

# A Study of Leadership among of Different Games Players

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**Abstract – In recent years, organizations have expended considerable effort and resources to develop and improve managers' leadership skills Among in Players through various forms of play Games. The role of play in leadership development processes. Drawing on theories of leader and leadership development and theories of play, a conceptual framework, suggesting that play can contribute to different components of leader and leadership development processes (i.e., leadership identity, cognitive abilities, and behavioral skills). Furthermore, the role of creating safe play spaces in leadership development processes is highlighted. The discussion examines the implications and applications of play for leadership development processes, points to the dangers of misuse of play, and outlines directions for further empirical research.**

**Keywords: Leadership, Different Games Players, Organizations, Leadership Skills.**

## INTRODUCTION

“At some point as we get older . . . we are made to feel guilty for playing. We are told that it is unproductive, a waste of time, even sinful. The play that remains is, like league sports, mostly very organized, rigid, and competitive. We strive to always be productive. This is not the case . . . the truth is that in most cases, play is a catalyst. The beneficial effects of getting just a little true play can spread through our lives, usually making us more productive and happier in everything we do”.

“A child in play acts ‘as though he were a head taller than himself”

In recent years, organizations have expended a great deal of effort and resources in an attempt to teach managers how to lead. Recent approaches to leadership challenge the notion that individuals are born as leaders and focus on ways to develop individuals' capacity to engage effectively in leadership roles. This has resulted in various methods, training programs, and workshops designed for this purpose. Many organizations view leadership development as a major source of sustainable competitive advantage and place leadership development at the core of their corporate culture. Leadership development programs and processes have become instrumental in many organizations, and they have fostered an industry that generates vast sums of capital and offers a broad range of possibilities. Over the past decade, research attention has been devoted to the theory and practice of leadership development. The general consensus is

that different managerial populations need different kinds of learning opportunities, but little theoretical and empirical guidance exists to help practitioners and HR personnel select or combine methods that are best suited to each group.

Some leadership development programs consist of experiences that span just a few hours, while others may last several days, or even take the form of extended seminars. In addition, the nature of such programs runs the gamut from relatively traditional programs to experiential programs for personal and spiritual growth. While the former is generally comprised of lectures on theoretical concepts and approaches, training in leadership skills, and feedback on leadership style, the latter type can be characterized by such wide-ranging approaches as arts and crafts, Tai Chi, Eastern philosophy, orchestra conducting, and outdoor nature challenges. A recent comprehensive study that summarizes 163 studies on management training programs indicates that some but not all, of these methods and approaches are effective in terms of different criteria, such as the participants' reactions, learning, behavioral change, and measurable organizational results. One type of leadership development program that is attracting growing attention is programs in which managers participate in activities that involve play. Spearheading these play-oriented programs are the popular “outdoors programs,” in which managers are asked to overcome natural obstacles, build log structures, go whitewater rafting, walk on tightropes, hunt for treasure chests, and experiment with fictional identities. Managers are also invited to take part in

“indoor” play involving role-play and simulations, strategy games, and computer on-line simulations.

Play is a unique and universal human experience. Huizinga’s seminal work “Homo Ludens,” (the man who plays) demonstrated the centrality of play to humanity and the construction of culture as manifested in everyday life. However, the postindustrial revolution has created the “myth of separate spheres” that permeates our culture. This “myth” entails splitting off the public sphere and the workplace from the private sphere, and from leisure and play, in an attempt to enhance organizational efficiency, rationalization, and profitability through control mechanisms. Recently, play has become increasingly acknowledged as an important factor in offices and organizations. Fortune-500 companies are being consulted on how to incorporate play into businesses. Various companies such as Google, Patagonia, Gore, Motorola, and Du Pont encourage their employees to use up to 20% of their work time to play freely with new ideas. In the “Top 10 reasons to work at Google,” number four on the company Website is “Work and play are not mutually exclusive: It is possible to code and pass the puck at the same time”. Current leadership development programs and processes also rely on play as a central component of leadership development. Social scientists have also underscored the importance of play in calibrating individuals and in contributing to employees’ development as well as to their mental and physical well-being. However, the role of play in leadership development processes has not been adequately studied by researchers, and the theoretical underpinnings have barely been considered.

## LEADER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership has traditionally been conceptualized as an individual-level skill. Within this tradition, development is thought to occur primarily through training individual intrapersonal skills and abilities. A complementary perspective approaches leadership as a social process that engages community members. In this way, each person is considered a leader, and leadership is conceptualized as an effect rather than a cause. These theories consider that both individual and social relational lenses are important elements of leadership development. In line with this perspective, Day and coauthors developed a model that distinguishes between leader and leadership development. The aim of leader development is to enhance human capital. The primary emphasis of this development strategy is to build the intrapersonal competence of the individual, foster a mature leader identity, and enable more effective performance. Typically the focus is on individual-based knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with formal leadership roles. Specific examples of the types of intrapersonal competence associated with leader development initiatives include self-awareness (e.g., emotional awareness, self-confidence); self-regulation (e.g., self-control, trustworthiness, adaptability); and self-motivation

(e.g., commitment, initiative, optimism; Day, 2000). A second, separate concept of development is leadership development. The primary emphasis in leadership development is on building and using interpersonal competence. This perspective focuses on social capital. Unlike human capital, which is focused on the development of individual knowledge, skills, and abilities, social capital is focused on building networked relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation and resource exchange to create organizational value. Social capital is based on relationships, which are created through interpersonal exchange. This view highlights the social nature of leadership and the idea that effective development best occurs in an interpersonal context. Hence, social capital requires an interpersonal lens that is grounded in a relational model of leadership. Key components of interpersonal competence include social awareness (e.g., empathy and developing others) and social skills. Furthermore, leadership development also includes the development of group-level competencies of relational and shared leadership. When leadership is shared, it is distributed among a set of individuals instead of centralized in the hands of an individual. Shared leadership puts forward a concept of leadership practice as a group-level phenomenon. Leadership development at the shared leadership group level is comprised of competencies such as group learning, team creativity, and the relevant behavioral skills for mutual leadership. Each framework (leader development vs. leadership development) is designed to develop different levels of leader identity (individual, relational, and collective). Because leadership involves multiple individuals engaged in a process of interpersonal and mutual influence that is embedded within a collective context, the construction of a leadership identity invokes all three elements of self-construal: individual internalization, relational recognition, and collective endorsement. Individual internalization is a state where individuals come to incorporate the identity of leader or follower as part of their self-concept. Relational recognition of the leader by the other calls for a mutually recognized role relationship between the leader and follower. Collective endorsement is about being seen within the broader social environment as part of a particular social group, for example, being part of the management team. Leader development deals with the level of the individualized self; whereas leadership development is about further developing a relational and collective leadership identity. Thus, leadership development processes that engage all three levels of self-construal will reinforce a solid, complex, and mature leadership identity. As a result, it is thought that the most value resides in combining what is considered the traditional, individualistic approach to leader development with a more shared and relational approach to leadership development.

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ONLINE GAMING:**

Computer games' influence is growing continually as research shows that the age of children playing games continue to be younger and Internet usage among children becomes more prevalent. Despite the mainstream research on gameplay that primarily focused on negative influences of computer games on individuals, this research have explored the positive aspects of gameplay where it focused upon the potential benefits which can be gained from computer games, thereby allowing these positive aspects to be improved within newly developing games and maximize games' potential benefits. Online games have allowed game players around the world to interact with each other in one single platform, enjoying the games together without boundaries. Subsequently, online games began to gain immense momentum as an important aspect of our social culture, as well as becoming more advanced and sophisticated to the point of creating a simulated reality for the game players today. How does the two worlds of computer games and Reality Bridge together to impact human lives? How does having two parallel worlds effect the development of an individual's characteristics? The urge to discover such profound relationships changing our society today is the motivation behind this research. This research aims to examine the correlation that exists between character roles in games and leadership in everyday life. The research will explain how these roles in the game and leadership styles are linked and how they influence each other. The games that are part of this research are known as Defense of the Ancients (DOTA) and Heroes of Newerth (HON). These games are suitable for leadership testing due to its unique situational control which aptly allows Fred E. Fiedler's contingency leadership theory. In order to examine the correlation of game players' leadership styles and their roles in game, close-ended surveys were distributed in Thailand via written and online formats. The collected data were quantitatively analyzed using statistical analysis tools with methods of factor analysis and multinomial logistic regression analysis. The purpose of this research is to explore whether or not behaviors in games are correlated with leadership behaviors in real life. The findings of this research will further provide a better understanding of how leadership is developed within an individual and how gameplay contributes to this development. This study has constructed a better understanding of the importance of game content—how it influences our characteristics—and potentially derives games' positive merits for social advancement. Most importantly, findings of this research have significance in future game designs. Game developers can use these findings as a way to improve game content to maximize benefits to be derived from gameplay. This research's purpose and conclusion implies that online games will not simply be an unproductive entertainment, but a significant tool for the development of individual

characteristics—allowing online games to be an enhancement to people's lives.

## **ROLE OF PLAY IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:**

### **Play Spaces as Sites of Leadership Development:**

Another important distinction between work and play is the space in which they take place. Work and play frames are enacted in different physical and psychological settings. For Huizinga, play has three central characteristics: It is free, it involves stepping out of "real" life, and it is bounded in space and time. Play activities are often buffered from work activities by physical and temporal boundaries (e.g., sabbaticals, time-outs, and vacations). From an anthropological perspective, the play space is defined as a liminal zone, a sacred transitional phase observed in different societies where cultural and communal practices are freed from normative social structures. Within a liminal space, tribe members are granted temporary freedom to explore playfully the sacred in the form of rituals and myths. As Turner (1974) notes, "in liminality people 'play' with the elements of the familiar and DE familiarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements". In psychological terms, play is situated within the safety of a transitional space where children can explore and express themselves without societal pressures. Psychologically, play occurs in a space in between external and internal reality, or a transitional space. This betwixt-and-between nature of play is an important component. It distinguishes play from other activities and makes it a universally recognizable phenomenon. Play requires a relatively safe space to try out new and untested identities, thoughts, and behaviors. Many of the ideas about the relationship between play and psychological safety derive from research on the stages of transition periods and children's maturity. Children imagine their futures and play out these possibilities through games, reverie, and make-believe explorations. The play world they create defines a region between an objective external reality and an entirely subjective internal world. Through play, the child prepares to accommodate illusions to real representations in the external world. This process can be best achieved in a safety zone, in which children can give free rein to their imagination, gradually defining and testing newly emerging possible selves, under the watchful and loving eye of the caregiver.

In recent research on experiential learning and play, Kolb and Kolb (2010) focused on the importance of ludic, or play spaces where playful behaviors thrive. They contend that "for a learner to engage fully in the learning cycle, a space must be provided to engage fully in the four modes of the cycle—feeling, reflection, thinking, and action. It needs to be a hospitable, safe and supportive space that is characterized by respect for all, but is also challenging. It must allow learners to be in charge of

their own learning and allow time for the repetitive practice that develops expertise". These spaces are characterized by the absence of extrinsic evaluation, which thus frees individuals to set their own learning agenda and terms. Such environments also tend to have the characteristics of holding environments. Holding environments are spaces in which cognitive and emotional experiences, at times unsettling, give way to meaning. Winnicott highlighted the fundamental importance of holding environments for children's healthy development, not only cognitive learning but also in developing an embodied, emotional understanding of the world. Children are not alone in needing holding environments to progress between stages of human development. It has been argued that individuals need safe holding environments in the context of work organizations, mostly when potentially disabling anxiety at work is experienced. In the workplace, holding environments have been defined as a social context that reduces disturbing affect and facilitates sense making. Such organizational spaces are likely to provide individuals both containment, which is the ability to absorb, filter, or manage challenging or threatening emotions or ideas so that they can be used for inner work and interpretation, namely, the ideas that provide connections, meanings, or a way of understanding what can be learned from an experience. Thus, in organizational life, certain physical settings delimit a psychological space and time that creates safety and holding, provides relief from the pressure of social validation, and legitimizes exploration. This suggests that for individuals to benefit from processes of leader and leadership development, the conditions of safe spaces must be provided. Spatial boundaries, such as those around leadership development programs in which managers can explore in play (scenarios, simulations, role-plays, outdoor experiences, games and other forms of play) can encourage departures from existing norms and procedures by allowing people to suspend requirements for consistency and rationality, and, as they play with possibilities, develop new skills or self-images that can be transferred back to their day-to-day work environment.

Leadership development training programs, as well as structures for "on-the-job" leadership development following these programs, can provide play spaces that can function as "safe havens" "protected milieux" or "holding environments" that have boundaries that partially keep out the world, so that individuals can remain open to what will unfold within them. This can enable individuals who are to become leaders or people who are already in leadership positions to rehearse a variety of possible selves, new ideas, and to experiment with new skills without necessarily seeking to adopt any of them on a permanent basis, and eventually make transitions. Play is an activity of utmost seriousness which is played out within a "consecrated spot" mentally and physically, with strict rules of its own. Leadership development processes and programs can become "consecrated spots" for

experimenting "seriously" with play, thus allowing leaders to experience personal and relational growth. The ability to play in a safe environment or time-bounded space can help people develop as leaders. This is because a safe environment enables them to experiment with a range of provisional leadership images, switching from one to the other and adopting various possible selves before settling on a new direction and making transformations in the way they chose to think and act as leaders.

## PLAY AS CONTRIBUTING TO PERSONAL AND RELATIONAL GROWTH

Leadership development programs that focus on personal growth are reported to have a strong effect on individuals, because much of the work is done on an emotional level. One aspect of personal development in becoming a leader is closely related to the issue of the formation of a leadership identity. According to a recent theory of leadership identity development, leader and follower identities become socially constructed and form the basis of leader-follower relationships in a process of identity work in which individuals actively "claim" an identity and others affirm or "grant" that identity. Claiming refers to the actions people take to assert their identity as either a leader or follower, whereas granting refers to the actions that a person takes to bestow an identity (i.e., leader or follower) onto another person. Hence identities are seen as flexible states frequently in movement. Thus, in the process of leadership development, individuals interact in the interplay of claims and grants to explore their identity as leaders.

The literature on identity construction in leadership suggests that claiming and granting tactics can vary on two basic dimensions: verbal-nonverbal (i.e., a person making statements that he or she is a leader vs. manipulating physical artifacts associated with leadership or followership) and direct-indirect (sitting at the head of a conference table vs. dropping the name of an influential organizational leader). When a focal person claims a leader or follower identity, this stimulates other people in the social environment to consider seeing that focal person in accordance with that particular identity. They communicate their acceptance of this perception by granting that particular identity to the focal person through their words or actions (directly or indirectly). Although this granting of the identity may not always occur immediately and may even require several claims before the identity is granted, the relational recognition of the claim through a reinforcing grant is essential to identity construction. This process of claiming and granting a leadership identity is central to the process of leadership development and growth. Thus, play can be a good context for the reversing of claims and grants dynamics in the process of developing a leadership identity. Being involved in play in a leadership development process is a good opportunity to test and experience claiming and granting dynamics.

### **Play and Learning**

Studies in education, psychology, and ethology suggest that play may have a major role in development and learning. From childhood to maturity, play is central to each stage of development in its different forms, styles, and meanings. Theories of play define stimulus-seeking activity that leads to two distinctive modes of play and learning. In the first mode (epistemic) the child's attitude is that of seriousness and focus, followed by intense, attentive investigation of all aspects of a toy. Once the investigation is over, the child then proceeds to the second mode (ludic) in which the toy is handled playfully. As children transition to the second mode in a relaxed manner they proceed to apply the knowledge gained through investigation in their play. Recent developments in neuroscience reveal how play is connected to the internal functioning of the brain of information processing. The epistemic mode of behavior seems to correspond to the left hemisphere of the brain, which is abstract, symbolic, analytic, and logical, whereas the second mode (ludic behavior) may be associated with the right hemisphere, which is synthetic, concrete, analogical, nonrational, spatial, intuitive, and holistic. This is similar to Zull's (2002) description of how brain functioning follows the process of experiential learning. Studies of animal play in neuroethology suggest that humans and other mammals share similar play behaviors associated with their neural plasticity. A cross species comparative study suggests that play has a central role in brain development, facilitating the integration of cognitive, social, affective, and sensorimotor systems in mammals. Furthermore, play has been suggested to enhance learning of complicated fields, to contribute to the acquisition of new knowledge, and to synthesizing of distinct concepts and memory processes.

### **Play and Creativity**

The ability to play is crucial for today's leadership and management, since it can enhance leaders' ability to be creative and promote ongoing innovation and organizational change. Modern organizations have been described as systems of continual self-renewal in which "change" is a routine process rather than an outcome or end state. Many scholars have defined leadership as different from management, contending that management promotes stability, preservation of the status quo, order and efficiency and is risk averse, whereas leadership seeks to promote organizational change, creativity and innovation. For organizations to change and develop, we need to develop leaders that can encourage ongoing experimentation, risk taking, openness, creativity, authenticity, imagination, and innovation. The distinction between management and leadership has resulted in attempts by many leadership training programs to focus on developing individuals' ability to take risks, and think in a creative and innovative manner to become better leaders.

### **PLAY AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP-RELEVANT SKILLS**

One definition of leadership is a set of behaviors that are different from management behaviors and may be exercised at any formal level. This definition focuses on the behaviors and skills of the leader. According to this perspective, leadership entails the mastery of numerous behaviors and domain-relevant skills. Research on leadership characteristics has identified several skills that are related to the advancement and effectiveness of leaders. For example, leaders need technical skills that include knowledge about methods, processes, and equipment to conduct the specialized activities of their organizational unit, as well as social skills that include knowledge about human behavior, group processes, and the ability to understand feelings and motivations. According to Conger (1992), one of the major aims of leadership development programs is to develop leadership through skill building. Skill building programs are designed to identify key leadership skills that are needed and foster the learning of these complex skills in workshops or in on-the-job training. Various researchers have stressed differences in skill priorities at different stages and levels of the organizational authority and hierarchy. The skills needed to lead a team for the first time are different from those needed to lead multiple business units or a large firm. Advancement in leadership roles is often related to advancement along the lifecycle of stages of adult development that profoundly influence an individual's professional developmental agenda. These changes in role and life stage incorporate challenges of transitioning into new leadership roles or further developing in an existing one. This suggests that the need to learn and master new skills is an ongoing essential element in the process of developing leader and leadership competencies.

Play is often seen as practice for skills needed in the future. According to animal researchers, when animals play-fight, they are practicing to fight or hunt for real later on. Play allows pretend reversal for the challenges and ambiguities of life, a reversal in which life and death are not at stake. Support for this notion comes from studies of animals in the wild. After carefully documenting the play behavior of the Alaskan grizzlies over more than 15 years, a research team found that bears that played the most were the ones who survived best. This is true despite the facts that playing takes away time, attention, and energy from other activities such as hunting and eating, which seem at first glance to contribute more to the bears' survival. Through play, individuals are able to examine new behaviors, reverse and experiment with different skills they may need to develop, reinforce and refine in the context in which they lead or as they transition into a new leadership role or context. As noted by Senge (1990: 314): "when they play with dolls, children rehearse ways of interacting with people. When they play with blocks, they teach themselves basic principles of spatial geometry and

mechanics. Later in life they will learn the general properties of the pendulum through swinging on a swing... Through experimentation.... children discover principles and develop skills that are relevant in reality beyond play.”

## CONCLUSION:

The current work refers to play in general and does not distinguish between different forms of play and the ways they are used in leadership development programs. Future empirical studies should assess the possible contributions and strengths of different types of play to the leadership development process. According to Guillen and Ibarra (2009) pedagogies used in leadership interventions cannot be generalized to all leaders, “simply cutting-and-pasting them from one population to the other”. Methods must be in sync with both job demands and individuals’ needs at a particular time and place. This suggests that different leadership development learning methods are suited for the different needs and issues faced by leaders at different level, life, and role stages. Thus, there is a need to further study and understand the possible contribution of play, as well as different forms and types of play, to leadership development for managers at different stages of their careers. Today children are expected to grow up at a fast pace, to stop playing at an early age, and to “begin to behave like adults” and learn leadership and management skills (e.g., time management, stress management, business entrepreneurship). Most adults may have not had much experience with free play when they were young. Beginning in preschool, the natural mayhem that 3–5 year olds engage in (normal rough and tumble play) is usually suppressed by a well-meaning preschool teacher and parents who prefer quiet and order to the seeming chaos that is typical of free childhood play. This raises the question of whether these children will actually grow up to be superior leaders and managers, or whether they are, paradoxically, missing out on the period of childhood play they need to develop into innovative and flexible leaders. Will these children need to learn to play as adults to become leaders? These questions on the relationship between play in childhood and leadership development constitute intriguing directions for future research. Thus, although play may have some drawbacks, the increasingly popular use of play in leadership development programs indicates its numerous advantages for leadership growth and development in the world of modern management.

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