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## Article

# Followership behavior and leaders' trust: Do political skills matter?

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## **Followership Behavior and Leaders' Trust: Do Political Skills Matter?**

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### **Abstract**

The study aims to examine the process and contingency to explain the relationship between follower's proactive behavior and leader's trust. Trust has been identified as one of the most critical elements of the high-quality relationship between a follower and leader and considered as a key boulevard through which followers can impact the behavior of their leaders. In this cross-sectional study, data is collected from leaders and followers (dyads) of a large corporation by conducting two self-administered surveys. Findings suggest that the proactive followers are more trustworthy in the eyes of their leaders. Perceived follower support plays a mediating role in this process. Further, we find that political skill of followers moderates this relationship. The study has significant implications for followership research, extending the comprehension about follower characteristics' effect on their behaviors and leaders perception. We contribute to followership literature by empirically validating the practices that help in trust building on followers providing a framework to practitioners for trust-building and empowering scholars for further identification of followers' behaviors and traits that can construct leaders' trust. The study indirectly expands the leadership literature and provides help to understand the leadership in the context of followership. These findings are useful for followers, leaders and for individuals who are involved in their development and training and invest and train employees for effective followership behavior. By improving the followership skills of employees advance the effective leadership outcome ultimately, therefore organizational improvement can be increased.

**Keywords:** leaders' trust on followers, proactive behavior, followership behavior, perceived follower support, political skills.

## 1. Introduction

Leadership is a universal phenomenon and exists in all human societies that focused by researchers and popular press (Shamir, 2007). This interest is supported by the long history of the leadership literature in organizational studies. Leadership is inseparable from the trust as it enables its task oriented and relational operations. Mutual trust has been identified as one of the most critical elements of the high-quality relationship between a follower and leader. Researchers (Ellis et al., 2001; Shamir et al., 2003; Thomas et al., 2009) and workers (Bartolome, 1989; Galford et al., 2003; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010) endorse that effective leaders gain followers' trust. Surprisingly little attention is devoted to understanding how followers earn their leaders' trust or how leaders process when and which followers should be trusted (Dirks et al., 2002; Park et al., 2012). Perhaps this lack of interest is consistent with the overpoweringly dominant leader-centric view (Mmambuosi, 1991) of leadership in which leaders are considered influencer and followers as being influenced. Although, the trust of influencer needs to be explored because being influenced often implies some degree of trust in the influencing party. Understanding 'the role and impact of followers in the leadership processes' is an emerging research area in leadership. Although followership has always been considered essential to the field of leadership, but the still abundance of investigations in this field is leader-centric. Recently, the existing literature is criticized by the researchers due to overly leader focused and ignoring followers' role in leadership process (Blom et al., 2015; Hoendervoogt, 2015; Landino, 2006; Malakyan, 2014; Riggio, 2014; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Wel, 2015; Zhao et al., 2016). This criticism on leader-centric research had directed to conduct follower-centric research. Recent investigations have analyzed the impact of implicit leadership theories (ILT) and implicit followership theories (IFT) on leadership outcome. For instance, Tsai et al. (2017), Riggs et al. (2017), and few other studies like Coyle et al. (2013), Topakas (2011) authenticate that the degree to which leader and follower have congruence on how they distinguish their character in leadership process have impacts quality of their relationship quality. In spite of this growth in followership studies, Foti et al. (2017) and Trichas et al. (2017) recommend that additional consideration is essential to comprehend how implicit leadership and followership works for actual firms' outcome. Therefore, scholars have started to bridge this gap considering the followers as a more active player in the leadership process. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) in their seminal work, modern followership theory that identifies follower as "causal agent" and considers how followers influence their leader's attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.

Previous exploration of follower-leader dynamics advises that it is rational to assume trust as a key boulevard through which followers can impact the behavior of their leaders (Brower et al., 2000; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Lapierre et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien et al., 2000). To know under what conditions and settings a leader consider his or her followers trustworthy is valuable for both parties (leader-follower). Followers need to impact their leaders' behavior because they are source of valued and economic resources (Tangirala et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2012) and due to the political nature of organizations, social ties, and good quality relationships influence the organizational decisions and allocation of resources (Mintzberg, 1985). Therefore, followers need to build trust and social ties with their leader. From the theoretical viewpoint of Leader-

Member Exchange (LMX) theory, the more leader and follower reciprocate behaviors that increase trust, liking, respect, and sense of obligation, the higher will be the quality of their relationship (Graen et al., 1995; Liden et al., 1993). Thus, for followers, it is significant to predict effective ways of intermingling with the leader to stimulate their trust.

This study intends to determine how followers can positively influence the leader's trust on them by behaving by the leader's expectations. We propose that followers who adopt proactive followership behavior (taking the initiative, voicing concerns, taking ownership, and offering a solution) regarding leader are likely to assist leader to trust on them in achieving targets. Furthermore, this study tries to explain the underlying mechanism and contingency in this relationship. Perceived follower support is suggested as mediating variable because the proactive behavior of follower is supposed to print positive impression in the minds of leaders so that they might be considered by the leader as supportive followers. Due to positive perceived support, leaders might consider their follower as most trustworthy. It is also expected that the follower political skill will moderate the relationship between followers' behavior, leaders' perception, and the leader's trust. A recent meta-analysis suggests that the personal characteristics of trustee and trustor have a direct impact on trust in a dyadic rapport (Zhang, 2014).

In previous research, leaders' characteristics and their impact on followers' trust has been explored extensively but how followers' characteristics play a role in developing dyadic trust remain ignored (Cheung, 2016, Park and Kim, 2016). Political skill is inclusive social competencies design, which reflects cognitive, affective and behavioral manifestations, and exhibits special effects on self and others. Furthermore, politically skilled employees have the ability to understand the environment and adjust their behavior accordingly. Therefore their proactive behavior might be considered as more genuine and trustworthy.

This study contributes in examining the role of the follower in leadership process by pinpointing the characteristics and followership behavior that help to build the leader's trust on them. A recent study by Nichols et al. (2014) examined that trustworthiness and intelligence are required in leaders of each level and give a general idea that trustworthiness may be desired by people across both leaders and followers. It also expands the leadership literature and will provide help to understand the leadership in the context of followership. The study highlights the significance of following in the leadership because, without an understanding of followership, understandings of leadership are incomplete (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The model proposed in this study help in "reversing the lens" of leadership (Shamir, 2007) by achieving a good understanding of the role of followers in the process of leadership. This research also pursues to validate the necessity of additional investigation to inspect the quite untouched area of leadership, known as followership. Managers could use the study findings in developing training plans to improve the proactivity of followers. By developing the followership skills of employees advance the effective leadership outcome ultimately, therefore organizational improvement can be increased (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, (2009, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Additionally, trying to understand how leader perceives and reacts to followership styles

should also provide organizations with the ability to improve feedback to employees and assist followers in evaluating their followership styles (Schyns, Kroon, & Moors, 2007).

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### *2.1 Proactive Followership Behavior and Leaders' Trust: Mediating Role of Perceived Follower Support*

Proactive behavior refers to “taking the initiative, voicing concerns, taking ownership, and offering solutions before being asked to do so by the leader” (Carsten et al., 2010). The proactive follower would demonstrate extra initiative in determining with their leader whether their responsibilities or the way they perform ought to be adjusted. As followership behavior become more proactive, follower's use of voice behavior (attempts to benefit the leader or group by constructively challenging the leader) (Carsten et al., 2009) and role innovation (Lapierre & Bremner, 2010) increased. Proactive followers show more involvement in extra role behavior like civic virtue (displaying concern about, or participating responsibly in the political life of the leader's group or organization), altruism (going out of one's way to help another member of one's team or organization), courtesy and interpersonal helping (Lapierre & Bremner, 2010). They make proactive attempt to influence their leaders by using upward influence tactics like rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, personal appeal, and legitimizing (Lapierre & Bremner, 2010). In a situation where follower displays proactive followership behavior, it can be expected that leader thinks favorably about that follower. In the eyes of leaders, the follower would possess all situational specific knowledge and skills that leader believes are necessary to obtain accurate performance. Bremner (2011) suggested that followers who show proactive followership behavior are perceived as benevolent and trustworthy members by the leader. In line with these arguments, we posit that proactive behavior is positively related to leaders' trust.

Social exchange theory provides the basis for understanding that how perceived follower support bridges the relationship between proactive behavior and leaders' trust. Perceived follower support is defined as leader's “general belief that their work followers value their contributions and cares about their well-being.” It is a significant component of their contextual environment in leaders' definition and may be used by the leader as an indicator of the follower's malevolent or benevolent intent. We argue that the positive perception about followers in response to their proactivity may affect the leader's perceived follower support that followers have to care about their well-being. Bailey (2014) argued that perceived follower support can affect supervisors behavior. High perceived follower support positively affects the confidence level of the supervisor to set higher level goals, satisfy socio-emotional needs and increase the expectations of leader that organizations will reward efforts on behalf of followers. Therefore, perceived follower support may produce a sense of obligation to care about the follower's well-being and to help them in achieving their objectives.

Trust is a psychological state of one entity (person, group, or organization) involving a willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another entity (person, group, or organization). This willingness to appear vulnerable depends on the motives of members in a relationship and the belief that the purpose of motives is not self-serving. Therefore, when leaders perceived follower

support is pervasive, they are more probable to trust that the social norms of followers are truly leaders support, and follower's actions are not self-serving. Complimentary to, social exchange process promoted the trust because in this exchange process both leader and follower interpret the behaviors of each other to define whether the exchange is an appropriate consequence. As Blau (1964) suggests that the continuing growth of the exchange permits the partners to prove trustworthiness to each other. In the result of the social exchange process, leaders' trust on their followers is generated:

- **H<sub>1</sub>:** Leader's Perceived Follower Support mediates the relationship between followers' proactive followership behavior and leader's trust.

## 2.2 Proactive Behavior and Perceived Followers Support: Moderation of Political Skill

Political skill is an interpersonal effectiveness construct that combines social understanding with the ability to adjust behavior to the demands of the situation in ways that appear sincere, inspire trust and supportive, and effectively influence others (Ferris et al., 2005). It is defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005). Ferris et al. (2007) proposed political skill in terms of four different dimensions. Each dimension labels a different characteristic of an individual's political skills e.g. social astuteness (the ability to read and understand people), interpersonal influence (the ability to act on that knowledge in influential ways), networking ability (the ability to interconnect and cooperate with others), and apparent sincerity (the ability to do all these in a seemingly genuine and sincere manner). Research shows very high dispositional and developmental effect of proactive personality on political skill through interpersonal influence and networking ability (Ferris et al., 2007; Liu et al., 2007; Thompson, 2005).

In the consequences of this ability, efforts of politically skilled followers are more probable to be supposed as sincere and genuine. Proactive followership behavior of politically skilled followers like taking extra initiatives, role innovation, constructive voice behavior or other extra role behavior may seem like support to achieve the ambitious objective and provide emotional support to the leader. Their proactive behavior seems more genuine and trustworthy. Good reputes caused by those highly politically skilled followers (Ferris et al., 2003) may increase the leader's belief that the followers are behaving in their best interest. Therefore, this positive perception regarding followers may affect the intensity of the relationship between proactive behaviors and leaders' trust. So, considering above arguments, it is hypothesized that:

- **H<sub>2a</sub>:** Political skill moderates the relation between proactive followership behavior and perceived follower support.
- **H<sub>2b</sub>:** Political skill moderates the relation between perceived follower support and leaders' trust.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Procedure and Sample

The data were collected from a large private manufacturing organization in the textile sector. A detailed process was used to select the organization. Invitation letters were sent

to three large organizations that were similar in size, decision making, and reporting pattern. Two of them accepted the invitation and we choose one of them for data collection purpose. Selected research site is a manufacturing firm that deals with the manufacturing and retailing quality embroidered fabrics, with top 12 brands in market. The reason behind the selection of this organization is its large size in the form of employees working in leader-follower dyads and the consent of firm for participation. There are nine functional departments in the firm. HR assists in identifying the dyads at middle level management from all departments. All the identified dyads are the target population and surveyed, and this organization was selected as it provided us the opportunity of in-person visits. We identified pairs from 40 middle managers (leaders) with their 300 supervisors/team leaders (followers) with the help of human resource department. The unit of analysis is dyads. Two self-administrated surveys from two different sources are conducted to collect data. The first survey is being carried out by the followers to measure follower's proactive behavior and political skill. The second survey is carried out from leaders to measure perceived follower support and their trust on followers. We assure the use of the negative item, multiple types of anchoring and multi-source data to reduce the common sources biases. (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We collected the data from middle management due to their low involvement in strategic activities, and they execute the business plans only. Furthermore, they have sufficient qualification and time to participate in the study. Total 300 dyads in all departments are identified with the help of human resource management department. According to the list employees and manager in each department provided by HR, a unique code is assigned to every employee and paired manager (e.g., F1, L1). This unique code was written on each questionnaire and addressed to the manager. The list of codes with employees' name is provided to the manager of the department. The total duration of 8 weeks is given to the departments to complete the survey. Reminders after every two weeks were also sent to the departments after distribution. Questionnaires in hard copies were distributed to all the to the identified dyads in their respective departments. Concerned manager of each department was provided with a consent letter, questionnaires and an envelope to return the survey's questionnaire.

Questionnaires are returned to the relevant manager after completion, which further returned to the manager of HR department. The response rate is 60 percent which is considered suitable for management research. Out of the 200 followers, 85% are male. The respondents are professional and experienced as they have the average education of 15 years and organizational tenure of 3.5 years approximately. Average value of supervisory tenure is 2.6, enough to analyze the relationship between dyads. The leader sample consisted of 40 leaders. Leaders are educated, experienced and mature as the mean values of education, experience, and age which are about 16 years, 35 years and 5.5 years respectively.

### *3.2 Measures*

The 18-item scale measures Political Skill at 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5; strongly disagree = 1) given by Ferris et al. (2007). Sample items are "I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me" And "I am good at getting others to respond positively to me." The value of Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.80.

We used five items of proactive followership behavior given by Carsten (2008) on 5 points Likert scale (Not at all = 1; To a great Extent = 5). Sample items are “I question my manager’s decisions when I feel it is necessary.” and “I approach my manager about changes that could make us more effective at our work.” The value of Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.78.

Perceived follower support is measured by a 10-item scale developed in 2013 by Eisenberger. Sample items are “He fails to understand what a good job I am doing.” and “He feels the Department made the right decision in appointing me as their supervisor” (Cronbach’s alpha = .93). To measure the items 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5; strongly disagree = 1) is used.

Trust is measured by the Lagace’s scale of trust given in 1991. These items are measured on Five points Likert scale (Not true at all = 1; True all of the time = 5), having Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .88. Sample items are “My subordinate is friendly and approachable.” and “I can depend on her.”

Four variables are controlled due to their possible influential effect on defined relationships. These variables include follower’s *age*, *relationship tenure* with the current leader and *organization tenure* because these variables may be exposed differently in a relationship with their leader. Further *gender* is controlled because the researcher has argued in preferences of individuals based on their gender.

#### 4. Data analysis

SPSS 21 and AMOS 19 is used for data analysis and hypotheses testing. The data is screened for missing values, multivariate outliers on the first stage. Further multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, descriptive statistics, and correlation analyses are also incorporated at this stage. The results of correlation along with descriptive of study variables are given in Table 1. The respondents are professional and experienced as they have the average education of 15.23 years and organizational tenure of 3.5 years approximately. Average value of supervisory tenure is 3.49, enough to analyses the relationship between dyads. All study variable also normally distributed as showing the value of SD, which is less than 1. Table 1 is also showing the significant correlation between study variables. Results demonstrate that the followers who adopt proactive followership behavior with their leaders are perceived as more supportive by their leader (coefficient = 0.29,  $p < 0.01$ ). Mediating variable PFS are showing significant correlation with PFB and leader’s trust on follower with coefficient values of 0.69 and 0.73 respectively with a p-value less than .001. Now it is worth to mention that these values justifying every proposed relationship among study variables and provide initial support to followership theory which suggests that follower behavior affects the leadership perception and outcome. As control variables did not show correlation with study variables, Therefore, control variables are not included in the final analysis (Petersitzke, 2009).



**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Correlations Analysis**

Variables		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Gender	1.15	.36	1.00								
2	Age	2.62	.98	-.23*	1.00							
3	Education	15.23	1.17	0.15	0.10	1.00						
4	Total Tenure	3.49	2.46	-0.31**	0.48**	-0.19	1.00					
5	Supervision Tenure	2.60	2.09	-.31**	.44**	-.29**	.74**	1.00				
6	Political Skill	3.87	.72	-0.07	-0.08	0.04	0.06	0.04	1.00			
7	Proactive Behavior	3.65	.52	0.03	-0.09	0.07	0.01	-0.03	-0.03	1.00		
8	Perceived Support	3.66	.58	-0.01	-0.08	.25*	0.04	-0.02	0.29**	.47**	1.00	
9	Leader's Trust	4.14	.63	0.02	-0.17	0.10	-.09	-0.10	0.43**	.69**	0.76**	1.00

n=200; \* p &lt; 0.05, \*\* P &lt; 0.01

Confirmatory factor analysis is conducted to measure the validity of study variables. CFI and TLI values are above 0.90, and RMSEA scores below 0.08 represent a good model fit (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2005). The model of 4 factors with 37 totals indicators is tested; the values of model fit indices for this model are very good except GFI which have approximately near to 0.8 that is not good but acceptable (CMIN/df = 1.355; GFI = 0.85; CFI = 0.932; TLI = 0.926; RMSEA = 0.058) given in Table 1.

**Table 2: Model Fit Summary for CFA and SR Model**

Model	CMIN	CMIN/DF	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Measurement Model	915.42	1.355	0.85	0.93	0.92	0.058

The reliabilities of all scales are very good as the estimations of all Alphas are near 0.80; though, the base satisfactory breaking point of alpha for sociologies is 0.70, given in Table 3. Additionally, the discriminant and convergent validities are computed for all the constructs by following the procedure given by Hair et al. (2010). They propose that convergent validity of constructs is recognized if the value of AVE (average variance extracted) is less than 0.50. They also suggest that the scale's reliability is good if the value of composite reliability (CR) is more than 0.70 and discriminant validity will be known good if the value of MSV (maximum shared variance) is less than AVE. The result of validity and reliability of this study are given in Table 3.

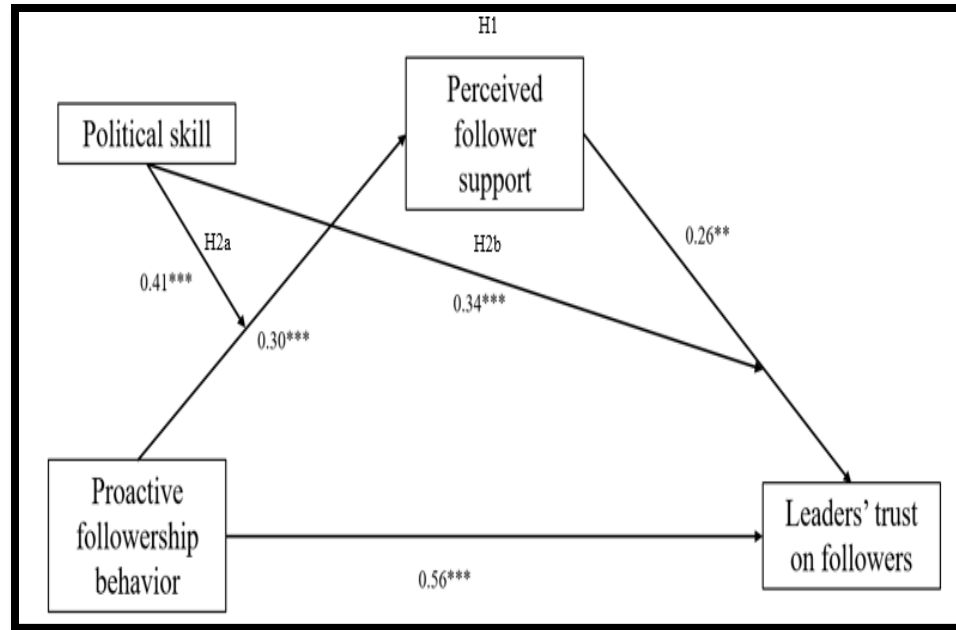
**Table 3: Validity of Variables**

	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>MSV</b>	<b>ASV</b>
<b>LT</b>	0.97	0.86	0.56	0.55	0.35
<b>PS</b>	0.78	0.97	0.68	0.61	0.48
<b>PFS</b>	0.93	0.92	0.61	0.61	0.39
<b>PFB</b>	0.88	0.79	0.56	0.29	0.23

## 5 .Results

The structural regression (SR) model is developed and tested and the result shows a good fit index (CMIN/df = 1.413; GFI = 0.85; CFI = 0.920; TLI = 0.914, RMSEA = 0.062). The results of SEM are given in Table 4.

The first hypothesis suggested the perceived follower support play a mediating role between proactive followership behavior of follower and leaders' trust. The results show that proactive followership behavior has a positive relationship with perceived follower support ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and perceived follower support has a positive impact on leader's trust. To test the mediation, we follow the procedure suggested by Zhao et al. in 2010. The bootstrap method was applied using 5000 bootstrap samples for an indirect relationship between proactive behavior and leaders' trust. (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The results show the positive indirect relationship between proactive followership behavior and leaders trust ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The result shows the complementary mediation (Zhao et al., 2010) or partial mediation (Baron et al., 1986) of political skill between proactive behavior and leader's trust because direct effect of proactive behavior and leaders' trust is also significant. Findings suggest that follower behavior impacts the leaders' perception about their role which later develops the followership outcome supporting the followership theory given by Uhl-Bien et al., (2014).



**Figure 1: Structural Regression Model**

To test the moderation, two interaction terms of “political skill and proactive followership behavior” and “political skill and perceived follower support” was calculated by using orthogonal interaction method. Direct effects between interaction terms (PS x PFB) and perceived follower support is significant ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It refers that interaction term (PS x PFB) considerably predicts perceived follower support, providing back to Hypothesis H<sub>2a</sub>. The findings suggest that when the political skill is high, the followers’ proactive behaviors are considered as more supportive near leaders. Direct effects between interaction terms (PS x PFS) and leaders’ trust is significant ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It refers that interaction term (PS x PFS) considerably predicts leaders’ trust providing support to Hypothesis H<sub>2b</sub>. When perceived followers’ support is high, the followers with high political skill are considered as more trustworthy in leaders’ mind. These findings are aligned with the recent finding of meta-analysis which suggesting that the personal characteristics of trustee and trustor have a direct impact on trust in a dyadic rapport (Zhang, 2014). Followership theory also suggests that followers’ characteristics affect their role and leader’s perception of their role (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). Shamir (2007) also given the “reversing the lens” model which suggest similar that followers are causal agent in leadership process. This study also attempting to provide empirical support to this follower-centric theory.

**Table 4: Structural Equation Modeling Results**

Indirect and Direct Effects	Coefficients
<b>Direct Effect</b>	
PFB→PFS	0.30***
PFS→LT	0.26**
PFB→LT	0.56***
PFB x PS→PFS (H <sub>2a</sub> )	0.41***
PFS x PS→LT (H <sub>2b</sub> )	0.34***
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	
PFBP→PFS→LT (H <sub>1</sub> )	0.08**

## 6. Discussion

The aim of this study was to contribute to the understanding of the role of followers in the process of leadership by recognizing those characteristics of followers that were contributing to the leader's trust on followers. Recent research on leadership has started to focus on the contribution of followers in leadership process with the development of followership theory. Though there is little literature is available to predict that which characteristics and role are contributing to the development of followership outcomes i.e. leader's trust and underlying mechanisms that clarify this relationship. This study examined the followers' behavior which contributes to building leaders' trust in them. It also examines how followers' characteristics can leverage this process. Though little literature is available to predict that which characteristics are contributing to the development of followership outcomes i.e. leader's trust and underlying mechanisms that clarify this relationship. The study aims to advance the understanding of leadership by turning the focus of investigation lens on followers instead of leaders through followership theory i.e. "study of the nature and impact of followers and following in the leadership process" by concentrating just on follower's proactive behavior and leader's trust. According to the study aims, the research hypotheses were articulated.

Hence, this study examines the proactive behavior of followers significantly affect the leader's trust on the follower, and this relationship is mediated by leaders' perception of perceived support and moderated by followers' political skill. The findings of this study also expand the leadership literature in the context of followership, recent shift toward leadership literature.

Firstly, study findings reveal that follower proactive followership behavior positively affects the leaders' trust, but perceived follower support partially mediates this relationship. It suggests that when followers behave proactively, it prints positive impression in the minds of leaders so that leader can perceive them as supportive followers. Due to positive perceived support, leaders might consider their follower as

most trustworthy. These findings are in line with previous research on the proactive behavior of employees. In a meta-analysis research, it is revealed that proactive employees are high performers and gain more career success than others (Fuller et al., 2009). Another review study suggested that proactive personalities can make a positive difference for both employee and organization (Bindl et al., 2010). Bremner in 2011 also suggests that proactive personalities are considered as more trustworthy in the eyes of their leaders. These findings are aligned with Coyle et al. (2013), as they suggest that there is congruence between followers and leaders' prototypes directly affects the quality of LMX. Discrepancy and miscommunication between leaders and followers expectations often happen in organizations; therefore understanding of follower's and leader's behavior, that are congruent with each other regarding the expectations of leaders and followers, might have a positive impact on organizational commitment, job satisfaction and well-being (Epitropaki et al., 2004). Jin, McDonald, Park, & Trevor (2017) also conclude similar finding as it is suggested that the active followership behavior also help employees to gain positive perceived support from their leader. Sy in 2010 also found the similar support of the positive relationship between IFTs and job satisfaction of followers and their welfare.

Secondly, this study reveals that the political skill of follower plays a moderating role between proactive behavior and perceived follower support. Political skill also moderates the relationship between perceived follower support and leaders' trust. It refers that proactive actions of the politically skilled followers are more likely to viewed as more supportive as compare to other followers and the right reputes caused by those highly politically skilled followers (Ferris et al., 2003) also increases the leader's belief about their supportive behavior, which proves them more trustworthy. These findings are aligned with previous research like Kimura (2015) suggest that political skills play moderating role in organization politics and leader-member exchange. Recent review by Kimura also suggest that political skill employees are more likely to gain more career success and supervisory reward (Shi et al., 2013; Treadway et al., 2010; Treadway et al., 2005)

Study finds that followers' proactive behavior is a good predictor of leader's trust. Proactive followership behavior encourages the leader to trust on their followers and subsequently leaders will provide more decision-making authority and enhance the allocation of significant tasks. Additionally, the results of this study also discourage the followers with the passive role; followers who behave per "traditional" belief of followers as submissive and subservient.

### *6.1 Implications*

This study has various theoretical and practical implication. This study is one of the initial attempt to understand the role of followers in leadership research. Results of the study show that followers' behavior and characteristics have a significant impact on leaders' trust and perceptions. These findings provide a base to other leadership researchers to explore followers' role more comprehensively in the leadership process.

#### *6.1.1 Theoretical Implications*

Taking everything into account, the findings of the proposed research have added to overcome the deficiency of empirical investigation concentrating on the dynamic part

that followers play in the process of leadership. This study is one of the attempts of deciding how followers impact their leaders' perceptions and the main known exertion at analyzing how the leader's perception communicates with follower behavior to influence these perceptions. More research on followership is justified to highlight the impact that followers have on their leaders and to completely comprehend the leadership process (Shamir, 2007). This study is expected to serve as a strong stride in the right bearing in this mission for more noteworthy comprehension of leadership, and the followership. The basic objective of this study was to understand the way followers can affect the relationship with the leader. Results find that the congruence between a suggested followership behavior and their leader's perception did influence the leader's trust on their followers. Significance result of the study is suggesting that the proactive followership behavior had a positive effect on the leader's perception of followers perceived support and this behavior and leader's perception co-construct the leader's trust on their followers. The result of study highlights the necessity for further investigation future research on follower characteristics and followership behavior which are effective in developing the followership outcomes.

#### 6.1.2 Practical Implication

This study has a various practical implication. These findings provide a base to other leadership researchers to explore followers' role more comprehensively in the leadership process. This study has several implications for followers as well as managers of organizations. Study finds that proactive followers are more trustworthy near leaders. Therefore, managers should train their followers for proactive actions. This study also provides guidance followers, how they can behave to win their leaders trust them by behaving according to leaders wants. Training is a function that is widely used in the organizational setting and is used as a way to utilize human capital as a competitive resource. The finding provides support for the politically skilled and proactive followers. Therefore, practical implication is that organization should invest and train their employees in developing proactive behavior. By improving the followership skills of employees ultimately advance the effective leadership outcome, therefore organizational improvement can be increased (Hurwitz et al., 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Additionally, trying to understand how leaders perceive and react to followership styles should also provide organizations with the ability to improve feedback to employees and assist followers in evaluating their followership styles (Schyns et al., 2008).

#### 6.2 Limitations and Future Direction

The first main limitation of this study is the cross-sectional collection of data. Though, by using the prior hypothetical framework and data collection from both sources; leader and follower assist in ameliorating this limitation significantly. However, it will be better to test the hypothesized model by using the experimental design or longitudinal methods. The second major limitation is this study is the sample size. The sampling size varies by a number of variables, model's complexity and missing data and many other (Muthén et al., 2002).

This study focuses on the only one type of followership behavior that affects the leaders' trust; Future research should consider other important following behaviors like feedback

seeking, obedience, resistance, voice and dissent which can significantly affect the leader's trust. Other important personal characteristics (Machiavellianism and goal orientation), motivations (, motivation to lead, mission consciousness and power orientation) and perception (role orientations, FIFTs, followership identity and romance of leadership) of followers which can affect individual's following behavior as well as leaders' trust as well, need to be explored in future for better understanding of followers' role. Leader's trust in one of the major followership outcome: lead to effective leadership process, but there are other important outcomes need to be explored like LMX, follower effectiveness, informal leadership, leader's derailment and organizational advancement) that contribute in constructing leadership that needs to be investigated thoroughly.

### 6.3 Conclusion

This purpose of this study was to answer two questions. First, is proactive behavior is always beneficial? Second, how followers' behavior can help them to generate leaders' trust in them? We also aim to examine the underline mechanism between followers' behaviors and leaders' trust. Study findings show that proactive followership behavior is a good predictor of leaders' trust, but this relationship is not linear. Leaders' perception regarding followers' proactive behavior and followers' characteristics affect this relationship. Proactive followers are perceived by their leader as more supportive and genuine, therefore become more trustworthy. Followers political skill moderate this relationship. Good repute, networking ability, and sincerity are inbuilt characteristics of politically skilled followers that make their proactive actions as more genuine, supportive and trustworthy in leaders' mind.

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