MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Who's Ready to Lead? The Impact of Developmental Readiness on a State Leadership Development Program

Industrial and Organizational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Although a significant amount of resources are being funneled into leadership development, organizations are still reporting issues with these efforts. The current study addresses these problems from the antecedent perspective by extending Avolio & Hannah's (2008) theory of developmental readiness. They argue that individuals who possess higher levels of developmental readiness will be more likely to maximize their development when exposed to a developmental experience. However, there has been little empirical research on the combined components of developmental readiness in a true representative sample of leaders. This study is looking to add empirical findings to this theory demonstrating that leaders with higher levels of developmental readiness components benefit more from leadership training.

INTRODUCTION

- According to McKinsey&Company (2014), US companies are spending almost $14 billion annually on leadership development, only 7% of senior managers think their companies are effectively developing their leaders, and 30% of US companies believe their leaders lack the right capabilities.
- The current argument looks to solve this issue with the concept of "developmental readiness (DR)." This research extends the idea that this DR framework (Avolio & Hannah, 2008) will accelerate the process of leadership development and ensure that money is being spent on the right people at the right time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Leader developmental readiness (DR) is defined as "the ability and motivation to attend to, make meaning of, and appropriate new leader KSAAs (knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes) into knowledge structures along with concomitant changes in identity to employ those KSAAs" (Hannah & Avolio, 2010, p. 1182).
- Hannah & Luthens (2007) studied the effects of three of the DR constructs (learning goal orientation, meta-cognitive ability, and self-concept clarity) using a sample of military cadets. In two longitudinal field studies, they found that these DR variables significantly moderated levels of development in transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and leadership efficacy. These variables also predicted leadership performance.
- In a study examining a student leadership program, the results found that participants experienced significantly higher outcomes of skill based on their levels of self-efficacy and motivation-to-lead when they entered the course (Keating, Rosch, & Burgoon, 2014). The authors suggest that the process of creating "ready, willing, and able" leaders may begin with their developmental efficacy, one of the key components of DR (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).
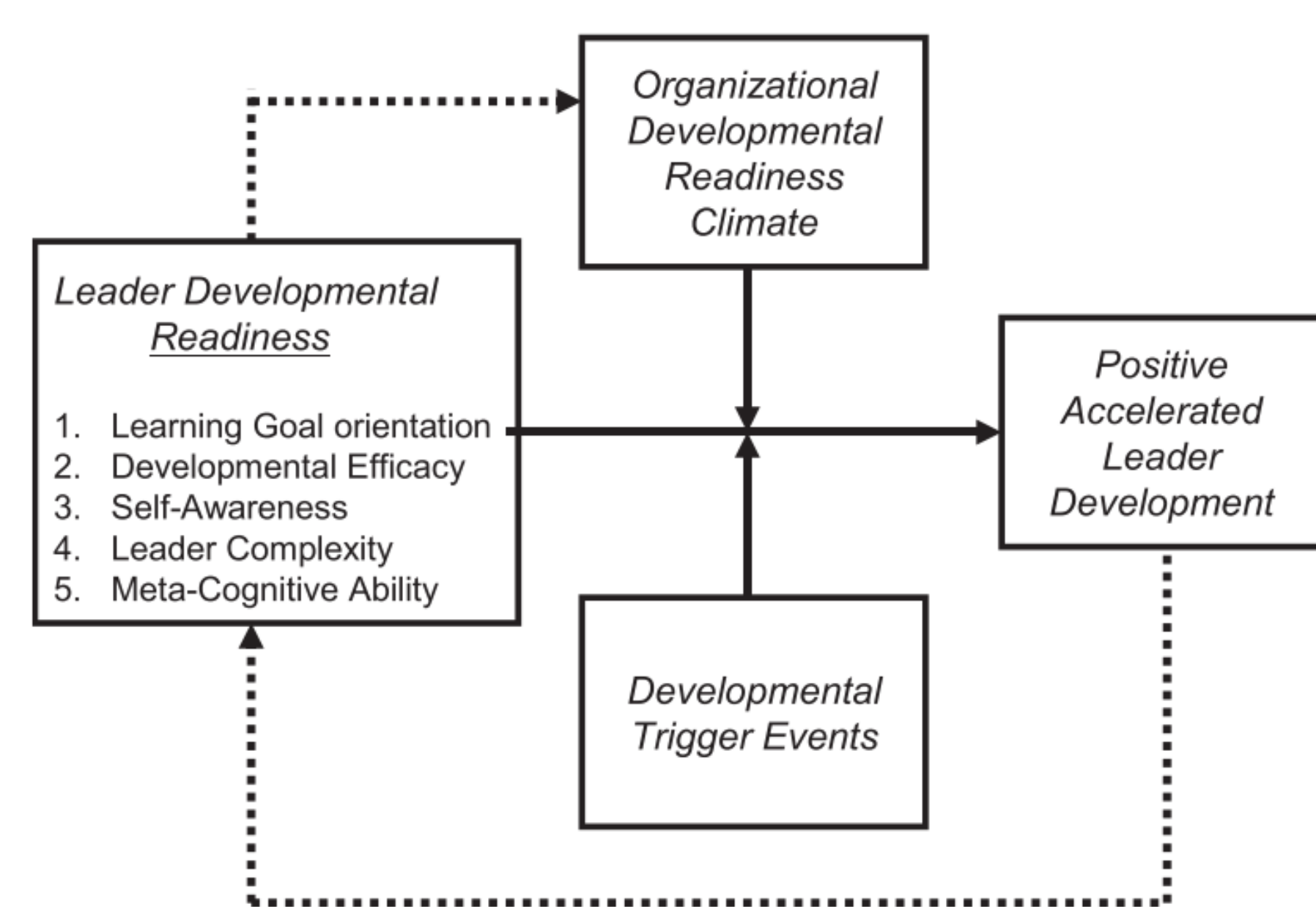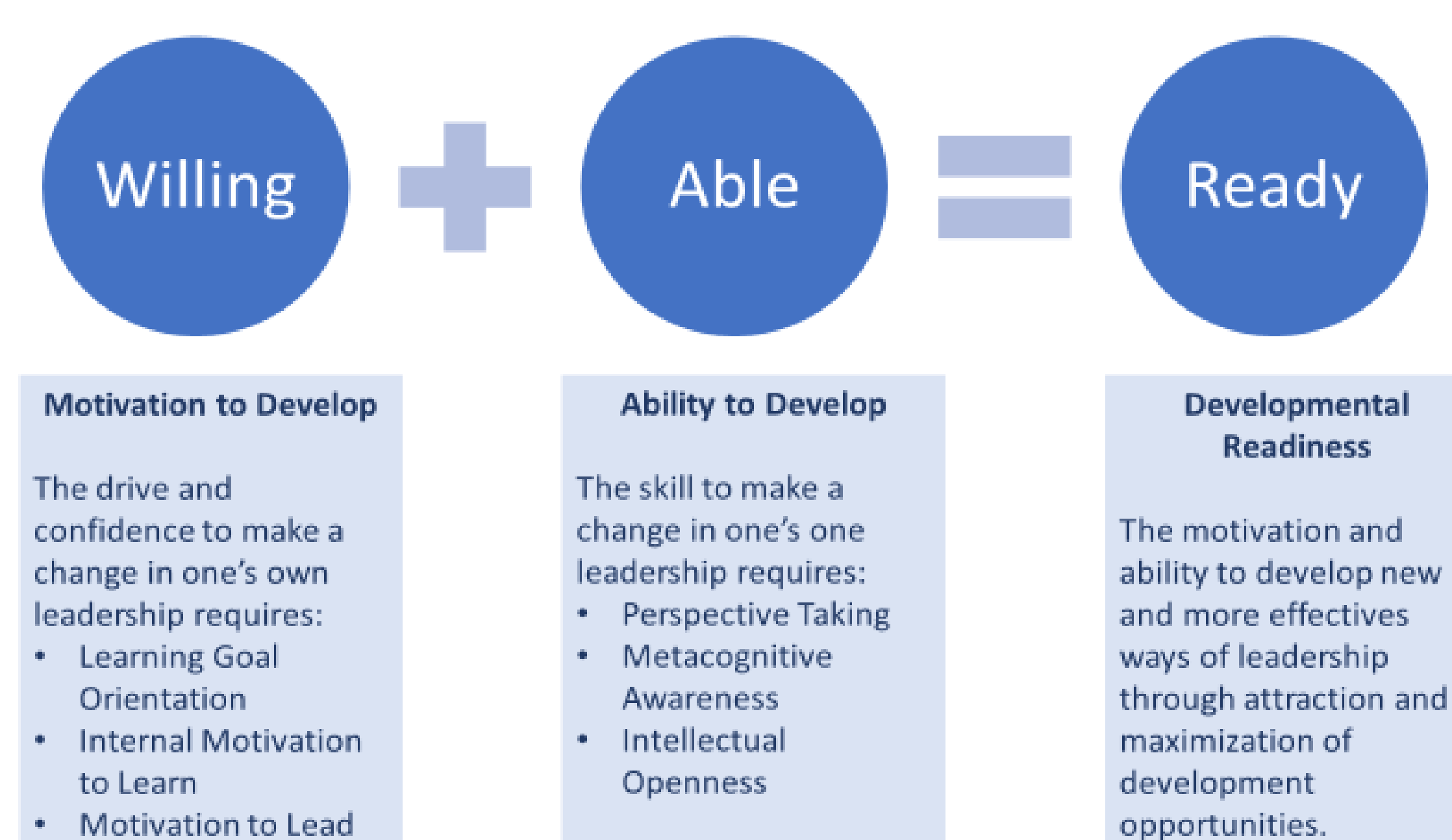
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. Leader and organizational developmental readiness.

The above framework details the original theory from Avolio & Hannah (2008). They suggest that developmental readiness consists of those five components, and that organizational readiness plays a moderating role in the relationship between developmental readiness positive leader development.

The below framework is what is being used for the current study. Our framework has been adapted from Hannah & Avolio (2010), with the main change being an additional measure of Openness to see if personality plays a role.

RESEARCH QUESTION/RATIONALE

Does the developmental readiness of leadership development trainees relate to their perceived improvement across a leadership training program?

Why invest time and money into developing a leader if he or is she is not ready, willing, and able to engage in such development?

METHODS

- Participants from a Tennessee state leadership development program will be invited to participate in the current study.
- These participants are TN state employees who work for various state agencies, ranging from the Department of Human Resources to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.
- The total number of trainees participating in the current LEAD TN Alliance is 120.
- The questionnaire will consist of eight scales (97 items) and demographic questions. The scales used in the questionnaire are as follows:

Variable	Scale
Goal Orientation	Button, Mathieu & Zajac, 1996
Motivation to Learn	Ryan & Connell, 1989
Motivation to Lead	Chan & Drasgow, 2001
Awareness of the Way I Think and Learn (Metacognitive Ability)	Schraw & Dennison, 1994
Perspective Taking	Davis, 1980
Intellectual Openness	Goldberg et al., 2006
Perceived Organizational Support	Eisenberger et al., 1986
Perceived Trainee Improvement (Criterion)	Developed by authors using LEAD TN program competencies

- Participants will have the option to receive a personal and confidential feedback report detailing the results of their developmental readiness scores and suggestions for improvement.
- Regression analyses will be performed to determine the relationship between the scores on the developmental readiness measures and the criterion. Additionally, a moderated regression analysis will be performed to determine if POS acts as a moderator

EXPECTED RESULTS

- We anticipate the data telling us that developmental readiness significantly predicts perceived improvement. We also believe perceived organizational support will moderate this relationship.
- The purpose is not to find a causal relationship; rather, we are looking to gain insight into this relationship in order to feel confident in continuing a longer term project with the Tennessee Department of Human Resources that involves validating a shorter version of the instrument being used in this study.
- Best practice would be to assess the leader's developmental readiness using a standardized tool of validated measures and provide these leaders with individualized feedback before beginning the developmental experience. Therefore, they would have time to work on their individual motivation and abilities needed to have a positive training experience.

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