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#### Followership among Employees in Small Medium Enterprise

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In organizations, there is no leadership without followers and recently followership as a main topic in organizational behavior research is relatively rare. The objective of this study was to obtain data concerning the followership of employees of small-medium enterprises in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This study used the Courageous Followership Questionnaire to evaluate the level of courageous followership. With 100 employees from nine SMEs as the subjects of this research, the results showed that age, work experience, education level, salary, and gender influence the level of courageous followership but these factors have no relationship with the types of SME. Additionally, the correlation between courageous followership and social desirability is low, indicating that the subjects have no tendencies to respond to the followership scale in a certain manner that will be viewed favorably by others. This research also discussed the limitations and directions for future research as well as managerial implications of the findings.

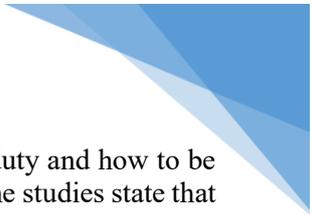
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#### 1. Introduction

Followership in an organization has an important role for organizational development. Some more recent researches explore followership and leadership<sup>1,2</sup>; however, little attention has been paid to followership as the main topic. In fact, it is found the major contributor to organizational performance is followership<sup>3</sup> and another study<sup>4</sup> states that a leader is accounted for only about 10% -20% of the success of the organization, while the remaining 80% -90% is the work of followers in the organization. Leadership is one of the main issues in organizations<sup>5</sup> and leaders may be responsible for overall performance; however, leaders do not directly execute every task in their work units. Followership has an important role in determining the superior-subordinate relationship with personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the idea that leader is the main controller of organizational performance should change.

Research on followership in Indonesia has been exploring the link between followership and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and innovative work behavior. One study conducted shows that if a follower feels appreciated and perceives himself to be a partner aligned with the superordinate, she/he would demonstrate high organizational commitment, completion of a good job, and more tied to the company<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, studies of followership in Indonesia are mainly in large companies or organizations, while that in small and medium industries is still rare. This is contrary to the fact that the contribution of micro, small and medium enterprises to gross domestic product increased from 57.84% to 60.34% in the last five years. Labor absorption in this sector also increased, from 96.99% to 97.22% in the same period<sup>8</sup>. It shows that SMEs are an important driver for the development of local economy and community.

A research report explains that human resources management positively affects the performance of SMEs<sup>9</sup>. Employee skills, experience and knowledge are assets to achieve global competitiveness and for the improvement of the level of economic performance. Development of human resources in the SMEs certainly is not only for the business owner but also for their employees or followers<sup>10</sup> because in order to achieve organizational objectives, there is a need for active and willing followers to participate<sup>6</sup>.



Followership is the existing and essential factor because the followers who know their duty and how to be a great supporter are able to develop their organization to be successful in the future. Some studies state that high quality and effective followers are those that have the courage to stop the leaders who abuse their power. Followers who dare to take risks and reject incompetent leaders are important for organizational effectiveness<sup>11, 12, 13, 14</sup>.

Various factors influence followership. There are three factors affecting followership; the first is individual traits (intelligence, independent thinking, self-reliance, and dependability), the second is the relationship between superiors and followers, and the third is organizational climate. Intelligence allows individuals to act correctly even without any direction from their superiors. Independent thinking leads individuals to take the initiative in thinking and able to anticipate any potential problems. Self-reliance is guidance for individuals to behave independently<sup>15</sup>. Interestingly, a research show that demographic characteristics such as gender, age, work experience influence followership<sup>16</sup>, nevertheless another study found that the dimensions of followership is not significantly affected by gender<sup>17,18</sup>.

Therefore, this research aimed to obtain pilot data concerning the followership of employees of SMEs in relation with age, work experience, education level, salary, gender and the types of SMEs. In addition, this study described the relationship between the level of courageous followership and social desirability. It is important to explore the relationship because social desirability, the tendency to present a favorable image, and other legal and cultural constraints is an indication if people feel free to express their socially disapproved responses.

## **2. Methods**

### **1.1. Subjects**

In this research, the samples included SMEs employees in Kotagede, a region in Yogyakarta, Indonesia known as SMEs areas of creative industry. From 100 questionnaires that had been distributed, all of them were completed and ready for analyzing. The samples were 45 percent male (n=45) and 55 percent female (n=55), and 11 percent were under 25 years of age and 53 percent were between 25 to 40 years of age and 36 percent were above 40. The subjects received approximately two US dollars for filling in the questionnaires that took about half an hour. Of the 100 persons contacted, all of them returned the completed questionnaires.

### **1.2. Instruments**

On the first occasion, the participants completed the Courageous Followership Questionnaire whereas on the second occasion they fulfilled the Social Desirability Scale. The first questionnaires used to measure the level of followership of the employees were 27 items of Courageous Followership Questionnaire with four choices: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. There are five aspects of courageous followership behavior: courage to assume responsibility, courage to serve, courage to challenge, courage to participate in transformation, moral courage to take action that followers know when to act differently with their leader if they see any fraud or actions of a leader who does not comply with the organization's values. The second questionnaires were nine items of Social Desirability Scale with yes-no answers.

## **2. Results and Discussion**

After the participants' responses to the questionnaires were codified, quantitative analyses were carried out on the data collected. First, this research applied descriptive statistics to quantify the demographic data, courageous followership, and social durability. The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 shows the gender, age, working experience, education, monthly salary, marital status, and type of industry.

Furthermore, to investigate whether demographic characteristics affected courageous followership scores, one-way ANOVA was calculated. The results showed that age and work experience influence the level of courageous followership. There was a significant main effect of age on courageous followership  $F_{(3,96)} = 3.001, p < .05$ , with the highest level is the youngest group of employees (under 25 years old) ( $M = 85.82$ ) compared to the 25-40 years old employees ( $M = 82.80$ ) and above 40 years old employees ( $M = 78.70$ ). Also, there was a significant main effect of work period about courageous followership  $F_{(2,97)} = 6.19, p < .05$ . Employing the Bonferroni post-hoc test, significant differences were found between both groups with less work period (the employees with 0-5 year work period and the 5-15 year work period employees)

and the group having more than 15 year work period (for both,  $p < .05$ ). However, there was no significant difference between the employees with 0-5 year work period and the 5-15 year work period employees.

Table 1. Sample demographic characteristics

Demographic	Group	N	%
Gender	Man	45	45%
	Woman	55	55%
Age	<25 years old	11	11%
	25-40 years old	53	53%
	> 40 years old	36	36%
Working experience	<5 years	24	24%
	5-15 years	49	49%
	> 15 years	26	26%
Education	Elementary/Junior high school	36	36%
	High school	59	59%
	Undergraduate	5	5%
Monthly salary	<1 million	33	33%
	1-2 million	62	62%
	2-3 million	5	5%
Marital status	Married	82	82%
	Single	18	18%
Number of employees based on type of SME	Manufacture	67	67%
	Trader	17	17%
	Production and trader	16	16%

Next, with regard to the level of another demographic characteristic, such as education level, salary, gender, and the type of SMEs industry, the results showed various conclusions. There was a significant main effect of education on courageous followership  $F_{(2,97)} = 22.16, p < .01$ , with the highest level is the most educated employees (with undergraduate degree) ( $M = 94.20$ ) compared to the high school graduates ( $M = 83.81$ ) and the elementary/junior high school graduates ( $M = 76.22$ ). Salary also has a significant main effect on courageous followership  $F_{(2,97)} = 3.99, p < .05$ , with the highest level is the employees with more than IDR 3 million ( $M = 87.20$ ) compared to those paid IDR 2-3 million ( $M = 82.74$ ) and those paid less than IDR 2 million ( $M = 78.74$ ). On average, male participants have significantly greater courageous followership ( $M = 83.60, SD = 8.92$ ) than female ones ( $M = 79.96, SD = 7.39$ ),  $t(98) = 2.23, p < .05$ . The means for the employees of manufacturing, trader, and production and trader distributor were 81.03, 83.24, and 82.25, respectively. These are no significantly different,  $F_{(2,97)} = 3.99, p < .05$ ,  $F_{(2,97)} = .54, p > .05$ . In addition, the hypothesized relationship between courageous followership and social desirability was tested using Pearson's correlation coefficients. The result showed non-significant and near zero correlations between courageous followership and social desirability,  $r = .03, p > .05$ .

Interestingly, the results of this study are different from those of previous studies<sup>17,18</sup> in which gender has no significant influence on the dimensions of followership. However, another study<sup>15</sup> shows that there are different types of certain followership by gender and, therefore, supports the result of this research. In addition, these results are consistent with that of another study<sup>15</sup>, showing that followers with higher educational background than leaders, having relationships with many people and having lots of information will have a strong enough position compared to leaders and tend to influence leaders in making decisions.



Figure 1. Mean scores of Followership

The findings from the correlations among demographic characteristics and courageous followership scores clearly indicate a dynamic situation in understanding the followership of employees in SMEs. Young, new, male, educated employees with higher salary show high levels of followership compared to counterparts with opposite characteristics. Surprisingly, participants from different types of industry (manufacture, production and trader) have the same levels of followership. Moreover, the relationship between courageous followership and social desirability also illustrates that the magnitude of the subjects' intensity to fake their responses on the followership measurement in the context of SMEs is low. It describes that the subjects have courageous to express their opinions about their social relationships with their own leaders in the workplace. A primary implication of this research is that management could utilize such psychological capital to improve organizational effectiveness and personal wellbeing by designing human resource management and organizational behavior control that considers demographic characteristics. For example, young, new, male, educated employees with higher salary may tend to voice disapproval of the actions or decisions of the leadership. Therefore, their supervisors should encourage them to discuss problem solving in order to find out solutions.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that age, work experience, education level, salary, and gender influence the level of courageous followership but these factors have no relationship with the types of SME. Additionally, the correlation between courageous followership and social desirability is low. This research has some limitations, for example, the research area is limited to one region; as a result, future research should investigate employees from various geographical locations and organizational characteristics, as well as investigate the correlations with other psychological variables.

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