

Political Leadership: A New Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Research indicates leadership is an important discipline in political studies. However, leadership has received little attention within political science scholarship. Theorists attribute this neglect to perplexities of political leadership which is often in conflict with tenets of liberal democratic ethos. As a result, the concept of political leadership and the character of the political leader remain understudied. The current study utilizes conceptual framework analysis method to identify political leadership's central concepts and themes which form the theoretical framework. The current study was conducted by examining literature covering social, cultural, and psychological facets of political leadership. Ensuing concepts were then used to map out a conceptual framework for political leadership. The findings reveal behavior is a cause of political leadership outcomes. Additionally, the study shows personality traits, leadership style, motivation, and stress tolerance are central concepts to the behavior of the leader, and define leadership outcomes within a political setting. Finally, further studies into the interconnectivities of the central concepts will deepen the understanding of the phenomena.

Keywords

Political Leadership, Personality Traits, Leadership Styles, Political Motivation, Stress Tolerance

1. Introduction

Since Selznick (1957) and Bennis (1959), discussions on leadership had centered mainly on business, organisations, and people (Teles, 2012). An extensive study on the term “political” is fairly new to the discussion of leadership. Burns (1978) and Blondel (1987) attempted to expound the study of political leadership focusing mainly on contextualising and analysing the phenomenon. Even so, it

was not until the last decade did academe and comparative political science hearken to the relevance of leadership in political studies. Consequently, there have been attempts by publishers to assemble the stance of scholars in related disciplines with the aim of consolidating a narrative on political leadership. For instance, Routledge has since released the *Ashgate Companion to Political Leadership* in 2009, the Oxford University Press produced the *Handbook of Political Leadership* in 2014, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences published *On Political Leadership* in 2016 among others. Even though previous resources provide insightful literature into the phenomenon, as would be later demonstrated, more discussions on the subject are required within political studies.

There is no single theory unifying the study of political leadership (Elgie, 2015), and also there are several approaches and theories surrounding the study of leadership (Bennister, 2016), so substantial interest in the field is expected, yet the neglect of “political” in leadership studies over the years remain conspicuous.

Kane and Patapan (2008) raised questions on the continual absence of scholarship on leadership in democratic studies even with the advent of many centers of leadership all over the world, and further pointed out that what existing literature lacks is a theory that adequately addresses the role of leadership in representative democracies. The neglect raises curiosity considering almost every conflict or dysfunction occurring in any part of the world is often attributed to “poor leadership”, and normally, the recommended solution has been “good leadership”. Discussions on outcomes of democracies center on leadership; whether it is done so regrettably (because of poor leadership) or desirably (because of good leadership), implying leadership is central to the successes and/or failures of modern democratic societies.

Robertson (2004) explained that in a democracy, political leadership is considered desirable and a normal feature of the political process until the leader fails to be accountable to the party or the electorate as a result of the leader becoming too conscious of the position held. This occurrence is prevalent in Third World countries where durable political institutions and economic growth may be absent or inadequate. The omission of political leadership is not coincidental but a blind spot for theorists considering its elusive nature (Kane & Patapan, 2008). The absence of “political” in leadership discussion may also be because of the discomfort it brings, as it draws attention to the lack of trust in politicians, and by its introduction, the general argument held that leadership in democracies is inherently antidemocratic may be compromised (Teles, 2012).

Masciulli, Molchanov and Knight's (2009) explanation of leadership remains an important factor in the discussion of government and governance because, inferior leadership yields government failure and political disaster, while superior leadership is vital to achieving positive outcomes and national prosperity. Additionally, studies have found leadership has a bearing on good governance, and the presence of strong and innovative leaders brings about desired results, for instance, in the areas of social protection and economic development (Lord,

Martin, Atkinson, & Mitchell, 2009; Beer et al., 2019) as well as in explaining functionality of political systems and public policy making (Bennister, 2016).

The role of political leadership is vital as public policy describes the actions of politicians in solving societal problems. Problem-solving skills determine the future fortunes of the people being governed, and political leadership embodies the internal and external factors which serve as the enabling or preventing influencers in executing remedial policies. Additionally, considering the important nature of “political” and its tendency to be desirable (or objectionable in some cases) in the discussion of leadership, and specifically its under-representation in political studies, there is a need for deeper scrutiny with a view of ascertaining its influence(s) on the democratic political process and public policy making. The objective of the study is to develop a conceptual framework for political leadership studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. A Conundrum of Political Leadership

What is political leadership? Is it a blessing or a curse? Does it bring positive or negative outcomes? Is it beneficial or inimical to societal advancement? Is it crucial or inconsequential to improving social equality and livelihoods? There are no clear answers to the posed questions, mainly because any answers provided for the questions may depend on standpoints of the consequences of the phenomenon. For instance disagreements among scholars center on conformity, compatibility, and favorability of leadership in contemporary political studies. This is why with its associated contradictions, unanswered questions, and lack of consensus among theorists, political leadership is often considered a complicated topic to comprehend (Elgie, 2015).

In some instances, political leaders have destroyed more than built, created misery and disasters, worsened inequality, and brought hardships upon the livelihoods they seek to improve (Amundsen, 1999). The tricky nature of political leadership makes it difficult to understand or control (Rhodes & ‘t Hart, 2014), as a result, political leadership is not well defined in literature and diverse in terms of its concepts (Bennister, 2016).

The complication is reinforced by the puzzling nature of the subject when examined within a democratic setting, because, on one hand, literature underscoring the transforming role of political leaders in turning around fortunes of nations, fostering unity among adversaries, and creating an enabling environment for economic development are in abundance (Masciulli et al., 2009; Lees-Marshment, 2016; Ofosu-Anim & Back, 2021), while on the other hand there are ample evidence on the often debilitating role of elected political leaders to societies (Amundsen, 1999; Keohane, 2016; Sackey, 2021). The contrasting functionalities of political leaders in democratic settings present a conundrum, one which political scientists deliberate to date.

Authors over the years attempt to debate and solve inherent dichotomies

within the political leadership function. For example, Kane and Patapan (2008) indicated two opposing forces are normally at play on the topic of leadership in democracies, because, leadership may seem like a good fit for democracy, but the concept of leadership also contradicts the philosophies of democracy's egalitarianism. It is problematic to reconcile the concepts of leadership which imply unequal levels of power and authority between citizens and leaders, and social equality which is characterized by the notion that all people are equal in fundamental value and in moral status. Another reason political scientist avoid the topic is its association with elites. The prescriptions of liberal democracy favours populism and pluralism, while opposing elitism. Democratic theorists struggle to resolve disagreements between leadership and popular sovereignty. Hendriks and Karsten (2014) attested that leadership in democracies is paradoxical because the theories of democracy are based on the premise of popular sovereignty—which suggests a government's authority is formed and pursued through permission of the people who are autonomous in nature and in function—and it is set on egalitarian ethos, but the concept of leadership incorporates hierarchy which implies inequality. By empowering a small section of society through hierarchies, the notion of leadership conflicts with social equality. Additionally, Keohane (2016) set out a political leadership conundrum by outlining three principles within a democratic system of governance: 1) for any democratic system to function effectively, political equality must be upheld, thus, the rights of the person contributing to political discourse must be respected, and must occur within an environment where each voice has the same count, secondly; 2) a democratic system requires leadership to function for attainment of set goals; but 3) the power wielded by the leader is greater than the power of the led. Keohane's (2016) explanations give the impression that the "presence" of leadership in democracy sets to defeat the main tenet of democratic governance-political equality.

Even though, occasional unfavorable outcomes of political leadership have generated uncertainties in democratic societies, there have been suggestions for "stronger" leadership approaches in the execution of political mandates (Rhodes & 't Hart, 2014). However, the very notion of political leadership is self-defeating taking into account instances where activities of "strong" leaders have resulted in devastating outcomes.

Teles (2012) advanced that strong leadership is often associated with weak democracies, and, a "good democrat" is incompatible with the exercise of leadership. The ensuing dichotomy is, elected political leaders are caught in the difficulty of meeting political mandates versus navigating restrictions placed on their leadership authority by democratic institutions (Rhodes & 't Hart, 2014). There is no scholarly consensus on whether leadership is essential for democratic societies and also there is no consensus on which leadership theory will address the innate doubts about leaders among political scientists (Bennister, 2016). What remains certain however is, political leadership is in conflict with egalitarian tenets of democracy which creates a compulsion for theorists to limit

or avoid the study of leadership within the political science discipline. Popular consensus reject empowering a small section of society instead of the whole, and the concept of political leadership substantially disagrees with social equality. Notwithstanding, there is a need to address the “neglect” question because political leadership is inevitable in every society whether its existence is implied or explicit. Also, political leadership constitutes a substantial area within academe bothering on several spheres of knowledge areas on how people and societies function and should not be relegated solely because of its perplexities.

2.2. Political Leadership in a Democracy

Is political leadership indispensable to liberal democracy? Or is leadership avoidable in the discussion of democratic governance? Considering the “avoidance” posture of liberal democracy experts on the subject, at a first glance it may seem leadership is incompatible with democracy. However, there is growing literature arguing to the contrary. Emerging literature calls for reconsideration of the role of leadership in democratic governance.

Leadership plays an important role and is a part of every political system (Finer, 1954). Gupta (1961) opined leadership is an essential condition in establishing a sound democratic system. Ruscio’s (2008) claim that to reject leadership implies to reject democracy is not a generally accepted statement among political theorists, but the claim is considered legitimate from an observational or empirical standpoint (Hendriks & Karsten, 2014).

The question of legitimacy of political leadership has been longstanding. Popper (1945) expressed the inevitability in dealing with the political leadership “problem” due to the dangers it bear. Schlesinger (1982) articulated leadership is resisted based on: 1) ideological grounds-because of its clashes with equality and majoritarianism; 2) on moral grounds-because of the corruptive nature of power; and 3) on emotional grounds-because leadership breeds envy towards superior persons.

Democracy can co-exist with leadership because good governance depends on good leadership. The dependency of good governance on good leadership is extensively discussed in scholarship. John and Cole (1999) contended creative leadership depends on good governance especially in the area of directing policy-making. Körösenyi (2005) showed leadership is essential to democratic politics by re-working Weber’s and Schumpeter’s theories to build a model for leader democracy. Kane and Patapan (2008) criticize the cynical attitudes of citizens towards the motives and intentions of democratic leaders, and explain that democratic leadership is an essential ingredient in building democratic societies. Also, Lowenthal and Bitar (2015) interviewed 13 past presidents in a study on transitioning from authoritarian rule to multi-party democracy, and concluded leadership is central to the sustainability of “young” modern democracies.

There is no consensus on the argumentation of political leadership’s place in political studies, but even though there is uneasiness stemming from leaders acquiring power beyond measurable control which leads to abuse of power, de-

mocratic practices prove to be the solution to the problem. Leadership could conflict with democratic canons such as egalitarianism and political decentralization. However, liberal democratic ideologies such as separation of powers, rule of law and moral universalism serve remedies for potential abuse of power (Keohane, 2016). The system of democracy is therefore adequately equipped to regulate and guide political leaders to act in conformity with set ethos.

2.3. A Portrayal of the Political Leader

Leadership is central to democratic governance. Without some form of leadership, the attainment of political goals remains farfetched (Keohane, 2016). The current study seeks to portray a leader from three main perspectives, i.e., relationship with followers, identity by characteristics and beliefs, and actions towards structures.

In seeking to depict the political leader, Haslam and Reicher (2016) suggested there is a need for a shift from an “individualistic” approach to a “pluralistic” paradigm as leadership cannot be the exclusive preserve of leaders. The term leadership implies followership, so there is a need to combine the two concepts into a unitary psychological frame. Haslam and Reicher (2016) outlined four reasons in defense of the claim: 1) leadership is practiced and not owned. It an activity to be conducted and not a possession; 2) due to its organizational function to lead, there is a need to include others, requiring involvement of others beyond the leader. Leadership is the manifestation of the leaders’ influence on followers. The fate of the leader is thus conjoined with that of followers; and finally, 3) leadership is not compulsion, or resource allocation but influence. What makes a leader is ability to inspire followership without use of coercive force.

Followers and structures are important on leading because without the checks and balances that separation of power offers, leaders they are likely to accumulate too much power and authority for personal gains, which deprive followers their right in participating in determination of their own fortunes (Kellerman, 2016). The role of the masses in fighting for equal rights and against all forms of discrimination has contributed to relational changes between leaders and followers and has also ensured continued progress in areas of power transfer and reduced adverse coercion by the elite.

To explain the concept of political leadership, it is important to provide sufficient description of who a political leader is. As indicated by Rhodes and ‘t Hart (2014), leaders are normally identified through their characteristics, beliefs, and deeds, and often occupy top political positions. Leaders may include heads of government, cabinet ministers, senior legislators, key party officials, advisers to politicians, and, senior public officials.

The character of the leader determines actions and choices, and actions will determine leadership outcomes (Teles, 2012). An attempt to portray the political leader require a venture into spheres of psychology (Rhodes & ‘t Hart, 2014). The character, personality, and abilities (both inherited and learned) of political

leaders, which are manifested through actions and choices, play pivotal role in execution of political mandates. Ofosu-Anim and Back (2021) argued that the political leader is an embodiment of traits and behaviors as well as ability to utilize skill set through deliberation and consultation to achieve political goals.

By comparing and contrasting leaders in similar scenarios, their beliefs and actions provide an idea of how differently issues will be handled. For instance, in the aftermath of the first round of the French presidential election in April 2017, what would have been the stance of Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally on remaining in the European Union (EU) and legal immigration issues if Emmanuel Macron's En Marche had been defeated? What would have been the fate of Brexit and the United Kingdom (UK) in the EU if Jeremy Corbyn and not Boris Johnson had been successful in the 2019 UK general elections? The destinies of many people rested on the outcome of these elections and the personality, beliefs, and character of these political leaders played key role in shaping those destinies. Another example is, how different would America's departure from Afghanistan in August 2021 be if it had been done under the presidency of Donald Trump instead of Joe Biden? And finally, would a different Russian head of state declare war on Ukraine in 2022?

Decisions made by the political leader are central to unraveling his or her identity. As a consequence, studying the actions of the leader help in understanding who the leader is (Rhodes & 't Hart, 2014). As an example, by seeking answers to; 1) why some people seek to occupy political positions?; 2) why some cling to positions despite difficult work schedule and tasks?; 3) why some continue in pursuit with no regard to public judgment, and a negative public opinion?, and also; 4) why some make decisions or take actions which seem precarious or even self-destructive? Asking questions pertinent questions provide a scrutiny into the leader's intentions and motivations which provide insights into his or her persona and character.

3. Method

3.1. Introduction and Context

For this current paper, conceptual framework analysis method as developed by Jabareen (2009) is the basis for which political leadership is theorized.

Jabareen (2009) defines conceptual frameworks as "a qualitative processes of theorization" and argues that the current characterization of *conceptual framework* lacks precision. In redefining conceptual framework, Jabareen (2009) offers that the term refers to a system of interrelated concepts that integrate to provide an understanding of a phenomenon. The concepts that form a conceptual framework "support one another, articulate their respective phenomena, and establish a framework-specific philosophy" (p. 50). The conceptual framework analysis method is ideal when building conceptual frameworks for a multidisciplinary phenomenon. Jabareen (2009) suggests that using literature from multidisciplinary fields of study to build a conceptual framework constitutes

theorization. This method is entrenched in grounded theory approach which focuses on theory development and is in contrast to other qualitative methods that focus on describing data. [Strauss and Corbin \(1994\)](#) point out the main differences between theorizing and describing:

The major difference between this methodology and other approaches to qualitative research is its emphasis on theory development. Researchers can aim at various levels of theory when using grounded theory procedures. However, most grounded theory studies have been directed at developing substantive theory (p. 274).

Other qualitative methods are good in describing a phenomena but not in theory development. A conceptual analysis on the other hand goes through a process of concept scrutiny, followed by an analysis to substantiate its existence and reality. Based on these ideas, [Jabareen \(2009\)](#) holds that grounded theory method is adequate and suitable for developing conceptual frameworks in multidisciplinary studies. Thus [Jabareen \(2009\)](#) derives the conceptual framework analysis method from the grounded theory method.

3.2. Features and Procedure

The main features of a conceptual framework analysis are that it is not merely a litany of concepts but, instead, a structure with integrative relationships between the concepts. Additionally, the method provides interpretation, not analysis as well as understanding, not explanation to social occurrences. Furthermore, due to its indeterminist nature, the method does not seek to predict an outcome but rather seeks to provide an interpretation of intentions and motives. Finally, data sources for the method are generally based on theories from a multidisciplinary viewpoint. These form data sources which are empirical in nature for the conceptual framework analysis. [Jabareen \(2009\)](#) lays out the following eight steps as a guide in developing a conceptual framework:

Phase 1: Mapping the selected data sources. Determining and selecting sources of data from a multidisciplinary literature regarding the phenomenon in question. This step is accomplished through an extensive review of multidisciplinary data.

Phase 2: Extensive reading and categorizing of the selected data: The aim of this phase is to help in determining the relevance of the selected data by level of importance and also to establish their application in each discipline.

Phase 3: Identifying and naming concepts. The aim in this step is to identify emerging concepts. This is achieved through reading and rereading the selected data. It is possible to identify conflicting or contrasting concepts at this stage.

Phase 4: Deconstructing and categorizing the concepts: This phase aims to dismantle each concept to identify its elements, features, conventions, characteristics and further to organize and categorize them according to their features and roles.

Phase 5: Integrating concepts. The aim of this step is to group similar concepts

and where possible, merge them into a new concept. This allows for a reduction in the concepts identified.

Phase 6: Synthesis, resynthesis, and making it all make sense: The aim in this phase is to synthesize the emergent concepts into a theoretical framework. This process requires openness, tolerance, and flexibility. This process is normally repetitive and requires several testing until a meaningful theoretical framework emerges.

Phase 7: Validating the conceptual framework: The aim of this phase is to determine if the proposed framework makes sense to other scholars and practitioners. A good way to do this is to present it at conferences, seminars for feedback from other researchers.

Phase 8: Rethinking the conceptual framework: Due to its multidisciplinary nature, the concepts in theoretical frameworks under this approach will always be dynamic and may be reviewed in accordance with emerging suggestions, literature and feedback. Again, because the framework is multidisciplinary, the theory should make sense across those disciplines. The theory should also advance knowledge in relevant disciplines.

3.3. Sources of Data

As Jabareen (2009) suggests, texts selected for conceptual framework analysis should be representative of the environment, social dynamics, and multidisciplinary fields that the study seeks to target. Selected texts must also present situations that are relatable to the phenomenon under scrutiny. The data could either be primary or secondary but must be varied in nature. Finally, most texts and data normally address theories within specific fields. In conducting a multidisciplinary study in a conceptual framework analysis, these discipline-focused theories form the empirical data of the study.

4. Results and Findings

Building a Conceptual Framework of Political Leadership

Designing this conceptual framework required detailed review and systemisation of the literature which encompasses—but not limited to—social, cultural, and psychological facets of political leadership. To peruse the literature, the current study delved into a mix of academic disciplines and fields such as sociology, public policy, political science, and psychology.

The current paper attempts to advance a conceptual framework for political leadership as an area of study which is made up of theory, practice, and functions through concepts and models, and develops into insights about the phenomenon. This conceptual framework is not a catalogue of taxonomy, instead it is an incorporation of homogeneous concepts and models which are interrelated and interdependent. The findings on connections between the concepts will be beneficial to stakeholders within the political-public environment. The current paper focuses on advancing political leadership theory.

In creating, categorizing and identifying political leadership's central concepts and themes, the current paper outlines personal traits, leadership style, motivation and stress tolerance as fundamental to its inceptive conceptual framework.

Concept 1: Personality traits

Barber (1972) first introduced psychological theory and research into political personality analysis. Etheredge (1978) introduced the importance of traits in leadership views and policy making. The current paper suggests that personality traits is a fundamental concept of political leadership and so charisma, individuality, selfdom, and temperament and so on of the leader has a bearing on leadership emergence and effectiveness.

The assertion that personality traits is a central theme to political leadership conceptualization is emphasized by Caprara et al. (2006) who in a study of 3,044 Italian voters found personality traits as a central factor in electing political leaders. De Vries (2011) also argues that political success of a political leader depends on his or her personality traits. Silvester et al. (2014) show that personality traits of a political leader are a determinant of his or her performance. To further demonstrate the centrality of this concept to political leadership, Aichholzer and Willmann (2020) conclude that voters choose their leaders based on their personality traits. As Grice (2019) conceptualized, personality traits are generally considered as the arrangement of thought, feeling, and behavior which are relatively enduring throughout the life period of an individual.

The Five-Factor Model of Personality Traits (Big Five) is one of the commonly used theories in evaluating human behavior. The theory is attributed to Tupes and Christal (1961) and Norman (1963). Also known as the Big Five Theory in psychology, it divides an individual's personality into five traits. The traits comprise of *neuroticism*, which deals with emotional stability or instability and is normally linked with stress tolerance (Norris, Larsen, & Cacioppo, 2007); *extraversion*, which is characterized by marked interaction with the external world (Laney, 2002); *agreeableness*, which seeks value in friendliness and compromise (Rothmann & Cotzer, 2003); *openness to new experiences*, which points to willingness to try new things (Ambridge, 2014); and *conscientiousness*, which drives pursuit for self-discipline and dutifulness (Toegel & Barsoux, 2012). As with every theory, the Big Five has its criticisms, it has been described as being too broad (John & Srivastava, 1999), neglecting other important domains of personality (Paunonen & Jackson, 2000; Paunonen, Haddock, Foserling, & Keinonen, 2003), and methodologically defective (Eysenck, 1992; Block, 2010), but also acclaimed as one of the most valid approaches to studying human traits (Goldberg, 1999; Aydogmus, Camgoz, Ergeneli, & Ekmekci, 2018).

An approach to studying political leaders will be to scrutinize leaders individually through personality theories. The reason is, there is scholarly evidence which suggests an individual's personality affects political behavior and choice making. Studies show political orientation correlates the Big Five (Sweetser, 2014; Hanania, 2017; Rosema & Bakker, 2017).

The current study conceptualizes interrelationship between personality and leadership behavior. A meta-analysis by Judge, Bono, Iles and Gerhardt (2002) revealed a correlation between four of the five traits and leadership, and the study concluded *agreeableness* is the least relevant trait for the leader. Lee (2012) showed *openness to experience* is positively related to transformational leadership. Özbağ (2016) found *neuroticism* has a negative effect on ethical leadership but *openness to experience*, *agreeableness* and *conscientiousness* positively impact ethical leadership, whereas *Extraversion* showed no relationship, which implies a leader's assertive and energetic behaviors may not necessarily impact ability to lead in an ethical manner. Shahzad, Raja and Hashmi's (2020) study showed *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, *conscientiousness*, and *openness to experience* positively impact authentic leadership, but *neuroticism* produces a negative effect.

Big Five also impact behavior of leaders in political positions. Araya (2022) found that there were 40 attempts to alter the constitution to enable political leaders overstay in office, in Latin America from 1945 to 2012. The study revealed three of the five traits were associated with the likelihood of constitution alteration attempts by political leaders. Hanania (2017) in a study among American legislators found, politicians are more *extraverted*, *agreeable*, *neurotic*, and *conscientious* than the general public, which implies significant differences in trait characteristics between politicians and the public. Hanania (2017) also compared Republican and Democrat voters in the United States and found that Republican voters score higher on *conscientiousness* and *neuroticism*, while Democrats score high on *agreeableness* and *open to experience*. Some studies have also linked personality traits to political identification. Joly, Hofmans and Loewen (2018) in a study conducted in Belgium and Canada concluded *openness to experience* is the best and most consistent correlate of political ideology and further asserted *openness to experience* is associated with more progressive left-wing political parties.

Findings from various studies indicate that even though the Big Five traits affect leadership approaches differently, there exist relationships between traits, political behavior, and leadership.

Concept 2: Leadership style

The leadership style adopted by the leader can influence actions which determine overall outcomes. Hermann (2014) explained that the leader's approach and actions in interacting with, and representing constituents sets the tone and pattern for leadership. Choices made by the leader in whether to meet constituents in person or through intermediaries, to delegate instead of "do it yourself", to be detail-oriented or casual, secretive in policy-making or candid, directly affect the leader's style.

The study conceptualizes leadership style as a central concept to political leadership as it affects performance outcomes and survival in politics. Paramova and Blumberg (2017) conducted a cross-cultural study on 140 elected political leaders in Bulgaria and UK and found varying leadership styles and performance

outcomes which emphasize a relationship between leadership styles and political identity. [Gherghina \(2021\)](#) conducted a study of 12 political parties represented in parliament in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary from 2004 to 2018 and concluded that political leadership style impacts political outcomes in new European democracies. In a study of 917 mayors in the Polish municipalities by [Podgórnjak-Krzykacz \(2021\)](#), it was found that political leadership styles impact employee relationships and ultimately political outcomes. In another study of top provincial leaders in China, [Jiang and Luo \(2021\)](#) demonstrate that one's leadership style influences their political survival. Based on the foregoing, this paper considers leadership style as a central concept in the development of a new conceptual framework for political leadership.

An aspect of leader's style is ability to persuade through use of rhetoric. Political rhetoric as observed by [Fairclough \(2000\)](#) is a combination of diverse ways language is used in persuasion, and underscores political rhetoric is fluid and not constant. As [Craig \(2021\)](#) observed, a leader's ability to use a mixture of languages instead of a specific repertoire can improve political communication. Four categories distinguishes a leader's repertoire in the following ways: 1) political assertion, which includes willingness to engage with the questioner; 2) management of political conflicts, which may arise from disagreements from opposing interests; 3) delineation of roles, which help clarify responsibilities and legitimize government actions; and 4) political evasion, which is the tactical ability to avoid addressing undesirable confrontations.

[Kaarbo and Hermann \(1998\)](#) explained orientation is a definitive factor in analyzing a leader's style as it pertains to how the leader interacts with followers or contemporaries. Orientations are based on three questions: 1) how do leaders react to political constraints in their environment, do leaders accept or challenge such constraints?; 2) how open are leaders to incoming information, do leaders selectively use information or are open to allowing information to direct response?; and 3) what are leaders' reasons for seeking positions, are leaders driven by internal focus of attention within themselves or by responses from constituents? Answers to the questions provide insights into levels of sensitivity of the leader to the political situation and will also determine whether autocratic or deliberative approaches will be used in addressing the situation. The answers provide suggestions for a leader's style.

Concept 3: Political motivation

Motive of the political leader in pursuing a political career is a central to performance outcomes. The current paper proposes motivation as a central to political leadership theory. The paper further demonstrates that motivation of the political leader influences policy making and political results. As shown by [Müller \(2007\)](#), there are two extreme types of politicians, i.e. those motivated by populism, and those motivated by policy success. This assertion is similar to [Callander's \(2007\)](#) claim that politicians are motivated by either office or policy. In light of this, [Fredriksson et al. \(2011\)](#) opined that in America, governors are normally office motivated when making environmental policies. Similarly, [Zal-](#)

manovitch and Cohen (2015) conclude that policy making in the healthcare is heavily dependent on the politician's motive and will to stay in office.

Browning and Jacob (1964) claimed desire for power is the main incentive driving many into politics and the most likely reason for most of the politician's activity. Winter (2002) opined that the political leader's motives may include the desire for power, a goal (to fix an existing problem, to introduce a philosophy, emergency), a sense of responsibility, to seek approval and recognition from others, the challenge the position brings, the need for prestige and acknowledgement, and the need to make up for personal inadequacies. As shown by Beniers and Dur (2007), the quality of government decision-making depends on the motivation behind the pursuit. Beniers and Dur (2007) described "desire for power" as well as prestige and remuneration as "narrow personal interest". This paper conceptualizes that motives determine actions and choices of political leaders.

McClelland (1961) outlined a model for human motivation which is non-hierarchical and non-mutually-exclusive. McClelland (1961) argued that there are three dominant needs which underpin every human motivation regardless of age, sex, race, or culture, thus, *need for achievement*, *need for power*, and *need for affiliation*. The importance of these needs however varies among persons and across cultures. The current study bases conceptualization of motivation as a factor of political leadership on McClelland's Trichotomy of Need Theory.

Need for achievement: It describes an individual's drive to excel with regards to a pre-existing set of standards or ideals. *Need for achievement* is characterized by a sense of achieving higher standards. Personalities motivated by this need tend to choose tasks with higher success rate and avoid failure (Fisher, 2009). *Need for affiliation*: persons who are motivated by the *need for affiliation* prefer to be given opportunities that bring acceptance from others and reduce rejection. Affiliation-motivated persons tend to focus on establishing friendships and maintaining relationships (McClelland, 1975). *Need for power*: the need is symbolized by a strong desire to control and influence others, which may be necessitated by pursuit of personal goals or for attainment of group goals. McClelland (1975) described both powers as "personal power" and "socialized power". Individuals in who exhibit *need for power* behavior tend to be argumentative, assertive within groups, and become frustrated if not in control of a situation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Persons who are motivated by *need for power* tend to perform well when given power and control opportunities within groups.

McClelland's (1961) model showed that motivation drivers are important factors to leadership emergence and effectiveness by showing motives impact actions and behavior. Further studies using McClelland's Trichotomy of Need Theory have shown that some motivation drivers are necessary for effective leadership behavior while others may be unrelated or even detrimental. Spangler and House (1991) found affiliation motives to be negatively related to leadership success, and explained *need for power* is positively related to political charisma. Bass and Riggio (2006) offered that an individual who is motivated by all three

motives is able to inspire followers and help improve abilities of these followers through lending of support. Winter (2011) showed a strong relationship between motivation and political behavior in revolutionaries. Hermann (2014) held that the strongest motive for leadership pursuit is to satisfy personal goals. Spangler, Tikhomirov, Sotak and Palrecha (2014) concluded leaders driven solely by *need for achievement* tend to abandon important leadership tasks. Steinmann, Ötting and Maier (2016) found individuals driven by *need for affiliations* tend to be passive leaders even though their activities tend to improve follower relations.

Concept 4: Stress tolerance

The current study also conceptualizes that political leadership is associated with situations requiring problem-solving and managing crisis in the face of scarce resources and uncertainties which require stress tolerance. The paper theorizes that stress tolerance is a central concept to conceptualizing political leadership. Compounding the often difficult task of leading in a crisis situation is the presence of competing interest groups, institutions and opportunity costs. These challenges make political leadership positions stressful, but it is impossible to write about political leaders without mentioning crisis (Neustadt, 1991).

According to Robins and Dorn (2016), pressures associated with time constraints, dire effects of bad choices, information asymmetry, and opposing demands have negative effects on political performance, but politicians thrive on and even in some cases seek out stressful situations. To successfully lead, a political leader must learn how to handle stress. How leaders react to stress is a factor to their behavior and decision-making choices. Notwithstanding, crisis management is a part of political leadership and must be expected.

Do all political leaders react positively in the face of stress and crisis? Hermann (2014) argued that with increasing stress, leaders gravitate towards quick decision-making, focus less on the effects of their decisions, rely on close and dependable allies for opinion and support, and want to directly supervise the decision-making process. Ansell, Boin and 't Hart (2014) offered that given the happenings on the global landscape where natural disasters, terrorism, climate change, interferences in world order, and financial crisis have become pervasive, modern day political leader will be defined by their ability to function under the pressure and stress confronted with. These reactions provide some insights into how stress impacts the leader's behavior and choices.

How leaders react to stress in times of crisis is indicative of the kind of leaders they are. Successful leaders tend to cope better in the face of crisis (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013). Hermann (2014) explained that some leaders are motivated by stressful situations which make them rise to the occasion, others show some distress, and while there some are incapacitated by it. Hermann (2014) also furthered that the leader's reaction to stress becomes more important in scenarios where the stress caused does not only threaten the group, organization or government but also threatens the leader personally. When threat becomes personal, the leader may internalize the stress. Internalization happens when the stress poses a threat to the position of the leader, a policy the leader may have

invested time and resources into, or directly affects the leader or people close to the leader, or on issues which the leader has little control over but would be held accountable for (Hermann, 2014). Robins and Dorn (2016) provided insights into the types of leaders in regard to potential stressors. Robins and Dorn (2016) categorized leaders as: 1) persons who have ability to cope with or enjoy and are helped by conditions others may refer to as stressful; 2) persons who are drawn to stressful situations and depend on such situations to function properly; and 3) persons who are unable to cope with stress.

5. Discussion

5.1. Emerging Conceptual Framework for Political Leadership

The current paper proposes a conceptual framework for political leadership which seeks to cover central concepts which underpin political leadership. The conceptual framework attempts to outline an overview of the political leader and to offer insights into a phenomenon which has received inadequate attention over the years. The relevance of the conceptual framework method is its ability to view political leadership from a multidisciplinary viewpoint. The framework provides alternative set of arrangements and constructs which help deepen comprehension of political leadership as an area of study.

The main theoretical foundation of the study is that political leadership studies is essential for modern liberal democracies and so should be acknowledged not ignored in political studies. The framework attempts to explain political leadership as a multidisciplinary concept (most often between political science, public policy, sociology and psychology). The conceptual framework for political leadership is a construct of four interrelated concepts as appears in **Figure 1**.

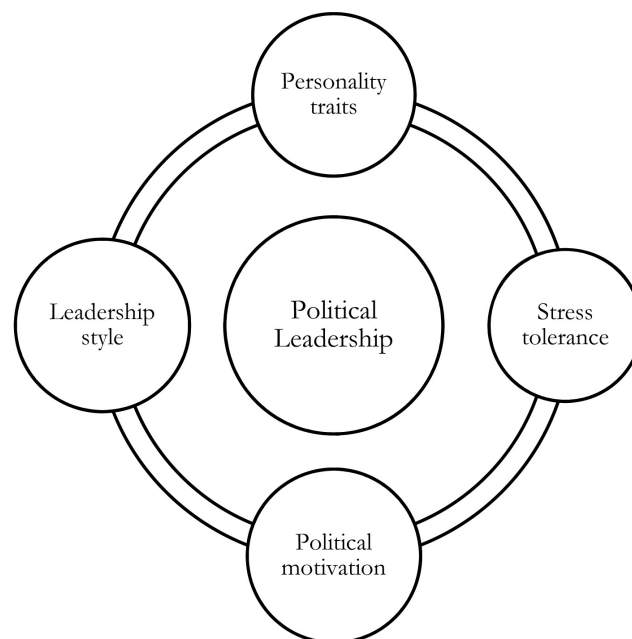


Figure 1. Concepts of political leadership.

Each of the concepts plays a specific role within the political leadership framework. The theoretical contribution of this political leadership framework lies in its ontological approach which creates relationships between the concepts stress tolerance, leadership styles, motivation, and personality traits by linking these concepts to the phenomenon of political leadership. By showing relationships between the concepts within the domain, the ontological nature of the framework provides the basis for its contribution to theory. By analyzing the determining factors of political leadership, the study demonstrates its relevance, meanings, nuances, and place in political discourse.

Table 1 outlines the conceptual framework which is drawn from the key concepts identified in the study. It discusses a proposed conceptual framework based on its main concepts, theoretical premise, and components.

The concept of *personality trait* shows charisma, individuality, temperament, character and behavior are factors for attainment of personal and political goals of the political leader. Studying the personality traits of political leaders provide a reliable understanding of the behaviors underpinning their decision-making. The study reveals that a politician's leadership style is influenced by his or her personality traits. The study also reveals that some personality traits are more suitable for political leadership than others.

The concept of *leadership style* demonstrates a relationship between a leader's approach to interacting with stakeholders and its bearing on achieving set goals. Consultative, participatory, and deliberative styles of leadership are preferable

Table 1. Concepts of political leadership and their functions and practices.

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Theoretical Premise</i> | <i>Main Components</i> |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Personality traits | An individual's traits impact thought, character and behavior which determine leadership outcomes. | A leader may exhibit four traits: neuroticism; extraversion; agreeableness; openness to new experiences. |
| Leadership style | A leader's style that is, participative, deliberative, or "do it yourself" defines leadership behavior. The choice of rhetoric and language can influence leadership goal attainment. | A leader uses style: for political assertion; to manage conflicts; define roles; avoid undesirable situations. |
| Political motivation | A leader's motive influences the quality of leadership. A good motive yields genuine behavior and vice versa. | A leader might be driven by 3 motivational needs: need for achievement; need for affiliation; and need for power. |
| Stress tolerance | Effectively handling stress is essential for leadership success. | Types of leaders in stress/crisis management include: leaders who cope or enjoy stressors; leaders who depend on stressors; leaders who are incapacitated by stressors. |

and effective alternatives to authoritative, controlling and dictatorial styles of leading. Given that politicians are expected to operate within *democratic* settings, leaders with egalitarian style of leadership are considered more favorable than leaders with coercive styles of leading.

The concept of *motivation* depicts that every leader has a motive for seeking position or representation. The motive may be undesirable or desirable, or personal or group focused. Whatever may be the motive for seeking leadership, its presence in leadership choice-making makes it essential in political leadership theorization because motivation has been seen to be key feature in defining choices and outcomes of the leader.

Stress occurrence may come in the form of crisis. How stress is tolerated, utilized and managed affects a leader's options, choices and actions. Crisis is often said to be unavoidable in leadership, how it is handled however, may define the nature of leader.

5.2. Interconnectivities between the Central Concepts

In developing a conceptual framework, the current study offers that *personality traits*, *leadership style*, *political motivation*, and *stress tolerance* are central concepts to political leadership theory. The study further argues that these concepts even though may hold their own attributes, are interrelated. In designing a conceptual framework, Jabareen (2009) emphasizes the possibility of a phenomenon's emergent concepts to interrelate. An examination of the emerging central concepts reveals interrelationships and interconnectivities that elicit further discussions. The author notes that the identified interconnections between the concepts are not conclusive and their presentation do not indicate exclusivity of their interrelationship(s). This discussion focuses on the emerging relationships between 1) personality traits and leadership style; 2) personality traits and stress tolerance; 3) political leadership style and political motivation and; 4) political motivation and stress tolerance.

- *Personality traits guide leadership style.* The study finds a relationship between *personality traits* and *leadership style*. This assertion is based on the premise that leadership capabilities are rooted in the abilities of individuals. For instance, Bono and Judge (2004) suggest that *extraversion* is the strongest correlate of transformational leadership. Adams (2009) also found a correlation between personality traits and leadership approach, and averred that a leader who prefers orderliness and thoroughness is likely to use a directive-control approach whereas a leader who is more empathetic is likely to adopt a collaborative approach to leading. Özbağ (2016) finds that leaders with traits such as *openness to experience*, *agreeableness* and *conscientiousness* portray ethical leadership styles.
- *Personality traits influence stress tolerance.* The study finds that an individual's personality traits influence his or her leadership emergence and effectiveness (Caprara et al., 2006; De Vries, 2011; Silvester et al., 2014), and a leader's stress tolerance level determines their reaction in a crisis situation

(Hermann, 2014; Robins & Dorn, 2016). When *personality traits* were analyzed in relation to *stress tolerance*, it was found that individuals with certain personality traits are better at handling stress in times of crisis than others. Carver and Connor-Smith (2009) find that individuals with personalities such as *agreeableness*, *extraversion*, *conscientiousness*, and *openness to experience* deal with crisis through engagement and confrontation while individuals with *neurotic* personalities tend to disengage and avoid when crisis occurs. Leandro and Castillo (2010) assert that personality traits influence stress tolerance styles, individuals with high self-esteem resort to task-focused coping styles while emotion-focused approaches are normally used by individuals with low self-esteem. Soliemanifar et al. (2018) conclude that individual's personality typology affect their biological response to crisis and stress. Medeiros et al. (2021) studied 61 heads of governments during the COVID-19 era and found that leaders scoring high in *extraversion* and *openness to experience* were quicker to implement travel restrictions whereas leaders scoring higher in *conscientiousness*, *agreeableness* and *neuroticism* used a more effective response in the form of financial relief. Medeiros et al.'s (2021) underscore the interrelationship between a leader's reaction to crisis and their personality traits.

- *Political motivation determines leadership style*: The study shows there is a causal relationship between political motive and leadership style. It was found that leaders driven by power are controlling (McClelland, 1975), affiliation motive leaders are normally passive (Steinmann, Ötting, & Maier, 2016) and achievement motive leaders seek out tasks with high chance of completion (Spangler et al., 2014). Power motive is considered by some as ideal for leadership. For instance, McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) explain that *need for power* motives are essential for leadership whereas *need for affiliation* motives impedes leadership. Also, a study by Wolff (2019) finds that power motive is functional to leadership while affiliation motive is dysfunctional. This point to a belief that functional or dysfunctional motives are a stimulus to leadership style. Spangler et al. (2014) conclude that for new bureaucratic organizations (as with some political institutions), motive of *need for achievement* is low, but motive for *need for power* and *need for affiliation* are high.
- *Political motivation affects stress tolerance*: As Spangler et al. (2014) explains, leaders driven by *need for achievement* avoid tasks with high risk of failure and evade crisis situations. Also as some power motives are characterized by a "me-against-the-world" persona (Królewski, 2017), Winter (1993) finds that wars end only after *need for power* motives drop. Additionally, an individual driven by affiliation motive tends to establish, maintain or restore positive relationships within a group (McClelland, 1975). This characteristic makes such individuals most ideal in situations involving crisis management involving people.

6. Limitation and Recommendations

Even though a conceptual framework has its limitations which includes the fact that conceptions may vary from one researcher to another on the same phenomenon which may create differing explanations, as well as challenges in finding suitable texts and data, Jabareen (2009) contends that the method has its own advantages such as its flexibility that allows using conceptual terms instead of rigid theoretical variables in analyzing a phenomenon, the possibility of modifying a conceptual framework in the future in the face of emerging data and texts which were not available at the time the framework was first developed, and the unique function of the method that helps in understanding the phenomenon rather than trying to predict it.

Given that the method used allows for future improvements and developments, it is hoped that other researchers of political leadership studies will further scrutinize the concepts with the aim of developing new concepts as time passes and new knowledge emerge. It is also hoped that this continual process will improve studies on the phenomenon and also create the needed awareness for same. Finally, even though attempts have been made in the current study to create interconnectivities between the central concepts, these discussions are in their early stages, and so further studies remain germane.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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