Exploring the Impact of Leadership Styles and Skills on Teams and Organisational Objectives

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Abstract: *This paper will explore the impact of leadership styles and skills on teams and organisational objectives and is presented in two parts, namely: (a) Impact of leadership styles on team and organisational objectives: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, laissez-faire leadership; and (b) Impact of leadership skills on team and organisational objectives: create a safe environment that promotes trust, values open communications, connects work to organisation objectives, builds self-esteem and confidence, respects diverse cultures and customs, challenging beliefs and assumptions.*

Keywords: Leadership styles, leadership skills, team objectives, organisational objectives

INTRODUCTION

Impact of Leadership Styles on Team and Organisational Objectives

Transactional leadership
In this leadership style, there is a focus by the leader to ensure that the team complies with what is required of them by using a system of rewarding when things are done correctly and punishments when things are not done correctly (Alrowwad et al., 2020). This leader puts a priority on how the team is performing collectively as a group and takes notice of where the organisation is going and aligns their supervision to the team accordingly. The team is closely watched for any deviations to the objectives of the organisation and to find faults (Alrowwad et al., 2020). This style of leadership may be appropriate when the work involves a critical situation and when mistakes may lead to serious repercussions. However, this style often leads to more mistakes within the team compared to the other leadership styles.

Transformational leadership
While the transactional style of leadership had a focus on rewarding to increase motivation and punishment for those not working as required, a transformational leadership style has a focus

on the behaviour that the leader possesses that could be used to transform members of the team by inspiring them to go beyond what is required of them within an organisation (Xenikou, 2017). Often, the transformational leader goes beyond what is best for themselves and their personal interests. This leadership style advocates for new ways of working and thinking and moves away from beliefs, ideas and traditions that can be outdated (Xenikou, 2017). There is a platform for team members to voice their ideas, concerns and individual needs to up skill themselves and the leader is also interested in issues that could impact on the performance of team members. In order to maintain the organisational image and objectives the leader needs to be charismatic and influential so that the objectives of the organisation can be implemented. The dimensions of this transformational leadership style are inspirational and it is of no surprise that according to Iqbal et al. (2015) this is the most researched and most popular style of leadership.

Democratic leadership
The main component of a democratic leadership style is that there is free and open dialogue and involvement of everyone in the decision-making process (Woods, 2020). In this leadership style the building of relationships is the foundation to shift the direction of the organisation towards quality improvement of processes and systems and move away from trying to find faults with one another (Woods, 2020). This is one of the main components that differentiate the democratic style of leadership from the transactional style of leadership. The amount of mistakes team members make in the organisation with this type of leadership is reduced (Woods, 2020). Although this style of leadership appears appealing and team members may show a preference for this leadership style, the downside is that team members with more dominant personalities and traits tend to influence the decision-making process to the detriment of others who may be more passive in nature.

Authoritarian leadership
In this type of leadership, the leader makes the decisions independently and does not consult with other members of the team to get their perspectives and input (Purwanto et al., 2019). The reinforcements that the leader uses are often negative in nature and there is no hesitation to use punishments to ensure that the rules are strictly followed (Purwanto et al., 2019). Often, the team is not given opportunities to undergo training to advance their knowledge and skills because this leader is concerned that the team may become empowered and then challenge the authority of the leader (Purwanto et al., 2019). Even when there are limited or no processes in place or a shortage of team members to undertake the allocated duties, this leader shows no tolerance towards team members making mistakes (Purwanto et al., 2019). One could understand that in an emergency scenario this leadership style may be necessary so that there is no confusion about what needs to be done and to prevent team members entering into long discussions and making alternative plans for which there may be no time. However, this leadership style is not conducive towards creating a culture of trust or to encourage team members to work together towards the objectives of the organisation. This leadership style is likely to contribute to team members leaving the organisation.

Laissez-faire leadership
This is a style of leadership whereby the leader does not provide any supervision or direction to team members, but rather prefers a more hands-off approach (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021). One could view this as the equivalent to not having a leader at all. The team members are left to work on their own and make all the decisions. The team is at risk of being totally accountable to the organisation when poor decisions are made because the leader is not available (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021). Someone who is new to leadership is probably most

likely to take to this style because they may not have the experience to interact with the team and contribute to the decision-making process. It may also be a style of leadership for someone who is about to retire as they may not want to address issues and rather leave it to the next person taking over that role. This absence of leadership can contribute to team members making more mistakes in their work and eventually feel the need to want to leave their jobs (Robert &Vandenberghe, 2021). There are some benefits of this style of leadership, such as giving team members the empowerment to make their own decisions which can make them take ownership of the work (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021). If the team believes that their leader has confidence in their abilities it can motivate them to work harder which can lead to better results and profit margins for the organisation. For the leader, they will have more time to focus on the higher-level work that is required to meet the organisation's objectives. However, this style of leadership will require team members to be able to work together harmoniously, which is a challenge for any organisation, and not being actively led could cause resentment in some team members who perceive themselves as working harder and not getting the acknowledgement and credit. More junior team members could be at a disadvantage if they do not have the experience, skills and knowledge to contribute to certain tasks and they could be seen as not 'pulling their weight.'

Impact of Leadership Skills on Team and Organisational Objectives

Create a safe environment that promotes trust
One of the fundamental skills a leader can possess is being able to motivate their team members (Sarros et al., 2014). In order to achieve this, the leader must create a culture that is of integrity and trust and encourage the building of relationships even when there are different opinions of the same issue (Kudonoo et al., 2012). It has been shown that team members are more likely to do more for the organisation if they are of the perception that their leader is someone they can trust and rely upon (Schwartz & Castelli, 2014). According to Hsieh and Wang (2015) when the leader fully engages with their team in an open and transparent manner, and engages with them authentically, they noted that the team acknowledges this authenticity. On the other hand, Chughtai et al. (2015) found that when a leader abuses this trust it leads to the team disengaging with the leader because they feel violated. One of the skills a leader can have is being reflective about their leadership skills because this will allow them to identify shortcomings in their skills because this makes a team feel safer and secure (Sidani, 2007). Sidani (2007) summaries this point by suggesting that the success of a leader in any organisation is due to the ability of that leader to create an impression of trustworthiness and to continuously foster this within the team. This is also supported by Sparrow (2013) who argued that the ability of the leader to create an environment that promotes a culture of trust contributes to the development of higher performers in the team because the team is much more motivated and engaged.

Values open communications
The skill of communication in a leader provides a basis in which the leader can openly seek and give feedback because this encourages discussion within the team, which in turn creates a culture of team involvement (Johansson et al., 2014). An important aspect when a leader delivers a message to the team is the way that message is communicated because a harsh delivery could create a culture of mistrust. A leader with a delivery tone that is positive and welcoming is likely to gain the trust and attention of the team than one than uses an impersonal and distant tone. Sidani (2007) advocates that a team that trusts and admires their leader could be more commitment and form a better relationship with the organisation. Even the language used, as pointed out by Sarros et al. (2014), when it is empathetic, can contribute to a culture

of open communication. However, when leaders are aggressive and use inappropriate or negative language this can lead to the team becoming demotivated and resentful (Riggio & Reichard, 2008). Although it is important for a leader to be supportive it does not mean that they must overlook performance at work that is poor. The members of the team should be free to voice their concerns in a constructive manner so that their views are taken into consideration to improve the performance of the organisation without looking like they are trying to undermine the leader. Criticisms that constructive can provide a forward and backwards feedback loop so that the leader and the team can respond openly to what is being discussed without feeling that they are being personally attacked (Lee & Jensen, 2014).

Connects work to organisation objectives

Another skill of a leader is being able to convey the objectives and values of the organisation to the team so that they understand the purpose of why they need to perform their duties. Carton et al. (2014) suggested that a team can become demotivated or even confused about how their duties contribute to the objectives and values of the organisation if they cannot connect their duties to these objectives and values. It is important for a leader to provider a clear direction about why the team needs to undertake specific duties and why it needs to be done and what gains would be achieved for the organisation. A step further would be for the leader to make it clear to each team member how their individual contribution impacts the organisation's objectives and values. Lawrence (2008) highlighted that if the leader was unable to set out a clear direction for the team, then this was likely to lead to the impediment of a culture of collaborative working.

Builds self-esteem and confidence

A fundamental skill of a leader is being able to increase the levels of confidence and self-efficacy of the team. According to McDaniel & DiBella-McCarthy (2012) self-efficacy can be modifiable because a leader can have influence over the team's motivation to meet the organisation's objectives. In this regard, it is important for the leader to act in a positive way so that the behaviours they display are supportive to help the team build confidence (Castelli, 2008). On the other hand, Buljac-Samardzic & van Woerkom (2015) warned about providing too much support which can lead to the team becoming self-reliant on the leader and may even harm the efforts to meet organisational objectives. Thus, it would be reasonable for a leader to vary how they approach the team or individuals within the team based on the specific team and/or individual needs. Schoel et al. (2011) indicated that building self-esteem provides the team with motivation to be proactive in the workplace. These findings were confirmed by Avey et al. (2011) and by an earlier study by Hinrichs (2007) which concluded that those with a high self-esteem tended to show behaviours that were less deviant. However, this self-esteem can decline if the leader undermines the abilities of the team (Castelli, 2008).

Respects diverse cultures and customs

Research by Tröster and Van Knippenberg (2012) showed that openness is a leadership skill that allows for the minority members in a team to have their voices heard. This is likely because when a leader is open to feedback then those members that are in the minority in a team are more likely to approach that leader and offer innovative ideas on how to meet the organisation's objectives. Castelli et al. (2014) pointed out that a leader that practices and values diversity demonstrated better metrics in meeting the organisation's objectives especially in profits and sales. Leaders with skills such as self-monitoring and being sensitive are more likely to adapt to the needs of a culturally diverse team. Ramthun & Matkin (2012) points out that if a leader does not accept and respect the different cultures within a team then this leads to the team not working collaboratively.

Challenging beliefs and assumptions

O'Brien (2012) was of the view that the skills of an effective leader went beyond measuring key performance indicators, but someone who was able to challenge their own beliefs and assumptions and be reflective. It is human nature to think that one's own views are valid, however it is important for leaders to be open to explore their assumptions so that the leader can connect more with the members of their team. Since humans tend to think that their values and beliefs are valid, it is crucial that the reflective leader be open enough to challenge his or her assumptions to make meaningful change. Critical self-analysis and reflective learning capability play a central role in the development of effective managers (Vilkinas & Cartan, 2006). Only by being willing to change his or her own thinking can the leader connect with other people who are operating with alternative paradigms, with different mental models, and with certain assumptions and beliefs about how the world works. When blind spots are not revealed in current thinking, the same patterns occur repeatedly with the faulty expectation that different outcomes will result. For example, some leaders may not consider what motivates followers to perform; instead, they focus purely on performance outcomes without regard to followers' needs. They are far less likely to seek feedback that questions or confronts their fundamental ideas or actions (Hughes et al., 2015). Challenging assumptions, as well as the beliefs that support them, can play a critical role in change processes and is necessary for reflective leadership. Further, according to Kim (2002) and O'Brien (2012), it allows for accurate framings of both problems and solutions and thus provides an important step for moving beyond business as usual.

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