

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar



To Empower or to Create Reliance: Examining Leaders' Autonomy or Dependency Helping Behaviors By

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Date : 1 Feb 2023 (WED)
Time : 9:00 – 10:30 am
Venue : Online via Zoom

Abstract

Leaders are well-equipped and well-placed to help their employees. When leaders help, both the leaders and the help-receiving employees reap positive benefits. Yet, we lack understanding of the manner in which leaders offer help, create dependency, or empower others. Offering dependency help i.e. fixing a problem for someone, can be strategic and a means to create reliance, whereas offering autonomy help i.e., teaching someone how to fix a problem, can be a way to empower others. We propose that leaders high on dominance (i.e., those who are seen as assertive and commanding) offer more dependency help and less autonomy help. In contrast, leaders high on prestige (i.e., those who are respected and admired) provide more autonomy help and less dependency help. We further examine the mediating role of leaders' zero-sum thinking and the moderating role of status threat in explaining their differential helping behaviors. We test our hypotheses using a combination of experimental studies and a large field study comprising of 130 supervisors and 578 employees. Additionally, we develop a scale to measure autonomy and dependency helping in the workplace. In doing so, this research highlights the systematic manner in which leaders can discriminate in offering dependency or autonomy help.

Dr Hemant Kakkar is an assistant professor of management and organizations at the Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. Dr Kakkar received his Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from the London Business School.

His research draws on social psychology and evolutionary theories of status and influence to examine judgments and behaviors of individuals and groups within social hierarchies. He also studies individuals' tendency to engage in both positive and negative deviant behaviors. His research is published in leading academic journals and also covered by several popular press outlets.

All interested are welcome.



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