Chapter 10
Development of a Single–Factor Scale to Measure Leader Accountability

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ABSTRACT

Wood and Winston defined leader accountability as the leader's response to (1) his/her willing acceptance of the responsibilities inherent in the leadership position to serve the well-being of the organization; (2) the implicit or explicit expectation that he/she will be publicly linked to his/her actions, words, or reactions; and (3) the expectation that the leader may be called on to explain his or her beliefs, decisions, commitments, or actions to constituents. They developed three scales—the Responsibility, Openness, and Answerability Scales—to form the Leader Accountability Index (LAI). Use of the scales in subsequent research has suggested the possibility of combining the three to form a single factor instrument to measure leader accountability. This chapter updates the literature on leader accountability since the LAI was first published, reviews the data collection and factor analyses involved in creating the new Leader Accountability Scale (LAS), and discusses implications of the new scale's usefulness in leadership research and organizational practice.

INTRODUCTION

Accountability continues to be a proposed social structure that can influence individual behavior to either comply with established behavioral norms and expectations or restore trust and credibility once lost (Wood & Winston, 2005). This is particularly true in the field of leadership. Calls for and examinations of leader accountability continue to go forth in virtually every leadership domain, including business (cf. Steinbauer et al., 2014; Molinaro, 2018), clergy (cf. Senander, 2017; Silliman, 2021), public

utilities (cf. Walsh, 2019), the non-profit sector (cf. Saddiq et al., 2013), healthcare (cf. Andersson & Wikstrom, 2014), education administration (cf. Knapp & Feldman, 2012; Lee et al., 2012), building trades (cf. Chapman, 2019), non-government organizations (cf. Ghela & Bhanderi, 2016), accounting (cf. Ahrens & Ferry, 2015), and government (Byrne, 2014; Lewis & Steinhoff, 2019). Despite repeated public scandals in various fields throughout the early part of the century and the perceived importance of leader accountability, Molinaro's (2017) Global Leadership Accountability Survey indicates that only 37% of respondents were satisfied with the level of accountability demonstrated by their leaders.

Wood and Winston (2005) contributed to this field in two ways. First, following a rigorous literature review in which leader accountability was described in a wide variety of ways, they defined the construct upon which leader accountability could be further researched and measured. Wood and Winston define leader accountability as the leader's response to (a) his/her willing acceptance of the responsibilities inherent in the leadership position to serve the well-being of the organization; (b) the implicit or explicit expectation that he/she will be publicly linked to his/her actions, words, or reactions; and (c) the expectation that the leader may be called on to explain his or her beliefs, decisions, commitments, or actions to constituents (Wood & Winston, 2005). Out of this research, Wood and Winston (2007) developed three scales to measure leader accountability – the Responsibility Scale, the Openness Scale, and the Answerability Scale – which, combined, form the Leader Accountability Index (LAI). These scales gave organizations and researchers the ability to move the conversation about leadership and accountability past buzzwords and reactive postures to a more proactive one. Having such a tool also provides organizational leaders and consultants a resource to help select or promote accountable individuals to positions of leadership and a framework by which to train and develop leaders in this critical area.

Use of the three LAI scales in subsequent research has suggested the possibility of combining the three to form a single factor instrument to measure leader accountability. This chapter updates the literature on leader accountability since the LAI was first published, particularly in the ways the three scales have been used in research, reviews the data collection and factor analyses involved in creating the new Leader Accountability Scale (LAS), and discusses the implications of the new scale's usefulness in leadership research and organizational practice. Having such a tool creates the possibility of increased use and usefulness as organizational leaders and researchers continue to address a significant leadership issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW: USE OF THE LAI IN SUBSEQUENT RESEARCH

This study is a response to a call from Frederick et al. (2017), who examined the three factors of leader accountability – acceptance of responsibility, openness, and answerability – as potential antecedents to employees' perception of their leaders' authentic leadership.

Responding to the call from Gardner et al. (2011) for stronger theory building, specifically in empirical studies regarding potential causal relationship with authentic leadership, Frederick et al. investigated the possible predictive role of accountability (responsibility, openness, and answerability) to authentic leadership, noting that the constructs share many common terms and concepts. A convenience sample of employees from six faith-based higher education institutions was asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Avolio et al., 2008) and the Leader Accountability Index (Wood and Winston, 2007). After eliminating data from employees who had less than a year of tenure due to anomalies in the data, Frederick et al. performed a multiple regression analysis on the 265 remaining surveys to predict variance on perception of authentic leadership associated with

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