

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

We certify that we have read and evaluated this document and that, in our opinion, it is adequate in scope and quality of its content for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Organizational Psychology from the Department of Psychology of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus.

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ABSTRACT

Change is always impacting organizations whether it is due to internal or external forces. Hence, managing change is a crucial task for organizational leaders. Guided by the adaptive leadership framework, this study aimed to develop a test to measure adaptability in contexts of change. The test consisted of eight dimensions, each representing a characteristic of adaptive leadership identified for managing change in the context of Puerto Rico. After undergoing the process of content validation, the test was administered to N= 103 individuals pertaining to two groups: leaders (n= 51) and non-leaders (n= 52). The inclusion criteria stated that, regardless of the group, each individual had to have experienced at least one period of change in their job. Through a quantitative approach, t-tests and correlation analyses were performed. Statistically significant differences were found between the adaptive leadership scores of both groups and said scores positively correlated with the change management scores. Also, a reliability analysis was performed where the scale presented a high internal consistency, supporting the eight characteristics proposed to measure adaptive leadership presence. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings were discussed emphasizing on the opportunity this test poses for recruitment and selection processes for leadership positions in changing environments, and how this study could help identify adaptive leadership profiles in other contexts.

Keywords: adaptive leadership, change management, context

DEDICATION

A mami, mama, abu y bisa... que, por ser mujeres, les tocó dejar algunos sueños a mitad. Esto es por ustedes y todas nuestras ancestras para quienes la educación era un derecho inasequible. Ustedes y ellas son el motor de mi tenacidad.

To mami, mama, abu, and bisa... who, due to being women, had to leave some dreams unfulfilled. This is for you and all our female ancestors for whom education was an unattainable right. All of you are the engine of my tenacity.

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And thank you to my close family and friends for being my support system throughout this process.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON CHANGE MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“Change is a migration from the current situation to a desired future situation” (Metz, 2021, p.612). Organizations worldwide are constantly experiencing periods of change, driven by internal and external forces. Jun Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) emphasize that, without leadership, change cannot be generated in organizations. Thus, managing change must be a top priority as an organizational leader.

The literature presents organizations as complex adaptive systems (Bohórquez, 2013) that seek to emerge from crises to achieve evolution. Therefore, it is important to develop in individuals a set of characteristics that will help organizations take a proactive position toward change where all resources, including human resources, are used to evolve. Doing this requires a set of individuals to take the lead during unusual circumstances, which is why fostering leadership is essential.

Within this context, in times of change, it is crucial to consider a specific leadership style. For example, adaptive leadership is one type that mobilizes people and organizations during challenges since each new scenario requires new strategies, skills, and ways of leading (Heifetz et al., 2009). Consequently, the adaptive leadership theoretical framework will be used to guide this study and its impact on change management. To study the role of adaptive leadership in change management processes, the question to be answered is: Do statistically significant differences exist between participants in formal management roles and participants in non-management roles in a test that measures adaptive leadership during change processes? Driven by this question, this study's aims are 1) to develop an instrument to measure adaptive leadership that can be useful in contexts of change and 2) to explore the presence of adaptive leadership in

participants in management roles versus non-management roles. The study will follow three (3) hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 states that there will be statistically significant differences between participants in management roles and participants in non-management roles in the adaptive leadership instrument scores, and participants in management roles will score higher than participants in non-management roles. Hypothesis 2 states that there will be statistically significant differences between participants in management roles and participants in non-management roles in the self-evaluation score of effective management of change processes. Hypothesis 3 states that there will be a statistically significant positive correlation between the adaptive leadership instrument score and the self-evaluation score of effective management of change processes.

Research Justification and Significance

In an uncertain and complex world, it is important to be flexible enough to adapt to day-to-day circumstances. Puerto Rico has experienced multiple periods of change over the past five years (2017-2022). External forces such as Hurricanes Irma and María in September 2017, a seismic swarm in January 2020, the effects of the global pandemic since March 2020, Hurricane Fiona in September 2022, and the ongoing economic inflation have impacted the way most organizations operate. Different contexts suggest other events that drive change in organizations depending on geographical, political, sociological, or other factors.

Additionally, internal forces such as transformations in structure, culture, or operations drive change within organizations. Therefore, this study proposes adaptive leadership to deal with change so that organizations can take a proactive approach toward uncertainty. It is important to foster a culture of adaptability to not only survive but also thrive during adverse circumstances.

This study will potentially contribute to leadership development and change management with a practical approach. The transferability of the proposed test supposes a great advantage to recruitment processes for leadership roles. Even though this study focuses on organizations in Puerto Rico and the characteristics needed to manage change in its specific context, it may serve as a guideline for organizations in other countries dealing with internal or external change and uncertainty. Said organizations may benefit from the approach taken in this study, while they may also identify new characteristics or resources that may be useful for change management. Adapting to change should be a priority for leaders because, even when external circumstances are normal, internal forces across organizations may demand change. This study will portray the benefits of doing so.

Theoretical Framework

“Mobilizing people to meet their immediate adaptive challenges lies at the heart of leadership in the short term” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p.17). This study will use the concept of adaptive leadership proposed by Heifetz et al. (2009) as a theoretical framework to explore the transferability of adaptive characteristics to change management. The concept of adaptive leadership is defined by Heifetz et al. (2009, p.14) as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” and aims to find new ways to ensure growth amid challenges and discard old methods and techniques that do not correlate with the current reality. This type of leadership differs from traditional leadership styles since it requires learning to attend to every different scenario. Therefore, it is fitting to approach change management from an adaptive leadership perspective.

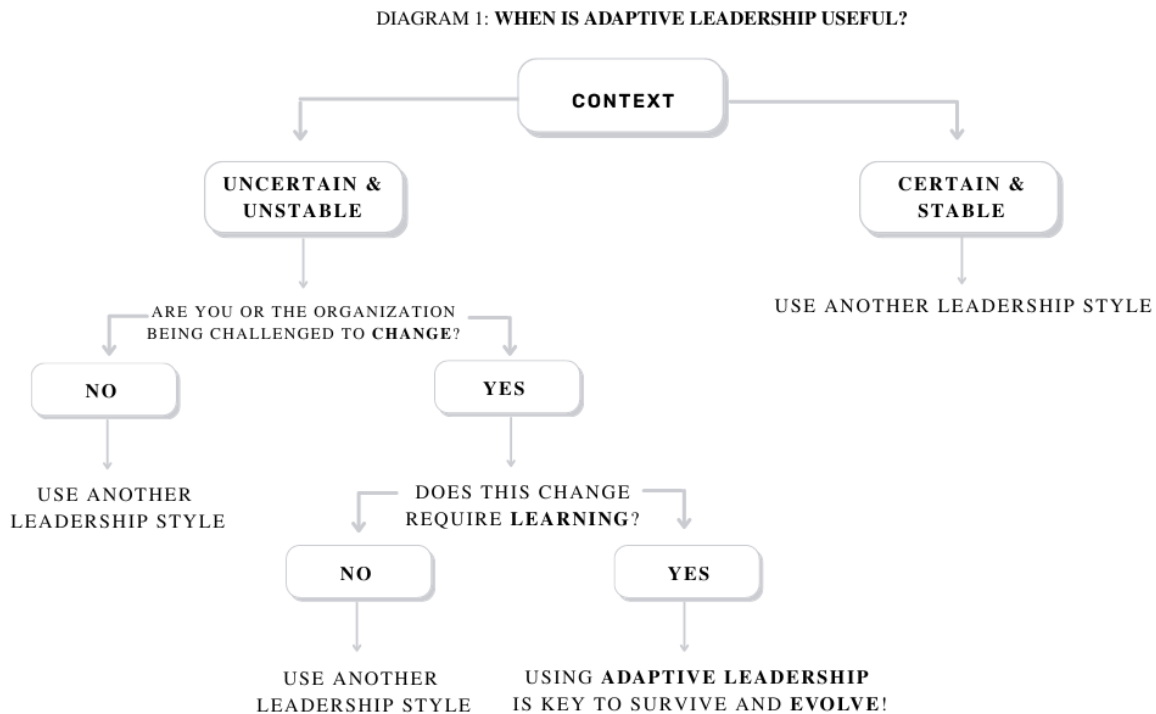
It is important to point out that adaptive leadership is useful in contexts of uncertainty; however, when approaching periods of stability, other leadership styles are more beneficial.

Since this study is interested in understanding periods of change, this conceptual framework will be used. Still, its findings must not be generalized to all contexts and organizational periods.

Figure 1 explains in which contexts is this style of leadership useful. However, the concept of adaptive leadership will be discussed in more detail in the Literature Review section.

Figure 1

Diagram of When is Adaptive Leadership Useful



Literature Review

To understand the nature of leadership, it is crucial to understand the nature of power and its essential foundations, which are motivations and resources (Mercedes, 1989). Mercedes (1989) defines power as the basic energy needed to initiate and continue action translating it into

reality. Therefore, she emphasizes that leaders can not act without power. In other words, power and leadership are reciprocal, according to her, and thus, leadership is the correct use of power.

In tune with that statement, Escandon-Barbosa and Hurtado-Ayala (2016) highlight the value that leaders bring to organizations and, contemplating the definition of leadership from different authors, state that leadership is the ability to influence others towards achieving specific desired goals. They also argue that leadership comes into play in the organization to be able to cope with changes in the business, including social, cultural, and political changes. Even though the general concept of leadership captures power and influence, Escandon-Barbosa and Hurtado-Ayala (2016) sustain that the variety of existing leadership definitions in recent literature leads to different conceptions and models of this concept.

House and Aditya (1997) reviewed the history of the social scientific study of leadership and analyzed the contributions of the four main theories and paradigms: trait, behavioral, contingency, and neocharismatic. Historically, research began with the traits and characteristics that differentiate leaders from others. However, this approach fell short in terms of theory as finding universal traits associated with leadership was not effective. Hence, efforts were made to focus on an interactional approach between traits and the situational context faced by the leader. As a result, trait theory suggested that while there are several traits that consistently differentiate leaders from non-leaders, said traits are enhanced depending on how relevant the traits are to the situation faced. Lastly, these traits are more influential in situations where the expression of individual dispositions is permitted (House & Aditya, 1997).

Aiming to gain distance from trait theory, leaders were later studied by their behavior. In turn, leaders were separated into two groups: task-oriented and people-oriented. However, this theory had very little focus on the leader's context, limiting its perspective. To reconcile this,

contingency theories were later developed and a higher emphasis on the situational context was placed. One example is Fiedler's Contingency Theory that emphasized the interaction between the leader's personality and behavior where situational control played a key role. Lastly, the most recent theories are grouped into Charismatic Theories aiming to explain how leaders guide their organizations into outstanding accomplishments achieving follower motivation, respect, loyalty, and performance while stressing symbolic and emotionally appealing behaviors, such as risk taking and adaptability (House & Aditya, 1997).

There are many leadership styles in recent literature that are useful in particular contexts, therefore, it is important to specify what type of leadership we are referring to. For example, according to Escandon-Barbosa & Hurtado-Ayala (2016), participative leadership supposes that every individual in an organization influences collective goals, while democratic leadership presents a leader and his or her subordinates sharing power. On the other hand, autocratic leadership focuses on performance rather than on people. In contrast, liberal leadership focuses on allowing members to be free and not interfering with their work unless it is requested (Escandon-Barbosa & Hurtado-Ayala, 2016). There are plenty leadership theories and styles in recent literature, however, it is evident that each leadership style has a particular approach, and it is important to consider that each approach presents different benefits and limitations that will depend on the context in which they are being put to use. Since this study focuses on leaders managing change and uncertainty, the adaptive leadership style would be beneficial because it focuses on evolving from challenges. Considering the previously mentioned paradigms, it could be stated that, even though the adaptive leadership style is highly contextual, there are several dispositional traits and behaviors that allow an individual to act with charismatic adaptability to effectively lead others in times of change.

Adaptive Leadership

Heifetz et al. (2009, p.14) define adaptive leadership as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.” Thriving stems from evolutionary biology and DNA’s successful adaptation process, which encompasses three characteristics: (i) preserving the DNA for survival, (ii) regulating or rearranging the DNA that no longer serves the current needs, and (iii) creating DNA arrangements to flourish in challenging environments. Thus, Heifetz et al. (2009) state that a successful adaptation enables a system to carry the best from its history into its future. Hence, it can be said that the goal of adaptive leadership is to find growth opportunities amid challenges and discard old methods and techniques that do not correlate with the present reality (Hernández-Santiago & Pérez-Rivera, 2022).

Having said that, it is relevant to highlight that the skillset of adaptive leadership in organizations is more specific than the general leadership concept. Heifetz et al. (2009) identified five characteristics that make some organizations more adaptive than others. These are: (i) addressing elephants in the room, (ii) shared responsibility towards the organization’s future, (iii) independent judgment is expected, (iv) leadership capacity is developed, and (v) reflection and continuous learning are institutionalized.

They emphasized that, in adaptive organizations, no issue is too sensitive not to be discussed, and difficult questions are expected to be brought up to identify crises early and manage them successfully. Also, responsibilities towards the organization's future go beyond formal roles and structures, and thus, cross-functional problem-solving is common. Additionally, executives and managers are not expected to have all the answers and therefore encourage employees to judge situations independently to the best of their ability. A healthy pipeline of leaders is also developed, and lastly, adaptive capacity requires constant learning of new ways to perform work.

Openness to learning is critical to overcoming adaptive challenges, which often leads to experimentation. This enables the possibility of failing; however, failing is not punished but instead used as an opportunity to find the best practices and gain wisdom. Therefore, personnel with different roles within the organization continuously learn from each other (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Since adaptive leadership aims to foster these five characteristics to evolve from crises, it is crucial to implement it in contexts of change and uncertainty as it requires constant action and experimentation. For example, a study in Colombia demonstrated the strong relationship between adaptive leadership and the success of the electricity sector in that country (Santiago, 2021). Similarly, in Puerto Rico, Hernández-Santiago and Pérez-Rivera (2022) studied the contributions of this leadership style to successfully face their country's changing realities, including hurricanes, earthquakes, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They performed interviews with executives pertaining to the Food Industry in Puerto Rico to identify the presence of the five characteristics of successful adaptive leadership in organizations. It was found that four out of the five characteristics of successful organizations were present in at least 50% of the participating companies, which resulted in a successful adaptation after the events studied. Stemming on their study, they developed a profile of eight characteristics to consider when recruiting and selecting influential leaders in Puerto Rico: (i) ability to lead tough conversations, (ii) ability to adapt to change, (iii) ability to admit and learn from mistakes, (iv) ability to make fast decisions, (v) ability to serve as an example, (vi) being a good communicator, (vii) being flexible, and (viii) being able to manage crises. These examples demonstrate the utility of adaptive leadership and its practical implications. However, it can not be ignored that no leader

can manage all circumstances and, therefore, each scenario calls for different leaders and leadership styles.

Adaptive Performance

Job performance is “the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time” (Mottowildo, 2003, p. 39). Taking into account that this value may change over time, especially during periods of change, it is important to consider the concept of adaptive performance. “Because employees’ ability to adapt has become extremely critical, organizations need to manage and improve their adaptive performance in addition to their everyday task performance” (Park & Park, 2019, p.295).

Park & Park (2019) define adaptive performance as flexible work behaviors that facilitate employees’ process of adapting to change through problem-solving techniques, crisis control, new learning, and adaptability related to people, culture, and environment. However, Pulakos et al. (2000) emphasize that, until the job performance requirements are not understood, adaptive performance attributes needed to execute the said job, can not be determined. Therefore, they developed a taxonomy of adaptive job performance that consisted of eight (8) dimensions.

The first one is *handling emergencies or crisis situations* which refers to the ability to react with the appropriate urgency in situations of emergency and analyzing options in a timely manner to make clear decisions in order to attend the emergency while remaining emotionally controlled. The second dimension is *handling work stress* defined as remaining composed under difficult and demanding situations and calmly coming up with solutions. The third one refers to *solving problems creatively* which means, according to Pulakos et al. (2000), generating new innovative ideas thinking outside the given parameters to explore other approaches and

possibilities. The fourth dimension is *dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations* and refers to the ability to take action even without having to know the total picture while effectively adjusting plans and actions and not being paralysed throughout uncertainty. The fifth one is *learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures* and emphasizes enthusiasm for learning new approaches to conduct work and also taking action in improving performance deficiencies. The sixth dimension refers to *demonstrating interpersonal adaptability* and alludes to being open-minded and flexible to develop relationships with others that may have diverse personalities and thus, tailoring one's behavior to work more effectively with others. The seventh one demonstrates *cultural adaptability* and focuses on understanding, integrating and being comfortable with other individuals or group's climates, orientations, needs and values in order to maintain positive relationships with them. Lastly, the eighth dimension demonstrates *physically oriented adaptability* and encompasses the ability to adjust to challenging environments, including extreme heat or cold, for example, depending on the job (Pulakos et al., 2000).

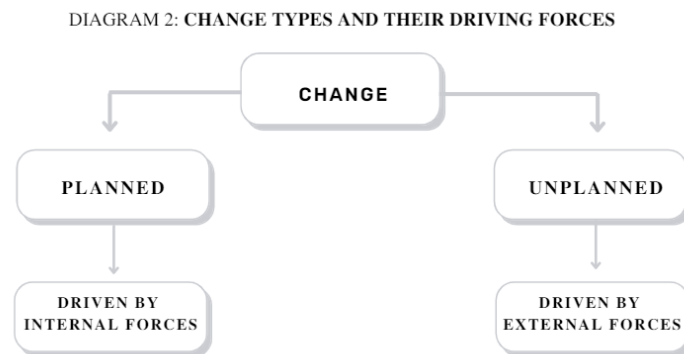
These eight dimensions constitute an adaptive performance framework that helps understand the specificities of adaptability in different jobs and roles. It is important to note that these are general to any managerial and non-managerial role. However, Graddick and Lane (1998) state that, given the complexity of leadership roles, assessing and evaluating a leader's performance keeps becoming more relevant. Therefore, even though the adaptive performance framework supposes a very useful baseline, developing a framework for adaptive leadership performance will be beneficial, especially for leader's managing periods of change.

Change Management

Change requires dismantling or restructuring organizational aspects such as structures, hierarchies, culture, and strategies, to give place to more flexible work models that will accommodate the potential issues arising out of resistance to change, according to Awoke (2020, cited by Metz, 2021). Change usually follows one of these outcomes: individual change, group change or system change (Sandelands, 2010 cited by Metz, 2021). However, change can sometimes be planned, while in other occasions it can be a reaction to a specific situation, thus making it unplanned change. This usually depends on the driving force of change which can be both internal and external. Diagram 2 helps put this into perspective. The difference is that internal changes arise due to the desires or needs of the organization itself, so there is more time to prepare and carry out a planned change process. In contrast, external forces come from outside the organization, and therefore the time to plan for change is reduced. These two change scenarios are very different; however, both are likely to occur. Therefore, understanding their differences is important to approach them correctly.

Figure 2

Diagram of Change Types and Their Driving Forces



Cumming and Worley (2005) discuss the theories of planned change since they mention they are the core of organizational development. These include Lewin's Change Model, which consists of unfreezing the organization's current state, performing the necessary movement to create change, and finally refreezing the organization's new state to reach equilibrium. They also discuss the Action Research Model, that consists of eight steps: (i) problem identification, (ii) consultation with a behavioral science expert, (iii) data gathering and preliminary diagnosis, (iv) feedback to a client or group, (v) joint diagnosis of the problem, (vi) joint action planning, (vii) action, and lastly (viii) data gathering after action. These first two models are deficit-based and focus on the organization's problems. Finally, Cumming and Worley (2005) discuss the Positive Model, which diverges from the first two since it focuses on what the organization is doing right and introduces the concept of appreciative inquiry. This model encompasses five steps: (i) initiate the inquiry, (ii) inquire into best practices, (iii) discover the themes, (iv) envision a preferred future, and (v) design and deliver. Based on these three models, Cumming and Worley (2005) developed a framework of planned change that consists of entering and contracting, diagnosing, planning and implementing change, and lastly, evaluating and institutionalizing change.

Even though the theories of planned change are very useful, some changes come unexpectedly and without precedent. In these cases, a rapid response is necessary to attend to the new scenarios. These usually require a high sense of adaptability. For these, an implementation bridge is necessary to be able to move from the current practice to the desired practice without having to take a giant leap (Hall & Hord, 2006).

As mentioned, whether change is planned or not relies upon what drives change. Anderson and Ackerman (2010), present said drivers. These can be from internal or external

forces, and are summarized in this model of seven drivers: (i) environment, (ii) marketplace requirements for success, (iii) business imperatives, (iv) organizational imperatives, (v) cultural imperatives, (vi) leader and employee behavior, and (vii) leader and employee mindset. This model helps identify the type of change presented and define the necessary actions to take to achieve a specific outcome. However, Hall and Hord (2006) emphasize that no matter if the change comes from internal or external forces, its success relies on the culture of the organization and its openness and readiness to examine ways to improve.

According to research by the Association for Talent Development (Habbert, 2022, p.5), two-thirds of organizations expect the number of change initiatives to increase in the next five years. More specifically, they state that the biggest motivators for change were growth, the COVID-19 pandemic, and technology changes. Following Anderson and Ackerman's (2010) model, it can be said that growth is either a marketplace requirement for success, an organizational imperative, or a part of the leader and employee mindset. This is an example that, to identify the action plan for change, the driver for change must be determined.

Another example is from the particular context of Puerto Rico, where, in addition to the global COVID-19 pandemic, events such as hurricanes and earthquakes have ongoingly affected the island since 2017 and have forced organizations to change (Hernández-Santiago & Pérez-Rivera, 2022). In this case, the environment is the main driver of change. However, in other cases, willingness to grow, the desire to change the culture or structure in an organization, or wanting to be up to date with recent technology may also internally drive change.

The Association for Talent Development (Ketter, 2020) states that once change has been initiated, it follows a non-linear path to respond to uncertainties, reactions, and guidance from those involved. Due to this, workers need to be increasingly adaptable, versatile, and tolerant of

uncertainty to operate effectively in these changing and varied environments (Pulakos, et al., 2000). Graddick and Lane (1998) mention that, if handled correctly, change can create amazing opportunities. However, if managed poorly, it can be devastating for the organization. That is why effective change management is vital since it aims to achieve the desired outcome while also attending the transition stages that the change process entails, according to Metz (2021).

The role of leadership in change management

The human resources of organizations are an essential part of organizational change, while simultaneously the biggest obstacle in achieving it. This is why leadership is a crucial element for successful change (Ajmal, 2012). Leaders are the agents that drive innovation to manage changes in the desired direction. Trujillo (2019) argues that leaders must motivate change in their workers so that they can contribute to the solutions that meet the needs and realities that arise daily in organizations. Meanwhile, Peña-Acuña (2021) encourages leaders to empower employees to take co-responsibility in these processes.

Leaders have a very important role in organizations since, if they seek to generate change and innovation, they must choose the best strategies to manage change. The different scenarios will require different approaches. However, Kotter (2007) summarizes eight steps leaders should take on a general level to transform their organizations: (i) establish a sense of urgency, (ii) forming a powerful guiding coalition, (iii) creating a vision, (iv) communicating the vision, (v) empowering others to act on the vision, (vi) planning for and creating short-term wins, (vii) consolidating improvements and producing still more change, and lastly, (viii) institutionalizing new approaches.

In a more specific level, adaptive leadership better attends change since its proponents state that “new environments and new dreams demand new strategies and abilities, as well as the leadership to mobilize them” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 2). In tune with that statement, Hernández-Santiago & Pérez-Rivera (2022) demonstrated the relevance of having adaptive capacity as a leader by undergoing a study to identify which of the five (5) characteristics of adaptive leadership in organizations proposed by Heifetz et al. (2009) were present in periods of change in Puerto Rico. They found that four of the five characteristics were present in at least 50% of the participating organizations and the most prevalent characteristics was “reflection and continuous learning are institutionalized” that was present in 100% of the participating organizations. Even though these results can not be generalized, it can be said that the adaptive leadership framework sets a baseline for change management processes. However, it is likely that this particular framework will be more useful depending on the type of change and what its driver is.

It is important to emphasize the characteristic of institutionalizing learning since it will foster a receptive culture within the organization that will most likely prepare it for change. Even though all the adaptive leadership characteristics would promote a more straightforward adaptation to change, it should be known that no leader can manage all circumstances. Thus, even though adaptive leadership is crucial to managing a complex and changing context, other leadership styles may better attend periods of stability (Hernández-Santiago & Pérez-Rivera, 2022).

Since the success of a change process hugely depends on a leader’s performance and approach to change, it can be said that the work that leaders perform is often the most uncertain and unstructured while also arguably the most important, according to Graddick and Lane (1998). Therefore, Kotter (2007) states that managers may be tempted to declare victory with

the first clear performance improvement. However, “while celebrating a win is fine, declaring the war won can be catastrophic” because it ceases action, and action is essential to empower team members while also maintaining the credibility of the change effort (Kotter, 2007, p.102). Thus, a proactive approach can help adapt to change. In conclusion, success can be achieved by fostering an open mindset that understands the malleability of leadership and takes into account the necessities of the present situation (Hernández-Santiago & Pérez-Rivera, 2022).

CHAPTER II: METHODS

Research Design

A correlational study was developed, which according to Hernández-Sampieri et al. (2006), is a type of research that associates variables using a predictable pattern for a group or population. These studies usually have the purpose of knowing the relationship or degree of association that exists between the variables. This helps predict the approximate value that a group of individuals or cases will have in a variable based on the value of one or more related variables. In this particular case, the study aimed to understand the correlation between adaptive leadership and change management.

To do so, an instrument to measure adaptive leadership in contexts of change was developed. This way, it could be determined if the adaptive leadership framework is useful to organizations experiencing change, particularly in the context of Puerto Rico. For this, a quantitative methodology was used where a test was administered to two groups with the goal of identifying statistically significant differences between them. More details will be provided in the following sections.

Methodology

This study followed a quantitative methodology which Hernández-Sampieri et al. (2006, p.5) define as “using data collection to test hypotheses based on numerical measurement and statistical analysis, to establish behavior patterns and test theories.” They established that a quantitative study states a clear and specific problem and establishes a hypothesis to put to the test. If the hypothesis were to be proven correct, the results would serve as evidence that supports

the problem. To test a hypothesis, numeric data must be collected, and results must be analyzed using statistical procedures. Adopting a quantitative method for this study allowed for numerical data to prove if adaptive leadership characteristics are helpful in managing change in the context of Puerto Rico.

It is important to consider that the research design and procedures were selected, taking into account the time limitations faced by this particular study. Thus, even though this problem could be studied from different approaches, the one presented below was the more adequate and practical for this scenario while still allowing for relevant results to be obtained.

Participants

The sample size for this study was $N= 103$ ($n= 52$ for Group A, the non-management group, and $n= 51$ for Group B, the management group). Group A corresponds to participants in non-management roles, and Group B corresponds to participants in management roles. This way, a comparison was made between their scores in the adaptive leadership test. The general inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) being at least 21 years of age, (2) having a formal employment role in Puerto Rico, (3) having access to an electronic device with an internet connection, and (4) knowing how to read in Spanish.

More specifically, the inclusion criteria for Group A was: (1) have never been in a formal leadership role in their organization, and (2) have experienced a period of change during their current role like, for example, a hurricane, a pandemic, an earthquakes, a change in culture or structure, technology changes, among others. For Group B, the inclusion criteria were: (1) being in a formal leadership role in their organization for at least one year, which can be as a team leader, supervisor, manager, or executive, and (2) having managed or lead a period of change

during their current role like, for example, a hurricane, a pandemic, an earthquakes, a change in culture or structure, technology changes, among others. Participants that did not meet the criteria for any of the groups were excluded from the study.

Research Instrument

A test titled *Profile of adaptive leadership in times of change in Puerto Rico* was developed to measure adaptive leadership presence in participants that experienced or managed periods of change. The construct used was adaptive leadership which Heifetz et al. (2009, p. 14) define as "the practice of mobilizing people to meet difficult challenges and thrive." The concept of adaptive leadership aims to find new ways to ensure growth amid challenges and discard old methods and techniques that do not correlate with the current reality. The test dimensions were based on a study performed by Hernández-Santiago and Pérez-Rivera (2022) with leaders in Puerto Rico where they identified eight (8) characteristics leaders should have to adapt and manage change. The test dimensions are defined below:

1. Ability to manage difficult conversations: Being able to effectively manage conversations whose outcome can have a great impact on relationships or results that affect the individual or the organization (Grenny, et al., 2022).
2. Adaptation to change (hyperlearning): The human capacity to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn to adapt to the speed of change (Hess, 2020).
3. Admitting and learning from mistakes: Learning from mistakes involves acknowledging that unexpected and unintended effects have occurred and leads to reflecting on these experiences to reduce the likelihood of their occurrence in the future (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001 cited en Tjosvold, et al., 2004).

4. Decision-making ability: Knowing what to do in a particular situation and identifying how to carry out that action (Noyes, Cook & Masakowshi, 2007).
5. Set an example: Leaders demonstrate character by modeling values, adhering to principles, and upholding both in their daily routines (Baldoni, 2008).
6. Effective communication: It is the tool with which we influence others, cause changes in the attitudes and opinions of our associates, motivate them, and establish and maintain relationships with them (Rai & Rai, 2008).
7. Flexibility: Having the ability to understand that it is necessary to adapt to circumstances in order to achieve better results and, therefore, organizational designs must be easily modifiable (Neufville & Scholtes, 2011).
8. Crisis Management: Minimizing the harmful effects of a crisis event using limited resources under extreme time constraints (Waryjas, 1999).

Based on this construct and its dimensions, preliminary items were developed to build the test. Seven items were added in each dimension, considering the possibility that due to the content validity results, at least three had to be eliminated. Therefore, the original test consisted of 56 items. The scale used was Likert-type due to its simplicity and because it allowed numerical assignment to non-quantifiable phenomena.

The test then went through a content validation process with 10 judges. These were six (6) Professors in Psychology or Management, one (1) Graduate student in Organizational Psychology, and three (3) Practitioner Psychologists in industry roles. For an item to be accepted, at least eight (8) judges had to categorize it as essential, which, using Lawshe's formula, results in a content validity ratio of 0.6 or more. In the case of those dimensions where more than four items met this criterion, the final selection was based on the judges' comments.

The final test is composed of 32 items, four in each dimension. Each item is affirmative, and participants can assign a value ranging from one (1) to four (4), where one means to no extent, two means to some extent, three means almost completely, and four means completely.

Therefore, the maximum score on the test could be 128.

The test was digitized, and a question to measure the change management abilities was added where, after mentioning the type of changes the participant has undergone, he or she would rate their change management effectiveness on a scale of one to five (1 to 5). Adding this question allowed me to perform a correlation analysis between adaptive leadership and change management.

Also, a section to collect sociodemographic information was included. The intention for this particular study is for the test to be self-administered, where each participant will evaluate his or her performance in each of the dimensions. This is due to practicality since there is a time limitation for this study. However, the test has another version where another individual can evaluate and administer the test to the participant. The latter represents an advantage for recruitment processes.

Research Procedure

This study consisted of three (3) phases. The first phase was the instrument development and validation phase, already described in the prior section. Then, the study's proposal and the instrument were submitted for the approval of the Institutional Review Board. Once the approval was obtained, the second phase consisting of the data collection process, took place. For this, the promotional material was shared through social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook,

and Whatsapp to potential participants through academic and professional groups of people that would be likely to meet the criteria. In addition, some professional organizations were contacted to see if they were willing to share the information with their employees and customers that also met the participating criteria. Five organizations agreed to do so, and thus, the desired participation rate was achieved. It is important to note that, even though some support from organizations was received, since the participation was anonymous, the identity of the individual and the organization they work for, remained unknown.

Each participation was voluntary, and each participant virtually signed a consent. Once at least 100 participants completed the test, a screening process took place to ensure all participants met the inclusion criterion. The total of participants resulted in 105; however, two responses had to be discarded due to incongruences in their responses (i.e., one indicated they did not have a management role but later on reported that they were an executive, and one indicated that they had not undergone any period of change which was part of the inclusion criteria). Hence, the total participation was $N= 103$.

After said screening process was conducted, the third and final phase of analyzing the data with the SPSS program took place. The results will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Data Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed using the SPSS program. The goal was to compare both groups to detect if a statistically significant difference existed between them in the adaptive leadership and change management scores. For hypotheses 1 and 2, a t-test was conducted to compare the management and non-management groups, whereas, for hypothesis 3, Pearson's

correlation was calculated. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the internal consistency of the test.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

The sample size for this study was $N= 103$ ($n= 52$ for the non-management group, $n= 51$ for the management group). For said sample, 80% were women, and 20% were men. The average age of the participants was 40.8 years. Also, the average time in the organization was 10.8 years, while the average time in the current role was 6.8 years. The majority of the sample (91%) has completed at least a Bachelor's degree or more. The predominant company size was large organizations (57%), and the main industries were service and education. Lastly, the average of change processes faced by the sample was four (4), with the pandemic and Hurricane Fiona being the most predominant.

A Cronbach alpha reliability analysis was conducted to examine the internal consistency of the adaptive leadership scale and its dimensions. The scale presented a high internal consistency with a reliability score of $\alpha=.963$. All dimensions presented high internal consistency as well (ability to manage difficult conversations, $\alpha=.818$; hyper learning or adapting to change, $\alpha=.816$; admit and learn from mistakes, $\alpha=.846$; decision-making capability, $\alpha=.873$; ability to serve as an example, $\alpha=.877$; effective communication, $\alpha=.809$; flexibility, $\alpha=.865$; crisis management, $\alpha=.856$).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be statistically significant differences between participants in management roles and participants in non-management roles in the adaptive leadership instrument scores and that participants in management roles would score higher than participants in non-management roles. This hypothesis was supported. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the adaptive leadership scores of the management and non-management groups. According to Levene's test of equality of variance, results showed that equal variances are assumed ($F= .203$, $p= .653$). The descriptive statistics results showed that

the mean for the management group was $\bar{x}= 112.392$, and for the non-management group was $\bar{x}= 105.308$. The results showed statistically significant differences between participants in non-management and management roles in their adaptive leadership scores ($t= -2.582, p= .012$), and the participant group had a medium effect size ($d= -.505$) on the adaptive leadership score.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be statistically significant differences between participants in management roles and participants in non-management roles in the self-evaluation score of effective management of change processes. This hypothesis was not supported.

According to Levene's test of equality of variance, equal variances are assumed ($F= .888, p= .348$). The descriptive statistics results showed that the mean for both groups was the same (management group, $\bar{x}= 4.12$ and non-management group, $\bar{x}= 4.12$). The results did not show statistically significant differences between participants in non-management and management roles in their change management scores ($t= -.015, p= .988$), and the participant group had an effect size of $d= -.003$ on the change management score.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be a statistically significant positive correlation between the adaptive leadership instrument score and the self-evaluation score of effective management of change processes. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Results showed a moderate positive correlation ($r= .342, p=.001$) between adaptive leadership and change management.

Further correlation analyses were conducted, and the results are shown in Table 1. As expected, age, time in the organization, time in role, and amount of changes experienced in the organization all positively correlated with one another. However, as could be predicted, the amount of changes experienced positively correlated with the change management score.

Nevertheless, none of the other variables correlated with the change management and adaptive leadership scores.

Table 1

Relevant correlations

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	-				
2. Time in organization	0.760**	-			
3. Time in role	0.639**	0.770**	-		
4. Amount of changes	0.499**	0.432**	0.291**	-	
5. Change management score	0.184	0.203*	0.127	0.234*	-
6. Adaptive leadership score	0.054	-0.039	-0.042	0.014	0.342**

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

After performing this study, several findings can be highlighted. First of all, the high internal consistency of the test leads to the conclusion that the test titled *Profile of adaptive leadership in times of change in Puerto Rico* is highly consistent in actually measuring the adaptive leadership presence in its participants in the context studied. However, further analysis such as performing criterion and construct validation could help determine the psychometric properties of the test. Second of all, two out of the three hypotheses were supported, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Hypothesis support

	Level of support
Hypothesis 1: There will be statistically significant differences between participants in management roles and participants in non-management roles in the adaptive leadership instrument scores. Participants in management roles will score higher than participants in non-management roles.	fully supported
Hypothesis 2: There will be statistically significant differences between participants in management roles and participants in non-management roles in the auto-evaluation score of effective management of change processes.	not supported
Hypothesis 3: There will be a statistically significant positive correlation between the adaptive leadership instrument score and the auto-evaluation score of effective management of change processes.	fully supported

The support of Hypothesis 1 could help imply that organizational leaders, regardless of the level of leadership (team leader, supervisor, manager, or executive), further develop a set of characteristics like the eight assessed in this study in comparison to non-leaders. However, it is still unclear whether having said characteristics led them to a management role or whether having a management role helped them develop such characteristics. It is possible that some or

most of these characteristics were already present in these individuals, but having a managerial role helped them master them. Of course, it all varies by individual; however, the hypothesis supported the idea that individuals with managerial roles have a higher presence of adaptive leadership characteristics.

In terms of Hypothesis 2, no differences were found between both groups regarding the effective change management scores. This could be due to various reasons. First, the change management construct was measured with just one item, which limited the measurement of this variable. Second of all, the item was self-evaluated; hence, limitations were faced. Lastly, it must be considered that this study and test were developed for the population of Puerto Rico, where managing change has almost become a requirement for surviving in said context. This is due to the multiple changes and crises that Puerto Rico has recently faced that have shaped how individuals and organizations behave; thus, most have learned how to adapt and overcome periods of change and uncertainty, and that most definitely impacted these results. This means that, regardless of the role, change management is a predominant skill in the population studied. It can not be denied that other unmentioned factors may still be impacting the change management score. Therefore, further research is needed.

Regarding Hypothesis 3, the positive correlation found between adaptive leadership and change management leads to the conclusion that to manage change, adaptive leadership characteristics should be fostered. This is a very relevant finding, especially in the context studied, as it could lead to practical implications where pieces of training on managing change through adaptive leadership skills could be developed.

Other correlation analyses showed (see Table 1) that the differences in the adaptive leadership score are not due to demographics like age, time in the organization, or the time in the

role but rather due to whether or not they had a leadership role and other individual differences. This finding strengthens the validity of the adaptive leadership instrument.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

These results present some theoretical and practical implications. In terms of theory, the profile of eight characteristics of adaptive leadership in Puerto Rico developed by Hernández-Santiago & Pérez-Rivera (2022) was proven to measure adaptive leadership presence and also enable successful change management in the context studied. This means that, in addition to the original five characteristics of adaptive leadership in organizations proposed by Heifetz et al. (2009), a more specific profile has now been developed for organizational leaders overcoming change in Puerto Rico. This can serve as an example to develop leadership profiles in other contexts taking into account different realities and demands. In other words, cultural adaptations of this profile could unfold. Leadership is a very broad concept; however, when contextualized, relevant theories and frameworks could be developed that could hopefully translate to practical scenarios.

In an always-changing environment like Puerto Rico's, these theoretical implications represent a good opportunity for leadership development in practice. For example, from a reactive perspective, this profile can guide pieces of training where each of these characteristics could be fostered and further developed, especially when internal changes are forecasted or when external changes are taking place. Trainings on Effective Change Management through Adaptive Leadership, Fostering an Adaptive Culture, The Benefits of Hyperlearning, and many others could be very useful.

Additionally, from a proactive perspective, the study's instrument can be used as a tool for recruitment and selection processes. Combined with other selection strategies, this test could help identify candidates with a high level of adaptability to undertake leadership roles during periods of organizational change. Different versions of the test are available where it could be self-administered or administered by a rater. For recruitment processes, the latter is advised. This test could be administered to both internal and external candidates; however, it would probably work best with internal candidates as the rater can gather more information from the candidate's adaptive capabilities in real scenarios in comparison to an external candidate where the point of reference would be the information gathered through interviews, assessments, and other portions of the recruitment process. Even though some challenges present themselves, this instrument poses an excellent opportunity for assessing adaptive leadership presence and predicting performance in change management processes.

Limitations

Even though this study presented really good results, it still faced some limitations. To facilitate the logistics of the data collection process, the test was self-administered. The decision to do so was taken considering that, for a rater to evaluate an individual, consent from both would have to be received, and the rater would have to know the identity of the ratee. This would require the time disposition of the rater and the openness for the ratee of being assessed. However, raters would not have received the proper training to perform the assessment, and, depending on the relationship between them and the ratees, results could be biased, unfair, or inaccurate. Also, since the internal consistency of the test had not been analyzed prior to the administration of the test, it was decided that self-administration would be the best option to not harm any participants throughout the process and not interfere with their job performance

assessments. Hence, the risk of participants facing interpretation issues or dishonest answers through self-administration was assumed, which represents a limitation. When the test results were to influence important organizational decisions in the future, such as serving as a recruitment criterion, the test could be administered by a properly trained rater since the internal consistency of the test has now been calculated.

Additionally, the sample size was appropriate to perform the study. However, having a larger sample could increase the accuracy and generalizability of the results. Thus, the sample size reached represents a limitation, and it is recommended to replicate the study with a larger sample.

Recommendations

Similarly, since the study focused on Puerto Rico's population, it is also recommended to replicate the study in other contexts and countries where new adaptive leadership characteristics could emerge, or current characteristics be discarded for said context. This way, the adaptive leadership literature could be expanded, and cultural differences could be accounted for when using this construct for practical purposes. Also, for a better understanding of how adaptive leadership impacts and correlates with change management, it is recommended that a more exhaustive change management scale is used. Factors impacting effective change management practices additional to leadership and adaptability could be examined in future studies. Lastly, based on the study's results, pieces of training for leaders and potential leaders could be developed so that adaptive leadership is fostered in times of organizational change. These results could also guide the design process of organizational change interventions.

Concluding Remarks

This study met its objectives of developing a test to measure adaptive leadership in contexts of change called *Profile of adaptive leadership in times of change in Puerto Rico*. It was demonstrated that, for the population studied, the eight characteristics and dimensions of adaptive leadership of said test helped individuals overcome change, as a positive correlation was found between both variables. Also, statistically significant differences were registered between leaders and non-leaders in the adaptive leadership score, whereas none were identified in the change management score. The implications of these findings were discussed mainly in the context of Puerto Rico, where recent years have been filled with events that have driven change. However, it is important to note that adaptive leadership is helpful in periods of uncertainty that require organizational learning and change. Thus, neither the concept nor the test should be taken as a universal approach and rather be implemented with intentionality in periods of instability and change, especially when used to advise organizational decisions such as the recruitment of leaders, and contextual factors should always be considered.

As changes continue to unfold at different levels, whether that is at an organization, industry, society, economy, country, or globally, leaders will continue to manage and hopefully overcome change in an effective manner. Hence, even though there is still more to explore regarding the best leadership and change management practices, this study poses a contribution to organizations facing change in Puerto Rico and indirectly in other countries and contexts while at the same time contributing to the current scientific knowledge on adaptive leadership and its benefits for practical work environments.

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APENDIX

I. IRB Authorization

Universidad de
Puerto Rico

COMITÉ INSTITUCIONAL PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS SERES HUMANOS
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AUTORIZACIÓN DEL PROTOCOLO

Número del protocolo: 2223-055

Título del protocolo: El liderazgo adaptativo y su impacto en el manejo de cambio: un estudio correlacional

Investigadora: Nicole Hernández Santiago

Tipo de revisión: Inicial Renovación

Evaluación: Comité en pleno
 Revisión expedita:
Categoría(s) expedita 45 CFR §46.110: 2(iii)



Recinto de
Río Piedras

Fecha de la autorización:

Además, el CIPSHI:

- Concedió la **dispensa** solicitada para modificar el procedimiento estándar de toma de consentimiento informado.

Cualquier modificación posterior a esta autorización requerirá la consideración y reautorización del CIPSHI. Además, debe notificar cualquier incidente adverso o no anticipado que implique a los sujetos o participantes. Al finalizar la investigación, envíe el formulario de Notificación de Terminación de Protocolo.

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II. Letter of Collaboration for Organizations



¡Saludos!

Le escribe Nicole Hernández Santiago, estudiante de maestría en Psicología Industrial-Organizacional en la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras. Actualmente estoy realizando mi estudio de tesis titulado: **El liderazgo adaptativo y su impacto en el manejo de cambio** supervisado por la Dra. Laura Galarza García.

Se espera que este estudio ayude en el desarrollo de una prueba para medir la presencia de liderazgo adaptativo en procesos de cambio y, por ende, sería útil en procesos de reclutamiento para puestos de liderazgo en Puerto Rico. En la promoción podrá encontrar los detalles sobre los requisitos de participación. Resulta importante destacar que existen dos grupos objetivos: individuos con roles formales de liderazgo e individuos sin dicho rol.

El perfil de participantes son individuos mayores de 21 años que trabajen a tiempo completo en una organización en Puerto Rico. Por tanto, considerando que su organización pueda tener contacto con potenciales participantes, **agradeceríamos si pudiera compartir la promoción del estudio ya sea por correo electrónico o a través de sus redes sociales.**

Su colaboración será de gran aportación no tan solo para la ciencia, sino que también para el futuro de las organizaciones en Puerto Rico. Esperamos pueda colaborar y, en el caso de que le surja alguna duda o pregunta, puede contactarse con esta servidora a nicole.hernandez24@upr.edu o al 787 602 4502 o con la supervisora a laura.galarza2@upr.edu.

El enlace al cuestionario es el siguiente <https://forms.gle/wsmrw1fvqZP4JzucA> y adjunto encontrará la promoción oficial con más detalles.

¡Muchísimas gracias!

Cordialmente,

Nicole Hernández Santiago
Investigadora Principal

III. Instrument (Reduced Version)

Constructo: Liderazgo Adaptativo	
Heifetz, Grashow y Linsky (2009, p. 14) definen el liderazgo adaptativo como "la práctica de movilizar a las personas para enfrentar desafíos difíciles y prosperar". El concepto de liderazgo adaptativo tiene como objetivo encontrar nuevas formas de asegurar el crecimiento en medio de los desafíos y descartar métodos y técnicas antiguas que no se correlacionan con la realidad actual.	
Escala Likert: (0) en ninguna medida, (1) en cierta medida, (2) en gran medida, (3) completamente	
Dimensiones (8 x 0.125 = 100%)	Ítems (8 x 4 = 32) Solo se muestra 1 reactivo como ejemplo
Habilidad para manejar conversaciones difíciles: Poder manejar de manera efectiva conversaciones cuyo desenlace puede tener un gran impacto en las relaciones o resultados que afectan al individuo o la organización (Grenny, et al., 2022).	Presento la capacidad para regular mis emociones mientras sostengo conversaciones complejas.
Adaptación al cambio (hyperlearning): La capacidad humana de aprender, desaprender y reaprender continuamente para adaptarse a la velocidad del cambio (Hess, 2020).	Puedo adaptarme con facilidad a los cambios en mi entorno.
Admitir y aprender de los errores: Aprender de los errores implica reconocer que han ocurrido efectos inesperados y no deseados y lleva reflexionar sobre estas experiencias para reducir la probabilidad de que ocurran en el futuro (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001 citado en Tjosvold, et al., 2004).	Admito cuando he cometido un error.
Capacidad para tomar decisiones: La actividad de saber qué hacer en una situación particular e identificar cómo llevar dicha acción a cabo (Noyes, Cook & Masakowshi, 2007).	Me aseguro que mis decisiones sean éticas.
Servir de ejemplo: Los líderes demuestran carácter modelando los valores, respetando los principios y defendiendo ambos en su rutina diaria (Baldoni, 2008).	Modelo el comportamiento que espero de mis supervisados.
Comunicación efectiva: Es la herramienta con la que influimos en los demás, provocamos cambios en las actitudes y opiniones de nuestros asociados, los motivamos y establecemos y mantenemos relaciones con ellos (Rai & Rai, 2008).	Demuestro habilidades de escucha activa.

<p>Flexibilidad: Tener la capacidad de entender que hay que adaptarse a las circunstancias para poder alcanzar mejores resultados y, por ende, los diseños organizacionales deben ser fácilmente modificables (Neufville & Scholtes, 2011).</p>	<p>Puedo modificar mi enfoque según las prioridades del momento.</p>
<p>Manejo de crisis: Minimizar los efectos nocivos de un evento de crisis utilizando recursos limitados bajo limitaciones de tiempo extremas (Waryjas, 1999).</p>	<p>Actúo de manera rápida luego de una crisis.</p>