Relational/Positive Leadership: Discovering Doctoral Supervisors’ Effective Approach, Which Can Influence Students’ Well-being and Performance Positively

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By

Maha Al Makhamreh

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Speaking of Discovery!
Research Overview

01
- Researcher
- Three main takeaways

03
- Relational Leadership (RL) lens: explore & address the doctoral supervision problem

02
- The Problem
(a) Doctoral Supervision
(b) Gap in Leadership Literature

04
Findings & Implications

- Methodology (qualitative) and Method (semi-structured interviews)
• 3 Main Findings – Takeaways

**Takeaway 01**
Relational leadership: connected to positive leadership and positive psychology. This confirms Komives & colleagues’ proposal (2013)

**Takeaway 02**
Relational/Positive leadership: an approach that effective supervisors apply → students’ well-being & performance

**Takeaway 03**
The process of developing positive relationships: relies mainly on the supervisor (leader)
The Problem

1. Doctoral students’ well-being and performance
   Influenced by the leadership style their supervisors exhibit

   • Well-being
     – Depression: 1/3 of PhD students (Levecque et al., 2017)

   • Performance
     – The time-to-completion rate: high (Tamburri, 2013)
     – Attrition rate: concern

2. Gap in leadership literature: how positive relationships are developed between leaders and followers → Relational Leadership (Ul-Bein, 2006).

Relational Leadership: “a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change” (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998, p. vii).
Addressing the Problem

Using the *Relational Leadership* style as a lens to explore the doctoral supervisor–student relationship context.

- Relational Leadership
  - *Positivity (uplifting environment)*

- Positive Leadership
  - *Relationships (people)*
Purpose

To explore the nature of *relational leadership* and the leadership competencies that influence the doctoral supervisor–student relationship within the Canadian university context.
Research Questions

What is the nature of relational leadership that exists in the doctoral supervisor–student context?

1. What are the perceived influential factors that contribute to the doctoral supervisory relationship?

2. To what extent do relational leadership ethical, cognitive, emotional and social competencies influence the doctoral supervisor–student relationship positively? And how they are demonstrated in the doctoral supervision context.
Methodology and Method

- An interpretive phenomenological study
- Semi-structured interviews
  - 19 doctoral students & 16 supervisors from Canadian universities across all disciplines
  - Students and supervisors were independently recruited— they were not paired. The reason behind recruiting them individually was to include all students, even those who had dysfunctional supervision experiences
Findings

- Relational leadership: connected to positive leadership and positive psychology. This confirms Komives and colleagues’ proposal (2013).

- Relational/Positive leadership $\rightarrow$ Effective supervision approach.

What is the Relational/Positive Leadership (supervision) approach that the data revealed?
Findings

• Relational/Positive leadership (supervision): an ethical and people-oriented approach that can influence doctoral students’ well-being and performance

• Relational/Positive leadership (supervision) is a spectrum: RPDS model
Implications

• At the individual level: supervisors and students can use the framework to evaluate their beliefs and performance, and enhance their practices

• At the group level: relational/positive supervisors can utilize the findings to create a positive culture in each department, where no student is left out, lost or forgotten

• At the Faculty/Institutional level: my findings can be used to
  (a) review and improve current policies
  (b) create new supervision guides, agreements, programs, etc.

Implications Beyond the Sphere of Doctoral Supervision
THANK YOU!

For further information about my research or my consultation services, please contact me:

12mam17@queensu.ca

maha.aham2010@gmail.com

Questions?