Frequent Top Leadership Transitions and Their Effect on Followers: The Moderating Roles of Followership Characteristics and Organizational Culture

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Abstract
Modern for-profit, large businesses are often organized as a collection of business units, with each unit having a top leader responsible for the unit’s results. While there is much literature about CEO transitions, there is scant literature about leadership transitions at an individual business unit level. Moreover, there is no literature concerning frequent leadership transitions at this level. This study developed and validated a new measure to assess employee perceptions of top leadership transition frequency. To measure employee reactions to perceived top leadership transition frequency, the EVLN scale was utilized. This study identified that employee Exit or Neglect are likely to increase in response to leadership transitions perceived as occurring frequently. In addition, organizational culture and followership were explored for their potential moderating effects on perceived frequent leadership transitions. Using Denison et al.’s organizational culture consistency scale, organizational culture was measured to assess firm outcomes; followership was measured using Kelley’s scales for active engagement and independent critical thinking. Organizational culture was found to have a moderating effect upon Exit, whereas followership was not. Contributions to research include the development of a new measure for top leadership transition frequency, identifying the relationship it has with employee reactions, and expanding the organizational culture and organizational change nomological networks. Finally, specific actions that managers can take to minimize the effects of perceived frequent top leadership transitions were also identified.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
John P. Meriac, Ph. D. (Chair)  
Ekin K. Pellegrini, Ph.D.  
Stephanie M. Merritt, Ph.D.