

THE EFFECTS OF LEADER REWARD AND PUNISHMENT BEHAVIORS ON SUBORDINATE'S EFFECTIVENESS: A TEST OF OPERANT CONDITIONING THEORY

BOR-SHIUAN CHENG

Fuhsingkong College

ABSTRACT

Operant conditioning theory of leadership suggested that leader reward and punishment behavior were effective reinforcers to subordinate's performance and supervisory satisfaction. These reward and punishment behavior could be classified as three categories, named contingent reward behavior, contingent punishment behavior, and noncontingent reward-punishment behavior, which might influence subordinate's effectiveness individually in all situations. This study was designed to test the assumptions inferred from operant conditioning theory of leadership for enterprise staff. It was found that (1) contingent reward behavior had positive effect on subordinate's effectiveness; (2) noncontingent reward-punishment behavior had negative effect on subordinate's supervisory satisfaction; (3) subordinate's task structure had moderating effect on the relationship between contingent reward behavior and subordinate's performance; (4) subordinate's work ethic had moderating effect on the relationship between contingent reward behavior and subordinate's effectiveness, and the relationship between noncontingent reward-punishment behavior and subordinate's supervisory satisfaction. The implications of these findings in interactionism and/or interactional approach to study leadership, and their applications for business organization are then discussed.