The Study of the Correlation among Personality Traits, Leadership Competence and Organizational Performance

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Abstract: -The administration and management of a farmer's associations are governed by Farmer's Association Act and Regulations of Credit Division of a Farmer's Association to ensure a solid and solvent management of a farmer-oriented financial institution, guarantee the benefits and privileges of account holders, and promote the economic development and prosperity of the communities for farmers and fishermen. This study intends to explore the correlation among personality traits, leadership competence and organizational performance. The methods include data envelopment analysis and structural equation modeling. The findings suggest that the leader's charisma demonstrated by the chief executive director serve as an important intermediated variable for affecting the performance of the management of Farmers' Association and propose suggestions for the management. The indicators of personality traits of chief executive directors in a farmer's association should be taken into consideration in the election of a chief executive director. As well, the indicators of leadership competence of chief executive directors in a farmer's association should be taken into consideration in the election of a chief executive director.

1 Introduction

Farmers' Association (FA) in Taiwan is a non-profit organization to serve farmers for multiple purposes and its mandates are to guarantee farmers' rights and privileges, promote their knowledge and skills in farming, modernize farming, optimize their profit from harvesting, improve their quality in living, and flourish the economy in villages. FA is a managerial entity by farmers to take care of the undertakings including finance, insurance, promotion, and marketing. In addition, FA is responsible for promoting policies in agriculture and social welfare and plays a significant role in farming and rural development.

Precursory studies on FA have focused mainly on organizational reform and operational performance and barely on a leader's personality traits and leadership competence. Personality traits construct an individual's unique cognitive and behavioral mode in response to the external environment. To organizations, "people" are the most important asset. In the study of organizational behaviors which concerns about organizational performance, the leader's role is essential. The leader has to frequently provide guidelines for reaching the goals in an organization and integrate the assets of manpower within the organization. Therefore, leadership is crucial to organizational performance. Within the FA, the chief executive director's (CED) leadership competence is pivotal to the key success of FA management. As the management of the credit division in an FA is getting more difficult, the CED's leadership competence is an important factor for strengthening the solid financial status of the credit division, enhancing business competitiveness and promoting operational performance.

This study takes the perspective of human resources and chief executive directors in farmers' Associations with credit division in Taiwan as subjects for determining the correlation of their personality traits and leadership competence to the operational performance of the FUs. The findings will serve as reference to responsible authorities in agriculture for amending relevant laws and regulations.

2 Literature Review

Currently, FAs who are indirectly elected as professional managers in charge of executing the resolutions made by the board of directors, recruiting new staff members, assigning tasks and monitoring their progress, undertaking the affairs of training, reviewing, disciplining and awarding the staff, and presenting proposals to the board of directors as required. In terms of managing the credit division in an FA, the profit derives mainly from the credit division of the FA. By December 2007, 261 FAs in Taiwan have established its credit division, with a total of 811 branches covering the areas of Taiwan and Penghu (the Pescadores) with a total asset of NT$ 1.5243 trillion, a balance of NT$ 1.296 trillion and a lending of NT$ 676.2 billion (Rf. *Financial Statistics Monthly* of Central Bank of Taiwan).

2.1 Personality Traits (PT)

2.1.1 Definition

Guilford [1] identified personality traits as perpetual and unique features that make an individual distinctive from others. Kassarjian [2] deemed personal traits an individual's consistent response to the stimuli from the environment. Robbins [3] considered personality traits as a complex that identifies one's psychological properties. In this study, personality is defined as the sum of an individual's cognitive model, emotional expression, and behavioral patterns that are uniquely distinctive from others.

2.1.2 Dimensions of Personality

Norman [4] extracts big five dimensions of personality types with factor analysis: openness to experience (OE), conscientiousness (CO), extraversion (EX), Emotional Stability (ES), agreeableness (AG).

Costa & McCrae [5] suggested Norman's inappropriateness of using cultural term to describe an individual's personality traits. They found culture does not contain much cultural components; instead, it is more closely related with factors such as an individual's creativity and independence.

McCrae & Costa further adopted several assessment techniques such as questionnaire, peer review to acquire testees' personality-related information to verify the afore-mentioned perspectives. Five solid personality factors are identified through factor analysis: namely, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and Emotional Stability. In this study, the Mini-Maker scale based upon the Big Five Model is adopted in addition to McCrae and Costa's five-type personality construct.

2.2 Leadership competence (LC)

2.2.1 Definition

Leadership is very important for organizational development and flourish. Muntean and Mircea (2008) stressed that "with departmental control and leadership from the organizational, planning and budgeting issues are more manageable." Krajewski, Marti and Walden [6] acknowledged three kinds of skills for a leader: technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills. Sergiovanni [7] further extended the conceptual skills into the essential skills for an effective leader, including cultivation skills, representational skills, educational professionalism, interpersonal skills, and technical skills. In this study leadership is defined as the essential skills in leadership for a leader, including workmanship, demonstration of behavioral characteristics, interpersonal relationship and potentials for future training and learning.

2.2.2 Dimensions of leadership competence

Phifer [8] proposed leadership competence to incorporate four major dimensions: functional domain, planning domain, interpersonal relationship domain. Li and Hsu [9] divided dimensions of leadership competence into five dimensions: environmental consciousness, strategic thinking, application of professional knowledge, management of interpersonal relationship and task management and constructed a scale of leadership competence, which is adopted as research instrument in this study.

2.3 Operational Performance

Kast [10] suggested that "performance" is an evaluation of how well an enterprise has reached its targets and the resources it has utilized for reaching the targets. Szilagyi [11] proposed a more comprehensive framework of performance for all sectors to have an in-depth understanding of performance and to determine from multiple dimensions the status of performance within and outside the organization. Maisel indicated the assessment of performance should cover finance, management and organization [12] .

The performance assessment shall be undertaken through some indicators to evaluate the level an organization has achieved its goals. Generally, the three most common indicators are: productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) adopts deterministic Non-Parametric Frontier for relative comparisons. The credit divisions being assessed are compared in relation to each other with a mathematic programming method. The method was derived from Farrell [13] who proposed the un-deterministic production function to replace commonly used pre-deterministic production function to estimate the efficiency value to obtain the efficiency frontier with mathematical programming technique, that is, efficiency production function. The frontier is generally known as "deterministic non-parametric frontier."

Some factors may affect organization performance such as service-oriented architecture [14], customer satisfaction and loyalty [15], and B2E [16]. Qian and Xu [15] considered that CRM can enhance the effectiveness and performance of the businesses. The e-business model (B2E) is a service to the employees and those services could support organizational efficiencies.

2.4 Correlation of Personality Traits and Leadership Competence to Operational Performance

Leadership is a topic scholars have always been pursuing and exploring. Sosik, Potoshy & Jung [17] found positive significance between leadership and operational performance in their study. Since leadership competence is a key factor to organizational success, the sustenance development of a business is contingent upon the leader and vision for future development to realize the goals. Hence, this study mainly explores the correlation between personality traits and operational performance of CED in FAs.

3. Research Method and Design

This study adopts five-point Likert scale, with 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree, and calculates the

average values for each dimension as the score for various dimensions of the CED's leadership competence. Subjects in this study are FAs with a credit division and FAs will be analyzed for their performance. Research methods include data envelopment analysis (DEA) and structural equation model (SEM).

3.1 DEA

DEA is an efficient frontier approach to production function and uses mathematical programming approach to evaluate the comparative efficiency values of each unit to another. DEA can be divided into CCR model and BCC model. The CCR model is developed by Charnes, Cooper and Rhodes (CCR) in 1978 based conceptually upon Farrell's (1957) efficiency evaluation to evaluate the relative efficiency between multiple inputs and multiple output decision making units (DMU). While BCC model was proposed by Banker, Charnes and Cooper (1984) introduced Shephard's concept of distance function and lifted the hypothesis on the restriction of generating potential assembly for evaluating sole technical efficiency value under the return of variable rate scale (VRS).

3.2 SEM

SEM theory integrates two statistic methods, factor analysis with path analysis, into one. The SEM includes random variables and structural parameters, and in some cases nonrandom variables. There are three types of random variables: observation variable, potential variable, and interference/error variable. In SEM, the associative correlation between variables is represented with structural parameters. Structural parameters provide unchanged constants with a cause-effect relation between observation variables. Nonrandom variables serve as exploratory variables with values holding constant in repeated random samplings. An SEM so constructed with afore-mentioned manner can further divided into two schemes: measurement model and structural model.

3.3 Research Model and Hypotheses

This study adopts SEM to explore the correlation of CED's personality traits and leadership competence with operational performance. The following hypotheses about the CED's personality traits, leadership competence and operational performance are proposed:

H1：Personality traits show positive significant impact upon leadership competence.
H2 ： leadership competence shows positive significant impact upon managerial competence.
H3：Personality traits show positive significant Effect upon managerial competence.

This study adopts Li and Hsu's [9] leadership competence scale, which divides leadership competence into the following dimensions: competences in environmental consciousness, strategic thinking, application of professional knowledge, interpersonal relation management, and task and assignment management (TAMC), as stated in the following:

1. Environmental consciousness competence (ECC) will determine executive directors' awareness and consciousness of intra-organizational environment and sensitivity to the interaction with the external sectors and describe to subordinates when necessary.

2. Strategic thinking competence (STC) will explore executive directors' abilities in discovering problems and factors in events and evaluating the pros and cons and the risk involved in various projects, and conveying overall ideals clearly to others upon decision-making.

3. Application of professional knowledge competence (APKC) will determine executive director' ability of acquiring, applying, understanding and familiarizing with specific professional knowledge and skill by constantly enhancing the professional knowledge and skill for him- or herself and his or her colleagues.

4. Interpersonal relationship management competence ((IRMC) will determine executive directors' effective interpersonal relationship with others in terms of commanding, coordinating, communicating, interacting and cooperating with colleagues and subordinates.

5. Task and assignment management competence (TAMC) will explore executive directors' effectiveness in planning, executing, assessing, and performing tasks and to further enhance subordinates' effectiveness in their work.

3.4 The Operational Performance Variables

This study with reference to relevant literature employs intermediation approach to determine input and output items. Due to restricted access, the input items are: number of employees -- the number of employees in the credit division in an FA, including branch sections of business, accounting, information,

auditing, and CED; total interest expenses -- cost of interest payment of the credit division, including interest from deposit and loans; non-interest fees -- the balance of total expenses of the credit division minus total interest expenses, mainly payrolls, rentals, overheads, meeting fees, management fees, account collectible and miscellaneous fees; net -- business capital and public funds (including profit and loss).

Output items are: revenues from loans -- including interest revenues from non-warranted lending, warranted lending, mortgages, farmer's loans, agricultural development fund lending, specialized lending, internal financing, employee's loans; other revenues excluding loans -- a total of interest from fund transfer and deposits, interest from transaction fees, revenues from banking orders, investment profit, fees, and revenue from account receivable; overdue lending rate -- overdue loans divided by amount of total loans.

4. Research Findings

4.1 Characterization of Samples

Sample analysis is as follows: Of all returned samples 107 are males and account for 85.6% of all returned samples in contrast with 18 females, or 14.4% of all returned samples. Their age range is between 51 and 60. With an average of 42 indicates subjects are mainly in their middle ages. In terms of education, 33.6% of samples are high school or senior vocational school graduates, and 31.2% college graduates. In terms of seniority, 64.8% are in service at FUs for more than 16 years, followed by 11.2% for between 4 and 8 years. In terms of the CED position, 34.4% have been in charge of the CED from 4 to 8 years, trailed by 31.2% for less than 4 years.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Descriptive statistics of the big five personality traits and leadership competence is shown in Table 1 of this study. The average value of "agreeableness" is 4.18 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.61. It indicates subjects demonstrate a high level of "agreeableness," being friendly, polite and easy to get along with subordinates and supervisors.

Similarly, the average of "conscientiousness"

is 4.23 indicates subjects demonstrate highly conscientious characteristics. That means, subjects are concentrated on pursuing goals, working hard and responsible for their tasks. The average of "extroversion" indicates subjects with "extrovert" personality are more active and sociable. The average of "Emotional Stability" is 3.73 indicates subjects with Emotional Stability are emotionally stable, determined, secured, and satisfied. The average of "openness of experience" is 3.99 indicates subjects who are open to experience are more adaptable, curious, inquisitive and versatile. Table 2 depicts the outcome analysis based upon the descriptive data of the operational performance, with significant variations among research variables.

4.3 Factor Analysis and Reliability

The reliability analysis of this study is based upon Cronbach's α coefficient to represent its consistency. The value will be acceptable when it reaches 0.70 in an exploratory study. The value between 0.70 and 0.98 is highly reliable; whereas any value under 0.35 unacceptable. Based upon these criteria, consistency and stability of the scale are demonstrated in Table 3. In addition, Table 4 and Table 5 show the loadings of the factor analysis for personality traits and leadership competence.

4.4 The Goodnees-of-Fit of Structural Modeling

The goodnees-of-fit Indexes for structural model are acceptable as shown in Table 6 and Figure 1.

4.5 Componential Analysis of Personality Traits, Leadership Competence and Operational Performance

This study adopts LISREL structural model to establish path to determine the intermediation effect of leadership competence and operational performance. According to Table 7, all factors are significant to personality traits, with a significance level of .01. All factors are significant to leadership competence, with a significance level of .01. Except for ECC all other factors are significant to operational performance and other variables at a significance level of .01.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistic Analysis

variables	Dimension	Average	SD
Big five personality traits	Agreeableness	4.18	0.61
	conscientiousness	4.23	0.64
	extroversion	3.99	0.68
	neuroticism	3.73	0.63
	openness to exp.	3.99	0.65
Leadership competence	Environmental consciousness competence	4.06	0.91
	Strategic thinking competence	4.11	0.89
	Application of professional knowledge competence	4.12	0.85
	Interpersonal relationship management competence	4.34	0.77
	Task and assignment management competence	4.25	0.82

（n=125）

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Operational Performance

Input Variables			
Item	number of employees	total expenses	non-int. fees	Net
Max	223	410342	543481	3611664
Min	8	2197	9410	-61377
Average	51	413631	106332	353094
SD	35	57506	84101	477460
Output variables			
Item	revenues from loan interest	revenues from other sources than loans	A/R	
max	687090	571643	62	
min	9368	3156	.12	
average	104069	69451	15	
SD	94129	71940	13	

Table 3 Reliability Analysis

Questionnaire	Factor	Dimensions	Dimensional Reliability	Overall Reliability
Personality Traits	F11	Agreeableness	0.830	0.869
	F12	conscientiousness	0.748	
	F13	extroversion	0.720	
	F14	neuroticism	0.604	
	F15	openness to experience	0.553	
Leadership Competence	F21	Environmental consciousness competence	0.912	0.976
	F22	Strategic thinking competence	0.924	
	F23	Application of professional knowledge competence	0.908	
	F24	Interpersonal relationship management competence	0.934	
	F25	Task and assignment management competence	0.925	

Table 4 Factor Analysis of Personality Traits

F11		F12		F13		F14		F15	
question	Loading	question	Loading	question	Loading	question	Loading	question	Loading
Q12	0.568	Q5	0.569	Q6	0.557	Q4	0.575	Q15	0.673
Q14	0.660	Q8	0.631	Q19	0.530	Q31	0.543	Q23	0.518
Q16	0.670	Q21	0.583	Q24	0.683				
Q18	0.568	Q30	0.666	Q27	0.527				
Q28	0.622	Q32	0.746						
KMO: 0.886, Bartlett: Chi = 988.531, df: 171, p-value: 0.000									

Table 5 Factor Analysis of Leadership Competence

F21		F22		F23		F24		F25	
question	Loading	question	Loading	question	Loading	question	Loading	question	Loading
Q1	0.693	Q6	0.666	Q11	0.747	Q15	0.631	Q21	0.754
Q2	0.679	Q7	0.706	Q12	0.770	Q16	0.635	Q22	0.729
Q3	0.690	Q8	0.819	Q13	0.762	Q17	0.719	Q23	0.619
Q4	0.729	Q9	0.744	Q14	0.691	Q18	0.672	Q24	0.675
Q5	0.759	Q10	0.768			Q19	0.717	Q25	0.689
						Q20	0.700		
KMO: 0.925, Bartlett: Chi = 7683.844, df: 1225, p-value: 0.000									

Table 6 The Goodnees-of-Fit Indexes

parameters	value	GFI	AGFI	RMR	SRMR	RMSEA	NFI	NNFI
criteria	P-value< 0.05	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.05	< 0.05	< 0.08	> 0.90	> 0.90
results	0.000	0.87	0.8	0.017	0.046	0.094	0.93	0.95
parameters	CFI	IFI	RFI	PGFI	PNFI	χ^2/df	t-value	
criteria	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.50	> 0.50	< 3.00	> 1.96	
results	0.96	0.97	0.92	0.57	0.8	2.05		

4.6 Effect of Leadership upon Managerial Management

The leadership competence of a CED at an FA has positive impact upon operational performance and Hypothesis III (H3) is supported. Leadership competence of a CED at an FA has merely direct impact upon leadership competence, with a total impact of .55 and a significant level of .05.

4.7 Impact Analysis of Personality Traits upon Leadership Competence

Refer Table 8, personality traits have positive impact upon leadership competence and Hypothesis I (H1) is supported. Personality traits of CED at an FA have merely direct impact upon leadership competence, with a total impact of .52 and a significant level of .05.
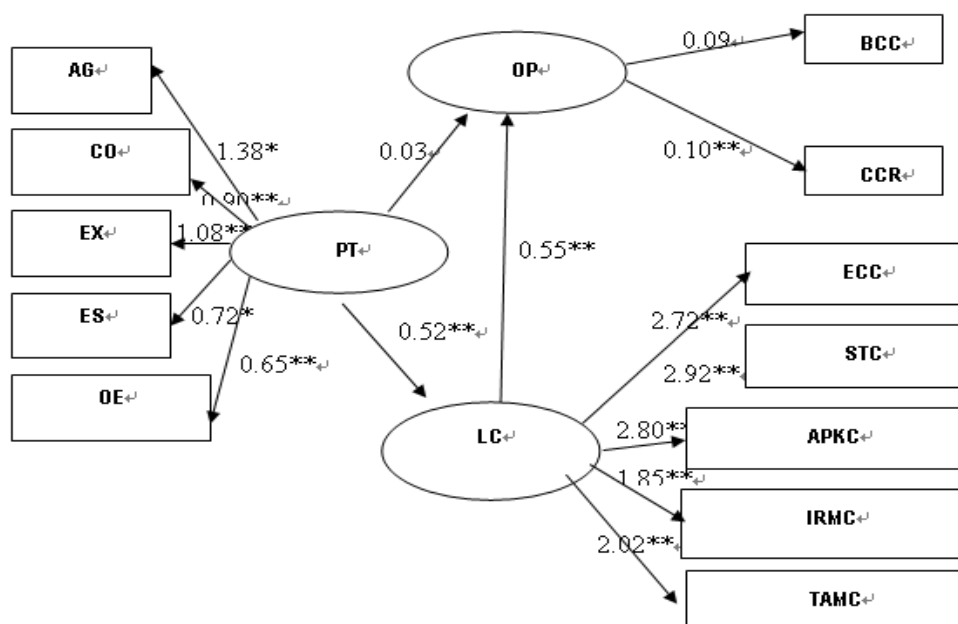
Figure 1 The results from LISREL (*p<.05, **p<.01)

Table 7 Componential Analysis of Personality Traits, Leadership Competence and Operational Performance

Components of Personality Traits			
Observation Variables	**Standardized Coefficient**	**T value**	**Impact Ranking**
agreeableness	1.38	9.91**	1
conscientiousness	0.90	9.92**	3
extroversion	1.08	8.36**	2
neuroticism	0.72	7.48**	4
Openness to experience	0.65	8.50**	5
Components of leadership competence			
Observation Variables	**Standardized Voefficient**	**T value**	**Impact Ranking**
Environmental consciousness competence	2.72		3
Strategic thinking competence	2.92	14.72**	1
Application of professional knowledge competence	2.80	15.41**	2
Interpersonal relationship management competence	1.85	13.22**	5
Task and assignment management competence	2.02	13.43**	4
Components of Operational Performance			
Observation Variables	**Standardized Coefficient**	**T value**	**Impact Ranking**
BCC	0.09		2
CCR	0.10	11.11**	1

Note: *p <0.05，**p <0.01

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

The credit division of a FA fulfills not only the basic function of financing but also the functions of promoting policies and welfare and its contribution in the history of economic development is insurmountable. A total of 260 questionnaires were sent to the subjects and 125 copies were returned. The findings and

conclusions are as follows:

1. Chief executive director's personality traits demonstrate positive significance to leadership competence. Among personality traits, agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness show the highest impact. That means, the more agreeable, extroverted, and conscientious a CED is, the more easily the CED will lead and coordinate with his or her teammates to accomplish organizational tasks and reach organizational goals. A leader with openness to learning and emotional stability will demonstrate better environmental consciousness, stronger strategic thinking, more applicable professionalism, better interpersonal communication and task managerial competence.

2. Chief executive director's personality traits demonstrate positive significance to managerial competence of the credit division in a farmers' Associations. The finding showed agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness among all traits yielded the highest impact.

3. Chief executive director's leadership competence demonstrates positive significance to operational performance. This confirms with the results of positive correlation. The research findings infer that CED with a higher level of environmental consciousness competence will demonstrate better competences in strategic thinking, interpersonal relationship management, competence in applying professional knowledge, and managing tasks and assignments.

Table 8 Impact of personality traits and leadership competence upon operational performance

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	
	MP	LC
P T		
Direct Impact	.03	.50
Indirect Impact	.29	
Total Impact	.32	.50
LC		
Direct Impact	.55	
Indirect Impact		
Total Impact	.55	

Abbreviations: PT Personality Trait
LC: Leadership Competence
MP: Operational Performance

The better the CED's leadership competence, the better the operational performance in the credit division of the FA. The leadership competence also serves as an important intermediation variable that yields significant impact upon operational performance. As conclusion of this study, some suggestions are made for election of CED at FAs: indicator of personality traits of the chief executive director should be considered when executive directors for farmers' Associations are elected and indicator of leadership competence of the chief executive director should be considered when executive directors for farmers' Associations are elected.

The following suggestions are made for further research based upon the conclusions of this study:

1. Scales on personality traits and leadership competence shall be developed for measuring the personality and leadership of prospective candidates running for chief executive directors of a farmer's association.

2. The correlation among personality traits, leadership competence and managerial performance may vary in different occasions. Interference factor may be added to the modeling in future study to determine the interference effect and enhance predictability.

3. The data envelopment analysis method is adopted in this study. Different performance measurement methods may be employed to determine the correlation among personality traits, leadership competence and managerial performance.

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