

Analyzing The Influence of Anonymous Feedback Channels on Leadership Behavior in Philippine BPO Firms

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Abstract: This research explores how anonymous alternative feedback channels influence leadership behavior within the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry in the Philippines. Using Yukl et al.'s (2002) Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behavior and Kluger and DeNisi's (1996) Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) as theoretical frameworks, the study evaluates the effect of anonymous feedback on twelve key leadership behaviors, including clarity, empowerment, risk-taking, and developing others.

The study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design using a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire administered to 300 leaders across five companies. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that anonymous feedback significantly affects leadership behavior. Specifically, leaders showed reduced engagement in task-oriented behaviors like clarity and monitoring, and in change-oriented behavior such as risk-taking, following exposure to anonymous feedback. However, leadership behaviors like empowerment, visioning, and developing others exhibited more positive changes in response to such feedback (London & Smither, 1995; Atwater & Brett, 2005).

The study concludes that anonymous feedback channels can meaningfully influence leadership practices, especially in cultures with hierarchical communication norms, like the Philippine BPO sector. While these channels encourage openness, they also raise concerns about feedback credibility and leaders' emotional reactions (Yukl, 2012; Borgman, 2016). To address this, the study recommends integrating structured anonymous feedback systems into performance management strategies, complemented by leadership training focused on emotional processing and interpretation of feedback. Furthermore, future studies are encouraged to examine variables such as culture, tenure, and demographics to better understand feedback reception.

This research enhances the understanding of feedback dynamics in cross-cultural, service-based industries and offers practical implications for HR and organizational development in fostering adaptive leadership through innovative feedback mechanisms.

Key Words: BPO, Leadership, Behavior, Feedback, Anonymity

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the past decades, many researchers have done research on leadership, its different dimensions and styles, opening up opportunities to determine its application and effectiveness in different scenarios. The researcher reviews the literature around this topic, giving light into key insights and looking into the gaps in literature that the topic presents. The researcher attempts to establish a foundation for further research – looking into existing research and critically analyzing them. By synthesizing the literature and compiling the findings, the researcher will add to the existing body of knowledge on the topic and be guided on the development of the thesis which aims to understand the impact of feedback from anonymous alternative feedback channels to leader behavior.

1.2 Literature Review

When the topic of anonymity and keeping data confidential, is discussed, in relation to the provision of feedback, Section 11: General provisions of Republic Act 10173 also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012 discusses that data shall be collected for specified and legitimate purposes determined and declared before, or as soon as reasonably practicable after collection, and later processed in a way compatible with such declared, specified and legitimate purposes only (Republic Act 10173: Data Privacy Act, 2012). This provides that information (such as the name) of the individual shall be kept confidential, in this case due to the purpose of anonymity in the provision of such feedback to individuals, especially to leaders, with the protection

of the law to not allow the disclosure of their identity without consent to the individual. This is in line with the prevention of retaliation or with the purpose of getting more open and honest feedback about the subject at hand. Given the area of the research, related literature that further discusses how the feedback systems and management should be governed and emphasized in guidelines set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Multinational Enterprise management, highlighting tougher guidelines on corporate behavior, laid out based on respect towards human rights, environmental and labor standards. (OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, 2011). Wolford (2024) further discusses the laws governing data privacy in international standards that influence Philippine laws in terms of protecting data for everyone. This includes making sure that data in relation to individuals anonymous and having a system that pseudonymizes and anonymizes it, which proves very critical in the administration of any anonymous feedback channel programs and/or systems.

Leadership and Leader Behavior

Leadership research over the decades has consistently aimed to explore the factors and behaviors that contribute to effective leadership. Yukl (2002) emphasized the need for an integrated framework to reconcile diverse leadership theories and behaviors, building on foundational works such as the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire by Hemphill and Coons (1957). Fleishman et al. (1953) suggested that leadership effectiveness is highly situational, meaning that a leader who thrives in one context may struggle in another. Similarly, Borgman et al. (2016) noted significant overlaps in leadership theories, raising questions about their construct validity. In the BPO

sector, Santos (2020) examined how leaders' ability to articulate goals, combined with leadership style, correlates with performance. Lashley (2021) echoed this, asserting that leadership styles significantly influence employee engagement and company performance. These findings support the view that leadership is not only multidimensional but also context dependent. Van Dierendonck et al. (2007) reinforced the need for leaders to understand how they are perceived, as self-awareness is often limited without external feedback. Yukl's later work (2012, 2019) deepens this discussion, introducing a hierarchical taxonomy of leadership behaviors and emphasizing that metacategories of behavior can be situationally interpreted through specific behavioral components. Dorfman et al. (1997) highlighted cultural variability, suggesting that leadership behaviors may not easily transfer across contexts. Bondoc (2020) and Johnson (2023) stressed the importance of adaptability in leadership, especially in managing generational diversity and evolving workplace dynamics in the BPO industry.

Feedback and Leadership

Feedback is central to leadership growth. Harding and Hartzell (2018) highlighted that leaders are constantly observed, and their behaviors form the basis for performance evaluation. Kluger and DeNisi (1996), through their Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT), found that feedback can have varying impacts on performance depending on how it is processed—focusing either on the task, the self, or emotional reactions. While feedback can drive improvement, Antonioni (1994) and Dowding et al. (2018) found that outcomes often vary depending on context, source, and delivery. Morran et al. (1998) emphasized the value of leaders receiving personal and behavioral observations from others to promote self-reflection and behavioral adjustment. Ipsen et al. (2018) also advocated for feedback interventions that increase leader awareness and responsiveness. Yet, as Conger and Toegel (2002) noted, managers often receive limited direct feedback, and misinterpretation of feedback remains a risk, underscoring the need for better-designed feedback mechanisms.

Anonymity in Feedback Mechanisms

Anonymity in feedback is a critical consideration, especially in environments where open expression

may lead to retaliation. Christopherson (2006) defined anonymity as the inability to identify individuals, which has profound implications for trust and disclosure. Austria (2013) and Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar (2011) found that anonymity encourages honest self-expression by reducing concerns around self-preservation. However, anonymity can also lead to unfiltered, sometimes harmful feedback, as observed by Harding and Hartzell (2018) in military and medical contexts. Brady et al. (2020) demonstrated that anonymous feedback can improve individual outcomes, as individuals often feel safer and more receptive without the pressure of social conformity. Erreygers et al. (2017) further validated that anonymity minimizes the risk of retaliation and promotes greater transparency in feedback. These findings support the integration of anonymous feedback channels within organizational frameworks, particularly in sensitive or hierarchical contexts like leadership evaluations.

Synthesis and Justification

This review underscores the complex interplay between leadership behavior, feedback, and anonymity. The evolving dynamics of the BPO industry require leaders to continuously adapt to varied situations, cultural expectations, and feedback sources. Yukl's framework serves as a theoretical anchor for this study, offering a structured lens through which to analyze leadership behavior in real-world contexts.

Anonymity, as supported by both local (Data Privacy Act of 2012) and international frameworks (OECD Guidelines), emerges as a critical enabler of honest and constructive feedback. As feedback influences leader behavior and performance, the integration of anonymous systems becomes not only a strategic necessity but also an ethical imperative for modern organizations.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in two core theories: the Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behavior by Yukl, Gordon, and Taber (2002) and the Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) by Kluger and DeNisi

(1996). Yukl's framework builds on the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) developed by Hemphill and Coons (1957), organizing leadership behavior into twelve observable and measurable categories. These behaviors serve as the dependent variable (DV) in the study, providing a structure for evaluating how leadership is demonstrated within organizations. The Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) complements this by exploring how individuals process and respond to feedback, especially in terms of its impact on task performance and behavioral change. FIT supports the view that feedback should target observable behaviors, not just inferred traits or outcomes, and that feedback can yield varied results depending on how it is perceived and processed.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis on the impact of anonymous feedback channels on leadership behavior between MJE BPO Company and four others selected BPO companies. Using Yukl et al.'s (2002) taxonomy of leadership behaviors and the LBDQ framework, the study investigates how leaders respond behaviorally to feedback, particularly when delivered anonymously. The research involves 300 BPO leaders (60 from each company), surveyed through face-to-face questionnaires conducted between February 10 and March 20, 2025, in Makati, Metro Manila. The study focuses solely on feedback as the independent variable, leadership behavior as the dependent variable, and anonymity as the mediating factor, excluding demographic data, performance metrics, and subordinate validation due to time and resource constraints.

By exploring only the internal behavioral responses of leaders to feedback, the study aims to inform how anonymous feedback mechanisms can influence leadership styles—while also laying the groundwork

for future research in broader or more complex contexts.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a non-experimental quantitative research design combining descriptive and inferential statistics to explore the impact of anonymous feedback on leadership behavior for 300 respondents (BPO Leaders) using representative sampling on 5 BPO Firms in Makati City.

Data Collection Procedure

- Surveys were administered in-person via hardcopy questionnaires from Feb 10 to March 20, 2025.
- Participants were briefed on the anonymity and purpose of the survey.
- Completed forms were tallied and analyzed using Excel and SocSciStatistics.com.

Research Instrument

The 16-item questionnaire included:

- 3 questions on general feedback (1 dichotomous, 2 Likert-scale)
- 12 questions on leadership behavior, based on Yukl et al. (2002) and the LBDQ (1957)
- 1 item for Date for tracking of responses.

Statistical Treatment

The analysis proceeded through several steps:

1. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha
2. Descriptive stats (mean, SD, frequency distribution)
3. ANOVA tests for:
 - Behavior differences within MJE BPO (Hypothesis 1)
 - Behavior differences within other BPOs (Hypothesis 2)
4. Regression analysis for comparing leadership behavior across companies (Hypothesis 3)

5. ANOVA on responses of leaders on (Q5 – Q16) who said “Yes” to receiving feedback (Hypothesis 4)

The final phase involved synthesizing statistical findings and formulating recommendations aligned with research objectives, identifying gaps for further study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Perception of Feedback

Direct feedback was largely viewed very positively across all companies (Mean 3.40/4.00). Anonymous feedback, while still positive, had less favorable sentiment (Mean = 2.93 / 4.00), categorized as “somewhat positive.” Leaders who had actually received anonymous feedback rated it slightly less positively than those who hadn’t, suggesting firsthand exposure leads to more cautious appraisal.

Effect on Leadership Behaviors (Yukl et al., 2002)

Twelve leadership behaviors were studied, and the following trends were noted. The most positively behaviors were: Supporting (M = 3.20), Developing (M = 3.19), Consulting, Recognizing, and Innovating (M = 3.15) for each. Most Challenged Behaviors After Anonymous Feedback: Clarity (M = 2.92), Monitoring Operations (M = 2.93), Risk Taking (M = 2.78). These were consistently lower-rated and showed statistically significant variances between leaders who received anonymous feedback and those who didn’t.

Comparison with Other BPO Firms

Analysis across five BPO companies showed that anonymous feedback significantly affected specific behaviors. ANOVA results confirmed Clarity, Monitoring, and Risk-Taking as behaviors with significant variance ($p < 0.05$, $F > \text{critical value}$).

Multiple regression showed a moderate correlation ($R = 0.58$) between receiving anonymous feedback and leadership behavior. Notably, Risk-Taking ($\beta = 0.19$), Clarity ($\beta = 0.19$) and Monitoring ($\beta = 0.12$) had positive associations. Recognizing ($\beta = -0.10$) showed an inverse relationship, indicating a drop in recognition behavior after receiving anonymous feedback.

Comparison with other BPO Firms

Results were consistent across MJE, PT, CA, US, and EF BPO companies. Clarity, Monitoring, and Risk-Taking showed significant changes in all companies. Other behaviors like Empowering, Consulting, Visioning, and Scanning also showed some sensitivity to feedback depending on the company.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Direct feedback is widely accepted and encouraged in leadership development. Anonymous feedback evokes mixed emotions and variable acceptance, especially among those with previous exposure. Anonymous feedback significantly influences specific leadership behaviors, particularly: Clarity (Task-Oriented), Monitoring (Task-Oriented) and Risk-Taking (Change-Oriented)

The Feedback Intervention Theory (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) is applicable, as it explains why feedback might redirect leaders' focus from task performance to emotional self-awareness. These behavioral shifts have implications for communication, performance management, innovation, and psychological safety in the workplace. Recommendations are as follows:

Clarity

- Targeted coaching on giving clear instructions.
- Role alignment workshops and feedback clarification.
- Encourage leaders to revisit task documentation and standardize communication practices.

Monitoring

- Provide leaders with data visibility tools, such as dashboards and real-time feedback mechanisms.
- Conduct structured check-ins and

implement shared responsibility models with subordinates.

- Emphasize transparency and feedback loops to regain trust in monitoring systems.

Risk-Taking

- Develop programs that support safe experimentation.
- Clarify decision-making authority and tolerances for risk.
- Encourage leaders to take initiative by ensuring psychological safety, managerial backing, and clear expectations.

4R Matrix: A Framework for Administering Feedback

- Review - Analyze the feedback, trend identification, insight generation and leadership feedback summary
- Reinforce - Support leaders to process the feedback, coaching, action plans and mentor assignments
- Reset - Realign roles and expectations, Role workshops, new KPIs, accountability systems
- Recover - Support emotional resilience and behavior reinforcement, resilience sessions, sharing forums, ongoing feedback cycles, peer evaluation

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