The Essentials of Leadership Skills for Administrative Leaders at Various Levels in the National Assembly of Lao PDR

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Abstract
This research explores the leadership skills required for leaders at different levels within the National Assembly of Lao PDR. By utilizing a quantitative approach and survey methodology, it identifies and analyzes the importance of conceptual, human, and technique skills across various leadership hierarchies. The analysis was conducted using EFA and CFA. This study explores leadership skills and their interrelations, using a 5-point Likert-scale survey that measured various leadership levels among 240 leaders. The significant findings of leadership skills variables were validated using the EFA method with a KMO of 0.865 and MSA >0.5. Three categories of leadership skills were identified by Factor Analysis Extraction, using the Maximum Likelihood method and Varimax Rotation: Conceptual Skills (vision, political, problem-solving, and decision-making), Human Skills (motivation, ethics, adaptability, interpersonal, and development), and Technical Skills (ICT, administration, coaching, service, and expertise). The relationships between leadership skills variables confirming the model's strong fit to the data were examined using the CFA method, yielding a model CMIN of 104.787 with df 68, CMIN/DF 1.541, and p=0.03. Fit indices included GFI 0.965, CFI 0.985, NFI 0.959, and RMSEA 0.048. Covariances reflect the relationships between the latent variables: conceptual and human skills at 0.66, conceptual and technical skills at 0.66, and human and technical skills at 0.78. The relationship between leadership skills and leaders was assessed by marginal means estimation. As leaders ascend the organizational levels, conceptual skills show the most significant increase, followed by human skills at the middle levels, and technical skills at the primary levels.

Keywords: *Leaders, Leadership, National Assembly of Lao PDR, Skills*

INTRODUCTION

This research aimed to explores the significance and relationship of leadership skills for leaders at various levels in the National Assembly of Lao PDR. The role of the National Assembly as prescribed in the Constitution of Lao PDR (Constitution, 2015). It's the highest organization of state power and serves as a legislative body, adopts the constitution, laws, and agrees on fundamental issues of the nation, monitoring the respect and implementation of the constitution

and laws of state organizations. In addition, to consider and approve the Five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan during the opening session (Law, 2015). Including leadership skills development as a component of the National Human Resource Development Strategy in Laos. It's an essential undertaking for Laos which aims to enhance the existing human resource development strategy and correspond to the national socio-economic development plan in each phase (LaoFAB, 2022). During the initial Lao Human Capital Summit 2023, human capital in Laos makes up 62% of the country's capital wealth, followed by natural and produced capital, accounting for 28% and 18%, respectively, combined with foreign assets, the total amount of capital equals 108%. In addition, the Human Capital Index of Laos has a rating of 0.5 (on a scale from 0 to 1) (WB, 2020). This indicated that Laos's investment in its people's knowledge, skills, and health is essential for the country's overall economic prosperity (ADB, 2013). Moreover, the application of skills is crucial for civil servant, not just because their frequency of use tends to correlate with the actual skill levels, but also due to the fact that skills may diminish if not regularly practiced (ADB, 2014). In addition, the leadership role, and responsibilities in the regional and international parliament context, such as Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UNDP, 2023). The National Assembly of Laos will be evaluating and enhancing the existing capabilities to participate in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and supporting the National Assembly in establishing a framework to monitor progress, engaging in multi-stakeholder participation, and identifying areas for improvement to align with Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2021). This will create additional opportunities to take on leadership roles and develop skills, guiding discussions and influencing decisions at all levels in the National Assembly of Laos.

In organizational leadership, involves guiding others towards a mutual understanding and agreement on the tasks to be accomplished and the methods to achieve them; it also encompasses fostering both individual and group endeavors to realize common goals (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Currently, leadership has become a highly sought-after skills in the 21st century (Bolden, 2004). Hence, developing leadership skills is a crucial factor in becoming more effective and bringing positive change to an organization, it helps to build trust, foster a strong organizational culture, and establish a clear vision, thereby facilitating the change process (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). Such professional development for parliamentarians can improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities, leading to better decision-making, staying up-to-date with the latest developments, and enhanced expertise; this ultimately results in increased effectiveness and higher performance levels (Coghill et al., 2012). By doing so, A Good Parliament promotes transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and critical thinking among legislators; this encourages effective communication, compromise, and problem-solving; it also promotes civic engagement, leading to a strong and active democracy (Childs, 2016). Thus, this research directly addresses the skills required by leaders and aims to fill current gaps in leadership capabilities, contributing to human resources development in Laos by enhancing staff leadership skills.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the reviewed literature, the aforementioned leadership skills have been identified as essential for effective organizational administration. The relationship between these skills and the overall success at the organizational level has also been a key variable in this study. These

concepts have developed an integrative process for both categories of leadership skills such as the three skills approaches (Katz, 1955) and the leadership skills strataplex (Mumford et al., 2007) which aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the leadership skills for different levels of leaders within an organization. According to Fig. 1, leadership skills such as conceptual, human, and technique skills are independent variables, and leaders at various levels. Each independent and dependent variable within the dataset has corresponding observed values. The model is centered around three main latent factors: conceptual, human, and technique Skills, each represented as circles connected to various observed variables (indicators) measuring these skills. The observed variables, labeled as X1 to X14, include specific skills.

Conceptual skills: which refers to the capacity to engage with ideas and concepts such as vision skills: represent the ideal state that reflects the shared values an organization should strive for (House, & Shamir, 1993), political skills: refers to the capacity to effectively comprehend others in ways that further personal and/or organizational goals (Ferris, 2005), decision-making skills: refer to the selection process among two or more options (Vroom & Jago, 1988; Vroom, 2000; Vroom, & Yetton, 1973), problem-solving skills: refers to a leader's capacity to generate creative solutions for novel and ambiguous organizational issues (Mumford et al., 2000), and development skills: a systematic approach that involves a series of planned change interventions, grounded in humanistic-democratic values (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). These are conceptualized typologies of leadership skill necessities in this text.

Human skills: also known as people skills on enhancing particular leadership skills at various organizational levels, which encompass: interpersonal skills: related to social perceptiveness relating to interacting with and influencing others (Mumford et al., 2007), ethnical skills: can be characterized as the exhibition of conduct that aligns with societal norms, demonstrated through personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown & Treviño, 2006), motivational skills: refers to the reasons or driving forces behind a person's actions or behavior (Maslow, 1943), and adaptive skills: revolves around guiding individuals to adapt, and confront problems, challenges, and changes (Northouse, 2019). Human skills discussed in this text will concentrate on enhancing particular leadership skills at various levels.

Technique skills: in this text, technique skills are described as the techniques and methodology, professionalism, and expertise of leaders at various levels. This includes expertise skills: characterized by their deep and well-structured knowledge, which is particularly relevant to the performance requirements in their specific fields of expertise (Mumford et al., 2017), administrative skills: pertain to an administrator's capacity to reason and execute actions within the specific organizational framework they are part of (Scullen et al., 2003), ICT skills: amplified the skill of individuals and communities to access and process information at an exponential rate(Emary & Brzozowska, 2017), coaching skills: a method that empowers others to take action and leverage their strengths (Kranz, 2011) and service skills: referred to as servant leadership. The servant-leader is initially a servant; this is from an innate commitment to helping others above all else (Greenleaf, 1977). The focus of this research is on technical skills within the context of the study's conceptual framework.

METHOD

Leader Participants

There are 240 leadership positions spread throughout the organization, indicating a formal hierarchy among different responsibilities. Each leader level has been collected a different size and position such as: chair-vice-chair of committee, director-deputy director of department, and head-deputy head of division. It consists of nine equalization units, including seven committees, a secretariat, and an institution. Committee-level are responsible for overseeing multiple departments, and required to have strong skills necessity as they interact with various stakeholders. Department-level leaders are responsible for managing specific departments, require strong organizational skills as they manage resources, staff, and financial. Division-level leaders are responsible for managing specific divisions within their respective departments. It's essential to ensure the data's reliability, suitability, and adequacy to support analysis.

Leadership Skills Measures

Leadership skills variables were measured in the study with instruments developed on 5-point Likert-type scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). The analysis was conducted with a sample size of 240 participants, providing a strong basis for these findings. Table 1 presents the results of a reliability analysis for various leadership skills variables measured in the study.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha and Corrected Item-Total statistics (*N* = 240).

No	Leadership skills	Corrected Item-Total	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Vision Skills	.456	.907
2	Political Skills	.436	.908
3	Decision-making Skills	.565	.904
4	Problem-solving Skills	.591	.903
5	Developing Skills	.643	.901
6	Interpersonal Skills	.676	.899
7	Ethical Skills	.640	.901
8	Motivation Skills	.775	.895
9	Adaptive Skills	.668	.900
10	Expertise Skills	.565	.904
11	Administrative Skills	.523	.905
12	ICT skills	.675	.899
13	Coaching Skills	.789	.894
14	Service Skills	.536	.905

Table 1 indicate strong internal consistency for all leadership skills measured, by examining the high Cronbach's alpha values and Item-Total Correlations across various skills. The analysis includes 14 leadership skills, each evaluated for its internal consistency and contribution to the overall measurement of leadership skills. This is shown by the high Cronbach's Alpha values, which range from 0.894 to 0.908 for the skill categories. These

values exceed the accepted threshold of 0.7, suggesting excellent internal consistency among the items used to measures (Black & Babin, 2019). The Corrected Item-Total correlations for all skills are also greater than 0.3, reinforcing the notion that each item contributes meaningfully to the overall score for its respective skill. Values between 0.2 and 0.39 indicate good discrimination (Field, 2005). These measurement results under similar conditions ensure precise and consistent assessment of leadership skills, thereby increasing the study's robustness and credibility.

KEY FINDINGS

Consistency Among Leadership Skills Variables

The significant of leadership skills variables, including the consistency of data measurements, is pivotal. To test Hypothesis 1a. Leadership skills for leaders at various levels will have strong consistency among variable measurements. The statistical tools will explore leadership skills variables and the consistency of data measurements. Exploratory Factor Analysis proves to be suitable in situations where theoretical relationships and structures are predefined (Goretzko et al., 2021; Hurley et al., 1997). The variables of leadership skills have a relationship with leaders at various levels and are measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (Comrey & Lee, 1992; Kaiser, 1974; Nkansah, 2011). and Measure of Sampling Adequacy (Brown, 2015; Lee, et al., 1994; Yamamoto et al., 2014). Table 2, summarize the sampling adequacy and the significance of the correlations among the variables, thus laying the groundwork for further exploration of the factors influencing leadership skills in the study.

Table 2: Consistency of leadership skills sampling analysis (*N*=240).

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**0.865**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	*Approx. Chi-Square*	2363.823
	df.	91
	Sig.	**0.00**

The KMO value is reported in Table 2 at 0.865, which indicates that the sample size is sufficient, as it falls within the acceptable range of 0.8 to 1.0. This suggests that the data is suitable for identifying underlying relationships among the leadership skills being assessed. Bartlett's test of sphericity shows an approximate Chi-Square value of 2363.823 with 91 degrees of freedom. The significance level is 0.00, which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirming that the correlations among the variables are statistically significant. This strong correlation indicates that the variables are interrelated and suitable for further analysis.

However, the correlation matrix has negatives of partial correlation coefficients, suggesting that leadership skills are suitable for factor analysis. This involves calculating the anti-image correlation matrix from negative partial correlations, while the anti-image covariance matrix includes negatives of partial covariances. In an effective factor model, most off-diagonal elements will be small, and the MSA for each variable is displayed on the diagonal of the anti-image correlation matrix, as shown in Table 3 of the study.

Table 3: Anti-image correlation for measures of leadership skills.

No	Leadership skills	Anti-Image Matrices													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	Vision Skills	**.663a**													
2	Political Skills	-.961	**.652a**												
3	Decision-making	-.031	-.026	**.845a**											
4	Problem-solving	-.027	.017	-.540	**.843a**										
5	Developing Skills	-.055	.044	-.026	-.146	**.935a**									
6	Interpersonal Skills	-.001	.012	-.089	.020	-.209	**.928a**								
7	Ethical Skills	-.018	.015	.031	-.213	.105	-.287	**.876a**							
8	Motivation Skills	-.079	.065	-.044	.111	-.150	-.115	-.422	**.896a**						
9	Adaptive Skills	-.030	.036	.048	-.049	.070	-.265	-.021	-.327	**.919a**					
10	Expertise Skills	.065	-.065	.004	-.230	-.190	-.021	.097	-.055	.015	**.932a**				
11	Administrative	-.078	.079	-.217	.016	-.052	.011	-.061	.075	-.024	-.087	**.899a**			
12	Catskills	.072	-.060	.005	-.063	-.028	-.044	.169	-.154	.086	-.114	-.198	**.889a**		
13	Coaching Skills	.017	-.032	-.095	.043	-.155	.049	-.133	-.203	-.195	-.028	.050	-.380	**.922a**	
14	Service Skills	.044	-.077	.196	.016	.058	-.008	.015	.016	-.107	-.125	-.270	-.283	-.159	**.881a**

Note: [a.] Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) > 0.5 accepted, N = 240

Table 3 reported the MSA values for each leadership skills, with a threshold of 0.5 indicating acceptable sampling adequacy. The MSA values show that the leadership skills in this study are appropriate for factor analysis, and the factor loadings should be significant given the sample size of N = 240 and a factor loading threshold of 0.4. The findings underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics between different leadership skills, as they can significantly affect leaders at various levels and the data is suitable for further analysis. This supports the consistency in measuring leadership skills variables and Hypothesis 1a of the study.

Leadership Skills Categories Analysis

Leadership skills extracted factors to describe variability among observed and correlated variables, reducing them into fewer unobserved variables. To test Hypothesis 1b. Leadership skills for leaders at various levels will be categorized as conceptual, human, and technique skills. Categorize these skills into distinct factors that can provide insights into their interdependencies and significance in leadership roles. The statistical tools examine the components of leadership skills correlated to classified into categories such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis. It's a statistical technique used to test whether the data fit a hypothesized measurement model (Stevens, 2012). This analysis employs factor analysis to identify underlying correlations among different leadership skills in the study. Thus, to test the hypothesis was assessed empirically (Jöreskog, 1988), the Maximum Likelihood method (Lee, et al., 1994), the Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization were employed (Hurley et al., 1997), and factor loading based on sample size (Hair et al., 1998). This method specifies a

correlation matrix to extract leadership skills factors in Table 3, which presents the factor loadings, communalities, and the percentage of variance explained by each factor.

Table 4: Rotated factors extraction for leadership skills categories analysis (*N*=240).

Leadership Skills	Factors Extracted				Communality
	1	2	3	4	
Motivation Skills	.822				.835
Ethical Skills	.773				.683
Adaptive Skills	.723				.635
Interpersonal Skills	.700				.608
Developing Skills	.408				.463
ICT Skills		.795			.752
Service Skills		.697			.550
Coaching Skills		.602			.745
Administrative Skills		.512			.383
Expertise Skills		.489			.433
Vision Skills			.959		.987
Political Skills			.944		.950
Problem-solving Skills				.801	.757
Decision-making Skills				.734	.665
Rotation Sums of Square	3.12	2.47	1.98	1.87	9.45
Percentage of Variance	22.28	17.69	14.12	13.36	67.46

Table 4 highlights the extraction of leadership skills into four factors, each contributing to the overall variance explained. Factor 1: the high loadings on these variables suggest that this factor represents core personal and ethical leadership qualities. The commonality values show that these skills are well-represented by this factor, with Motivation Skills factor having the highest commonality (0.835). Factor 2: these skills indicate technical and service-oriented leadership capabilities. The commonality values show that ICT Skills are particularly well-represented (0.752). Factor 3: the high loadings on these variables suggest that this factor encapsulates strategic and political skills in leadership. The communality values are high for both Vision Skills (0.987) and Political Skills (0.950). Factor 4: these skills are important for effective leadership in dynamic and challenging environments. The communality values for these skills are also high, with Problem-solving Skills having a commonality of 0.757. The rotation sums of squared loadings indicate that, these four factors explain 67.458% of the total variance, suggesting a strong model for understanding leadership skills. However, the factors extracted in categories 3 and 4 have been merged due to significance with theoretical and summarized total into three: Category 1 (Human Skills) includes skills of motivation, ethical, adaptive, interpersonal, coaching, and developing skills; Category 2 (Technique Skills) includes skills of service, ICT, administrative, and expertise; and Category 3 (Conceptual Skills) includes skills of vision, political, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Therefore, these findings indicates that leadership skills can be categorized into conceptual, human, and technical skills, providing support for Hypothesis 1b of the study, and Hypothesis 1 was supported, as it significantly of leadership skills in an empirical exploration of leaders at various levels.

Interrelationship Among Leadership Skills

Leadership skills offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the interrelationships among important latent variables, such as conceptual skills, human skills, and technique skills, as well as the observed indicators that represent these factors (Fig.1). To test Hypothesis 2a. The leadership skills categories such as conceptual, human, and technique skills will be importance interrelated in the study. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis method within the Structural Equation Modeling framework to test assessing if the data fits a hypothesized measurement model (Byrne, 2001; Kline, 2023). However, Hair et al., (2019) identified characteristics of different fit indices demonstrating goodness-of-fit across different model situations, specifically within the framework of structural equation modeling. It discusses the expected p-values for the chi-square statistic and various fit indices like Goodness-of-Fit Index, Comparative Fit Index, and Normed Fit Index, categorized by sample sizes (N) and numbers of observed variables (m), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. Fig. 1 provided concepts and correlation analysis of leadership skills categories among leaders at various levels in the study.

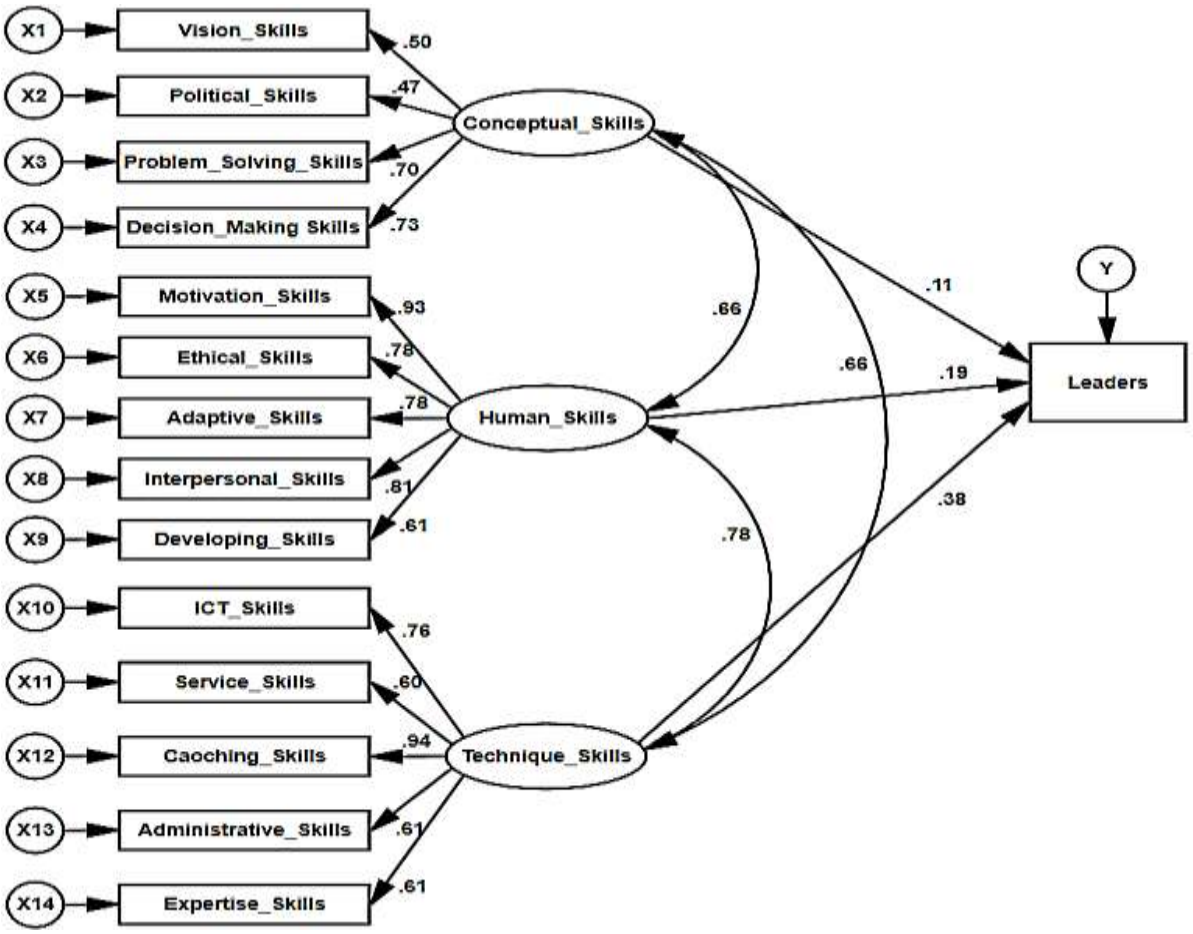

Figure 1: Correlation analysis of leadership skills categories and leaders at (N<250, 12≤m≤30).

Fig. 1 show the model fit indices show a strong alignment between the proposed model and the observed data, confirming its validity and appropriateness for analyzing leadership skills. The

model's Chi-Square value of 104.787 with 68 degrees of freedom results in a Relative Chi-Square of 1.541, below the commonly accepted threshold of 2, suggesting a good fit between the model and the data. The p-value of 0.03 suggests that the model is statistically significant, though it also indicates some discrepancy between the model and the observed data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation of 0.048 is below the 0.05 cutoff, suggesting a minimal error in approximation and confirming the model's strong fit to the data. Additional fit indices further support the model's strength: the Goodness-of-Fit Index is 0.965, meaning 96.5% of the observed variance is accounted for by the model. The Comparative Fit Index of 0.985 and the Normed Fit Index of 0.96 both reflect an excellent comparative fi. The covariance between conceptual skills and human skills is 0.66. Similarly, the covariance between conceptual skills and technique skills is 0.66, showing comparable association. The strongest relationship is between human skills and technique skills, with a covariance of 0.78. The regression weights provide further insight into the influence of each latent variable on the overall leadership skills construct. Conceptual Skills have a regression weight of 0.11, while Human Skills have a stronger impact, with a regression weight of 0.19. The most substantial influence comes from Technique Skills, with a regression weight of 0.38. Thus, Hypothesis 2a is accepted leadership skills categories such as conceptual, human and technique skills will be significantly interrelated in the study.

Relationship Between Leadership Skills and Leaders

Leaders at various levels observed leadership skills throughout the study. However, to test Hypothesis 2b, Leadership skills will significantly relate to leaders at various levels in the study. Thus, the marginal means estimation was employed (Stevens, 2012). These relationships and interactions were visually illustrated in Fig. 2, which plots the estimated marginal means for each leadership skill essential for leaders at each level.

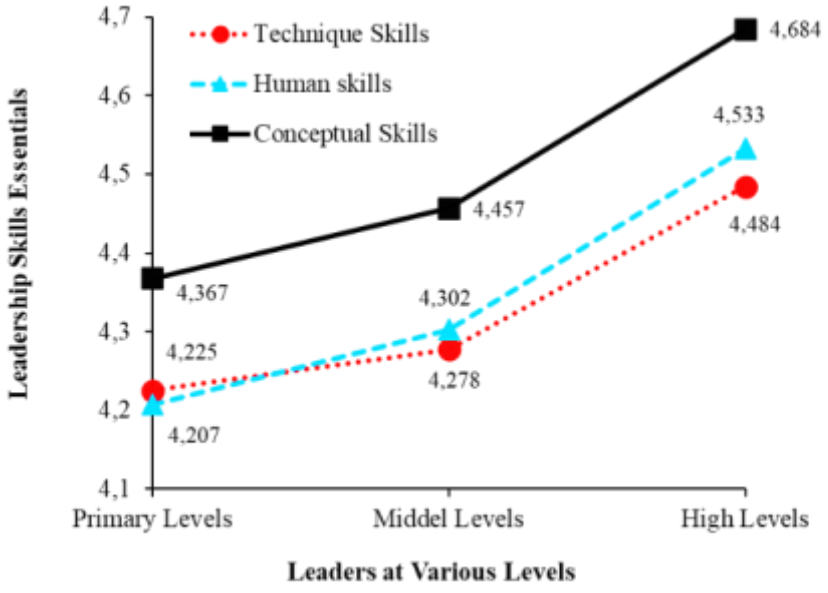

Figure 2: Marginal means estimation the interaction between leadership skills and leaders.

Fig. 2 illustrates the estimated marginal means of three types of leadership skills across different leadership levels and reveals significant insights. Conceptual Skills also show a gradual increase, starting near 4.367 at the primary level, moving up to 4.457 at the middle level, and reaching about 4.684 at the high level. Similarly, Human Skills begin at roughly 4.207 at the primary level, rise to 4.302 at the middle level, and increase to around 4.533 at the high level. Technique Skills show a notable upward trend, starting at about 4.225 at the primary level, increasing to 4.278 at the middle level, and reaching about 4.484 at the high level. Therefore, the marginal means estimation highlights that all three leadership skills improve as leaders move up the organizational hierarchy. This supports Hypothesis 2b, which states that leadership skills are strongly related to leaders at various levels, and supported Hypothesis 2 the correlation between leadership skills and leaders at various levels across the high, middle, and primary levels of the study.

DISCUSSION

Significant of Leadership Skills Exploration

The significant of leadership skills among the leaders, the study employed Exploratory Factor Analysis, which is a statistical technique employed to uncover the foundation structure of variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value indicates that the sampling was highly adequate for factor analysis, and the significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirmed that the leadership variables were appropriately correlated for analysis. This suggests that the leadership skills measured in this study are reliable and well-suited for statistical modeling. The Measures of Sampling Adequacy values for individual leadership skills indicated a strong correlation across key leadership domains, particularly for decision-making, problem-solving, and motivation, reinforcing the robustness of the measurement model. These findings support Hypothesis 1a, confirming that leadership skills are consistently measurable across different levels of leadership within the organization.

The categorization of leadership skills revealed a clear distinction among conceptual, human, and technique skills, providing a thorough insight into how these skills interact within a leadership context. Using factor analysis provided a clear structure by which leadership skills could be grouped. Conceptual skills categories, including vision, political skills, and problem-solving, were critical for strategic leadership and decision-making at higher levels. Human skills categories, including motivation, ethical, interpersonal, adaptive, and developing skills, emerged as a strong category, as indicated by high factor loadings and communality values. Technique skills categories, such as ICT, service, coaching, administrative and expertise skills, were also essential for leadership, particularly in service-oriented contexts. Collectively, these categories account for the total variance, providing a robust framework for understanding the interrelationships among leadership skills.

Importance Correlation

The study confirmed that conceptual, human, and technique skills interact dynamically, reinforcing each other. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed a strong model fit, with high covariance between human and technical skills suggests that as leaders progress, the combination of practical abilities and relational skills is important. The correlation between

conceptual and other skills underscores the idea that while strategic thinking is important, it works best when integrated with hands-on technical knowledge and strong interpersonal abilities. This confirms that leadership is a complex and interconnected skillset, where different areas must work in performance.

Further, reinforces the importance of these interrelationships as leaders advance to higher levels. The marginal means analysis revealed that conceptual skills and leaders showed the most significant increase as leaders moved from primary to middle and high levels, reflecting the growing need for strategic thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving at senior leadership levels. Human skills and leaders also increased markedly, emphasizing the growing complexity of managing interpersonal relationships and maintaining effective communication as leadership responsibilities expand. Technique skills and leaders also observed a steady rise, highlighting the necessity for effective leaders to maintain and enhance their task-oriented knowledge even as they take on broader, more strategic roles.

CONCLUSION

Conceptual Skills as Critical for High Level Leadership, such as committee chairs and secretaries, require strong conceptual skills to articulate a clear and inspiring vision, influence stakeholders, and address multifaceted challenges. The significant loadings of vision and political skills in the factor analysis highlight the importance of these competencies for leaders at highest levels. Human Skills for Middle Level Leadership, such as department heads, play a crucial role in connecting the gap between high-level strategic goals and frontline execution. The high internal consistency of human skills, with strong loadings for motivation, ethical skills, and adaptive skills, shows their importance in middle-level leadership. Technique Skills in Primary Level Leadership, which include ICT ability, service orientation, administrative, and expertise. Leaders at this level, such as division managers and supervisors, are directly engaged in the daily operations of the organization. Interrelated Importance: as leaders progress through various organizational levels are highly interrelated and become increasingly important as leaders ascend in the hierarchy. Leadership skills and leaders become more pronounced as leaders rise through organization.

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