

Discovering Important Assumptions Underlying Fiedler's Theory of Leadership Effectiveness in Empirical Studies-from Thailand การพบสมมุติฐานสำคัญเกี่ยวกับความพึงพอใจในกาวะผู้นำ ตามทฤษฎีของ Fiedler จากการศึกษาอย่างเป็นรูปธรรมในประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาที่เป็นรูปธรรมในประเทศไทยเกี่ยวกับการนำทฤษฏิวาด้วยความพึงพอใจในภาวะผู้นำของ Fredler ได้มีการดำเนินการแล้วมากขวา 10 การศึกษามับแต่อดีตจนสังจุบัน การศึกษาตั้งกล่าวพบว่า ภาวะผู้นำของไทยจนได้ รับความพึงพอใจขึ้นอยู่กับความนิยมของคนส่วนใหญ่ แม้ผู้นำแหล่งนั้นจะมีได้กระทำประโยชน์ประการใต้ให้แก่กลุ่มชน เหล่านั้นมากมายดังเช่นผู้นำบางคนที่อยู่นอกความนิยมของคนกลุ่มใหญ่นั้น สิ่งหนึ่งที่น่าสนใจในประเทศไทยเราพบว่า ผู้นำที่ได้รับความนิยมชมชอบจะมีคุณประโยชน์ต่อคนส่วนใหญ่ต้องเป็นผู้นำที่มีคุณภาพจริงๆ เท่านั้น คุณภาพของผู้นำที่ดีประกยบด้วยลักษณะสำคัญทั้งทางจิตวิทยาและพฤติกรรม แต่ตามทฤษฏิของ Fiedler จะสนับสนุนผู้นำไทยเฉพาะที่ มีบุคคลิกด้านจิตวิทยาติประการเดียว ในขณะที่ผู้นำที่มีคุณภาพต่ามีผลงานมากกว่าผู้นำที่ประชาชนนิยมเสียตีก เกร ค้นพบล้าษณะตั้งกล่าวในผู้นำไทย ทำให้เห็นสมมุติฐานที่เจ้าคัญในทฤษฏิของ Fiedler และได้มีการศึกษาเปรียบเทียบ ระหว่างผู้นำไทยและผู้นำอเมริกันในปัจจุบัน การศึกษาค้นคว้าที่ขยายกว้างขวางยิ่งขึ้น จะทำให้ความเข้าใจทฤษฏิของ Fiedler ครอบคลุมชัดเจนนี้นด้วยและจะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการนำความรู้เหล่านั้นมาประการเป็กกระมเกี่ยวกับภาวะผู้นำต่อไป

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Abstract

At least ten empirical studies have been conducted in Thailand based on Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership Effectiveness. It was generally found that Thai leaders need only the highly favorable group situation to be highly effective. However, Thai leaders in in-match condition did not necessarily make their group more effetive than the leaders in the out of match condition, as predicted by the theory and found support in the USA. Interestingly, in Thailand, it was recently revealed that only in the in match condition that the effectiveness of the groups depended on the quality of the leaders. Leader's quality consisted of some important psychological and behavioral characteristics. In other words, Fiedler's theory is supported only when Thai leaders have high psychological characteristics. On the other hand, with low quality leaders, the out of match groups perform better than the in-match groups. These findings give rise to important assumptions for Fiedler's Theory, and have prompted a new cross-cultural study between Thai and American to be conducted at present. The accumulation of more research evidence in this line, will have strong implications for the extension of Fiedler's theory and also the practice of leader ship training.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership effectiveness has been with us for more than 30 years (Fiedler, 1967). More than 200 empirical studies on this theory have been published (Ayman, Chemers, & Fiedler, 1998) and at least 12 studies were found in Thailand. Fiedler's line of research and theory has been strongly validated in American and European continents, which makes Fiedler's leadership training module highly useful and continuously acceptable around the world more than, and much longer than, any leadership training programs. However, empirical studies of this kind have been rarely carried out developing countries. Fortunately, Thailand has been familiarized with Fiedler's theory and research since early 1970's when the author of this paper, a former thesis advisee of Fiedler (Chemers, Fiedler, Lekhayananda, & Stolurow, 1966), went back to teach in Thailand. In 1991, this author published a

review article using 10 research studies from Thailand. At present (1999), there were 10 field studies, and at least one cross-cultural study based on Fiedler's theory is being conducted comparing Americans and Thai bank-executives.

Many empirical studies in Thailand have added new variables and together with the results that have distinctly shown a development trend. Some of them incorporated leader's psychological characteristics from the present author's "Psychological Theory of Moral and Work Behavior" established since 1983 (Bhanthumnavin, 1983, 1990, 1995, 1998). This exciting trend calls for more research studies which may pinpoint the underlying assumptions of Fiedler's Contingency Theory, which will make the body of knowledge useful for future investigations and leadership training in the next century.

Objectives of This Article

This paper aims at presenting two major groups of research findings from Thailand on Fledler's theory and discussing their implication for future research and leadership training, as follows:

First, to show the quality and quantity of the Thai research supporting to hypotheses in Fiedler's theory.

Secondly, to demonstrate that the results of Thai studies which employed many new independent as well as dependent variables, can extend and enrich the body of knowledge on Fiedler's theory

Thirdly, to pinpoint new assumptions necessary for increasing the validity of Fiedler's theory for future research and leaders' training in Thailand and other similar countries.

Overview of Research Methodology

All of the 10 Thai empirical studies were non experimental, but correlational and comparative (field studies) in nature. They recruited leaders from wide range of vocations, from rice farmers to department heads. They also added important independent and dependent variables into their studies which greatly enriched the body of knowledge in this area. All of 10 Thai studies were locally published. Therefore, this article is the first attempt to internationalize their reports.

Overall samples

The first two Thai studies conducted in 1975, used only the LPC test for measuring

their major dependent variable on secondary schoolers (Chiembunchiong, 1975) and another on the division-leaders in one Thai ministry (Saengnium, 1975). Ten years later, Thai behavioral scientists started to investigate the relevance of Fiedler's theory in various types of Thai leaders and contexts. By the year 1991, more than 800 Thai leaders have already participated in at least 5 important studies (Bhanthumnavin, 1991). Two studies recruited the total of 220 head departments in universities and colleges (Surakitboworn, 1989; Soonthornvipart, 1992). One study compared 240 school directors (Chuamthong, 1993). Eight-one head divisions in a ministry (Soonthornvipart, 1989) and 122 executives in private organizations (Sorod, 1991) responded to sets of questionnaires. Matched-leaders from more and less effective cooperatives of rice growers were samples in one Thai study (Bhanthumnavin, 1994). Another recent study was conducted using 222 leaders in branches of governmental bank (Poonyarit, 1991). In 1995 (Lertsatyanusuk, 1995) studied 84 administrators in the college councils. But the study in progress can secure 500 executives from branches of Thai Agriculture and Cooperative Bank to be compared with Americans in similar position (Sorod, 200).

Thus, at present (1999), there were 1,086 groups of various occupations in Thailand which were investigated along the line of Fiedler's theory. By the year 2000, there will be about 1,600 Thai work groups in total.

Measurement of Variables

The 10 That studies employed wide range of both independent and dependent variables. Some studies also used the biosocial and other background variables as moderating variables in their studies.

Independent variables. Consist of 4 categories of vaiables.

- 1) Leader's LPC-test
- 2) 3 group situation variables namely, leader-member relation test, task-structure test, and leader's position power test.

These 4 tests were usually the translated version of Fiedler's self-administering questionnaires (Fiedler & Chemers, 1984; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1976).

- teristics identified for Thai people in the "Psychological theory of moral and work behavior" conceptualized by this author (Bhanthumnavin, 1983; 1990; 1995; 1998). Thai leader's psychological characteristics commonly employed are: belief in internal locus of control of reinforcement (ICON), future orientation (FO), need for achievement (nAch), mental health (MH), and attitude towards work (AT).
- 4) Group's or leader's background variables such as group size, leader's time in position, frequency of group meetings, etc.

Dependent variables consisted of global as well as categorized work effectiveness and other related variables. They can be divided into 4 types.

- Leader's effectiveness, rated by the leaders themselves and/or by their boss. The variables can be both overall or specific duties.
- Group effectiveness rated by the bosses.
- 3) Leader's job satisfaction.
- 4) Leader's cooperative behavior
- Etc.

Statistical analysis. Most Thai studies in this area have mostly employed parametric statistics such as 2-3 way ANOVA and/or Multiple Regression Analysis (both totaled and step-wised) for their hypotheses testings.

Empirical Results from Thailand

As can be expected from the old and new variables employed in the Thai studies, numerous hypotheses were proposed and tested which yielded interesting findings. In this paper, only two groups of empirical results are reported.

Thai results supporting Fiedler's theory

In the Contingency theory, leadership effectiveness depends on 4 independent antecedents, namely, leader's psychological trait assessed by the LPC test, and 3 groupsituation variables. In this section, 4 research questions relating to these variables will be answered using the empirical results from Thailand.

First, is the leader's LPC trait alone, not related to leader's or group effective-ness? In all but on Thai studies, the majority of leaders were found to be high LPC scorers and about 5 percents were socio-independents. The number of low LPC scorers increased from 35% in elementary-school directors, to 54% in department heads in Thai universities.

Consonance with Fiedler's model, most Thai studies found, no relationship between leaders's LPC scores and their degree of work effectiveness. However, in 6 Thai studies, some relationships were reported. High LPC scorers were found to be more effective in departments in universities, in colleges and in governmental bank's branches (Poonyarit, 1991; Soonthornvipart, 1992; Surakitbowon 1989). In addition, executives in american business organizations were found to have significantly higher LPC scores than executives in Thai organizations (Sorod, 1991).

On the other hand, heads of the highly effective rice-farmer's cooperatives were found to be mostly low LPC scorers (73%), while the less effective cooperatives were run mostly by high LPC scorers (90%) (Bhanthumnavin, 1994). In the counter corruption section, low LPC leaders were found to be significantly more effective than high LPC leaders (Soonthornvipart, 1989).

Even though the LPC trait of the leaders may play a role in the effectiveness of some work-groups, however, the results were not consistently in the same direction.

Therefore, other additional independent variables in Fiedler's theory are needed.

Group situation is a condition for leader's operation. It consisted of 3 dimensions, i.e., the leader-member relation, task structure, and leaders' position power. These 3 dimensions are combined to make the group situation the most, moderate, or the least favorable for the leader to work with the group.

Secondly, is the magnitude of group-situational favorableness responsible for leadership effectiveness? The contingency theory does not expect much of its influence on leadership effectiveness.

In Thailand, the group conditions were found to be moderately or highly favorable for the leaders. Only four studies reported groups with less favorable conditions. These are 32% of the groups in which the administrators in the office of the college councils worked, 25% of the bank-branches, 16% of the counter corruption units, and 7% of the faculties where the deans worked (Lertsatyanusak, 1995; Poonyarit, 1991; Soonthornvipart, 1989; Surakitbowon, 1989, respectively).

In addition, it was reported that there were more secondary schools with moderate group situation (63%) than in elementary schools (52%) where there were more high control situations (Chaumthong, 1993).

Three Thai studies have found that the effectiveness of the leaders and/or their groups was significantly higher when the favorableness of the group situation increased. This was found to be true in the rice farmers' cooperatives, in the business organization, and in the branches of the governmental bank (Bhanthumnavin, 1994; Sorod, 1991, and Poonyarit, 1991, respectively). Many of the Thai studied did not carry-out such analysis. If it was done, one should expect to find more results.

In sum, it is evident that favorable group-situation alone can contribute to the effectiveness of the work-group in Thailand.

Thirdly, a crucial prediction of the Contingency model is that the in-match leaders are more effective that the out of match leaders (Ayman, Chemers, & Fiedler, 1998; Fiedler & Chemers, 1984).

The "in-match" condition is defined as having low LPC leaders in highly or less favorable situations and high LPC leaders in moderate group situation. The "out of match" condition is defined as having low LPC leaders in moderately favorable group and high LPC leaders in highly or less favorable situations.

In Thailand, at least 6 studies have reported the classification of the work groups into the two types mentioned above. Four studies reported higher incidences of "in-match" groups (54 to 64%). These are faculty and councils administrators in the colleges, the branch heads of the bank and the farmers' cooperatives (Surakitbowon, 1989; Lertsatyanusak, 1995; Poonyarit, 1991, and

Bhanthumnavin, 1994, respectively). Two other studies, reported finding 45 to 50 percents of the "in-match" groups (Soonthornvipart, 1992; Soonthornvipart, 1989).

Numerous pair comparisons were carried out in the six Thai studies, but only one study on the groups of counter corruption found full support of the contingency model's prediction (Soonthornvipart, 1989). However, the other 5 Thai studies found from no support, to one fourth support and one half support of the contingency model (Sorod, 1991; Surakitbowon, 1989, Poonyant, 1991; and Bhanthumnavin, 1994, respectively).

The fact that the Thai studies all together, showed weak support of Fiedler's contingency theory may be accountable by several reasons.

First, all of these Thai studies were field studies. The low support of the results in this group of studies may partly, be due to the type of research used. It has been found in a couple of meta-analytic studies that field studies generally yield weaker support of the contingency model than the laboratory studies (Ayman, Chemers, & Fiedler, 1998)

Secondly, even though Fielder's theory shows strong promise to be universal, but only a few studies outside North America and Europe have tested the model (Ayman, Chemer, & Fiedler, 1998; Triandis, 1993). In a recent article on "The Contingency Model in Cross Cultural Perspective", Triandis (1993) has pointed out some psychlogical variables which

are important dimensions of cultural variation between East and West, i.e.,a) collectivism vs. individualism, and b) high vs. low uncertainty avoidance. These personal values seem to correspond with some dimensions of group situational control.

In Thailand, many psychological traits are combined and found to be highly capable for differentiating people within the same culture, who behave differently, in the same or similar situations. Based on many empirical studies on the psychological analysis of different types of behavior, a "Psychological Theory of Moral and Work Behaviors", has been conceptualized since 1983 (Bhanthumnavin, 1990; 1995; 1998). Some Thai studies have assessed 2 to 5 of these 8 important traits of the leaders, which become significant contributions to this area of research (Bhanthumnavin, 1994; Chaumthong, 1993; Soonthornvipart, 1992).

Therefore, both intra-cultural and inter-cultural comparisons of the results pertaining to the contingency model of leadership effectiveness are possible and encouraged.

Extension of the contingency model by Thai findings

There are at least 5 That studies which attempted to incorporate some important leader's characteristics into their studies of leadership effectiveness. Numerous types of research findings can be reported here

in 3 subtopics, i.e., comparing and combining the two models.

Comparing the two models. The contingency model offers 4 independent variables for predicting leadership effectiveness, while leader's characteristics model (Bhanthumnavin, 1983; 1998) offers various psychological and background variables of leaders as predictors of leader's behavior and success. The difference between the two models is that the contingency model puts strong emphasis on leader's perception and report on the 3 dimensions of their group situation. The scores of these 3 situational dimensions also reflect the reporting leader's characteristics as well as the characteristics of the group situations "out there"

There are at least two Thai studies which intentionally compared the predictive powers of the independent variables from each of the two models on the degrees of variation of leader's effectiveness.

In the study of 87 department heads of Education in 11 Thai universities (Soonthornvipart, 1992), it was found that the contingency model can better predict the variation of leader's effectiveness while the other model can better predict group's effectiveness, especially among the leaders with low cooperative behavior.

In another study of 240 directors of elementary and secondary schools in central Thailand (Chaumthong, 1993), it was found that the directors' psychological and personal variables were better predictors of school success than the contingency model.

Combining the two models. When the predictors of the two models were joined together, the amount of predictive power was about twice of that from either one alone, as found in the above two studies. In addition, in a study of 80 rice farmers' cooperatives, the contingency model could account for 68% of the variation in group effectiveness with task structure, LPC scores, and leader's power as the 3 major predictors. When added leader's internal control scores and two other group characteristics the predictive power increased to 76%

Factors responsible for the support of the contingency model in Thai studies. The contingency model predicts that the in-match leaders are more effective than the out of match leaders. In Thai studies, main effect of group situsational control on leadership effectiveness was rear except in the study of the head of the counter corruption units (Soonthornvipart, 1989). The rest of the That studies supported the contingency model in certain conditions, but not in the opposite condition. Even the opposite findings to the contingency model have been repeatedly reported.

In several of the advanced Thai studies, the researchers have employed some variables for categorizing the samples into subsamples for more detailed but important findings. It was generally found that the 4 variables in the contingency model showed stronger predictive power (using Multiple Regression Analysis) in groups where leaders were of higher quality, than in the groups with lower quality leaders. In the units for counter corruption, the contingency model showed higher (70%) predictive power of leaders' directive behavior in the group with leaders of higher education than in the group with leaders of lower education (14%) (Soonthornvipart, 1989). Only in the department heads with high cooperative behavior, that the contingency model could account for more of the group effectiveness. than in the group with low cooperative leaders (13% vs. 1% predictive power in Soonthornvipart, 1992).

In another study on 240 school directors, half of which won the King's award, it was also found that in the directors with high training received the contingency model could predict better than in the ones with low training received (72% and 55% predictive power, respectively). In both instances, task structure and leader-member relation were the two most important predictors (Chaumthong, 1993).

In the 80 uce-farmers cooperatives, it was found that the leaders who had higher education level, exposed more to news media, showed higher need for achievement and were stronger believers of internal locus of control of reinforcement, their group effectiveness depended more on the 4 variables in the contingency model to 79% (to be accounted for) than their counterparts of low quality

leaders (only 50 -96% to be accounted for, in Bhanthumnavin, 1994).

Therefore, it can be concluded that Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership effectiveness is more relevant to the work group with higher leader's quality, be it psychological, background, or behavioral quality

Opposite results from the predictions of the contingency model were evident in at least three Thai studies.

First, in the educational departments of the Thai public universities, the data significantly showed that leadership effectiveness was significantly greater in the out of match groups than the in match groups, especially in leaders with lower education and in leaders who stayed longer in the position. But such results did not reach the level of statistical significance in their counterparts (see Figure 1, Soonthornvipart, 1992).

In the rice-farmers cooperative study. the researcher reported significant interaction effect between the types of group and the leader's belief in internal locus of control of reinforcement on group effectiveness. In another instance, there was a significant interaction effect between group type and the frequencies of group meetings on group effectiveness. In this study (Bhanthumnavin, 1994), it is clearly evident that (see Figure 2) the contingency model's prediction was supported only when leaders showed higher quality. The stronger opposite results were found

in the cases where leaders had low quality.

Consistence with the two Thai studies mentioned above, the study of award winning schools also reported the opposite findings from the contingency prediction among the elementary school directors, but not among the ones in secondary schools. These findings were true only in older directors (Chaumthong, 1993). Furthermore, the opposite results were found in two other instances in the same study. It was consistently found that among the directors with less favorable attitude towards work, the opposite results form the contingency model was reported in the elementary school directors with more work-years and in the ones with more years in the position (see Figure 3)

The three studies just mentioned have jointly demonstrated that Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership effectiveness is more relevant in Thai leaders with higher qualities, both educational and psychological. On the other hand, the out of match groups have prevented the low quality leaders from having negative influence on group effectiveness and productivity. Furthermore, the low quality leaders can also be highly detrimental to group effectiveness in the in match groups.

Similar findings were reported in 70 Mexican managers that the contingency model worked among the low self-monitoring leaders, but did not work well in the leaders with high self-monitoring (Ayman & Chemers, 1991; Thandis, 1993).

New Assumptions and Implications

At least 3 studies from Thailand (Bhanthumnavin, 1994; Chaumthong, 1993; Soonthornvipart, 1992) and one study from Mexico (Ayman & Chemers, 1991) yielded similar results, that the contingency model works for only certain types of leaders, such as high internal control, high news media exposure and low self-monitoring leaders. On the other hand, the opposite to the predictions from the contingency model was found to be even more strongly demonstrated among the low quality leaders. The out of match groups were more effective because low quality leaders had lower opportunity to be detrimental to group effectiveness than when they were in the in match groups.

Therefore, it can be concluded that new assumptions underlying Fiedler's contingency theory are the quality of the leaders. The contingency theory is valid only when the leaders are of high quality, and the model is not applicable, or even reversed in results, if the leaders are of poor quality.

Consequently, these findings have encouraged further investigations. One cross-cultural study between American and Thai bank executives is being conducted at present (Sorod, 2000, in press), and sponsored by the National Committee on Research and Development of the Thai Behavioral System, National Research Council of Thailand. This important cross-cultural study will permit both

intra-cultural comparisons, as well as, inter-cultural comparisons of the degrees of validity of the contingency model among different types of leaders classified mainly by the psychological traits found highly desirable in Thai people (Bhanthumnavin, 1990; 1998). This study may yield results which can give new additional definition to the concept of "cultural variation" which will make this concept become closer to the concept of "individual differences" within one culture.

If such research studies have been conducted and confirmed, these assumptions of the contingency model on important leaders' characteristics can be confidentially included in the theory, as its extension, for use in the countries such as Thailand.

As for the application of the new body of knowledge, leadership training in Thailand and Mexico may have to be modified accordingly. First, the original package of Fiedler's leadership training (Fiedler, et al.,1976; 1984) should be used only for leaders with high education and high psychological characteristics. Secondly, the leadership training in the country like in Thailand, should include additional training of some psychological qualities to ensure good results.

This addition of the new psychological characteristics of leaders to the contingency model of leadership effectiveness will certainly increase its precision as well as ensure its universality.

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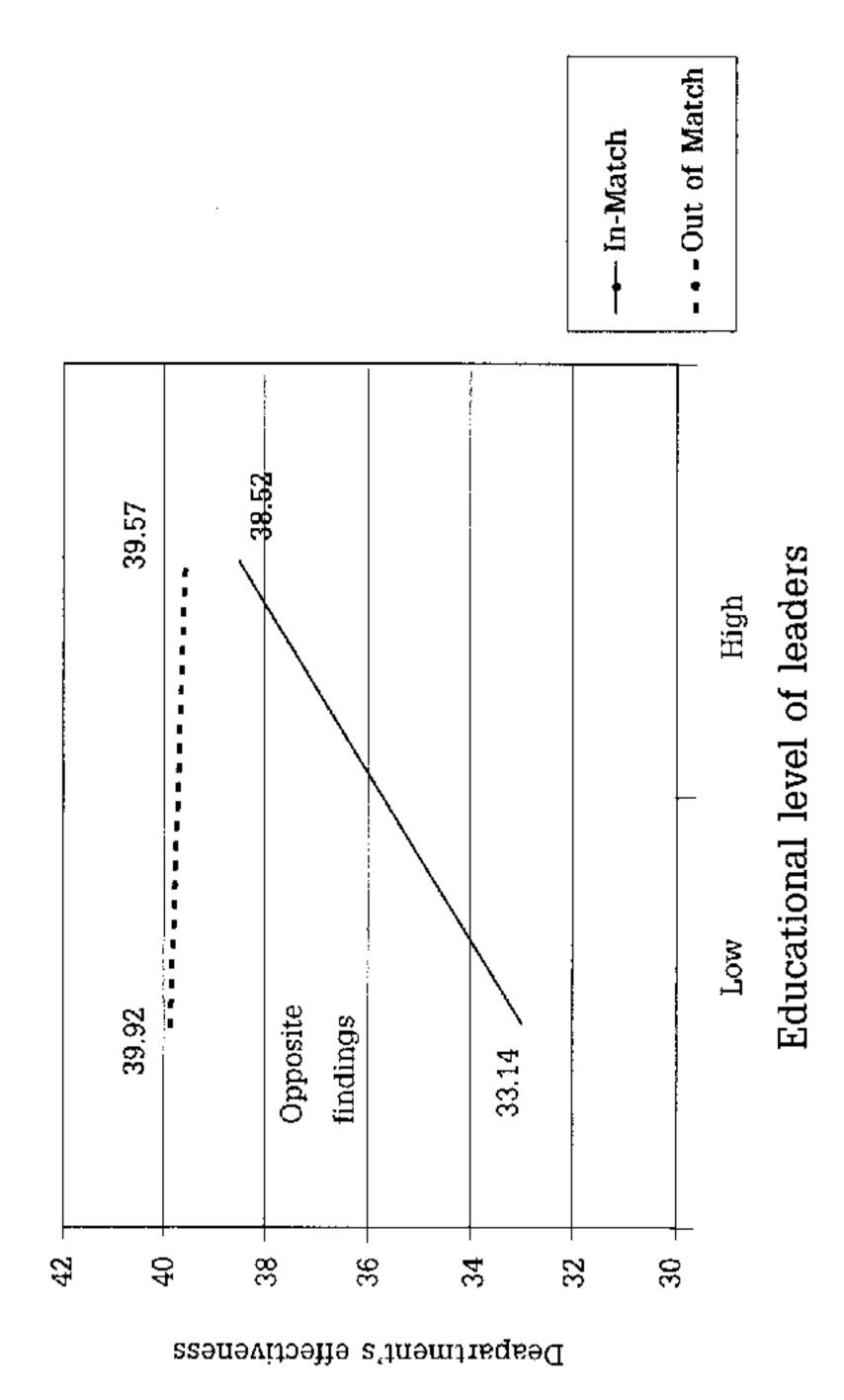
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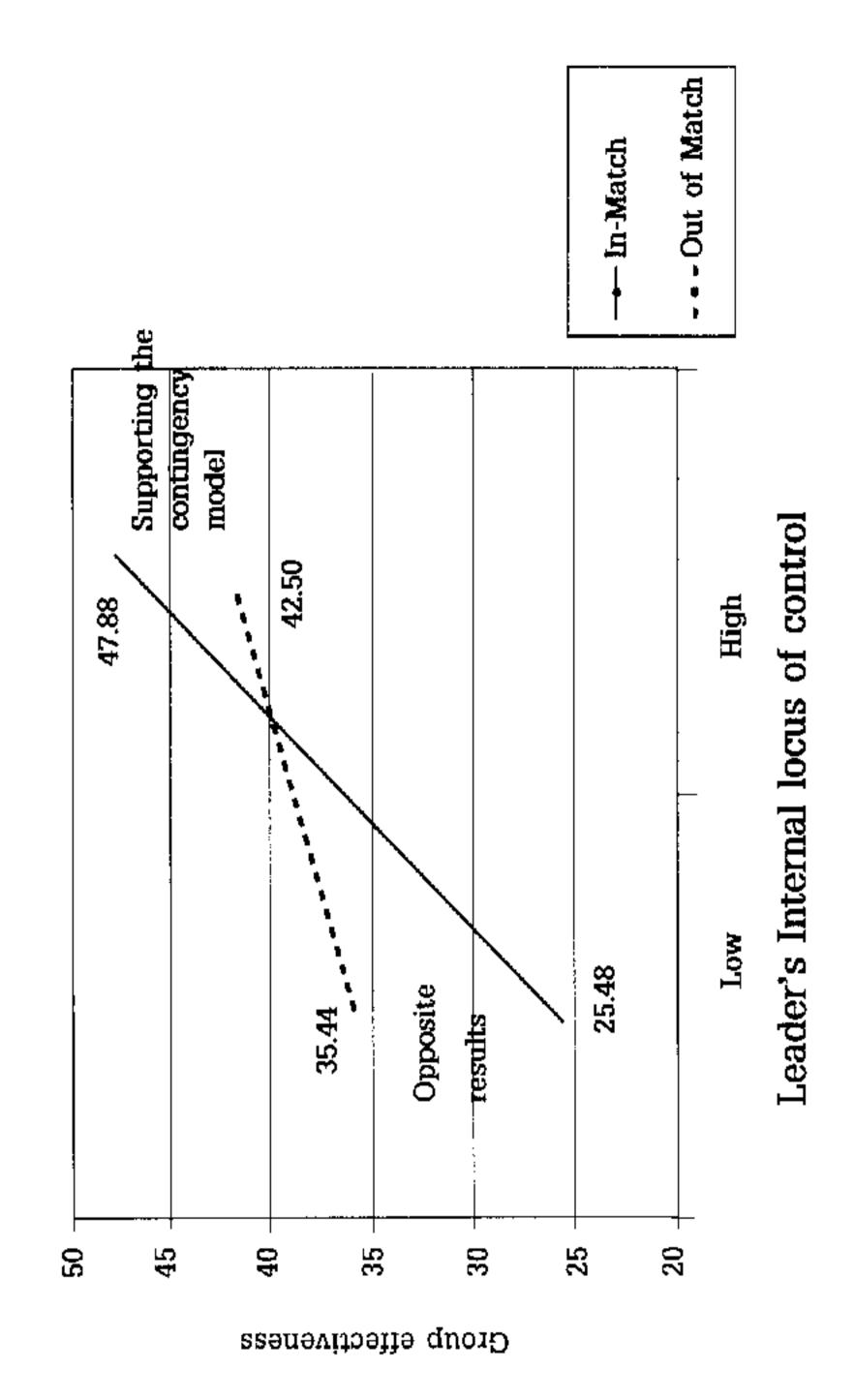
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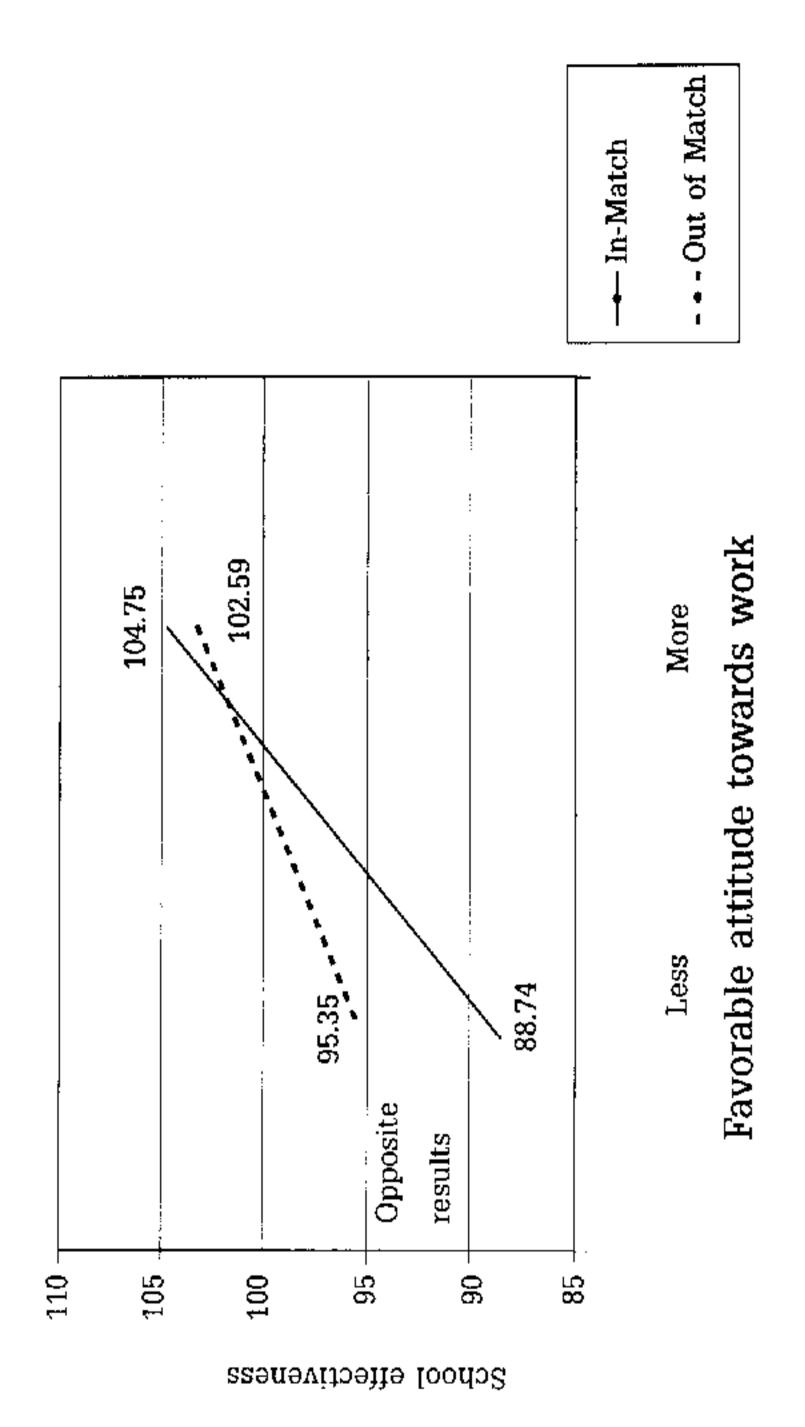
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oups as more effective than the in-match groups education leaders. (Total sample of 87 department heads of Education in Thai Universities, by Sonthornvipart, J., 1992) Showing out of match gr among groups with less Figure 1



rice farmers' coops depends on interaction of in-out of match and leaders' belief in internal locus of control of reinforcement (Bhanthumnavin, N., 1994) Group effectiveness of 80 Figure 2



work especially in elementary schools with more years in position. (Total Shows opposite results among directors with less favorable attitude toward sample of 240 directors, Chaumthong, 1993). Figure 3

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