A COGNITIVE INTERPRETATION OF HOW PERCEPTION-BASED DECISIONS DETRACTS YOUR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Dr. Vincent Drew Jemison

University of Phoenix, Phoenix, Arizona

Email: drewjemi@email.phoenix.edu

Abstract: Structured decision-making is the cornerstone of what defines the practice of good leadership. However, it is unclear whether decisions that incorporate perception are more consistent with negative impact bias outcomes than are structured decisions, which rely solely on purpose, options, and results. Addressing these empirical questions will produce both theoretical and practical advances when defining leadership. The objective of this paper is to provide a clear explanation of how perception-based decisions detract your leadership performance (decision-making and behavior). For example, based on their own personal experiences (perceptions), most individuals develop cognitive representations from the arousal of subjective cultural values and oppressive experiences to define their personal concept formations and threshold decision-making. However, the cognitive process underlying the negative impact bias of subjective concept formations often leads to overestimating the consequences of an event when making a threshold decision. In this study, results showed that perception-based decisions were associated with an increased negative impact bias resulting in predictable path of verbal, mental, and physical harm, whereas structured-based decisions had no relationship with bias, suggesting that there are significant differences between perception and structured-based decisions in the practice of good leadership. The findings of the study provided a thorough interpretation of the negative impact bias of the practice of perception-based decisions, further supporting future exploration on the theory of "Measuring the intensity of perception-based decisions that follow a predictable path."

Keywords: Perception; Performance; Subjective learning, Affective forecasting, Impact bias, Focalism, Immune neglect, Working memory; Leadership; Decision-making; Behavior.

I. INTRODUCTION

In present-day, identifying the level of individual reasonability for what is communicated to others and which actors it applies to is on the rise (Charron, 2016; Bandura, 2012). With this in mind, research now shows that structured decision-making effectively demonstrates the practice of good leadership by establishing how an individual, no matter in a corporate, law enforcement, political, or educational leadership role, including a leading family role, can now be held responsible for transferring their perception-based performance (decisions-making and behavior) onto others. In addition, because of ongoing organizational transformations and recent changes in political policies and laws, accountability of individual performance now demands specific measurable evidence that challenges the "Reasonable person" standard, which is now being used to justify the communicated transfer of perception-based performance. Fundamentally, we are not just dealing with interpretation issues, but the impact bias in how perception-based decisions detract a person's leadership performance. Before I began to study perception and how it detracts an individual's leadership performance

(decision-making and behavior), I examined the most important question of all; "How does the majority of people define perception" (Jackson, 2011; Braund, 2008)? The debate over the definition of perception and how it is transferred through communication as reliable knowledge, or a reasonable cause to believe in or act on what you heard, essentially boils down to measuring the narratives to identify the level of an individual's competence and subjective views. It is here that most definitions of "perception and competence fall somewhere between two extremes; competence as a universal attribute, such as literacy, and perception in terms of individual reasoning" (Hodkinson & Issitt, 1995).

II.   THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Perception-based decision-making and the subjective dangerous behavior that often follows, has pushed some elected leaders to declare racism against women and other marginalized groups a "public health crisis" (Branigin, 2019). The purpose of this paper is to interpret the predictable path perception-based decisions follow, in order to reduce the negative and detrimental social and mental hygienic impact such decisions have and will have on the future of our society (Keeney, and Raiffa, 1976). More essential, research now shows that perception-based decisions could negatively influence an individual's self-awareness, self-regulation, and competence (Mangham, (1986) beyond the legal "reasonable person" standard that supports the cornerstone of good leadership and individual threshold decision-making practices.

III.   LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Deliberate Practice

According to Ericsson (2008) "Deliberate Leadership Practice" (DP) has become a state-of-the-art cornerstone concept that is now being recommended in numerous workplace environments where high-level human leadership performance is demanded, such as political, corporate, military, and educational institutions including the practice of medicine and law enforcement. The purpose of "Deliberate Leadership Practice" is to deliver high-level individual leadership performance skills that rely solely on the principles of structured-based leadership. Studies like those that of Ericsson has aided in the curiosity to discover what types of cognitive concept formations causes the reliance on of perception-based decision-making over structured-based decisions while serving in a position of high-level leadership.

3.2 Deconstructing the Transfer of Perception

Although the deliberate transfer of communicated perception-based decisions have become more evident in our society, recognizing the contempt and predictable path such decisions follows has not. However, research now shows that deconstructing the narratives captured from such transfers is now critically necessary in order to measure the intensity of perception-based decisions that follow a predictable path (Derrida, 2004). The process of deconstructing communicated perceptions is achieved by pinning down which energy model (displaced thought process; i.e., agitation, toleration, resonation, acceleration, and resonation) is most signified in the individual's captured narrative. The measurement approach here is then to identify the harmful predictable path stimulated from the arousing contemptible performance captured in an individual's narrative (Tosey, Visser, & Saunders, 2012).

The extant literature reviewed for this paper provided supporting research and theories on how subconscious performance is often based on an individual's perception when making a decision, which is often stimulated on the bases of contempt towards another person influenced by focalism. Focalism is the "tendency for a person to give too much weight to one specific piece of information when making a judgment or prediction." In other words, focalism causes a person to concentrate solely on a specific subconscious past event, and they fail to realize that an arising event may also be influenced by the arousal of that same subconscious past event as well" (Wilson, Wheately, Meyers, Gilbert, & Axsom, 2000). Focalism also "occurs whether people are focusing on the emotional impact of a positive or negative past experience, and thus measuring the perception-based decision(s) from the narrative of the new experience could explain affective forecasting errors observed across a wide range of past performances." The above explanation of focalism by some researchers is called "dangerous behavior" (Lee, Donnelly, Cohen, et al, 2016) because again, research now shows that perception-based decisions have been found to follow a predictable path (Leakman, Panter-Brick, and Saleh 2014. It is here that "Perception-based decisions have been found to lead to developmental psychosomatic harmful thought patterns that can play out in the form of reciprocated (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005) dangerous behavior in the form of verbal, mental, and even physical violence …" (Gentes and Ruscio, 2015). With this in mind, Veltman and Piper (2014) suggested that when measuring psychosomatic performance, such performance can be overt or conducted secretly without the oppressed person(s) knowing they are being oppressed.

Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (2009) argued that oppression is commonly formed from the working memory of internalized perceptions, which can be "observed in cases where an individual or group believes that those who oppose them do not conform to the internal and the external expectations or controls of a dominant group" (p. 436). According to Postmes and Smith (2009), a good example of individual's practicing mental control over others is when mainstream members of society support obvious and blatant negative rhetoric of verbal or mental judgment on others and approve the action(s) and behavior it represents. For example, failure to punish race-related hate speech or support for sexist speech, or deliberately smearing the name of who some consider reputable individuals of our society (Schneider & Bos 2014; Killen, Rutland, & Jampol, 2008). Logie and Cowan (2015) noted, "Working memory is needed for both our understanding of personal problems and how we process solutions to those problems, for both acting in and navigating around the situations, and for both the comprehension and production of reasonable knowledge." However, Veltman and Piper (2014) supported the views of Herek et al., by highlighting how oppression is often internally manifested in different ways when stimulated by mental arousal within working memory.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This part discusses the theoretical framework of the study with regard to the influence focalism was reflected on within several of the participant's leadership performances. For this paper, focalism is considered unambiguous, and I suspect an easy go-to source after making subjective concept formations, because focalism makes perception-based decisions comfortable to rely on at the threshold of decision-making. Some researchers believe that the cognitive stronghold of focalism can be corrected to some degree, by asking people to think carefully about the many subconscious past events that will demand their attention on future leadership decisions, which are often met with personal perceptions. However, the "influence of focalism, often leads individuals to underestimate the extent to which the transfer of theirs and someone else's perception may have on their personal thoughts and actions" (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). With this in mind, the study was grounded by the participant's narratives, which supported the use of applying Jacque Derrida's deconstruction theory to confirm the saturation of signifiers identified throughout the participants narratives (Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson, 2012; Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey, 2012). To better understand the application of impact bias while applying the Derrida's deconstruction theory, helped to discern the leadership themes discovered in the transcribed participants narratives (Saldana, 2013; Hannum, Martineau, and Reinelt, 2007; Luoma and Voltero, 2002).

4.1 Deconstruction Theory.

The theoretical framework for this qualitative narrative inquiry study purposely drew from Jacque Derrida's deconstruction theory to maximize the impact bias of a displaced thought process in order to analyze the discourse and perception-based decisions expressed in the language of the participant's narratives (Bauer, Suerdem, & Bicquelet, 2014). In contrast, Brown (2013) noted, it can be risky to handle any participant's narrative as an absolute reality. Bauer, Suerdem, and Bicquelet (2014) cautioned, "Analytical methods for deconstructing stories into coded piles could undermine the aims of narrative inquiry research by directing attention away from thinking exclusively about the individual's experience(s)." Derrida suggested that deconstructing any form of discourse from an individual's story leads to the discovery of experiences that if not defined or measured properly produces an incoherent story. An example is attempting to deconstruct a male leader's speech about abortion and its impact on women's health without recording the full narrative as it was said. What the deconstruction process in the above example is intended to identify was, which displaced thought process(s) could be signified in a person's narrative in order to measure the individual's intent.

V. METHODOLOGY

Led by narrative inquiry design and qualitative methodology, the study was conducted with eight purposively selected women political leaders to explore how the intensity in the shifts in perception negatively influenced their leadership performance (Clandinin, 2014; Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynerg, & Wan, 2010). The principal advantage of using a small purposive sample of individuals yielded detailed, rich, thick narratives from each participant. The participants of the study all shared their personal and leadership experiences and were equally concerned with the question of how, not whether, to optimize their individual leadership performance. The goal was to provide recommendations for the next generation of women leaders in order to develop and deliver definable methods to measure individual leadership performance that would reduce the reliance on perception-based decision-making. What we see from the intersection

threshold "Learning System" map below, is that after an individual leverages their cultural beliefs and oppressive factors, arousing concepts are formed from subconscious past experiences, which often leads to the choice of perception-based decision making instead of structured-based decision making.

The benefits of being able to measure the intensity of perception-based leadership decisions are because the findings will essentially identify the cognitive displace thought process(s) arousing the subconscious psychosomatic response to perception-based decisions that followed a predictable path. What can be achieved from the results a measuring the intensity of a perception-based decision will not only explain how individuals rely on their perception to justify their beliefs, and behavior, but the action taken in a given situation, especially those reciprocating the transfer of someone else's perception (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). The findings of the study suggested that because most individuals have come to rely on their perception to make leadership decisions, such decision-making causes more mental anguish and anxiety required from an experience, compared to the high-level confident non-bias results structured decision-making has on individual leadership performance. The goal of being able to properly measure an individual's perception-based decision(s) is very important to achieving accountability and fairness when applying the "reasonable person's" theory, especially when individuals are engaged in situations of uncertainty.

Table 1: Learning System Map
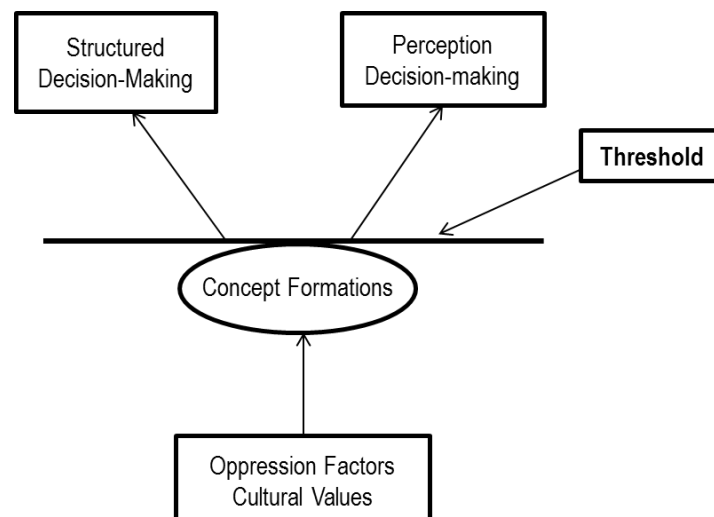
The individuals participating in this study also revealed how their personal upbringing (cultural values) and often experienced oppressive factors were two of the main components they frequently leaned on to form their leadership reasoning; and when acted upon often resulted in decision-making that was hasty and based on their perceptions and the perceptions of someone else. The Learning System map (shown in Table 1 above) shows that there are two types of threshold leadership decision-making options and how they are formed.

VI.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study suggested, when you think of leadership, you often think about developing yours or someone else's leadership skills. Other discussion questions come to mind such as, "What does it mean to be a good leader" or "What makes a great leader," or "What are the personal traits of a good leader," or "What are the characteristics of a good leader," and the list goes on. These questions have been turned into some great selling books, seminars, and podcasts. However, after an extant literature review, very few books, seminars, podcasts, and studies have been conducted on how perception-based decisions detract an individual's leadership performance (decision-making and behavior). One main assumption of the study was if at all, structured-based decisions were different from perception-based decisions.

The method of achieving the results of the study was by deconstructing the narratives of each participant to understand and identify how often and which participants relied on making perception-based decisions over structured-based decisions in their leadership practice. For instance, it did become clear in each participants narrative when and why the practice of perception-based decision-making began to take shape in their leadership approach, strategies, and actions.

Folkman and Lazarus, (1985) noted that "One possible explanation, is that people vary as to whether they see challenging experiences as having the potential for growth and mastery, or the potential for personal harm or loss." The objective here is to ultimately determine, what the individual gained from those experiences.

With this in mind, Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall, (1992) noted that, "Future research that investigates the personal and situational factors that explain the differences in threshold leadership decision-making would aid in organizations developing advance leadership training intended to reduce the reliance on perception-based decision making." It was also discovered during the study that unlike perception-based decisions, structured-based decisions are framed around the three principles of leadership (i.e., managing your purpose, identify intentional options and forecasting results) in order to properly measure the validity, objectivity, and competence of the leadership decision(s). The results of the study also identified five leadership themes that could be used to develop future leadership training in order to optimize individual leadership performance.

The first leadership theme identified, offered insight into the participant's understanding of the origin of their knowledge base and leadership approach. The second theme described leadership strategies practiced by the participant's that was open, honest, and communicative. The third theme focused on transparency, and personal development designed to shape their individual leadership performance. The fourth theme was driven by the structured decision-making that was observed and communicated based on an individual's observed family values and any oppressive factors experienced. The final theme centered on identifying the value of measuring the influences embodied perceptions have on detracting an individual's leadership performance. For instance, how a displaced thought process such as agitation, and or tolerance can arouse the transfer of one's perception, and later reciprocated into a perception-based decision(s) that follows a deliberate predictable path (Hatfield, 2012; Chemero, 2013; Barton, 2012).

- **Theme 1: Leadership Approach**. The majority of participants were forthcoming about the limits of their knowledge base when it came to their initial leadership approach. The findings revealed how each participant now desired to practice the principles of structured leadership decision-making over perception, to deliver selfless leadership governance and become more effective professional leadership practitioners (Boje, Helmuth, & Saylors, 2013a). Using Jacque Derrida's deconstruction analysis to fully explore the participants narratives, which identified how some of the cognitive representations aroused from their subjective perception-based decisions were often delivered in their leadership approach (Olendzki, 2011). The express reason for needing to know how shifts in perception can shape and detract an individual's performance was to show how negative external discursive constraints of perception is often transferred and imposed on women through dominating male rhetoric (Sutherland, Breen, & Lewis, 2013). If a leader relies on making hasty responses, this can set off a series of chain reactions that magnify the damage of small mistakes in their leadership approach (Sokol-Hessner & Phelps, 2016). Perception can shape beliefs, and many people mistakenly believe that their personal judgments are sound, even if false premises and offensive behavior and habits follow.

- **Theme 2: Leadership Strategies**. The leadership strategies and approaches identified during the transcription of the participant's narratives and later confirmed through member checks were identified as open, honest, and communicative. Susan echoed this sentiment and said, "The center of her leadership strategy is her strong work ethic." Each participant felt the same about their expectations of the individuals working in their district. Several of the participants were accountable for large political districts with a multitude of responsibilities. The remaining participants noted that they sincerely relied on the expertise of those with whom they work, and often supervise. Alisha suggested that it is unrealistic to think that one person knows everything about all aspects of their leadership realm. All of the participants found that the practice of a structural, transformational leadership strategy allowed them to function with other experts in areas of great demand without having to know everything. The fact that the participants readily accepted the limits to how much they could (and should) know follows the tenets of how the participants of the study desired to balance, process and take action against the communicated perceptions from others (Goldstein, 2014). The participants also revealed during the interview sessions that each of them incorporated authentic actionable leadership into their leadership strategies.

- **Theme 3: Leadership Development**. All of the participants emphatically shared how they incorporated the same determination into their leadership strategies and approaches as they had in their leadership development. The women also shared the significance of being observed as an integral practicing transparent leader. Transparency, a key leadership quality, as the women expressed during each interview session, helped them recognize how other women leaders before

them processed and took action against shifting perceptions derived from discursive rhetoric and discrimination (Sutherland, Breen, & Lewis, 2013). They also expressed how each of them sought to practice genuine transparency, in the hope that others under their leadership would follow suit. The women appeared confidently aware of the visibility of their leadership position and even though their decision-making choices were always being watched, scrutinized, and often fueled by subjective perceptions, they boldly endeavored to always lead by example.

- **Theme 4: Structured Decision-Making**. The participants specifically stated that they learned to distinguish the difference between structured and perception-based decision-making through their upbringing, and observed and communicated family values. Elizabeth stated that women must come to rely on structured decision-making practice and hold firm to the principles of this practice. For Elizabeth, leadership was personal, and therefore, she learned to lead according to the experiences learned from her family values (Lichtenstein, 2012) and through all forms of leadership development opportunities. The participants all echoed that, family and the structured values learned through lived experiences are looked upon as significant traits used in their practice of good leadership governance. During each interview session, all of the participants were very clear how they strived to value making informed decisions when attempting to carry out strategic leadership and management plans (Landrum, Gardner, & Boke, 2013; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005).

- **Theme 5: Embodied Perceptions**. The findings of this study revealed how most of the participants managed the embodied perceptions of their leadership performance (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2015). Examples of the type of leaders who would benefit from recognizing the value of measuring their embodied perceptions when it comes to decision-making are police officers, political and organizational leaders, and corporate managers. Doherty (2014), noted that managers, leaders, and other change agents in the workplace must be knowledgeable and sensitive to the issues and challenges faced by women and other marginalized groups (Fraser and MacDougall, 2016; Bissessar, 2014). The question then becomes, at what point from the example above are embodied perceptions used to influence an individual performance especially when engaged in situations of uncertainty (Tenbrink & Taylor, 2015; Chemero, 2013)?

The results of the study revealed that half of the participants admitted that they often engaged in perception-based decision-making, while the other half consciously attempted to reduce their perceptions when making decisions. The transcribed participant narratives confirmed just how the intensity of perception could detract and internally affect the competence of an individual's leadership decision-making ability. These results could be translated into organization-wide and community settings in several ways. In retrospect, Senge (1990a) identified two conditions used to measure the intensity that follows a perception-based decision: 1) an individual must suspend their perceived assumptions especially when engaged in situations of uncertainty, and 2) an individual must make a connection with the other person being perceived. Prospectively, Hochman, Ayal, and Glockner, (2010) noted, when individuals make decisions based on a past subconscious (subjective) experience, there is a "necessary" demand for measuring the individual's narrative to every extent to identify the level of mental arousal and displaced thought process that was triggered to make the decision (Sharot, Delgado, & Phelps, 2004).

VII. FINDINGS

The data analysis and assessment used to identify the themes was achieved through thematic analysis and NVivo11™ qualitative data analysis software. The data analysis was achieved through saturation, which guided this study and ensured the trustworthiness of using the qualitative methodology. The primary data analyzed for this study were the transcribed narratives from the participant's interviews, and field notes (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). The collected data revealed repeated themes from saturation based on the participant's experiences and later recognized in the study's findings (Birchall, 2014; Saldana, 2013). As the themes repeated, the data was connected and then associated with the leadership themes as likely influences of facts arose throughout the participant's stories. As a result, after the assembly of the participant's narratives, emerging themes were discovered during the interview sessions as recommended by (Hesse-Biber, 2013).

In addition, triangulation analyses along with a combination of the literature review and synthesis of participant experiences were used to discover patterns and themes from the participant's stories (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The reason to code the transcribed data was to reflect the source of the meaning, description, and explanation for the emerging themes (Saldana, 2013). In addition, the induction process allowed the researcher to

analyze and sort the data into related text groupings, which were used to identify themes and associations between the groupings (Saldana, 2013). However, the overarching aim for such extensive analysis of the data was to obtain answers to the main research question and sub-questions, discover emerging themes and more essential, document the lived experiences of professional women in the study (Gill, 2015; Saldana, 2013). The grouping, organizing, and retelling of the narrative data into themes occurred through the entire data collection process (Gill, 2015).

Deconstructing the collected data was performed by singling-out words and sentences that were expressed multiple times (Yegen & Abukan, 2014). The reflective writing style was simulated during the process of deconstructing the collected data (Gibton, 2015; van Manen, 2014). Overall, the aim during data analysis of the collected data was to learn and gain significant information from the participants to form groupings related to themes that support the research questions and study findings that purposely excluded any form of gossip when restoring of the participant narratives during member checks (Monk & Winslade, 2013). As a result, the core of collective facts signified the essential significance of the impact bias shifts in perceptions influenced the participant's leadership experiences (Cunliffe & Hibbert, 2016; Saldana, 2013). Therefore, the population size was small enough to attain saturation at a faster pace than with a large population. Systematically organizing the interview recordings and then deconstructing the transcribed narratives and field notes contributed to the findings of this study.

VIII.   CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the study interpreted the ways in which perception-based decisions can detract from and or harm the outcome of an individual's leadership development and performance. The urgent importance for researching how perception-based decisions detract your leadership performance, is because today, the deliberate transfer of communicated perceptions are being reciprocated in our society more than ever, in the form of cruel verbal, mental, and even physical harm. This reciprocated dangerous behavior is all around us and is not hidden from our sight any longer. The question becomes, does measuring the intensity of perception-based decisions that follow a predictable path contribute to improving social change, by providing the means to hold an individual accountable for the harmful performance that was transferred through verbal communication and then reciprocated?

What emerged from this study was a clear interpretation how perception-based decisions could detract an individual's leadership performance, while structured-based decisions optimize (enhance) your threshold leadership performance. The results of this study could also inform the development of leadership decision support tools and practices, including the advancement of high-level leadership and psychology studies. Overall, measuring the intensity of perception "might not be able to correct all of the dangerous behavior that follows the transfer and reciprocation of perception-based decisions." However, the findings suggested that being able to effectively measure the narratives of perception-based rhetoric discovered to have produced the potential for harmful decisions and behavior may play an important role in shaping new policies and laws that could legally hold leaders accountable for transferring their perception(s) onto others. Together, the results of this paper demonstrate that there in now a measureable predictable path in which the negative impact bias and underestimating consequences of transferring your perceptions onto others will have, and the benefits of relying on and practicing structured-based leadership decision-making.

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