

Self-leadership Training Review

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Abstract

The purpose of this article was to examine the current state of self-leadership training. The authors analyzed all published, publicly available studies (in English) pertaining to self-leadership training methods, offering a current state of self-leadership training, and implications for future research.

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Abstract

Self-leadership is a widely accepted constellation of behaviors that contribute to individual and organizational success (Houghton and Neck, 2006). Stewart, Courtright, and Manz (2019) recently published a meta-analysis of self-leadership theory, providing an in-depth analysis of the current theory and a cursory overview of the value and implications of self-leadership training. The purpose of this study is to extend the current meta-analysis by examining self-leadership training specifically. The researchers employed a meta-analytic process of all published self-leadership training publications that include an intervention along with the theoretical significance of self-leadership training on the individual and organizational levels. The research includes analysis and discussion of the training specific literature along with findings and implications for future research.

Keywords: Self-Leadership, training, self-regulation

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The rapid advances in technology and global networks have contributed to an environment described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and an ambiguous (VUCA). Post-modern hierarchal structured organizations are struggling to remain competitive in such a challenging environment. Decision cycles can no longer afford to go through difficult bureaucracies. There are though examples of organizations that seem to thrive under such conditions. Organizations like the Bridgewater Hedge Fund have cultivated an organizational culture that leverages both technology and people to remain competitive (Dalio, 2017).

Technology is utilized to analyze massive amounts of data to develop and create decision algorithms. According to Ray Dalio, the former CEO of the Bridgewater, algorithms make the majority of Bridgewater's business decisions (Dalio, 2017). Leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning is only part of the equation at Bridgewater. The other part of the equation is the self-led people that comprise this remarkably resilient organization.

The development of people is both a strategy and priority within Bridgewater (Dalio, 2017). The development of people is critical because the success of good algorithms depends upon the competence and reliability of the organization's members. Employees at all levels of leadership at Bridgewater are charged to challenge the organization's perception of reality continually. The process of challenging perceptions is the organizations most fundamental principle, which consists of two essential questions; 1) is it true? 2) How do we know it's true (Dalio, 2017)?

These two questions are the heart and soul of the organizations famous 'principles.' Recent organizational research found that Bridgewater appears to have created a culture in which the organization recruits, hires, on-boards, cultivates and reinforces people who take absolute

responsibility for their attitude and their behavior (Keagan, Lahey, Miller, Fleming, & Helsing, 2016). In other words, the center of gravity for Bridgewater rest within the self-leadership skills of each person within the organization. Put another way, Bridgewater would not exist using the Ford “assembly line” mentality in which individuals mindlessly performed a single task that required to individual responsibility, agency, or conscious thought. The members of Bridgewater are selected for and provided training in self-leadership. The latter point occurs indirectly; Bridgewater does not use a formal self-leadership training model. Rather, the mentality of self-leadership is inculcated in the culture of the organization and reinforced through the social structure of Bridgewater. The implication is that self-leadership can be taught and become part of an organizational culture that increases the probability of success and sustainability. However, a review of the self-leadership training literature does not currently exist.

This paper’s primary concern is exploring self-leadership training literature. Stewart, Courtright, and Manz (2019) recently published a meta-analysis of the self-leadership concept, yet it only provides a cursory overview of the value and implications of self-leadership training. Therefore, the authors intend to expand this research by specifically examining the current state of self-leadership training literature. The examination begins with a literature review of self-leadership theory followed by an examination of self-leadership training literature.

Self-leadership Theory. Self-leadership is a process by which a person influences themselves to achieve their aims in life (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The Bridgewater example is significant for many reasons, chiefly that it is not a tale of heroic leadership. Instead, it is a story about an organization which allocates attention and resources into developing the self-leadership capabilities of each member of the organization. Thereby, deliberately creating a culture of

competent and trusted professionals that need little more than a general direction to produce world-class results (Keagan et al., 2016).

For large organizations, the traditional hierarchical organizational structure is no longer responsive enough to meet the demands of the environment. The post-modern environment is a hyper-connected world that demands speed and contextual adaptability. Put another way; it is nearly impossible to maintain pace with such a fluid environment using a methodical and cumbersome decision chain that supports traditional hierarchical organizations. Organizations now more than ever, need people that excel at following the guidance of their supervisors, and also possess the adaptability to respond appropriately to changes in the environment with little to no guidance from organizational leadership. In other words, leading, directing, and influencing oneself (self-leadership) is quickly becoming critical to organizational survival (Pihl-Thingvad, 2014).

In 1980, Manz and Sims wrote an article on self-management from a social learning theory perspective (Manz & Sims, 1980). This critical paper led to the emergence of self-leadership theory. The theory is a normative or prescriptive theory that provides strategies designed to help people influence themselves in a positive direction (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The theoretical framework for the self-leadership theory rests on a foundation constructed by a variety of psychological theoretical models (Houghton, 2000). The foundation includes contributions from self-regulation theory, social cognitive theory, intrinsic motivation theory, and self-control theory (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011; Neck & Houghton, 2006). This theoretical framework provides the basis for effective strategies that people often utilize to influence themselves. The basic self-leadership strategies include behavior strategies, natural reward strategies, and cognitive strategies.

Self-leadership strategies. The three strategies do not operate in a vacuum. It appears that the more synergy between the three strategies the more effective the person is at influencing themselves towards their desired aims. The behavior focused strategy gets its theoretical foundation from both self-management theory (Manz & Sims, 1980) and self-regulation theory (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The crucial elements that emerge from these theories is an understanding of how human beings pursue goals.

Additionally, Bandura's (1997) social learning theory significantly informed the prescriptive self-leadership theory that emerged from early self-leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Social learning theory provides an understanding of how people utilize feedback loops to adjust their behaviors in a socially appropriate manner (Bandura, 1997). Goal-Setting theory also contributed significantly to self-leadership theory. Goal-setting theory helped provide the mechanics of the goal pursuit process (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Locke & Latham, 2002).

The pursuit of goals is successful when a person understands where they are in relation to their goals and correctly identifies behaviors that will eliminate the discrepancy between their current state and their desired end-state (Locke & Latham, 2002). Key elements to eliminate the discrepancy require self-awareness and an assessment of the behaviors effectiveness (Houghton, Wu, Godwin, Neck, & Manz, 2012). Neck and Houghton (2006) suggests that behavioral strategies will include, "self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, and self-cueing" (p. 271). Behavioral strategies are reliant on cognitive strategies to frame perspectives and develop contingencies to overcome obstacles.

Effective self-leaders use cognitive strategies to identify dysfunctional mindsets and replace them with productive mindsets that positively impact their performance (Neck & Houghton, 2006). A component of cognitive strategies is the use of constructive thought

patterns. Constructive thought patterns consist of patterns of thinking that enable a person to find opportunity in challenges (Boss & Sims, 2008). This pattern of thinking is also characteristic of people who are capable of adapting to adversity (Bartone, Kelly, & Matthews, 2013; Unsworth & Mason, 2012). Finally, constructive thought patterns enable a person to make mundane and often unpleasant tasks meaningful, a critical component in developing a sense of natural rewards (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Natural reward strategy is a focused cognitive strategy in which a person creates positive emotions and feelings towards tasks that might not otherwise be enjoyable (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The strategy is grounded in intrinsic motivation theory and self-determination theory (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination theory suggests that people find it rewarding when they achieve high levels of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Often the high levels of competence result in the person receiving more autonomy and trust from the people they work with (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This combination of competence, autonomy, and acceptance is often the key to giving a person a deep sense of meaning in their work as well as a sense of agency (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The deep sense of meaning often translates into helping the person find value in even the most mundane tasks. The positive affect towards the task is an incentive and cultivated by the person's attitude toward their work (Bandura, 1997). Self-leadership theorist suggests that natural reward strategies are a central for helping people fight through adversity in pursuit of their goals (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Essentially creating a positive feedback loop in which competency raises the person's self-efficacy and vice versa (Bandura, 1997). Each strategy is influenced by both genetic personality traits and through both deliberate and vicarious learning (Bandura, 1991; Peterson, 1999). The robustness of self-leadership theory rests in the rigor of

the theoretical underpinning. This underpinning attained further validation through the self-leadership research that has focused on training people on how to apply the three strategies to their lives.

Training Self-leadership. Some self-leadership research projects have included training interventions to improve or instill self-leadership meta-skills. The commonality across all of the interventions is some form of positive effect on the participant. Sometimes the positive effect is captured as an improvement in performance or desired behavior and a positive effect on the participant's actual self-leadership skills. For example, early training research included an intervention designed to improve employee constructive thought patterns. The intervention had a positive impact on mental performance, increasing positive attitudes, job satisfaction, and at the same time, the intervention reduced negative feelings and or nervousness (Neck & Manz, 1996). Another important aspect of self-leadership training is the impact of a person's personality traits and its effect on the training.

Williams investigated how various personality traits impact the effectiveness of self-leadership training (Williams, 1997). His (1997) findings suggest that people low in conscientiousness will benefit more from self-leadership training than those who are genetically wired to be high in conscientiousness. In other words, organizations that develop self-leadership training must consider the personality traits of the participants and tailor the training to match the 'natural' need of the participant. Williams (1997) investigation is consistent with the other research that explored the impact of personality on self-leadership (Stewart, Carson, & Cardy, 1996). Stewart et al., (1996) research demonstrated that high levels of the personality trait conscientiousness moderated the effect of self-leadership training and that participants who initially scored low on conscientiousness improved their self-leadership behaviors more than the

participants high in conscientiousness. After the Williams research in 1997, the self-leadership training research appeared to take a hiatus until 2012.

In 2012, two significant self-leadership studies emerged that examined the effects of self-leadership training. One project considered self-leadership training and focused on skills related to natural rewards and constructive thought patterns (Furtner, Sachse, & Exenberger, 2012). The findings from the study suggest that skills related to both natural rewards and constructive thought patterns can be optimized and improved with targeted training (Furtner et al., 2012). The results of the intervention are consistent with previous research that focused on training people in skills related to self-management, goal setting and self-regulation (Brett & VandeWalle, 1999; Locke & Latham, 2002; Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007).

Unsworth and Mason also conducted a study in 2012 that involved a training intervention designed to improve self-leadership skills. The study is one of the first to demonstrate that developing self-leadership skills can have a positive effect on a person's ability to handle stress effectively (Unsworth & Mason, 2012). The study also demonstrated that self-leadership training increases both self-efficacy and positive affect (Unsworth & Mason, 2012). Five years later, a variety of studies emerged that combined self-leadership training with mindfulness training and or reflective work.

Sampl, Thomas, and Furtner conducted a study that combined self-leadership training and mindfulness training (Sampl, Maran, & Furtner, 2017). The training intervention was aimed at improving academic performance and lasted ten weeks. The group that received the intervention made significant improvements in their grade point average. It is also important to note that part of the training intervention included reflexive practices.

Pina e Cunha, Pacheco, and Castanheira (2017) also explored reflexivity in a study that considered how managers engaged in self-leadership. This study (Pina e Cunha et al., 2017) is significant because it is the only study that discusses maintaining self-leadership skills through the development of habitual practice. The researchers (Pina e Cunha et al., 2017) explored self-leadership from an interpretive perspective. Specifically, focusing on the question of “how do they (managers) describe their efforts to improve their intimate understanding of leadership as a highly reflexive and personalized practice” (Pina e Cunha et al., 2017, p. 474)?

The study is also unique in that it views self-leadership as a process. In other words, the study considered how people lead themselves as opposed to examining the prescribed theory of self-leadership. Pina e Cunha, Pacheco, and Castanheira (2017) suggests the practice of reflexivity is an effective way for managers to lead and influence themselves. It is important to note that this is not a value statement, rather it is a description of self-leadership. The importance of this study is that it gets to the heart of how one may develop a self-sustaining self-leadership praxis.

Developing self-leadership meta-skills such as goal setting, constructive thought patterns, and the utilization of rewards and punishment were included in every one of the training studies examined. The development of a self-sustaining praxis, however, is not readily apparent in any self-leadership training literature. Pina e Cunha, Pacheco, and Castanheira, (2017) approach to understanding how managers lead themselves raises an important consideration for all future self-leadership training interventions. How might an organization develop the deliberate practice of reflexivity to sustain and improve leader/manager self-leadership processes? The goal of such research would seek to understand the effectiveness of self-leadership training and a training prescription that organizations could rely on to develop effective self-leaders.

The researchers explored the self-leadership training literature to discover what works and how self-leadership training might be further improved. The next section explains the methods used by the researchers to obtain and analyze the data. The section starts with an overview of the search engines and words used to research the topic then discusses the data analysis process. The section concludes with a summary of the findings. Implications and a detailed discussion of the data are found in the general discussion section of this research.

Method

The researchers selected a meta-ethnography approach, focusing on completed studies rather than interviews to develop the foundation of a theory by examining existing literature (Bazeley, 2013). The completed studies selected addressed the impact of self-leadership training specifically. This provided the researchers with an understanding of how self-training functions in a research setting, the results of the interventions examined, and a greater understanding of how self-leadership training impacts a diversity of participants.

Search Methodology

The primary search engines utilized in this study were Google Scholar and the University of Charleston, West Virginia (UCWV) library. Google scholar has an increasing amount of publicly available; peer-reviewed research to draw upon while the UCWV library contains several subscription-based databases. The combination of these search engines provided access to a vast amount of journal articles, as well as, books and various studies that contributed to this research. However, it was impractical to obtain an exact number of self-leadership articles published in large part because of the redundant postings of the same articles. Therefore, an exact count of the total number of self-leadership research papers published since 1980 remains undetermined.

The terms “self-leadership” was utilized for a general search of self-leadership literature. Additionally, “self-leadership training” and “self-leadership intervention” were utilized for the training focused Boolean queries. The terms chosen were broad enough to capture keywords in published research and specific enough to rule out a publication that might reference the “self” along with “leadership” separately.

The process began with a review of the self-leadership literature between 1980 and 2018. The purpose was to develop a foundational understanding of the theory of self-literature before analyzing training specific interventions. At this point, the researchers included Boolean terminology “self-leadership,” “thought self-leadership” and “self-management” to retrieve some of the foundational work that led to the construct of self-leadership as we know it today. Self-management and thought self-leadership served as a foundation for the current theory of self-leadership (Manz & Sims, 1980). The researchers then separated publications related specifically to self-leadership training and self-leadership interventions from the general self-leadership literature for further analysis.

The researchers created a priori codes to ascertain specific information regarding self-leadership training and interventions. Terms commonly used in training literature served as the basis for the initial coding process. Figure 1 shows the codebook.

INSERT CODEBOOK HERE

Figure 1

Coding. The numerical numbers utilized included: 1 (clearly and directly addressed by the research), 0.05 (indirectly addressed by the research), and 0 (not directly addressed by the research). Figure 2 contains the results of the initial coding.

INSERT RESULTS HERE

Figure 2

Results

The results include a total of eight articles (see Figure 3) discussing self-leadership training interventions. Article E is a position paper explaining how the US Coast Guard embeds self-leadership training in their officer training programs rather than an intervention (Zapalska, Kelley, & Zieser, 2015). The researchers chose to include the study because it is an example of an organization attempting to apply the theory of self-leadership as part of its leader development program.

The self-leadership training body of literature represents a small fraction self-leadership literature. Somewhat surprising was that the researchers found only two longitudinal studies and even more surprising was the fact that neither study examined the impacts of the training intervention beyond a few months post-intervention. Additionally, it is significant that there was no obvious discussion of ego-depletion in the published self-leadership training literature. Indeed, one of the first direct references to the strength model and self-leadership appeared in the recent meta-analysis by Stewart (et al.), published in 2019. Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice's (2007) work on ego-depletion, the strength model, and the contributions of this work towards understanding self-regulation would appear to be a critical aspect of any self-leadership training. Finally, little work examined the role of personality traits in self-leadership training since 1997.

It should be noted, however, that in Houghton, Bonham, Neck, and Singh (2004) examined the relationship between a personality trait and self-leadership. However, this research did not concern self-leadership training. A discussion of each of these findings in more detail follows.

Discussion

A review of the existing self-leadership literature showed a scarcity of training interventions; most of the studies either measured the presence of the concept or offered theoretical statements of how to apply a self-leadership prescription to various levels of an organization and its people. Additionally, no meta-analysis of the self-leadership training literature exists. Currently, only two meta-analyses (see Neck and Houghton, 2006; Stewart et al., 2019) and one multi-level review of self-leadership (Stewart, Courtright and Manz, 2010) exist since the emergence of the theory as an academic concern in 1980.

In general, there is a limited amount of research which has carefully examined how to train self-leadership skills. Of the literature that does exist, there appears to be no standardized training methodology of self-leadership per se. This is based on a review of the published literature and is not meant to imply that previous researchers did not create a plan on how to train self-leadership before undertaking their studies. Rather, the lack of a detailed training scheme limits additional research into the validity and generalizability of the training methodology. Many of the foundational psychological theories of self-leadership contain specific interventions which strengthen their validity (i.e., Bandura's social cognitive theory and self-efficacy) and enhances their credibility. The researchers recommend that for self-leadership to gain the credibility it deserves in the leadership literature a standardized training protocol should be created and tested for validating the efficacy of self-leadership training. This particular finding emerged from the examination of the existing psychological literature that contained similar language to the self-leadership literature.

The purpose of analyzing the psychological literature was to understand better how supporting psychological theories integrate into self-leadership theory and the relevance of training for the construct within a theory. For example, social cognitive learning contained

numerous studies that examined the impact of interventions to improve self-efficacy. By comparing the supporting psychological theories to the existing self-leadership literature, the researcher's gained a sense of how the psychological theories contribute to self-leadership training research. The self-leadership training research appears to craft the training protocols on the supporting psychological theories. However, it does not appear that the training interventions have included recent findings.

Ego-depletion, in particular, is a significant psychological theory with a large body of supporting research and an understanding of the impact of ego-depletion and strength model would enhance a self-leadership training program. Ego-depletion is a phenomenon that describes how fatigue erodes an individual's self-regulatory abilities, thus impacting decisions and behaviors (Baumeister et al., 2007; Baumeister, 2002). However, only two studies reference ego-depletion and neither discussed the phenomenon in any real detail. The implication of Baumeister's Strength model is that to be an effective self-leader an individual must possess processes that account for significant drops in self-regulation when the 'willpower muscle' is over-taxed (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice 2007; Baumeister, 2002). Stewart et al. argue that self-leadership might drain willpower based on the constant use of self-regulation and decision making required to be an effective self-leader (2019). However, this suggestion is theoretical and conceptualizes self-leadership as a conscious process that requires continual effort. However, the impact might be different if self-leadership behaviors are ingrained habits.

Additionally, the strength model research suggests that ego-depletion awareness could enhance self-leadership by helping the person design their environment and habits in a manner that accounts for the limitations of human willpower (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). In other words, paying attention to ego-depletion could potentially enhance the application of self-

leadership strategies during times of fatigue or stress (Baumeister and Tierney, 2011). The researchers also reviewed literature that examined Self-determination Theory, self-efficacy, social learning theory, and self-regulation/control theory.

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), social cognitive learning (Bandura, 1991) and self-regulation theory (Baumeister & Vohs, 2011) are some of the primary psychological theories contributing to self-leadership. Self-determination theory suggests that a person reaches their fullest performance potential when their sense of autonomy, competence, and acceptance obtains a synergy between them (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Social cognitive learning theory also argues that a person with a higher levels self-efficacy in their competence (both general and domain-specific) will perform better than those lower in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991). Additionally, social cognitive learning theory also suggests that individuals learn through observation and environmental reinforcements (Bandura, 1991). Taken together, these theories make a convincing argument that a person gains a sense of agency when they believe in and display their competence, which appears to contribute to greater social acceptability, and more importantly appears to reinforce productive behaviors. Through this lens, self-leadership and behavioral regulation are as much about others as it is about the individual. However, only half of the studies directly considered the impact of social support on self-leadership. What this appears to suggest is that self-leadership training could be enhanced by deliberately incorporating a social component in training.

The theory of meta-cognition (Efklides, 2006) is another psychological theory that could contribute value to the current self-leadership construct. Meta-cognition focuses on how a person thinks about their thinking, beyond initial impressions (Efklides, 2006). Put simply, developing meta-cognitive processes is positively correlated to increases in self-awareness and

self-observation, two key strategies of self-leadership. The recent five-factor model research also suggests that personality traits can have significant impacts on how people influence themselves (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007).

The current analysis found only one study which included a measure of personality (Stewart, Carson, & Cardy, 1996) as part of the self-leadership training intervention. The results of the study in question showed that highly conscientious people benefited less from self-leadership training because they already exercised similar habits as those taught in the intervention. Meaning, highly conscientious people tend to have an intrinsic propensity for cultivating habits nearly identical to those taught in some self-leadership training programs. The implications from this study are that developing a generalized training protocol may not be the most effective way to improve self-leadership meta-skills, which presents a challenge to the idea of a general training protocol. At the same time, it might also suggest that the only valid training interventions will have both general and specific focuses, based on the participant's particular personality traits. In addition to the absence of personality trait considerations, the researchers found only one longitudinal study (Unsworth & Mason, 2012).

The description is technically correct; it should be noted, however, that this study only conducted one follow up with participants three weeks after the completion of the intervention. Put simply, the validity of the study's findings are difficult to assess as it seems highly probable that the positive findings were more than likely the result of participants still basking in the new car smell of their self-leadership skills. The study was significant in that it demonstrated the potential utility of self-leadership training as a stress-management tool, which is interesting because social connection and social support have been found to greatly contribute to the

management of stress (Maddi, 2013). The researcher's analysis found a poor representation of the social aspect of self-leadership in the literature.

The existential paradox of self-leadership is that it involves other people. Part of Bandura's social cognitive theory of learning is that we vicariously learn through observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1991). The implication is that we are shaped by those we spend time with. A finding echoed by the great Roman Stoic Epictetus, "remembering it is impossible to rub up against someone covered with soot without getting sooty oneself" (Hard, p. 271, 2008). The implication that we are shaped by others is also in line with social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979). Each of these respective theories argues human identity is created in part by the groups we associate and identify with. An individual's choice of social circle quite clearly shapes how they behave and potentially how effective they are at self-leadership.

Finally, self-leadership training does not appear to be equally effective across people. As mentioned earlier, Stewart Carson and Cardy (1996) found that individuals higher in trait conscientiousness improved their performance less during a self-leadership intervention because individuals high in this trait appear to be natural self-leaders. However, this explanation only pertains to a small portion of the overall self-leadership training literature discrepancies. Put simply, if self-leadership training didn't produce the desired effect a major implication for future research might be understanding why it failed to connect with the participants.

Limitations

Both its scope and coding criteria limited the study. The focus on self-leadership training and not included training related research within the psychological research potentially overstates the small number of studies concern with developing self-leadership skills with training.

Additionally, the coding criteria were not comprehensive and did not include potentially significant variables from neuroscience, social psychology, and resiliency research.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this research identified four significant implications for future research. First, the development of a standardized training protocol or practice is critical for validating the effectiveness of self-leadership training. Second, the validation of the standardized training protocol must be validated across a diverse population to account for both cultural and genetic factors. Third, the training protocol should also reflect the theoretical changes that have emerged in the literature. Fourth, self-leadership scholars could potentially advance self-leadership scholarship by developing a descriptive, theoretical framework for how people lead and influence themselves.

The development of a standardized training protocol will provide self-leadership scholars with a definitive reference point. This reference point will allow scholars to refine the effectiveness of training protocols further and provide a useful leader development tool for organizations that are becoming more and more dependent upon the self-leadership skills of every employee or member. Current organizational and business trends suggest that the speed and dynamic nature of the environment require greater empowerment than that of previous generations. In other words, the organizational survival is becoming increasingly dependent upon the ability of each member of an organization to lead themselves with little direct oversight. This trend also suggests that future research must be mindful of the fact that cultural and genetic factors influence self-leadership.

Researchers face creating a standardized protocol and at the same time being mindful that the protocol must also consider the impact of personality traits and cultural traditions that have

shaped the person's view of reality. This reality suggests that the protocol will necessarily need to address developing skills that are flexible enough to cover a diversity of human factors.

Nesbit's model for self-regulation is an example of a protocol that may be useful for any self-leadership training protocol (Nesbit, 2012). The Nesbit model is a form of dialectic that enables a person to create self-awareness within the context of their lives and the context of who they are genetically and culturally (Nesbit, 2012). It is also flexible enough to include updates to our understanding of human behavior.

The findings from this research also suggest that the training protocol must include the management of ego-depletion, meta-cognition skills, and the influence of the external environment. Ego-depletion and meta-cognition skills are both interconnected to constructive thought patterns and intrinsic rewards. While the influence of the external environment is a significant factor to consider within the behavioral strategies discussed within the self-leadership literature, these updates all suggest that our understanding of human behavior has advanced enough to call for a descriptive theory of self-leadership.

The development of a descriptive theory of self-leadership is perhaps the most significant implication for future research. A descriptive theory will provide the theoretical framework which can both develop training protocols or practices and a method for testing and validating updates to the theoretical framework. From the beginning, self-leadership scholars have argued that self-leadership is a distinct construct and the basic assumption is that deliberately influencing oneself is inherent to positive life outcomes. A general theory of self-leadership would necessarily expand this perspective to include both the negative and positive outcomes associated with how people influence themselves. The current theory appears quagmired within the Cartesian model. It suggests that scholars must start with a clear definition of the self. In

other words, the self is a much broader concept than the ghost or soul in the machine. It includes the physicality of the person, the interconnections to others, the cultural history, and the physical location of the person.

Conclusion

Self-leadership is a valuable quality for individuals to possess in their private and personal lives. Individuals higher in self-leadership tend to attain the goals they prescribe for themselves at a higher rate than those lower in self-leadership (Neck and Houghton, 2006). Organizationally, self-leadership could contribute to organizational effectiveness through empowering individuals to make decisions that contribute to organizational success. Self-leadership seems to achieve this through empowerment and giving the individual the cognitive skill set to find meaning in their work, regardless of context (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). Self-leadership also contributes to innovative behavior (Ulvenblad, Wall, Cederholm, & Hedin, 2014). Put simply, self-leadership seems to have the potential to optimize the output of an organization's human capital. We argue that more research into the effects of self-leadership training will increase both the validity and generalizability of the construct. More importantly, the research has the potential to provide a significant contribution to organizational effectiveness and the leadership paradigm in the post-modern era.

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