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Impact of Leader's State of Core Self-Evaluation on Task Complexity: A Quantitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the association between a leader's State of Core Self-Evaluation and the complexity of tasks assigned to them. Previous research on this topic has established a strong foundation for the conceptual framework and hypotheses used in this study. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing an adapted questionnaire to gather data from 141 organizational leaders holding various positions in the banking sector. Statistical analysis of the data demonstrates that a leader's core self-evaluation is positively linked to task complexity. This implies that when leaders believe they possess the necessary abilities and skills to handle a task, their cognitive skills improve, leading to efficient task completion. Conversely, when leaders perceive a task as complex, they may exhibit avoidance behaviour and refrain from attempting to complete the task. These findings are useful in assessing leaders' performance under different levels of task complexity, particularly in a demanding work environment. Policymakers can also benefit from this research in understanding what triggers leader behaviour when task complexity increases. The results of this study align with previous research, indicating that a leader's State of Core Self-Evaluation and task complexity are crucial considerations in the field of management.

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1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive and technologically advanced world, possessing the ability to work in a task-oriented environment is a significant strength. Core self-evaluation, which is a crucial construct in determining an individual's personality, influences how people shape their behaviours in response to varying situations. Individuals who possess a positive and confident outlook regarding their abilities are deemed to have a higher level of core self-evaluation.

Several studies have reported varying effects of task complexity on performance. For instance, prior research has found that goal performance is more strongly impacted when tasks are less complex (Earley, 1985; Wood et al., 1987). Additionally, Bonner (1994) found that task complexity can negatively impact the quality of decision-making or judgment. Swink and Speier (1999) suggested that individuals tend to spend more time and make lower quality decisions when they perceive a task to be complex. Conversely, Marshall and Bryd (1998) found that as the complexity of a task increases, so does the level of individual performance. Such contrasting results develop a rationale to conduct a study on varying level of task complexity with the leader state core self-evaluation.

Paquette and Kida (1988) have suggested that the complexity of a task can be determined by the size of the set of alternatives available during decision-making. When the set of alternatives is small, individuals employ a rigorous and effortful decision-making strategy, evaluating the characteristics of each alternative in detail. However, when the set of alternatives is large, individuals may resort to a less accurate and effortless decision-making strategy, reducing the set of alternatives based on one or more attributes to make an efficient decision.

Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997) proposed the concept of core self-evaluation (CSE) as a personality trait that can be used to predict workplace behaviour. CSE comprises four well-known personality variables: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control. A positive CSE indicates a favourable self-concept, confidence in one's abilities, and a propensity to produce positive outcomes.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between a leader's state of core self-evaluation and task complexity. The study is guided by the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which posits that task complexity can deplete a leader's psychological resources by promoting negative thoughts about their abilities, leading to negative self-evaluation. In such situations, a leader's coping ability, sense of control, and self-confidence are negatively affected. Consequently, when a leader perceives a task as less complex, they are more productive and capable of making effective decisions. However, when leaders perceive a task as highly complex, their behaviour towards task accomplishment is unproductive and inefficient.

The study is particularly relevant in the banking sector, where employees are required to perform numerous tasks within a limited time frame, and the role of the leader is crucial in dealing with complex situations by making the right decisions at the right time. The findings of the study could be useful in identifying the optimal characteristics of a leader who can effectively handle complex and challenging environments.

2. Literature Review

The emergence of the service and information age has led to significant changes in organizational structure and management. With the global competition, the concept of "job" has become more challenging and technologically complex. Consequently, it has become increasingly important to comprehend the roles of individuals at various levels to maintain the organization's competitiveness. One of the crucial factors that determine the success of an organization is the role of its leaders. Effective leaders empower their employees to work autonomously and shape their work environment and careers according to their own interests. As a result, it is imperative for leaders to maintain a positive and stable outlook, even during difficult situations, in order to drive the

organization forward.

2.1 Leader's Core State Self-Evaluation

The concept of Core Self-Evaluation (CSE) has become an important construct in the field of psychology and organizational behaviour. CSE is a high order inherent construct that comprises of four personality attributes: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control (Judge et al., 1997). These four personality traits are strongly associated with the construct of CSE (Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Judge et al., 1998). Self-esteem is the most basic and extensive self-evaluation as it displays the overall value that an individual places on themselves (Locke, McClear, & Knight, 1996). Generalized self-efficacy is an assessment of how an individual handles their life events (Smith, 1989). An internal locus of control represents whether life events are characterized by internal or external factors. Finally, emotional stability, also known as low neuroticism, is a stable personality that can handle negative emotions in an efficient manner, such as stress and anxiety.

Research has shown that people with high levels of CSE exhibit emotional stability, a positive self-image illustrated by a high degree of self-esteem, an internal locus of control, and general self-efficacy (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). In contrast, people with low levels of CSE typically have a negative self-respect. CSE provides a mind frame to guide an individual's reaction in a specific sort of situation and also has an effect on motivation to persistently show their actions and behaviours (Bono & Colbert, 2005; Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge et al., 1998).

In the practical approach to leadership, CSE is generally treated as the most desirable trait of leadership effectiveness (Judge, Piccolo et al., 2009). Leaders with higher levels of CSE are perceived as capable, competent, and have complete control over their work (Judge, van Vianen, & de Pater, 2004). These traits encourage them to enthusiastically seek opportunities and challenges and to find unconventional ways to conduct their work (Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge & Hurst, 2007; Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006), which is helpful in shaping their intellectual stimulation behaviours.

Moreover, the working conditions inside and outside the organization have an effect on individual perception levels, capacities, feelings, and psychological resources. This self-recognition can be viewed and measured by CSE or the primary assessment that individuals can make about themselves, their values, and their skill level (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003).

2.2 Task Complexity

Task complexity refers to the degree of difficulty and intricacy involved in the completion of a task (Hackman, 1969). Tasks are the fundamental unit of analysis used to understand and evaluate human behaviour and performance (Wood, 1986). The performance of an individual or a group is largely determined by the characteristics of the task, the characteristics of the performers, and the environment in which the task is being performed. Task characteristics are known to have a significant impact on individual and group behaviour, which is why task-related research is widely studied in the fields of behavioural and social sciences (Hackman, 1969; Wood, 1986).

However, there is a lack of consensus among researchers on the definition of tasks and the literature related to them. Despite this, task complexity is recognized as a crucial component of task analysis and is frequently used in research studies. Task complexity can be measured in various ways,

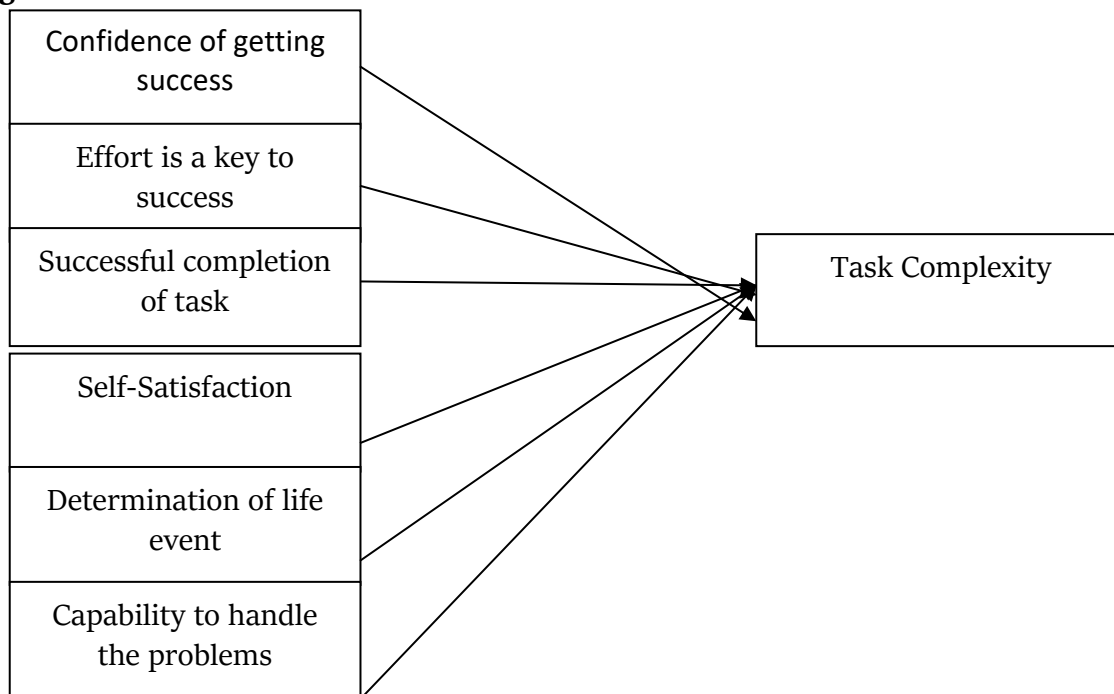
including by evaluating the number of sub-tasks involved, the level of interdependence among the sub-tasks, the degree of uncertainty associated with the task, and the amount of information required to perform the task (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Wood, 1986).

Task complexity is a significant factor in determining the performance of an individual or a group. Research has shown that tasks with high complexity require greater cognitive resources, such as attention, memory, and problem-solving abilities, compared to tasks with low complexity (Dzindolet, Peterson, Pomranky, Pierce, & Beck, 2003). Moreover, high task complexity has been found to increase the level of stress and frustration experienced by individuals and groups, which can negatively affect their performance (Sonnetag, 2003). Therefore, it is essential to carefully evaluate and manage the complexity of tasks in order to optimize individual and group performance.

Task complexity is a critical aspect of job demands that exerts pressure on employees' psychological resources. Studies have demonstrated that task complexity is positively associated with emotional exhaustion (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003) as well as employees' self-efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Furthermore, researchers have established a correlation between task complexity and work behaviour, performance, and leadership behaviour (Earley, 1985; Maynard & Hakel, 1997; Payne, 1976; Schroder & Suedfeld, 1971). Specifically, high task complexity levels enable the prediction of task-specific leader behaviours (Barrow, 1976) and facilitate the development of strategies and structural behaviours (Marta, Leritz, & Mumford, 2005). Task complexity is considered an essential determinant of the leader's state core self-evaluation.

In line with the conservation of resources theory, it is inferred that as the level of task complexity increases, the psychological resources of leaders become depleted due to the overwhelming task demands, and the leader is more likely to engage in avoidance behaviour.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



In Leader's Core State Self-Evaluation is based on the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- H₁:** There is a relationship between leader's state of core self-evaluation and task complexity.
- H₂:** Confidence of getting success has impact on task complexity.
- H₃:** Considering Effort as a key to success has impact on task complexity.
- H₄:** Successful completion of task has an effect on task complexity.
- H₅:** Self Satisfaction has no considerable impact on task complexity.
- H₆:** Determination of life event has impact on task complexity.
- H₇:** Capability to handle the problems has an effect on task complexity.

3. Methodology

The participants in the present study were carefully selected from both multinational and domestic banks operating in the areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. In order to ensure that the participants were suitable for the study, only managers who faced challenging tasks in their daily work environment were selected as respondents. A total of 141 questionnaires were initially distributed among the participants; however, a significant number of invalid responses were later excluded due to their failure to meet the predefined criteria. It is worth noting that responses provided by individuals who worked on third-party contracts in the oil and gas industry were also excluded from the study sample.

Convenient sampling technique was employed to gather data on a larger scale due to the limitations of time and budget constraints. This technique involved the targeting of employees who solely represented the public and private banking organizations of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. These two cities were chosen due to their significance as Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan and the employees of Islamabad are mostly employed in the service industry and have diverse backgrounds.

In order to measure the construct of core self-evaluation, the instrument developed by Judge et al. (2003) was utilized, which consisted of 12 items such as 'I am confident I get the success I deserve in life' and 'sometimes I feel depressed'. The construct of task complexity was measured through the scale developed by Van de Ven, A.H., and A. Welbeck (1974), which included 20 items. These items were designed to assess the complexity of tasks, with examples such as "The sequence of steps to be carried out to successfully complete these activities is: Easy to identify - Hard to identify" and "In your opinion, these activities are: Routine - Always new".

4. Analysis

To evaluate the consistency of the measurement instrument, the Cronbach's Alpha test was employed. The results revealed a Cronbach's Alpha value of .817 for the six items related to Leader State Core Self-evaluation construct, indicating that the instrument is reliable in measuring the said construct. Similarly, the reliability of the instrument used to measure Task Complexity construct was also tested using the Cronbach's Alpha test, which yielded a value of .775 for the twenty items. The reliability of the instrument for measuring the Task Complexity construct is considered acceptable based on this result. The obtained results are presented in the table below.

Table-1: Reliability Statistics

Variables	α	N of Items
Leader’s Core Self-evaluation	.817	6
Task Complexity	.775	20

Descriptive statistics play a pivotal role in studying the demographic information of the participants in a research study. This information can shed light on various socio-economic and cultural factors that may influence the research outcomes. To this end, a table has been provided below that elucidates the demographic information of the 141 participants who completed the survey. The table reports participants' gender, age, educational background, and work experience, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the sample characteristics. By considering the gender of respondents, males have high frequency of 105 out of 141 as compared to the females. That’s shows 74.5% respondents of our research consist of male.

Table-2: Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	105	74.5	74.5	74.5
	Female	36	25.5	25.5	100.0
	Total	141	100.0	100.0	

By considering the age of respondents, age group of 46-55 is found high frequency of 45 out of 141 as compared to other age group. That’s shows 31.9 % respondents of our research fall under the age group of 46-55. Then, 56-65 and 66 and above are similar in their percentage by having 19.1% of our research. And lastly, the age of 25-35 and 36 to 45 have similar frequency of 21 respondents.

Table-3: Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25-35	21	14.9	14.9	14.9
	36-45	21	14.9	14.9	29.8
	46-55	45	31.9	31.9	61.7
	56-65	27	19.1	19.1	80.9
	66 and above	27	19.1	19.1	100.0
	Total	141	100.0	100.0	

By considering the Education Level of respondent majority are bachelor by having a 63 frequency and 44.7% of total research sample. The respondent having an education of MS/MPhil lies at second by having 39 frequency and 27.7% of total research sample. Further lays intermediate with 21.3% of population and PhD with 6.4 % of total respondent of survey.

Table-4: Education level of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Intermediate	30	21.3	21.3	21.3
	Bachelor	63	44.7	44.7	66.0
	MS/MPhil	39	27.7	27.7	93.6
	PHD	9	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Total	141	100.0	100.0	

By considering the Experience Level of respondent majority lies in the groups of 16-20 and 21-25 years of experience by having 27 frequencies and 19.1% of total research sample. Afterwards, then lies respondent having an experience of 6-10 and 11-15 by having 21 frequencies and 14.9% of total research sample. The respondents have 30 and above experiences come at end by having 9 frequencies which represents 6.4% of our total research sample.

Table-5: Experience level of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5	18	12.8	12.8	12.8
	6-10	21	14.9	14.9	27.7
	11-15	21	14.9	14.9	42.6
	16-20	27	19.1	19.1	61.7
	21-25	27	19.1	19.1	80.9
	26-30	18	12.8	12.8	93.6
	30 and above	9	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Total	141	100.0	100.0	

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Bivariate analysis is used to determine the statistical relationship between two variables.

In the current study, the Leaders state core self-evaluation has considered as independent variable and job task complexity is a dependent variable. The results shows that there is significant relationship exist between leader state core self-evaluation and task complexity as the p value is less than .005. Further the negative sign shows there is negative correlation between leader state core self-evaluation and task complexity. The negative value of 0.49 represents that with the increase in leader state core self-evaluation the task complexity level get decreases which is align with the literature of our study.

Table-6: Correlations Analysis

		LSCE	TC
LSCE	Pearson Correlation	1	
TC	Pearson Correlation	-.490**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Regression Analysis

In our study, we employed the Simple Regression analysis method to predict the variability of the criterion variable. Simple Regression analysis is commonly used in making predictions about multiple values and variables, while also assisting in uncovering the relationship between variables and identifying an equation that accurately reflects this relationship.

Table-7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.490 ^a	.240	.234	.18644

a. Predictors: (Constant), LSCE

Upon inspection of the summary table, the R2 value of 0.24 in the table above reveals that the independent variable, leader state core self-evaluation, has a significant explanatory power in defining the dependent variable, task complexity, to the extent of 24%. This indicates that leader state core self-evaluation contributes to 24% of the variation in task complexity. Furthermore, the adjusted R square, which corrects for overestimation of R2, is 0.234 percent. This correction ensures a better reflection of the population, which is especially important in small sample sizes.

Table-8: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.912	.059		32.466	.000
	LSCE	-.111	.017	-.490	-6.621	.000

a. Dependent Variable: TC

This study examines the impact of leader’s state core self-evaluation on task complexity therefore regression analysis is conducted. The unstandardized coefficient beta value of these two variables -0.111 which is significant as p value is less than 0.05. It implies that 1 percent increase in Leader core State Self-evaluation the value of task complexity level is decreases by 0.111 percent which is align with the literature of our study.

4.3 Multiple Linear Regressions (Item wise)

By taking in to account all the facets of leader state core self-evaluation the explanatory power of model is increase up to 56.6 percent. The better the value of R square the higher the contribution of independent variable in the dependent variable. Here the value of R square is 56.6% which represents the best fit of our research model.

The unstandardized beta value shows the impact of independent variables on dependent variable. The analysis shows that only the two facets have an impact on task complexity level. The beta value of self-satisfaction is .335 is significant as the values is less than .005. Furthermore, the value of capability to handle the problems is .207 which is significant as the p value is less than .005. The other facets are insignificant and have no impact on task complexity as the p value of all is greater than .005.

Table-9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.566 ^a	.320	.290	.17957	
Coefficients^a					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	.917	.086		10.631	.000
While the consequences of some activities are easy to predict, others are often unpredictable. The consequences of the activities in question are	.035	.035	.081	.995	.322
A well-defined body of knowledge on which to base the execution of these activities	-.042	.052	-.087	-.819	.414
In general, one can determine whether or not the activities were successfully performed	-.071	.040	-.166	-1.748	.083
When problems arise in carrying out these activities, getting help is	.355	.082	.792	4.342	.000
When carrying out these activities, problems which cannot be immediately resolved arise	-.099	.059	-.233	-1.677	.096
Solving these problems typically requires	.207	.037	.487	5.586	.000

a. Dependent Variable: TC

Table-10: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	t-value	P-value	Accepted/Rejected
H1: There is a relationship leader’s core state self-evaluation and task complexity.	-6.621	.000	Accepted
H2: Confidence of getting success has an impact on task complexity.	.035	.322	Rejected
H3: Effort as a key to success has an impact on task complexity.	-.042	.414	Rejected
H4: Successful completion of task has an impact on task complexity.	-.071	.083	Rejected
H5: Self Satisfaction has no impact on task complexity.	.355	.000	Accepted
H6: Determination of life event has an impact on task complexity.	-.099	.096	Rejected

H7: Capability to handle the problems has an impact on task complexity.	.207	.000	Accepted
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The table presented above displays the outcomes of the hypotheses tested in study. As per the results, Hypotheses H1, H5, and H7 are supported, whereas the remaining hypotheses are rejected. This signifies that the leader's core state self-evaluation has a considerable influence on the level of task complexity. Moreover, the self-satisfaction and capability to handle problems facets have a positive impact on task complexity. This is because self-satisfaction and problem-solving abilities create a positive mindset, enabling employees to channel their resources towards task attainment with complete commitment and motivation. As a result, positive outcomes are achieved, which are instrumental in developing effective leadership skills.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between leader state core self-evaluation and task complexity. The results of the study provide evidence for a significant relationship between the two variables. This finding is consistent with the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which posits that under conditions of high task complexity, leaders' psychological resources may be depleted, leading to negative self-evaluations and reduced efficacy. Specifically, leaders' ability to cope with demands, sense of control, and self-confidence may be compromised under conditions of high task complexity, leading to negative state core self-evaluations. Conversely, when leaders perceive tasks to be less complex, they are more productive and can make effective decisions. To ensure that leaders can perform effectively in complex situations, organizations may consider providing training on cognitive-behavioural methods, which have been shown to effectively modify dysfunctional behaviour in clinical (Butler, Chapman, Forman, & Beck, 2006) and organizational settings (Proudfoot, Corr, Guest, & Dunn, 2009; Ruwaard, Lange, Bouwman, Broeksteeg, & Schrieken, 2007). These methods can help leaders develop positive state core self-evaluations, which can enhance their performance and productivity in complex situations. Thus, it is recommended that organizations utilize cognitive methods to develop leaders' core state self-evaluation in an efficient manner.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Human Resource (HR) professionals provide support to leaders at both individual and group levels by providing them with basic information about four critical traits: core state self-evaluation traits, including self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Leaders with high levels of these traits can perform well under pressure and complete tasks effectively even in challenging situations with limited time. As personalities tend to be stable over time, recruiting and selecting emotionally stable leaders can be beneficial for the organization. To enhance leadership skills, HR and organizational development professionals may initiate training programs that focus on vision articulation, group goal promotion, and intellectual stimulation, which can contribute to improving a leader's core state self-evaluation. Additionally, coaching and mentoring are essential tools for the development of personality traits such as self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability.

7. Conclusion

Our research suggests that leaders with a positive Core State Self-Evaluation (CSE) not only efficiently complete their tasks, but also demonstrate a keen interest in developing their skills

throughout the process. Leaders with high CSE levels tend to view their jobs as more challenging, seek greater complexity of tasks, exhibit higher job satisfaction, and ultimately produce superior job performance. Our findings also demonstrate that the facets of self-satisfaction and problem-solving ability have a significant impact on task complexity. These two factors contribute to the generation of positive energy in the minds of leaders, ultimately leading to the efficient completion of tasks. The positive outcomes of our study provide substantial value to human resource professionals seeking to develop positive CSE traits in their leaders through various techniques and training procedures. Future research could extend our study by introducing stress-related variables to broaden the scope of inquiry.

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