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Emotional Leadership, Leader Legitimacy, and Work Engagement in Retail Distribution Industry

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Abstract

Purpose: The study examines how emotional leadership affects employee attitude towards work engagement. Leader legitimacy perception is chosen as the mediating variable to understand the effect of emotional leadership on employee work engagement. **Research design, data and methodology:** The research model is based on theory and empirical research findings in order to examine the mediating effect of leader legitimacy perception on the relationship between the manager's emotional leadership and employee work engagement. For this purpose, a survey was conducted among 188 employees of domestic retail distributors. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and survey data confirmed the construct, and the hypothesis was tested by using structural equation modeling (SEM). **Results:** a) Emotional leadership has positive influence on leader legitimacy; b) Leader legitimacy is positively related to work engagement; c) Leader legitimacy mediates a positive relationship between emotional leadership and work engagement. However, there is no direct effect on work engagement (of employees) from emotional leadership standpoint. **Conclusion:** Based on the empirical results, implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: Emotional Leadership, Leader Legitimacy, Work Engagement, Retail Distributor, Mediating Effect

JEL Classification Code: L81, M12, M19

1. Introduction

As the importance of emotional intelligence becomes significant, the interest in leadership seem to be shifting gear to the emotional perspective from that of the rational (Sosik & Magerian, 1999). The concept of emotional leadership comes from emotional intelligence (EI) by Salovey and Mayer (1990). It is an ability where as the leader well understands his/her internal state, so does in the need and emotional aspect of the employees; hence by which a solid relationship is established (between the leader

and the individuals of the firm) that can improve the emotional capacity of the firm (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). According to Wong and Law (2002), in order to understand better the emotions of other individuals, emotional leadership is noted as the ability to adjust ones emotional state and behavior, in accordance to the circumstance. Indeed, it is the effort to establish a healthy relationship between the management and the individuals of the firm, which in the end strengthens the sense of belonging as an organization (Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002). Thus as emotions are affected, evidently, emotional leadership can influence the performance of the firm's individuals (Humphrey, 2002; Nguyen, Duong, Tran, Ha, & Phung, 2020).

From the research by Goleman et al. (2002), according to the top management of more than 500 of global organizations, emotional leadership was suggested as the core factor to their success. If the leader is able to establish a genuine bond emotionally with the individuals of the firm, self-motivation is triggered which naturally escalates into an intense level of work engagement (Lee, Son, & Lee, 2011). Emotional leadership is positively related to the

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individual in health, creativity, efficiency, work engagement, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior (Wong & Law, 2002). In addition, turnover rates become lower (Codier, Kooker, & Shoultz, 2008) with significant outcomes in team cohesiveness (Choi & Kown, 2012). Emotional leadership is significant as it affects the individuals of the firm, which improves the effectiveness of the organization; thus enhancing the performance overall and contributing to the growth of the organizational culture (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000).

Moreover, research to explore the process of how emotional leadership affects the dependent variable also took place. From the preceding research, it was discovered that emotional leadership influences the outcome by its mediating variables such as positive psychology (McCallin & Bamford, 2007), creativity (Zhou & George, 2003), job satisfaction (Wong & Law, 2002), transformational leadership (Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Doan, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2020), self-efficacy (Kim, Oh, & Jung, 2014). Tee (2015) suggests the model that proposes how emotional connection between the leader and the individuals of the firm, can affect the sentiment of the organization and even its culture. However, research on the mediating variable is still insufficient to explain the process of how emotional leadership can influence the attitude and behavior of the individuals of the organization.

Henceforth, this study is to assess the process of how emotional leadership is related to the individual's behavior of the firm. In detail, by selecting leader legitimacy as the mediating variable, we are to identify the effect emotional leadership has on the employee's work engagement. The definition of legitimacy is the recognition that the behavior of the entity is appropriate, based on the socially accepted rules and value, principle and justice.

Executing an appropriate level of leadership can enable the employee to recognize leader legitimacy perception (Cho & Jeong, 2006), also the display of the leader's emotional leadership can lead to leader legitimacy perception. Furthermore, to express appreciation in return to the leader's emotional leadership, we can anticipate that the employee, who is aware of leader legitimacy, will strengthen their level of work engagement and attitude in a positive manner.

The distribution industry (particularly that of retail) is established by the intimate relations with clients and by the active exchange and communication with people in general. Thus, emotional labor is frequently practiced and encountered. In other words, the employees may experience emotional drainage within the process of dealing with customers. Hence, by the support of the leader's emotional understanding and response, the employees can be saved and their resources preserved (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Most importantly, as the employee and the employer are

frequently within communication, the execution of the employer's emotional leadership will be the crucial criteria.

In short, this study is to understand within the retail distribution industry, the impact emotional leadership has on the employee's work engagement – especially with a focus on leader legitimacy as the mediator. Therefore, the results of the study can contribute in the development of leader legitimacy theory while providing practical implications to the retail distribution industry.

2. Literature Reviews

2.1. Emotional Leadership

As noted prior, emotional leadership is the ability where the leader takes the lead in developing a solid emotional relationship with the individuals of the firm; thus as a result, the emotional capacity of the firm becomes positively stronger (Goleman et al., 2002). In other words, emotional leadership is the sort that have impeccable management abilities in the following - self-emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotion (Boyatzis, Goleman, & McKee, 2002). Self-emotional appraisal is a state when you can be truly objective, honest and realistic in evaluating yourself. Coming from the roots of self-emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion is managing your emotions effectively, and to be emotionally prepared despite the various on-going changes in life (Wong & Law, 2002). Through interest for others, other's emotional appraisal is about being conscious of the issues that others (different societies and communities) face; also, to reciprocate a genuine sense of psychological support. Use of emotion is the ability to connect emotions of others to one's own (Wong & Law, 2002); for leaders, such an ability is vital in securing positive relations with individuals of the firm, which in turn will determine leadership capabilities of running the organization.

Leaders whom exercise emotional leadership, through empathy builds relationships, motivates employees of the organization to come together and synergize as a team and to remain focused on the firm's objective (Kong, Ma, Ji, & Li, 2020). Therefore, in order to be a capable leader, emotional leadership is regarded as a prerequisite (Abraham, 1999).

Evidently, previous research suggests that emotional leadership is positively related to the employee's attitude and performance. From the perspective of the individual's attitude, it seems to affect job satisfaction (Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002), work engagement (Park & Chang, 2016), self-efficacy (Rajah, Song, & Arvey, 2011),

organizational commitment (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004; Ioannis & Ioannis, 2002) and turnover intention (Codier, Kooker, & Shoultz, 2008). From the performance perspective, it seems to affect creativity (Wong & Law, 2002; Zhou & George, 2003), work achievements (Bass, 2002; Gohm, 2003; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Rahim & Psenicka, 2005; Wong & Law, 2002; Zhou & George, 2003), and productivity (Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986).

2.2. Relations between Emotional Leadership and Work Engagement

Work engagement is the opposite concept of burnout (Leiter, 1997). Burnout is a state of negativity that shows up in response to the individual's resilience; in response to the reaction of another individual's work; and to the responsibility of work. Work engagement contains a strong level of energy, involvement, as well as a sense of efficacy - such strong energy along with the positive and supportive nature is shared with others (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). Thus, one can explain that work engagement while executing one's role, express all aspects of energy in the physical, cognitive and emotional (Kahn, 1990).

It is a known fact that the leader's leadership is the core criteria affecting the work engagement of the individual. For example, the following are said to affect the employee's work engagement: Transformational leadership (Macey & Schneider, 2008), empowering leadership (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012), positive leadership (Cameron, 2012), leader-member exchange (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008), psychological stability from the relationship between colleague and boss (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), coaching from the supervisor (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Based on the affective events theory, various affective events encountered from the organization, end up affecting the individual's emotion, which eventually will influence job satisfaction and work engagement (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). When emotional leadership is exercised to its employees - via emotional understanding, consideration and encouragement - there is a high chance that the individuals of the firm will experience positive outcomes. Therefore, through such positive outcomes, the individual will experience an up-boost in its work motivation as well as self-confidence, which will lead to work engagement.

The job demand-resource (JD-R) model can explain the relationship between emotional leadership and work engagement. Job resources - autonomy, feedback, social support, mentoring from superior - accelerate learning and development, which then elevates the individual's work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Emotional leadership takes on the role of work resource, as it caters to

the individual's emotion via supporting the work through empathy and understanding. According to Kahn (1992), positive relationships established within the firm give the employees psychological stability, which naturally elevates work engagement levels. Herewith, from the results of previous research and discussion, the hypothesis that emotional leadership is to positively influence the employee's work engagement was established.

Hypothesis 1: Emotional leadership will be positively related to work engagement of the employee.

2.3. The Relationship between Emotional Leadership and Leader Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined as the appropriate and ideal organizational behavior (Suchman, 1995). According to Scott and Dornbusch (1975), from the organizational psychology perspective, legitimacy is regarded as the governing rule for all individual behavior as well as personal faith. Scholars of sociology created the legitimacy theory and now in business economics, it is recognized as organizational legitimacy.

Leaders are obeyed not because of their power, but because of the belief that their decisions and instructions are appropriate and reasonable (Pfeffer, 1981). If the individual of an organization willingly accepts the influence of a leader, that itself acknowledges the legitimacy of the leader (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998); whenever influence is exercised by the leader, legitimacy of the leader is the core factor that motivates individuals (of the firm) to follow (Pfeffer, 1981).

Herewith, if the leader obtains legitimacy, positive effects are to take place for job satisfaction, work engagement and similar areas related to emotions within the work environment (Shin & Tak, 2011). Thus if the subordinates are under a legitimate yet powerful leader, it is expected that great positive emotions will be experienced (Keyes, Hysom, & Lupo, 2000).

However, within the spectrum of organizational behavior, except for some conceptual studies, not enough empirical research exists in regards to leader legitimacy. A few were conducted on factors that of which influence leader legitimacy perception such as studies done by Zelditch and Walker (1984) also Kanter (1977) - both insisting that authorization given by a higher authority and endorsement given by colleagues, are the essence of leader legitimacy perception. In addition, there are studies that suggests leader legitimacy perception can be elevated, depending on the leadership's characteristics (the leader's charisma or vision) as well as from the endorsement by its individual followers (Cho & Jeong, 2006).

Based on the theory of social exchange, we execute our

behavior in accordance to expectations that, corresponding outcomes will be rendered in consequence to how the individual behaved to others or to the firm. In short, we determine and execute our attitude and behavior to the organization, depending on the interests that can be obtained from the relationship of leader-employee exchange. From the theory of the norm of reciprocity, among the interdependent individuals, respect for others are preserved only if equal exchange of positive and negative outcomes is implied (Gouldner, 1960). Therefore, we can assume that leader legitimacy is achievable when the leader, which can influence the individual's need to reward, gives the individual useful support.

Within the essence of power, through referent power, which influence the behavior of individuals, legitimacy of leadership can be achieved. French and Raven (1959) suggested the leaders' five essentials of power to be the following: starting with legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, expert power and finally referent power. Among them, referent power derives from love, respect and loyalty for the individual, which emerges only when there is genuine desire to be-friend the person. Referent power is the individual's authentic strength, regardless of rank or position. On similar grounds, it is addressed once more that referent power comes from positive emotions the subordinate feels from the superior (Yukl, 2013); hence as a leader, maintaining close positive relations with individuals of the firm, seem crucial in enlarging the referent power of the leader. The reaction (from the firm's individuals) on the execution of the leader's power are compliance, identification, internalization and alienation; in terms of internalization, there is a prerequisite in regards to the concept. As soon as emotional leadership is exercised, due to the leader's influence of referent power, through stages of internalization the employee starts to convince and justify the legitimacy of the leader. Based on the above, the following hypothesis was established.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional leadership will be positively related to leader legitimacy.

2.4. Relationship between Leader Legitimacy and Work Engagement

Beetham (1991) in his book 'The Legitimation of Power' talks about legitimacy, and suggesting the three factors required to uphold the concept; the three are the law of legitimacy, the legitimacy of control and of the agreements expressed. This theory is helpful in understanding the mechanism where the employee voluntarily displays positive attitudes or behavior to the organization - as a reaction to the realization of the leader's legitimacy. The detailed criteria to the ideas of Beetham (1991) on

legitimacy are as follows. First, power becomes legitimate, given that the power is gained and is exercised by respecting the official guidelines of law. Second, though legitimacy is said to be achievable only through law, legitimacy of law itself becomes acknowledged when the dominant and the non-dominant share the same set of values. Third, only by voluntary behavior from the people, can legitimacy be acknowledged. Agreement needs to be expressed through behavior; agreement, which is the core of legitimacy, cannot be simply explained by agreement being implied. Agreement is the acknowledgment of the relationship of power as well as their positioning of compliance. Agreement needs to be a voluntary outcome. From this perspective, legitimacy is agreed upon once the individual becomes aware of the legitimacy, and displays a corresponding attitude or behavior. Indeed, the worker will start to show deliberate passion and devotion in his/her responsible task, which will naturally be helpful in achieving the organizations objective.

Unfortunately, the research on the relations between leader legitimacy and work engagement is insufficient. However, there has been a study done that once the legitimacy of the leader is recognized, the effect on the subordinate's sense of duty and attitude becomes revealed. According to Shin and Tak (2011), the work attitude of the employee definitely can be influenced, if the legitimacy of the leader is acknowledged. The subordinate's job satisfaction and organization commitment are said to be indirectly influenced by the recognition of leader legitimacy, which the superior's consistency of speech and action ensure. Hence, based on the discussion thus far, the following hypothesis will be rendered; the recognition of leader legitimacy positively influences the individual's work engagement.

Hypothesis 3: Leader legitimacy will be positively related to work engagement.

2.5. The Mediating Effect of Leader Legitimacy

The mediating effect of leader legitimacy can be explained in the combination of hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 3. Based on the theory of social exchange, emotional leadership is recognized by the benefits the employee receives from the superior manager; in terms of legitimacy, it is given to the leader (Gouldner, 1960). Furthermore, factors of emotional leadership influence referent power, which then take part in the effect of increasing the significance of leader legitimacy.

The individual of the firm will show appropriate attitude and behavior, in accordance to the recognition of the legitimacy of the leader. Between the leader and the

individual of the organization, acknowledgement is established from sharing same values, and by the voluntary expressions through behavior (Beetham, 1991). The employee displays passion for the work, as well as behaving and showing attitudes that are supportive to the firm's objective and contributions. Based on the discussions above, the following hypothesis was established.

Hypothesis 4: Leader legitimacy will mediate the relationship between emotional leadership and work engagement.

2.5. Research Models

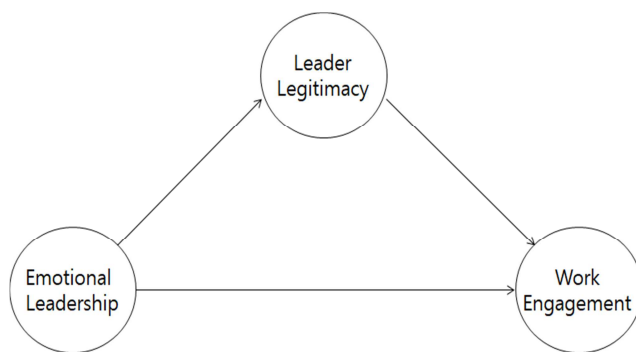


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Data and Research Methodology

3.1. Data

For the research, employees of the retail confectionary and bakery industry in Daegu, Kyongbook and Kyongnam participated in the survey. With 200 surveys given out, excluding the idle participators, 188 copies were collected and analyzed. The response came from Male 54.5% (=96), Female 45.5% (=80); age group of 25 and under (7.6%), age 25~30 (36.2%), age 31~35 (24.3%), age 36~40 (12.4%), age 41~45 (5.9%), age 46 and above (13.5%). In terms of education, high school graduates (21.8%); junior college (26.8%); university (49.7%); and graduate school (1.7%). The years of employment with the current firm's leader came out to less than 1yr (16.6%); less than 3yrs (42.90%); less than 5yrs (10.1%); and above 5yrs (31.5%). All in all, in general being less than 5 years.

3.2. Measure

For all questions, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables (1=most disagreeable, 5=most

agreeable). The measurement and the concept of the manipulative variable are as follows.

3.2.1. Emotional Leadership

This research used Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale(WLEIS) by Wong and Law (2002) which was developed based on the 4 dimensions of emotional leadership by Goleman et al. (2002) - self-emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotion. The sample items are as follows: "The CEO of our firm understands self-emotion (self-emotional appraisal)" "The CEO of our firm understands how to manage self-emotion (regulation of emotion)", "The CEO of our firm understands well the emotion of others (others' emotional appraisal)", "The CEO of our firm motivates the employees by suggesting the vision of the firm (use of emotion)."

3.2.2. Leader Legitimacy

For the measurement of leader legitimacy, 7 items by Choi and Jeong (2006) were used which was based on the research by Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998). In the research by Choi and Jeong (2006), the assessment was for the legitimacy of the team leader; but for this research, as the assessment will be for the legitimacy of the leader, modifications in the terminology were made. The sample sentences are the following; "The CEO of our firm is sufficient in his/her ability to be the CEO.", "I accept the CEO of our firm as the real leader."

3.2.3. Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as a state where the individual is full of vigor, dedicated and absorbed in his/her work at all times. In order to assess the levels of work engagement of the firm's individuals, the research was conducted by 9 items developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006). The bottom dimensions of work engagement - vigor, dedication and absorption - are the entities that are being assessed. They are constructed each in three questions. The sample items are, "At my work, I feel bursting with energy (vigor)", "I am enthusiastic about my job (dedication)", "I feel happy when I am working intensely (absorption)".

3.3. Method: Analytical Strategy

We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to analyze the factor structure of the study's variables plus structural equation modeling, in order to examine our hypotheses (Kim, 2020; Yim, 2019). Based on the partial aggregation method (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Little, Cunningham, & Shahar, 2002), the number of parameters that needed to be estimated were reduced. This methodology pertains to

averaging the responses of the subsets in regards to items that measure a construct. As Emotional Leadership and Work Engagement variables have 4 and 3 dimensions respectively, we created parcels of items representing each dimensions to serve as indicators for these variables. However, Leader Legitimacy was unidimensional constructs; hence, we pursued the procedure advised by Little, Cunningham, and Shahar (2002), in order to create three parcels of randomly selected items. The goodness-of-fit index should not be sensitive to the sample size; rather it should fit the data, and preferably contribute to the simplicity of the model. In this research, evaluations were made in regards to the model's goodness of fit based on the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI), along with the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

4. Analysis

4.1. Validity and Reliability

In order to test the construct validity, by using maximum estimation procedures, a CFA was conducted (Ishak, Ismail, Abdullah, Samsudin, & Mohamed, 2018). We evaluated the model fit. The combination of fit indices following Hu and Bentler (1998) were chosen. The model fit was acceptable ($X^2=61.639$, $df=31$, $X^2/df=1.988$, $TLI=.971$, $CFI=.980$, $RMSEA=.073$). The factor loadings in its entirety are statistically significant (showing a range from .734 to .916, see Table 1).

4.1.1. Validity

A CFA was taken place in order to examine construct validity within the study variables. As illustrated in Table 1, component reliability index of all factors were higher than .90 (beyond recommended levels of .70 by Hairr, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1992)). Fornell and Larcker (1981) tested discriminant validity. According to them, AVE (average variance extracted) for each construct should be larger than any squared correlations with any other constructs to ensure discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Ishak et al., 2018). Out of six possible comparisons (each variable can have 2 correlations with that of any different variables), the AVE of the entire variables were above its squared correlations with another variable (see Table 2). Hence, the conclusion was made that all variables within the research have construct validity.

4.1.2. Reliability

By using component reliability and cronbach's alpha, construct reliability was evaluated. The outcome of the CFA illustrates that the entire component reliability (C.R) index of each latent factor was higher than the recommended level (0.7) (see Table 1). As displayed in Table 2, cronbach's alpha values of the entire study variables are above .885 (Emotional leadership 18 items, Cronbach's alpha = .936; Leader legitimacy 7 items, Cronbach's alpha = .917; Work engagement 9 items, Cronbach's alpha = .932). Herewith, from the combined, C.R index and cronbach's alpha provided the proof that all the measurements are reliable (Park et al., 2019).

Table1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Factors	Measure	Non-Standardized Loading	S.E	C.R	Standardized Loading	Component Reliability	AVE
EL	EL_RM	1	0.105		0.904	0.930	0.771
	EL_OA	0.894	0.215	14.327	0.797		
	EL_SM	0.905	0.127	16.862	0.867		
	EL_SA	0.958	0.369	12.420	0.734		
LL	LEGI_1	1.049	0.151	18.914	0.916	0.931	0.817
	LEGI_2	1.029	0.205	17.886	0.888		
	LEGI_3	1	0.186		0.891		
WE	WE_VIG	1	0.287		0.778	0.929	0.814
	WE_DEV	1.188	0.131	13.857	0.909		
	WE_COM	1.256	0.108	14.02	0.930		
Goodness-of-Fit	X²=61.639, df=31, X²/df=1.988, TLI=.971, CFI=.980, RMSEA=.073						

Note: EL: Emotional Leadership, LL: Leader Legitimacy, WE: Work Engagement

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Prior to testing the hypothesis, we analyzed the correlations of the study variables as shown on Table 2. In accordance to expectations, the correlation coefficients amongst the variables were significant. In other words, emotional leadership was noted to be significantly and positively correlated with leader legitimacy and work engagement. Correlations of leader legitimacy was significant and positive with work engagement as expected. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table2: Correlations and Reliability Estimates

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3
1. EL	3.432	.6796	(.936/.771)		
2. LL	3.561	.8585	.773**	(.917/.817)	
3.WE	3.348	.8009	.430**	.405**	(.932/.814)

Note) EL : Emotional Leadership, LL: Leader Legitimacy, WE: Work Engagement

** $p < 0.01$, The first entry inside of the parentheses is Cronbach's index of internal consistency reliability (alpha) and the second one is AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

4.3. Hypothesis Tests

The fit index based on the structural equation model was positive ($\chi^2/df=1.988$, TLI=.971, CFI=.980, RMSEA=.073) as shown in Table 3. Therefore, the hypotheses were assessed by significance of the path coefficients. In Table 3, the outcomes of the path analysis are displayed. Emotional leadership(EL), in Hypothesis 1, is positively related with work engagement(WE). The path coefficient was .116($p > 0.05$) which means H1 was not supported. The path estimate from emotional leadership(EL) to leader legitimacy(LL) was significant ($\beta = .866$, $p < .001$). And the path from leader legitimacy(LL) to work engagement(WE) was also significant ($\beta = .373$, $p < .05$). Thus, H2 and H3 were all supported. Leader legitimacy appears to mediate the relationship between emotional leadership(EL) and work engagement(WE), but a more in-depth test was needed in the future section. Bootstrapping tests were conducted to examine the mediating effect of leader legitimacy - the bootstrap samples quantified at 2,000 (95% confidence level). The results are presented in the Table 3. Table 3 shows that the mediating effect of leader legitimacy between emotional leadership and work engagement is significant ($\beta = .323$, $p < .05$). Thus, H4 was supported.

Table3: Path Analysis

Path	Standardized	S.E.	C.R.	P
EL → Work Engagement	.116	.168	.662	.508
EL → Leader Legitimacy	.866	.137	13.899	***
Leader Legitimacy → Work Engagement	.373	.077	2.121	.034
EL → Leader Legitimacy → Work Engagement	.323	-	-	.034
Goodness-of-Fit	$\chi^2=61.639$, $df=31$, $\chi^2/df=1.988$, GFI=.939. TLI=.971, CFI=.980, RMSEA=.073			

Note: Bootstrap sample=2,000

5. Conclusions

5.1. Summary of the Research Results

This study is an empirical assessment as to the mediating effect of leader legitimacy on the relationship between emotional leadership and the individual's work engagement. For this purpose, hypotheses were established based on previous research, and 188 employees of the domestic retail distribution industry were analyzed by the structural equation model. The empirical results are as follows.

First, we discovered that emotional leadership is positively related to leader legitimacy. From the perspective

of affective event theory and of job demand-resource model, positive elements of emotional leadership – emotional understanding, empathy, consideration and support of the employee – enable positive relationships between the leader and its members, which effortlessly enforces leader legitimacy.

Given the characteristics of the small retail distribution industry where the leader and employees work closely together, establishing relations with the firm's individuals through emotional leadership, may be easier. As the more emotional leadership is exercised and the leader-employee relationship gains genuine trust, subsequently respect and loyalty voluntarily emerge; thus empowering the leader with referent power and once again, leader legitimacy (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998).

Evidently, results of the research can be understood

from the same perspective as that of affective event theory and of job demand-resource model. Nevertheless, as sufficient precedent research is limited in regards to the relationship between emotional leadership and leader legitimacy, our efforts of this empirical outcome should be of significance.

Second, we were able to discover that leader legitimacy is positively related to work engagement. From the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) - which asserts, people react in accordance to the positive or negative behavior of others - indeed the employee's attitude and behavior towards the leader is determined, depending on the benefits attainable from leader-employee exchange. Once employees recognize the leader's legitimacy, their reaction in attitude and in behavior will become positive, which eventually will strengthen his/her work engagement (Gouldner, 1960).

Third, the direct effect of emotional leadership on work engagement was not supported, while the full mediation effect of leader legitimacy was supported. Clearly, research results imply that employees are influenced only when they recognize leader legitimacy. Therefore, despite previous research that claim there is a direct link between emotional leadership and work engagement (Park & Chang, 2016), the actual outcome (from this study) turned out to be different. Nevertheless, under the correlation analysis where leader legitimacy is in full mediation, with a positive relationship between emotional leadership and work engagement, we can conclude that emotional leadership is related to work engagement. Thus although additional research would need to take place, we believe that our research had contributed in giving clarity to the mechanism of emotional leadership by introducing and assessing leader legitimacy as the full mediation effect.

5.2. Implications

Our study has shown the mediation effect of leader legitimacy within the relations between emotional leadership and work engagement. The implications are as follows.

First by the uncommon approach of assessing the leaders of the retail distribution industry, we were able to demonstrate how emotional leadership is related to the attitude and behavior of the employees. If the organization is large, the possibility of a close day-to-day contact between the management and the employee is limited; however, for the small and medium size businesses, due to the smaller size of the firm, the outcome is the opposite (Roh & Park, 2018). Hence, in light of the specified focus on the retail distribution industry, we were able to enhance the effect that emotional leadership can render and encompass. Moreover, we find our research to be helpful in providing practical guidance to that of the actual leaders of the small and medium size businesses, and of the retail

distribution industry.

Second, we were able to bring more detail in regards to the process of how emotional leadership can influence the result variable. There have been many studies on the positive effect of emotional leadership; however, not enough as to the explanation in regards to the actual process of how the employee becomes influenced. Thus, by the example of the retail distribution industry, and by addressing leader legitimacy as the mediating variable, we find our research to be a meaningful attempt.

Third, unlike the others, whom mostly position leader legitimacy as a primary condition - to the execution of emotional leadership - our research centers on leader legitimacy and specifically as a result variable.

Outside of theoretical impact, we believe the results of our research can be resourceful in the practical side of the related industries. As noted prior, if the size of the company is a small to medium in size, realistically emotional leadership can be practiced. In addition, although it depends on the characteristics of the business, if the size of the firm is manageable, for the sake of the firm's long-term success, frequent direct leader-employee exchange may turn out to be a necessity. Certainly, the fine line of professionalism should always be respected, nonetheless through positive emotional leadership, intangible resources such as loyalty and dedication can be savored.

Second, it gives an opportunity to understand the actual factors that influence leader legitimacy. Hence, by incorporating a program officially within the firm, which fosters frequent communications between the management and the employees, the leader needs to investigate culprits that will simultaneously enable and maintain healthy motivations for the employees as well as for the firm.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

The following are the limitations to the research.

First, as the research was conducted concentrating on the retail distribution industry alone, there will be limitations in generalizing the theory. Hence, further investigations in the various segments and size should take place, which eventually will enable a more diverse portfolio suitable for generalization.

Second, the results of the study need to improve in the realm of subjectivity. Because the independent and the dependent variable was measured from the same source, there is the possibility of common method bias.

Third, since the data were collected and analyzed based on the approach of cross-sectional study, it needs to be cautious when interpreting the results. Hence, in future research a longitudinal analysis should be in need.

Four, this research only focused on the positive aspects of emotional leadership. Therefore, in future studies, the negative aspects would need to follow, which will allow us to observe the various diversities of emotional leadership.

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