

## Structuring the Area of “Leaders’ Commitment Studies” Using Three-layers Structure

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, the importance of leader's commitment is told, in particular, to realize innovation or to create new business. In this paper, we visualize the relationship between the area of "leaders' commitment studies" and the area of other previous studies such as leadership studies, entrepreneurship studies, motivation studies, commitment studies and engagement studies. Specifically, after we overview each previous studies area, we structure and show the relationship between them. As a result, it is confirmed that the new area where previous studies don't cover exists (the area of "leader's commitment studies"). The area is for study which focus on leaders' background, reasons and causes etc. and also focus on not only internal / subjective (psychological) aspect, but also external / objective. (psychological, legal, social etc.) While we refer to them all as “leader's commitment studies”, there are so many wide and various areas on it. From now on, it is hoped that more concrete and detailed "leaders' commitment studies" will progress based on this paper.

Keywords: Leadership, Commitment, Entrepreneurship, Motivation.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

By the rapid development of technology including information technology, and the progress of globalization, the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguity) era has arrived. And it is said that leadership which is different from the leadership of previous era is required in such an era in which future cannot be seen well. (Lawrence. (2013))

Since old times, leadership has been the subject of exploration of various researchers and practitioners. And in recent years, the importance of leaders' commitment is told to realize innovation or to create new business. For example, Kanai (1984), who is a prominent Japanese business scholars and leadership researcher, said, " Without a real commitment of defender of each project (ie experiment) – he or she is called project champion when the project is product development project –, and even the real

commitment of the top management, the project (experiment) will not be on track,"<sup>1</sup> and he stated the importance of leaders' commitment.

Also, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (2012) pointed out that many Japanese companies couldn't create new businesses continuously and it was important that Japanese companies had to raise executives' commitment for realizing innovation. In addition, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (2016) also emphasized that the active commitment of top management was essential to create innovation.

Therefore, in this paper, we focus on "leaders' commitment". We set the purpose of this paper to clarify the relationship between the area of previous studies such as leadership studies and entrepreneurship studies and the area of "leaders' commitment studies". The novelty of this study is showing that the area of "leaders' commitment studies" is different from the area of previous studies.

In the following, first, in Chapter 2, we outline the leadership studies, entrepreneurship studies, motivation studies, commitment studies and engagement studies as a related study area. Then, in Chapter 3, we structure and show the relationship between the areas of these previous studies and "leaders' commitment study". Finally, in Chapter 4, we summarize what we show and state the direction of future studies as a conclusion.

## 2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

### 2.1 Leadership Studies

Since old times, many researchers and practitioners have researched on leadership.

From the first half of the 20th century, people researched "trait theory" thoroughly which tried to explain the personality traits of the leaders, and people searched feature which can distinguish between leaders and non-leaders. Until the 1980s, it is thought that it is difficult to distinguish between leaders and non-leaders by traits, but due to the discovery of big five personality traits, it is claimed in recent years that traits can be judgment materials to predict the emergence and existence of leadership. (Robbins. (2005))

Also, people researched "behavioral theory" which tried to identify uniqueness found in the behavior of competent leaders. In the study of Ohio State University in the late 1940s, they said that they found two categories to explain leadership behavior. One is "initiating structure", which defines and constructs the role of self and subordinates, and the other is "consideration", which is characterized by mutual trust and attention to emotion. Also, in the study of University of Michigan, which is conducted almost at the same time as the study at Ohio State University, they claimed that they found two aspects of leadership behavior, which is named as an "employee orientation" and "a production orientation". However, it has been said that it is not possible to find a consistent result about relationship between the leadership behavior pattern and the team's outcome. (Robbins (2005))

Based on the results of these researches, researchers were also looking at the situation where leadership is demonstrated, and advocated "Contingency theory", which try to explain what kind of leadership is effective under some different conditions. We can cite

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<sup>1</sup> Kanai T. (1984). Commitment in Experimenting Organizations: Further Arguments on Both Dysfunctional and Beneficial Aspects of Escalating Commitment Phenomena. The annual review of research in business, the School of Business Administration, Kobe University. 30: 173

two famous theories as representative theories. One is “Fiedler leadership model” that the leadership behavior that raises high achievement differs depending on the three conditions (1. relationship between leader and members, 2. task structure, and 3. leader’s position power). And the other is “path goal theory” that effective type of leadership is different depending on the work environment and subordinates’ characteristics.

In addition, there are various concept of leadership theories. For example, one is “Transformational leadership”, which is the study of focusing on characteristics and behaviors of leaders who educated the subordinates to transcend self-interests for the organization and who can deeply and profoundly influence subordinates. And another is Misumi’s “PM theory” that leadership can be explained from the two aspects of “performance function” to achieve organizational goals and “maintenance function” to improve the relationship of organizations. Also, Jim Collins Method [Good to Great], which is the one of the famous leadership framework is understood as a tool or methodology to improve organizational performance in a leadership study which deal with development leadership in university. (Rizka (2017))

As you see, leadership studies vary from person to person. However, the main concern of leadership studies can be covered by a question which is “what is the leaders’ traits, behavior, methodology or the adaptation to condition which realize high performance” even for “trait theory”, “behavioral theory”, “contingency theory” or other theory.

## 2.2 Entrepreneurship Studies

Recently, in addition to general leadership studies, entrepreneurship studies which deal with entrepreneurs of startup businesses are also on the rise. The background of the prosperity of entrepreneurship studies is the fact that venture businesses have been emerging as being a certain part of whole economic with technological innovation such as IT and the development of the Internet. However, it can be said that entrepreneurship studies is a new academic field than the other research fields mentioned in this paper such as leadership studies and motivation studies.

In the entrepreneurship researches, various papers and books have been written, but most of them are mainly methodological studies on how to start a business and how to grow a business.

For example, the most popular textbook of entrepreneurship in Japan, it is written about creation of ideas, discovery of business opportunities, construction of business models, marketing, differentiation from rivals, preparation of business planning documents, team building, financing, etc. (Kutsuna K. (2013)) Also, one of the interesting entrepreneurship research, which studied Indonesian food service micro, small and medium enterprises, focus on relationships between some variables and performance. (Cindy (2014))

In addition, Venkataraman (1997) stated “Our field is fundamentally concerned with understanding how, in the absence of current markets for future goods and services, these goods and services manage to come into existence. Thus, entrepreneurship as a scholarly field seeks to understand how opportunities to bring into existence “future” good and services are discovered, created, and exploited, by whom, and with what consequences”<sup>2</sup>. He said that the principal point of entrepreneurship studies is stating that it is how, and who will find, create and exploit good services that do not exist right now.

At the same time, Venkataraman (1997) stated that the prosperity of entrepreneurship studies responded to the requests from students of business schools. Based on these

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<sup>2</sup> Venkataraman, S. (1997). The distinctive domain of entrepreneurship research. *Advances in entrepreneurship, firm emergence and growth*, 3(1), 120

backgrounds, the entrepreneurship studies so far has mainly conducted methodological studies on how to start a business or how to grow a business.

### 2.3 Motivation Studies

Motivation studies is one of the big themes studies in management studies. Broadly speaking, it is divided into the “content theories” to study about the contents of human motivation, and the “process theories” to study the mechanism by following the process which people are motivated.

Content theory has been heavily influenced by what kind of human model is good to explain human beings in the organization.

For example, the scientific management of F. W. Taylor is suit to the economic man model which says that human beings are motivated by economic reward, and Hawthorne research says that human beings are motivated by belonging to the group, and the Y-theory of McGregor and Maslow's five-stage desire theory are suit to the self-fulfillment model which says that human beings are motivated by self-realization, and E. H. Shine thought that the content of desire would change depending on the circumstances and mental state. These are representative examples of Content theory of motivation.

As a representative example of process theory, there is the expectation theory that was first proposed by Victor Vroom and then developed by L. W. Porter and E. E. Lawler. This is the theory that satisfaction with reward changes depending on the strength of satisfaction from reward obtained by the realization of the target (Valence) and the feasibility of the target (expectation).

As mentioned above, motivation studies also have various subjects and perspectives, but each of them research about the people's motivation (the background, reason, cause of people's action, behavior and so on), and it focus on the psychological aspect

Generally speaking, the subject of motivation studies is general human beings, but there are so many studies that targeted to some groups such as employees, students, specific professional employees, etc., and as far as the previous studies has been concerned, it is mainly assumed that someone motivate others (for example, a manager motivates employees) with some aim.

### 2.4 Commitment Studies

The word of “commitment” is used in multiple ways in daily life. According to Oxford Modern English Dictionary, for example, it means 1. engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action, 2. process or an instance of committing oneself, 3. entrustment or consign fore, perpetrate 3. Pledge, involve, or bind to a certain.

In academic fields, it is also used as various concepts, and it is often used especially in the fields of social psychology, economics and organization behavior.

For example, in the field of social psychology, Sternberg (1986) says that commitment to the loved one is "in the short term, the decision that one loves someone else, and in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love"<sup>3</sup>. And Yamagishi (1995) also said, "We define commitment as continuity of relationship, not as an emotional involvement, i.e. we define that commitment exist when we continue the relationship with the same opponent even if we miss short-term interests."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological review*, 93(2), 120s

<sup>4</sup> Yamagishi T. (1995). Trust and commitment formation: An experiment. *The Japanese Group Dynamics Association*. 35(1), 32

And, there are so many studies about "organizational commitment" in organization behavior studies field. "Organizational commitment" is studied by two meanings. One is "behavioral commitment", which means "the process in which members of an organization is getting to be bound to the organization through some action"<sup>5</sup>, and the other is "attitudinal commitment" which means "focusing on the psychology of employees which will deeply involve himself in the organization,"<sup>6</sup>

As mentioned above, the term "commitment" is used in various fields, but it surely has some point in common. For example, Kubota (2012) said about the common point of way of using the word that "it has meaning of "consistency" or "bring consistency" inside as a way of using the word of "commitment""<sup>7</sup>.

In general, it can be said that the term "commitment" is used as a combination of a psychological state behind human behavior (e.g. "attitudinal commitment" etc.) and a relationship born from it (e.g. definition of commitment by Yamagishi (1995), etc.), and usually the commitment studies focus on how we can make someone commit oneself to something. (e.g. "Organizational commitment", etc.)

## 2.5 Engagement Studies

In recent years, the word of "engagement" is used in various areas. In general, "engagement" means 1. employment, 2. binding by a promise or contract, 3. the act or state of engaging or being engaged, 4. an appointment with another person, 5. a betrothal, 6. an encounter between hostile forces. (Oxford Modern English Dictionary) The word of "engagement" is used in various fields such as marketing, organization behavior, education, science and technology policy, CSR, investment and so on.

The usage of the word of engagement differs depending on the author even in the same field. For example, in the field of marketing, it is used as "user's behavioral reaction effect on brand and corporate posting"<sup>8</sup> (Sakata (2014)), or it is defined as "'Relationship" meaning to be actively involved"<sup>9</sup> (Minamihori (2013)). In different areas, the meaning of the word differs more. For example, it is used as "'encouraging (from investor) to the companies" including shareholder proposal and voting"<sup>10</sup> (Adachi (2004)) in the field of investment, and it also used "citizen engagement (public engagement) for public policy on science and technology"<sup>11</sup> (Goto (2015)) in the field of science and technology policy.

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<sup>5</sup> Kubota Y. (2012) Integrated understanding of relationship marketing: commitment approach. Yuhikaku Publishing Co., Ltd. 61-62

<sup>6</sup> Kubota Y. (2012) Integrated understanding of relationship marketing: commitment approach. Yuhikaku Publishing Co., Ltd.62-66

<sup>7</sup> Kubota Y. (2012) Integrated understanding of relationship marketing: commitment approach. Yuhikaku Publishing Co., Ltd.60

<sup>8</sup> Sakata T. (2014) SNS Marketing Strategy : A case study consideration of Co-creation product development, Comprehensive O2O, and User analytics in Facebook platform THE TAKACHIHO RONSO, 49(3): 136

<sup>9</sup> Minamihori N. (2013) A study of the marketing-oriented role of Chief Communication Officer (CCO). Japan Society for Corporate Communication Studies. 17:84

<sup>10</sup> Adachi E. (2004) Corporate Social Responsibility and Employment / Labor Issues The monthly journal of the Japan Institute of Labour 530:49

<sup>11</sup> Goto T. (2015) Measuring Representativeness of Participants in Public Engagement Events Japanese Journal of Science Communication 17:4

Minamihori (2013) also inspected various areas of using word of “engagement” and argued that the word of “engagement” “encompasses the meaning of "to communicate with facing each other and promise " among stakeholders in society”<sup>12</sup> as a common element of the word. In general, it can be said that the word of “engagement” always has the common meaning that is some sort of (psychological, legal, social etc.) involvement among stakeholders.

Also, in engagement studies, there are many studies under the subject of concern "How we can improve engagement someone in something. ("How can we raise user’s engagement in brand?", "How can I raise students' engagement in university classes?" etc.), and generally speaking, it is often intended to raise engagement by doing some intervention.

### 3. STRUCTURING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PREVIOUS STUDIES AND LEADERS’ COMMITMENT STUDIES

#### 3.1 Explanation of Three-layers Structure

In the previous chapter, as previous studies related to the study of "leaders’ commitment studies", I reviewed overview of 1. Leadership studies, 2. Entrepreneurship studies, 3. Motivation studies, 4. Commitment studies, 5. Engagement studies. In this chapter, we show structure about the relationship between the area of these previous studies and the area of "leaders’ commitment studies”. In this section, we present three-layers structure, which is the way of thinking towards structuring, and from the next section, we explain the positioning of each studies area.

Figure 3-1 is the figure for organizing the relationship between the area of previous studies such as 1. leadership studies, 2. entrepreneurship studies, 3. motivation studies, 4. commitment studies, 5. engagement studies, and the area of “leaders’ commitment studies”.

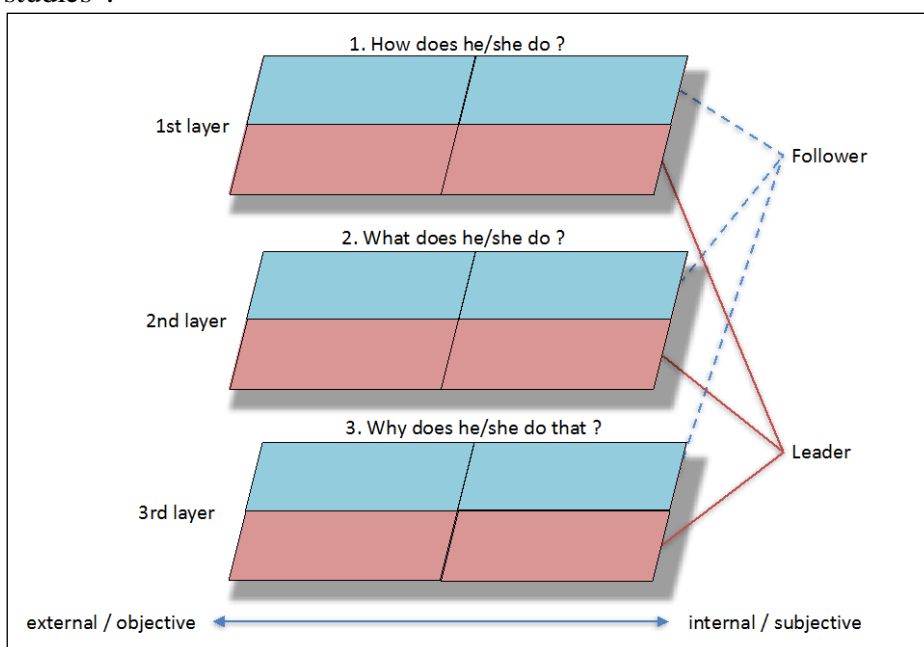


Figure 3-1. Explanation of the Idea Toward Structuring

<sup>12</sup> Minamihori N. (2013) A study of the marketing-oriented role of Chief Communication Officer (CCO). Japan Society for Corporate Communication Studies. 17: 84

In Figure 3-1, each layer (1st layer, 2nd layer and 3rd layer) shows that has different viewpoint of question. The arrow on the horizontal axis shows which viewpoint emphasize. (the right side emphasize internal / subjective, and the left emphasize external / objective) And in each layer, the back side (blue) shows a study on follower, the near side (red) shows study on leader.

The 1st layer is a research area which focus on methodology. A typical research question is “How does he / she do?”. For example, studies on how to lead the people or researches on strategy theory of how to create business correspond to this layer.

In the 2nd layer, it is a research area which focus on the contents. A typical research question is “What does he / she do?”. For example, researches on Mission (what the enterprise do), or studies on business contents corresponds to this layer.

In the 3rd layer, it is a research area which focus on the background, reasons, and cause of what people do. A typical research question is “Why does he / she do that?”. For example, studies on the reasons of some action or researches on background such as “why entrepreneur challenge the business” correspond to this layer.

Using this Figure 3-1, we show the relationship between the area of previous studies and the area of "leaders' commitment studies" through structuring from the next section.

### 3.2 The Positioning of Leadership Studies

As mentioned in section 2.1 of this paper, the main concern of leadership studies can be covered by a question which is “what are the leaders' traits, behavior, methodology or the adaptation to condition which realize high performance”. Figure 3-2 is the figure that show the positioning of leadership studies in Figure 3-1.

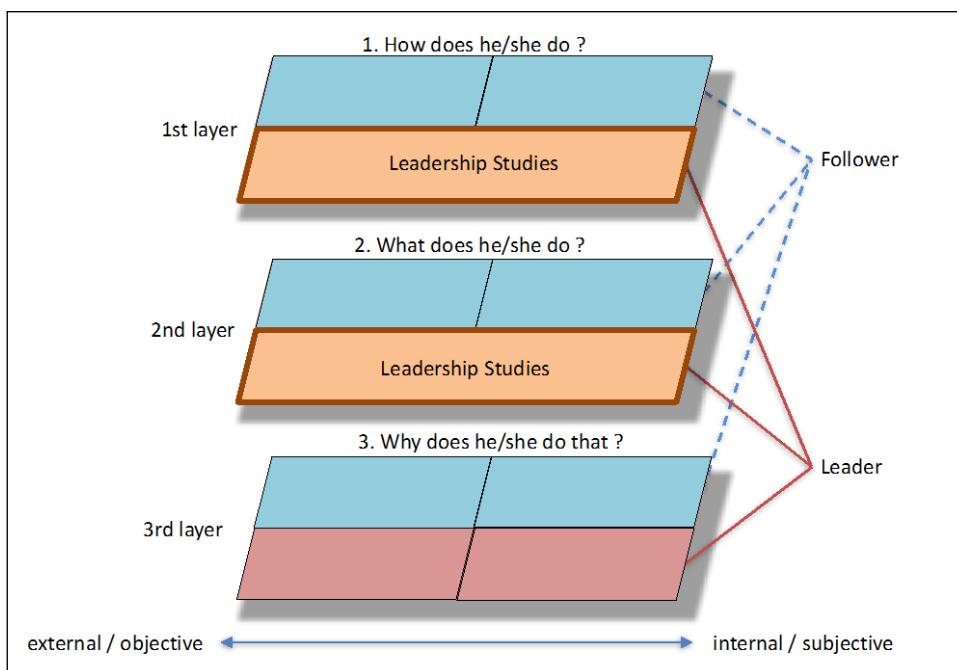


Figure 3-2. The Positioning of Leadership Studies

As you see, leadership studies mainly focus on how realize high performance, and partly ask what he / she does. Figure 3-2 shows that leadership studies are positioned on 1st and 2nd layer.

### 3.3 The Positioning of Entrepreneurship Studies

As mentioned in section 2.2 of this paper, the principal point of entrepreneurship studies is stating that it is how, and who will find, create and exploit good services that do not exist right now, i.e. the entrepreneurship studies so far has mainly conducted methodological studies on how to start a business or how to grow a business. Figure 3-3 is the figure that show the positioning of entrepreneur studies in Figure 3-1.

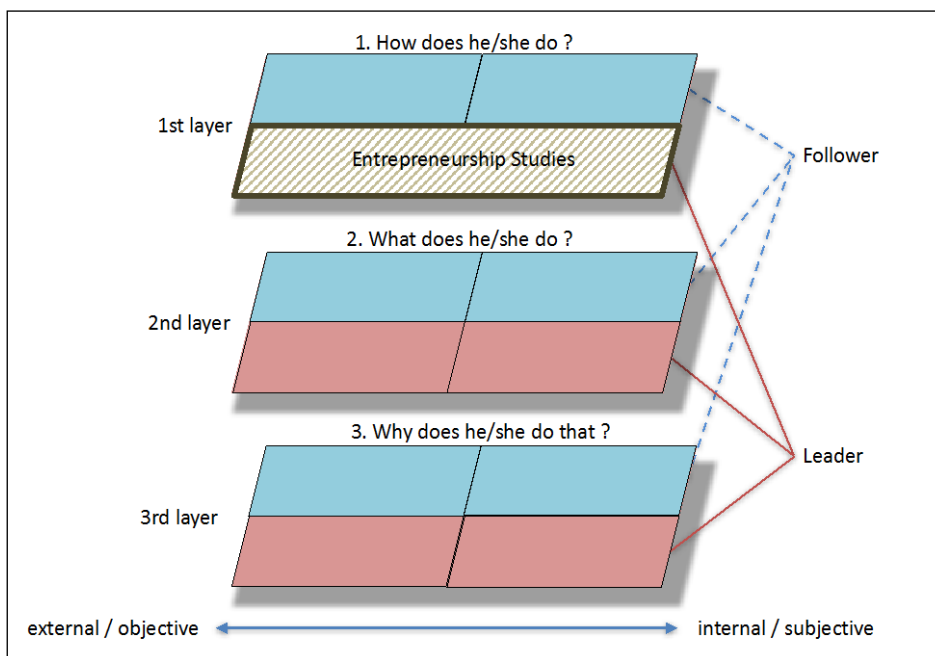


Figure 3-3. The Positioning of entrepreneurship Studies

As you see, entrepreneurship studies mainly focus on methodology, hence Figure 3-3 shows that entrepreneurship studies are positioned on 1st layer.

### 3.4 The Positioning of Motivation Studies

As mentioned in section 2.3 of this paper, motivation studies research about the people's motivation (the background, reason, cause of people's action, behavior and so on). Figure 3-4 is the figure that show the positioning of motivation studies in Figure 3-1.

As you see, motivation studies mainly focus on the background, reason, cause of people's action, behavior and so on, hence Figure 3-4 shows that motivation studies are positioned 3rd layer, and it focus on the psychological situation, so it can be said that it based on an internal / subjective viewpoint.

### 3.5 The Positioning of Commitment Studies and Engagement Studies

As mentioned in section 2.4 of this paper, commitment studies focus on a combination of a psychological state behind human behavior and a relationship born from it.

As mentioned in section 2.5 of this paper, engagement studies focus on some sort of (psychological, legal, social etc.) involvement among stakeholders.

Figure 3-5 is the figure that show the positioning of commitment studies and engagement studies in Figure 3-1.



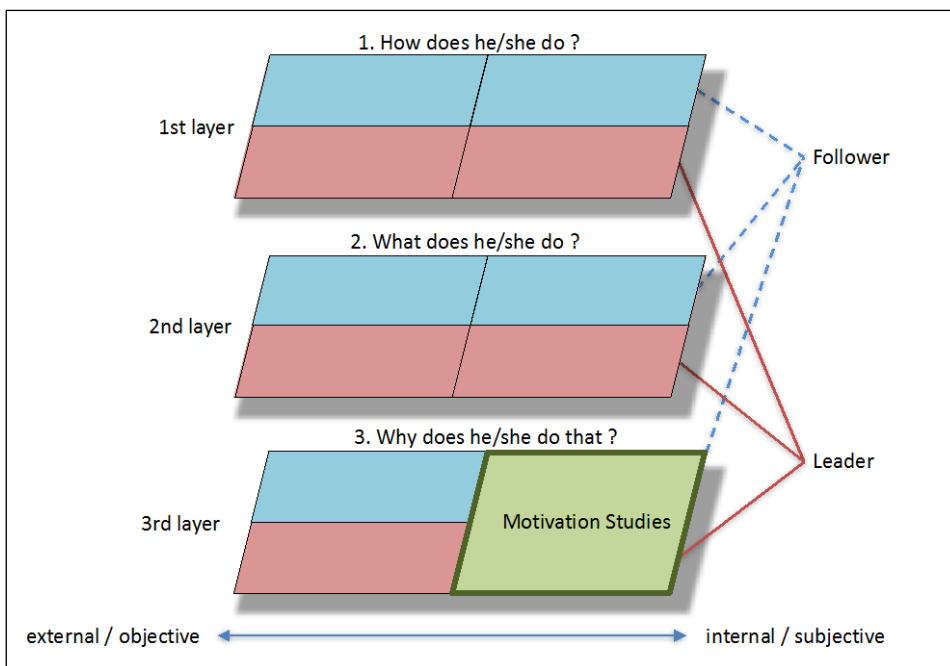


Figure 3-4. The Positioning of Motivation Studies

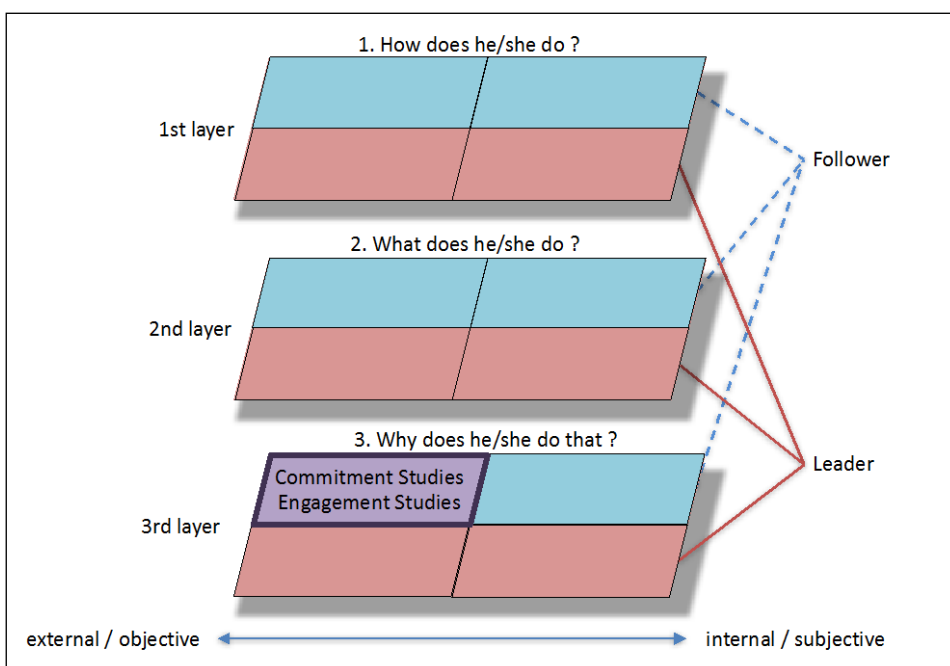
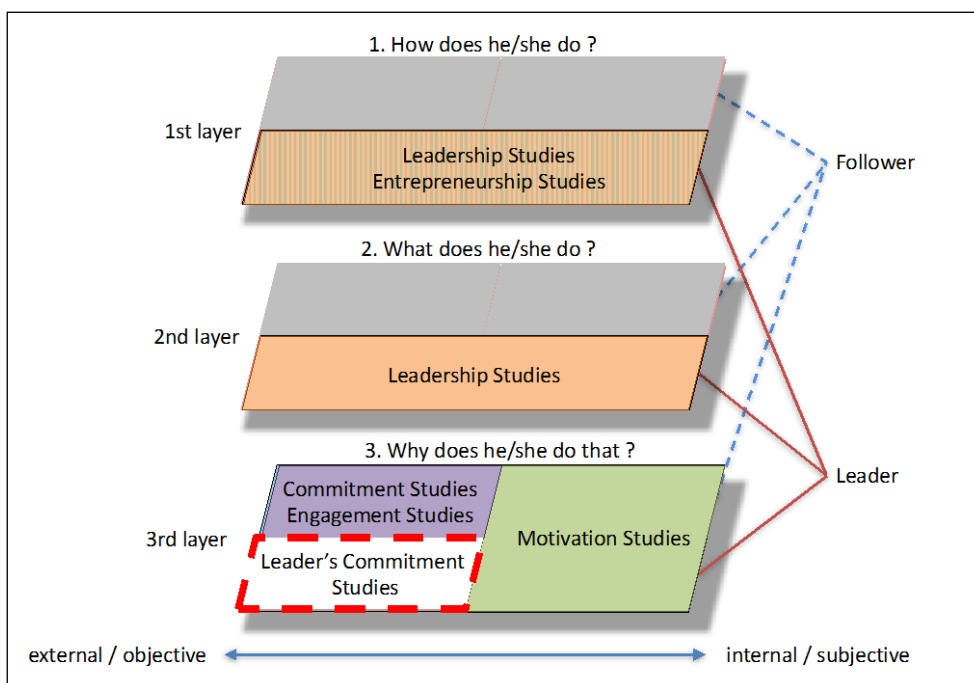


Figure 3-5. The Positioning of Commitment Studies and Engagement Studies

As you see, commitment studies and engagement studies are focus on why he / she does (background or reason of his / her action) so Figure 3-5 shows that commitment studies and engagement studies are positioned on 3rd layer. Also in engagement studies and commitment studies, the studies mainly focus on making someone commit / engage something. Therefore, the area of the studies is on followers. And the studies are not limited on psychological aspect, but also psychological, legal, social or other relationship with someone or something, hence the studies are positioned more external / objective than motivation studies.

### 3.6 Explain the Remaining Studies Area

Figure 3-6 is the figure which is made from integration of the positioning of each study which is described from section 3.1 to section 3.5. (The studies of followers in the 1st and 2nd layers colored gray in Figure 3-6 are not mentioned in this paper because it is separated from the subject of this paper)



**Figure 3-6. Structure of Previous Studies Areas**

As shown in Figure 3-6, it can be seen that there are areas that are not covered by previous studies in the 3rd layer. It is area of studies which focus on leaders' backgrounds, reasons, and causes of what leaders do and the relationship between leaders and projects (including some kind of emotional background). It is confirmed that there is a new area (research area of "leaders' commitment studies") which is not covered by the previous research. We consider that it is because that how to demonstrate leadership or how to make followers' commitment is required more than strengthening leaders' commitment or increasing leaders with commitment in the past era whose change was relatively gradual. However, strengthening leaders' commitment and increasing leaders with commitment, who can create innovation and change society, gets required more in present day which is called the VUCA era and in which future cannot be seen well.

Based on the discussion so far, we summarize the discussion in this chapter. In this chapter, we will first describe three-layers structure such as the research area for methodology (1st layer), the research area for contents and mission etc. (2nd layer) and the research area for backgrounds, reasons, and causes (3rd layer). Then next we describe the contrast between the internal / subjective viewpoint and the external / objective viewpoint, and then, we talked about the difference between the subjects of followers and leaders.

Then, in line with that idea, we have selected the areas of previous research such as 1. leadership studies, 2. entrepreneurship studies, 3. motivation studies, 4. commitment studies, 5. engagement studies and the research area of "leader's commitment studies". As a result of structuring, it was confirmed that there is a new research area of 'leaders' commitment studies' which is not covered by the field of previous research. We show

that the area of “leaders’ commitment studies” is different from the area of previous studies as the novelty of this study.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the relationship between the area of "leaders’ commitment studies" and the area of related previous studies such as leadership studies and entrepreneurship studies is structured and shown. As a result, as shown in Figure 3-6, it is confirmed that the new area where previous studies don’t cover exists (the area of "leader's commitment studies"). The area is on the 3rd layer where the area of studies which focus on leader’s background, reasons and causes etc. and also focus on not only internal / subjective (psychological) aspect, but also external / objective. (psychological, legal, social etc.)

While we refer to them all as “leader's commitment studies”, there are so many wide and various areas on it, for example, entrepreneurs’ / in-house entrepreneurs’ commitment to their own project, a leaders’ commitment to organizational transformation, top managements’ commitment to organization management, government officer / politicians’ commitment to policy planning and execution and so on. Moreover, there are so many research questions such as “what is the leaders’ commitment?”, “how the leaders’ commitment is born?”, “what kind of environment does promote the leaders’ commitment to be born and to get strong?”, “what is the different and what is the same between leader's commitment and others’ commitment?” and so on. From now on, it is hoped that more concrete and detailed "leaders’ commitment studies" will progress based on this paper for creating innovation and changing society.

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