenty useable sets of questionnaires were returned. Questionnaires were translated into Spanish by using the procedure suggested by Hofstede (1980).

4.2 Measures

Stress and Stressors. To assess stress and stressors, we used the Management Standards Indicator Tool (MSIT) (Cousins, MacKay, Clarke, Kelley, Kelley & McCaig, 2004; Edwards et al., 2008). The MSIT measures six potential stressors: (1) *Demands*, measures issues like workload, work patterns and the work environment and consists of eight items; (2) *Control*, reflects how much say a person has in the way they do their work. This scale has six items. (3) *Managerial Support*, measures encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the employer. The scale has five items. (4) *Relationships*, promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior. The scale has four items. (5) *Role*, this factor asks the employees whether they understand their job and whether their employer ensures they do not have conflicting roles. The scale includes five questions, and (6) *Change*, measures how organizational change is managed and communicated at work. The scale contains three questions. The MSTI contains 35 items tapping seven components or potential stressors. However, though, the "*Support*" scale includes Managerial support and Peer support (4 items), we only measured *Managerial Support*. Respondents answered on a five point Likert scale the extent to which their job included each of the six components measured. Reported reliabilities for the scales range from alpha = 0.78 for Change to alpha = 0.87 for Managerial Support and Demands. Results for all of the items were summed and divided by 31 to arrive at a summary indicator of the potential stressors at work: *Total Stress*.

Leadership behaviors. Leadership behaviors were measured by the 30 items of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI observer) developed by Kouzes & Posner (1988). The LPI measures five leadership practices. The five practices are: Challenging the Status Quo, Sharing a Vision, Enabling to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. Internal reliabilities reported for the LPI observer range from alpha = 0.81 to alpha = 0.92 for the five scales. Assessments of the instrument, to measure the 5 leadership practices, have confirmed that the instrument can be used to measure both transformational and transactional leadership approaches (Fields & Herold, 1997) and its validity (Careless, 2001). The LPI (observer) asks the respondents about their leader's leadership practices, in the five subscales, in a 5 pointLikert scale. Results from all of the 30 items were summed and divided by 30 to arrive at a summary indicator of the Leadership practices (*Total Leadership*).

5. Results

Descriptive statistics, inter-correlations among the study variables, and reliabilities of the measures are provided in Table 1. Reliabilities for the measures were found at an acceptable level, being the lowest alpha = 0.70 for the "Change", and "Challenge" scales, and the highest alpha = 0.85 for the "Encouraging" scale.

Results for the hypotheses postulated were as follows. Hypothesis 1 predicted that the leadership practices will be positively related to the perceptions of existence of the six components of the management standards (i.e., potential stressors). As shown in Table 1, Total Leadership correlates with Total Stress significantly and in the predicted direction ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$).

"Inspiring a Shared Vision" was positively and significantly related to "Role" ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$) and to "Change" ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) supporting H2a, and H2b, respectively. "Enabling Others to Act" was found, as predicted, positively related to "Role" ($r = .38$, $p < 0.01$), "Managerial Support" ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$), "Relationships" ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), "Change" ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), and "Control" ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$), therefore support was found for H3a, H3b, H3c, H3d, and H3e, respectively."Modeling the Way" was found, as predicted, positively and significantly related to "Role" ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), "Relationships" ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$), and "Change" ($r = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H4a, H4b, and H4c, respectively. Finally, "Encouraging the Heart", was found, as predicted, related to "Role" ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$), "Relationships" ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$), and "Change" ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H5a, H5b and H5c, respectively.

We did not find, as expected, a significant relationship between the Demands potential stressor and any of the leadership behaviors. Results were: for Total Leadership: r = -0.02, for Challenge r = -0.05, for Vision r = -0.01, for Enabling to Act r = -0.01, for Modeling r = 0.03 and for Encouraging r = -.02. We found, though, Demands related to Total Stress ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), and also Demands correlated highly with "Control" $r = 0.83$, $p < 0.01$.

On the other hand: we did not find, as expected, a significant relationship between the leadership behavior: "Challenging the Process" and any of the stress components. Results were: for Total Stress r = 0.18, for Demands r = -0.05, for Role r = 0.16, for Managerial Support: r = -0.06, for Relations r = 0.12, for Change r = 0.12, and for Control r = 0.05.

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations of Study Variables

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Demands	3.32	0.78	(0.78)												
2	Role	3.74	0.48	0.45**	(0.78)											
3	Managerial Support	3.56	0.73	0.78**	0.64**	(0.75)										
4	Relations	3.63	0.62	0.71**	0.76**	0.81**	(0.82)									
5	Change	3.74	0.58	0.58**	0.74**	0.80**	0.80**	(0.70)								
6	Control	3.45	0.61	0.83**	0.49**	0.78**	0.80**	0.76**	(0.76)							
7	Total Stress	3.63	0.53	0.61**	0.71**	0.73**	0.85**	0.89**	0.80**	-						
8	Challenge	3.52	0.81	-0.05	0.16	-0.06	0.12	0.12	0.05	0.18	(0.70)					
9	Vision	3.38	0.95	-0.01	0.39**	0.06	0.27**	0.36**	0.15	0.38**	0.61**	(0.80)				
10	Enabling to act	3.79	0.80	-0.01	0.38**	0.20*	0.33**	0.42**	0.26**	0.46**	0.40**	0.69**	(0.72)			
11	Modeling	3.45	0.89	0.03	0.36**	0.07	0.22*	0.30**	0.12	0.36**	0.66**	0.72**	0.67**	(0.77)		
12	Encouraging	3.60	1.03	-0.02	0.23*	0.06	0.24**	0.27**	0.13	0.38**	0.44**	0.61**	0.70**	0.71**	(0.85)	
13	Total Leadership	3.55	0.75	-0.02	0.36**	0.08	0.28**	0.35**	0.16	0.42**	0.73**	0.87**	0.82**	0.90**	0.84**	-

Note: Reliabilities (alpha) are on the diagonal. *p < .05, **p < 0.01, n = 120.

Table 2 Regression Analyses: Leadership Behaviors and Stressors

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	R	Standardized Beta- Coeff.	t	Sig t
Demands		0.065			
	(constant)			8.256	0.000
	Challenge		-0.047	-0.361	0.719
	Vision		0.009	0.055	0.956
	Enabling to act		0.060	0.399	0.691
	Modeling		-0.032	-0.192	0.848
	Encouraging		-0.019	-0.127	0.899
Role		0.47			
	(constant)			13.248	0.000
	Challenge		-0.114	1.666	0.090
	Vision		0.259	1.872	0.064
	Enabling to act		0.243	1.835	0.069
	Modeling		0.311	2.072	**0.041**
	Encouraging		0.235	1.795	0.075
Relations		0.336			
	(constant)			8.865	0.000
	Challenge		-0.071	-0.573	0.568
	Vision		0.120	0.814	0.417
	Enabling to act		0.261	1.841	0.068
	Modeling		0.007	0.042	0.966
	Encouraging		0.009	0.063	0.950
Managerial Support		0.271			
Support	(constant)			8.365	0.000
	Challenge		-0.160	-1.267	0.208
	Vision		-0.075	-0.498	0.620
	Enabling to act		0.345	2.380	**0.019**
	Modeling		0.097	0.590	0.556
	Encouraging		-0.128	-0.896	0.372
Change		0.457			
	(constant)			9.647	0.000
	Challenge		-0.168	-1.444	0.152
	Vision		0.192	1.377	0.171
	Enabling to act		0.369	2.763	**0.007**
	Modeling		0.106	0.700	0.485
	Encouraging		-0.108	-0.816	0.416
Control		0.279			
	(constant)			8.855	0.000
	Challenge		-0.041	-0.324	0.746
	Vision		-0.010	-0.069	0.945
	Enabling to act		0.362	2.507	**0.014**
	Modeling		-0.013	-0.082	0.935
	Encouraging		-0.098	-0.689	0.492
Total Stress		0.482			
	(constant)			10.451	0.000
	Challenge		-0.124	-1.078	0.283
	Vision		0.124	0.899	0.370
	Enabling to act		0.307	2.331	**0.022**
	Modeling		0.115	0.773	0.441
	Encouraging		0.062	0.475	0.635

Results of the regression analyses show that leadership behaviors are able to predict five of the six components of stress in the study (R = 0.48) (Table 2). Being the only significant predictor: Enabling to Act at the alpha level = 0.02. Results for each of the potential stressors were as follows. Leadership behaviors failed, as suspected, to predict Demands (R = -0.04). When we regressed *Role* on the leadership practices results were: (R = 0.47). Concerning Role, we found that all of the practices predicted Role, including Challenging the Process, although this relation was not in the predicted direction, results for *Role* were: Challenge, significant at the alpha = 0.09 level, Vision, at the alpha = 0.06 level, Enabling, at the alpha = 0.07 level. Modeling was the most significant predictor of Role at the alpha = 0.04 level, while Encouraging the heart was significant at the alpha = 0.08 level. When we regressed *Relations* on the leadership practices results were: R = 0.34. The only predictor that approached significance was Enabling to Act at the alpha = 0.07 level. When we regressed *Managerial Support* on the leadership practices results were: R = 0.27, the only significant predictor of *Managerial Support* was Enabling to Act, at the alpha = 0.02 level. When we regressed *Change* on the leadership practices results were: R= 0.44, being the only significant predictor of Change: Enabling to Act, at the alpha = 0.01 level. Finally, when we regressed *Control* on the leadership practices results were: R = 0.28, being the only significant predictor for Control: Enabling to Act at the alpha = 0.01 level.

6. Discussion

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

As noted at the outset, the impact of leadership on job stress has been vastly considered. We noted that less attention has been given to what specific leadership behaviors are indicated to deal with specific stressors. With that in mind, this study makes some theoretical contributions.

First, we provide empirical support for the idea of differential stressors. By linking each potential stressor to each of the five sets of leadership practices we were able to further understand what possible behaviors leaders may exert, in order to deal with the detrimental effects of each particular stressor. We found that when leaders exert the transformational behavior of inspiring a vision, leaders foster role clarity, promote relations, and facilitate change. We argue that leaders accomplish these results by helping subordinates to know the direction of change and how their work contributes to this aim. In a similar way, we found that when leaders “enable to act”, they help subordinates to deal with all the stressors, with the only exception of Demands. The stress caused by role ambiguity and conflict, the lack of managerial support, relations, change and lack of control all can be helped with when leaders enable subordinates to act. When enabling subordinates to act leaders increase the amount of cooperative and participative decision-making, and strengthen subordinates’ capabilities to perform. When “modeling the way”, leaders consistently practice their espoused values, set an example, and plan small wins, enabling followers to experience tangible success. We found that these behaviors have a positive effect on the stress caused by role conflict and ambiguity, and the stress of relations, and change as well. Finally, when “encouraging the heart”, leaders give positive feedback, hold and communicate high expectations, link performance and rewards, celebrate accomplishments, publicly recognize individual contributions and celebrate team achievements. We found that by exhibiting these behaviors leaders have a positive effect on the stress caused by role ambiguity and conflict, relations, and the stress of change as well.

In brief, we found that our study goes beyond the classic idea of empowerment and presents alternate and additional leadership behaviors to deal with the stressors. When leaders Inspire a Vision, Enable to Act, Model the

Way, or Encourage the Heart they make an effect on the stress caused by Role, Managerial Support, and Relations.

On the other hand, our regression analyses show that Enabling to Act was the most versatile of the leadership behaviors. When taking all the leadership behaviors together, Enabling to Act became the best behavior to deal with the stress caused by the lack of managerial support, the stress caused by change, and the lack of control as well.

Fourth, before we argued that the effect of leadership's behaviors on Demands cannot be easily predicted. We did not find a significant relationship between any of the leadership practices and this potential stressor. Besides confirming prior findings, this finding in our study seems to support the idea of differential stressors, giving support to our argument, about not all stressors being subject to the same strategies.

Fifth, regression analyses showed that the most significant predictor of Role is Modeling the Way. So, in dealing with the most detrimental stressor to performance, "walking the talk", and leading by example become rather important.

6.2 Limitations

Two limitations of the study should be noted. First, to set our hypotheses we used the descriptions of the behaviors included in each of the five practices. However, even if our hypotheses were supported, we cannot be sure whether support came from the specific behavior we postulated related to the stressor, or for other behavior or behaviors included in the leadership practice set. For example, we postulated that by "modeling the way," leaders will promote role clarity; because we reasoned that setting a basic philosophy and a set of values will have such an effect. However, although the hypothesis was supported we cannot be sure that role clarity was specifically promoted for that behavior rather than for other "modeling" behavior or behaviors. Future research may address this idea in order to further understand what specific behaviors within each leadership practice lead to the desired results.

Second, we did not find a set of leadership behaviors related to Demands. Although, this result has been found before, there is always a concern of whether our study fail to include the specific leadership behaviors needed to help subordinates to cope with this stressor or whether this stressor cannot be dealt with the leader's efforts. Future research in this sense is needed to help organizations with this major stressor. The inclusion of some variables such as organizational justice may bring some answers. For example, in a recent study (Zhang, LePine, Buckman, & Wei, 2014), found a moderating effect of leadership to be contingent on the type of leadership and the type of stressors. Transactional leaders reduced the negative effect of hindrance stressors on job performance because they weakened the negative link between hindrance stressors and justice perceptions. Alternatively, transformational leaders enhanced the positive effects of challenge stressors and justice perceptions. The authors position organizational justice as a new important mechanism that explain how stressful work demands influence employee job performance. That is, they found transactional leaders to be more influential in buffering the negative effects of hindrance stressors on organizational justice, whereas transformational leaders were more effective at enhancing the positive effects of challenge stressors on organizational justice. Zhang et al. (2014), argue that, whereas stress management practice has focused predominantly on support or resources that facilitate coping with stressors, their theorizing and results suggest that stress management may be improved by focusing on factors that influence how employees judge stressors with regard to their fairness. To this end, for example, stress management could be improved by practices that leverage "justice rules" (e.g., Copranzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007). Organizations could implement practices that help employees understand why they have to deal with work demands, whether others in the organization are also having to face similar stressors, and

what the organization is going to do to acknowledge and reward their employees for effectively coping with such demands. According to the authors, such practices could be especially worthwhile for hindrance stressors, given that it is unrealistic to think that these types of demands can be completely eliminated from the work environment. With these results in mind, it just might be argued that our "ample" set of leadership behaviors is still lacking those transactional behaviors needed to deal with the fairness appraisal of job demands; a source of stress that is highly loaded with hindrance components.

Third, the generalization of results from the study because of it being made in Mexico; a country culturally different from the United States, and other countries, might be in doubt. However, this concern may be less important as it seems, for at least two reasons. First, hypotheses were set by reasoning from the current literature and supported with the Mexican sample. Second, at least concerning the relationship between several stressors and performance, culture has not been found as a moderator (Edwards et al., 2008).

6.3 Practical Implications

Managers in various organizations are in dilemma over what interventions need to be employed to minimize the costs associated with occupational stress. Given the detrimental effects of stress on organizations, leaders may benefit from our study by knowing how several behaviors can be instrumental to reduce or to avoid the detrimental effects of stress. A main point here is that leaders can access a "battery" of behaviors that goes beyond delegation of authority (empowerment) that can be used to deal with the several stressors. To empower employees is not always found as feasible or desirable. For example, Morgeson & Johnson (2006) found that in conditions where the organizational rewards and feedback and information systems were effective, redesigning work into a semi-autonomous team structures had no discernible effect on performance behaviors.

Others have cited the potential dangers of giving autonomy to employees. It is argued that the danger lies in the costs and risks that organizations take when redesigning work. Increasing the autonomy of workers means that organizations grant control to the workers, thus putting themselves at risk that the workers will make poor decisions, be negligent in their duties, or otherwise act in ways that are inconsistent with organizational interests (Eisenhardt, 1989). Moreover, although autonomy may be easily given, it is not easily taken back (Morgeson& Campion, 2002). Furthermore, to some, delegation leaves the leader without enough authority or respect, while some others may fear the challenge of being a leader of empowered employees.

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