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EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AS A DETERMINANT FACTOR ON EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT IN PRIVATE ORGANIZATION IN KENYA (A CASE OF A NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION IN KENYA)

REGINA KANANU MARETE, DR. DENNIS JUMA, DR. BRENDA ACHIENG

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¹Regina Kananu Marete, ²Dr. Dennis Juma, ³Dr. Brenda Achieng

¹Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology (JKUAT), Kenya

²Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology (JKUAT), Kenya

³Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology (JKUAT), Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Many studies show that the working population can be divided into several categories; people who are engaged (loyal and productive), those who are not engaged (just putting in time), and those who are actively disengaged (unhappy and spreading their discontent). Employee commitment, productivity and retention issues are emerging as the most critical workforce management challenges of the immediate future, driven by employee loyalty concerns, corporate restructuring efforts. Productivity and retention generally fall further as employees become distracted, confused and preoccupied with potential outcomes following these transitions like restructuring, downsizing, mergers, acquisitions as well as even rapid growth. The purpose of this study was to investigate leadership style as a determinant factor to employee disengagement in private organizations in Kenya with a case study of a nongovernmental organization in Kenya from which the analysis of the research objectives can be used to analyze other private organizations. The study will on practical level equip private organizations with useful information on managing leadership of different teams within an organization. The other private and even governmental organizations can draw learning experiences from the study to implement in their workplaces to enhance their production and sales volumes. Descriptive survey was used in the study. The study used semi-structured questionnaire targeting a population of 420 employees with a sample size of 36. The study used stratified random sampling technique and primary data. The findings shared common similarities with the themes of literature review and confirmed that there is a relationship between disengagement and leadership styles. Employees can attain high level of satisfaction which is attributable to leadership, their styles and obligations towards employers. Results indicated the management ought to conduct attitude surveys that will include satisfaction level, interpersonal relations, communication and leadership styles and the interpretation used to influence employees' actions towards work in order to change the status quo. Leaders need to build appreciation with and acquire personal values of those who are giving their energy and talent to accomplish the shared objectives.

Key Words: *Determinants, Employee Disengagement, Private Organizations, non-governmental institutions; leadership styles, charismatic leadership style, visionary leadership style, classic leadership style, transactional leadership style*

Introduction

Employee engagement is an emerging concept in the business management organization psychology and human resource development fields as cited by (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Kahn, (1990) defined employee engagement as a psychological presence of an employee when executing his or her tasks in organizations. He considered the psychological presence from the aspects of physical, cognitive and emotional which facets he described as being activated simultaneously to generate an 'engaged state'. Researchers have started investigating the imperative of employee engagement, increasing evidence on both theoretical and practical level which indicates that engagement can make a huge difference to the performance of individuals, teams and organizations.

Employee disengagement is the negative attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. Disengagement is the opposite of employee engagement. There is not so much material on disengagement but on engagement. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization (Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday, 2004). Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, (2001) view employee engagement as a concept with a sparse and diverse theoretical and empirical framework and further demonstrated relevance to the relationship among potential antecedents, and consequence of engagement although the components of engagement have not been rigorously conceptualized, much less studied. Macey and Schneider, (2010), state that engagement is the illusive force that motivates employees to higher (or lower) levels of performance. They contend that employee engagement is a desirable condition that has an organization purpose and connotes involvement. It is further described as the commitment passion, enthusiasm, focused effort

and energy so that it has both attitudinal and behavioral component.

Doherty, (2010), states that engagement is about respect going up, down and across a business. It also relates to alignment of human resource and management policies to business culture and objectives. Simpson (2009), also in his research on engagement in USA hospitals, said employee engagement is about employee performance (related with nurse performance, patient outcomes and other core healthcare organizational outcomes) at work within organizational performance based.

Melcrum, (2005), on the other has defined employee engagement as composing of three areas which are 'think', 'act' and 'feel'. 'Think' which is cognitive commitment describes an employee's intellectual connection with the company, including their support and belief in the company's objectives. 'Feel', on the other hand is affective commitment describing a strong emotional connection to the company. The employees feel loyal, devoted and have a sense of belonging and are proud to work for the company. Lastly, 'act' relates to behavioral commitment. Employees act in ways that support the success of the organization. They are willing to stay with the company despite other opportunities and frequently go above and beyond normal expectations to help the company succeed.

The nongovernmental organization (NGO)

The NGO under study began its support to Somali communities in 1980 in collaboration with United Nations High Commission for Refugees. It established itself in from the year 1992, in various parts of the country in response to the critical needs of the most vulnerable people in war torn Somalia. Since then, the organization has been operational and works in all four geographical "sections" of the country. Its portfolio has been wide and varied,

with humanitarian outreach in the following sectors: refugees/internally displaced Persons, emergency feeding programs (supplementary and therapeutic), water and sanitation (primarily emergency relief), distribution of emergency kits to the displaced, primary health care, emergency food distributions (free food distributions), food security programming through Food For Work, emergency and agricultural rehabilitation programs, tuberculosis treatment and control, civic education/grassroots peace building, eradication of the female genital mutilation practice, anti- female circumcision advocacy and primary education program.

Statement of the problem

Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantages including higher productivity and lower employee turnover. Thus, according to Vance, (2006), it is not surprising that organizations of all sizes and types have invested substantially in policies and practices that foster engagement and commitment in their workforces. Though different organizations define engagement differently, some common themes emerge. These themes include employees' satisfaction with their work and pride in their employer, the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do for work and the perception that their employer values what they bring to the table. The greater an employee's engagement, the more likely he or she is to "go the extra mile" and deliver excellent on-the-job performance. In addition, engaged employees may be more likely to commit to staying with their current organization. Clearly, engagement and commitment can potentially translate into valuable business results for an organization (Vance, 2006).

Recent work by Hiltrop (1999), Woodruffe, (1999), Williams, (2000) and Cappelli (2000), concentrates

primarily on retaining high-performing key players. Each of these authors uses the expression "the war for talent" to illustrate the significance and difficulty faced by those competing for services of individuals who have the capacity to make a real difference to an organization's competitive position. The turnover of key employees can have a disproportionate impact on the business and the people organizations wish to retain are probably the ones most likely to leave according to (Leighn, 2002).

The study variables have objective characteristics in private organizations like non-governmental organizations' since the investigation is on the relationship between factors and employee engagement in relationship to leadership styles employed. The study investigated leadership styles (visionary, classic, transactional), which are tangible realities and independent of social actors (private organizations' employees).

Engaged employees in nongovernmental are organizational assets; therefore management is always adopting new compensation tactics to employ their employees to remain engaged. This NGO carries out engagement surveys called 'Our Voice' every year to establish the level of employee disengagement. Despite this, employee engagement index has never reached 80 per cent. For an organization that employs so much effort on employee engagement, one would think the index would be higher than that. Employees in this NGO in Kenya have job duties and operating procedures to which they adhere to. They are part of the formal structure (hierarchy) where employees report to managers who in turn report to more senior managers. The NGOs main objective is often to adopt different leadership factors to ensure their employees are engaged. The question is 'why doesn't the engagement index rise up'? This study seeks to investigate the determinant factors of

leadership styles that cause a percentage of employees to be disengaged.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to evaluate determinant factors of leadership style on employee disengagement in private organizations in Kenya. The Specific objectives of the study were:

- To establish the effect of classical leadership on employee disengagement in private organization in Kenya
- To determine the effect of transactional leadership on employee disengagement in private organization in Kenya
- To establish the effect of visionary leadership on employee disengagement in private organization in Kenya.

Literature Review

Personal Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990),

The history of research on engagement started way back in the 1990s with Kahn, (1990) who defined personal engagement as the ‘harnessing of organization members’ to their work roles. He expressed that when people employ and express themselves at their workplaces physically, cognitively and emotionally, then they are able to fit into their roles and their productivity is increased. Kahn identified the three psychological conditions that increase personal engagement as meaningfulness, safety and availability and the variation of their engagement based on the employees’ perceptions to the safety and resources they perceive to have.

Kahn’s personal engagement theoretical framework was helpful in better understanding the concept of employee engagement. According to Kahn’s (1990) personal engagement theoretical framework, people express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in the roles they occupy; people

are more excited and content with their roles when they draw on themselves to perform these roles; and people vary in their levels of attachment to their roles. Further, Kahn suggested that people vary their levels of personal engagement according to the meaningfulness of a situation (or perceived benefits), the perceived safety of a situation, and their availability based on resources they perceive they have. Conversely, an individual can become disengaged and defend the self (or protect himself or herself) by withdrawing and hiding his or her true identity, ideas, and feelings.

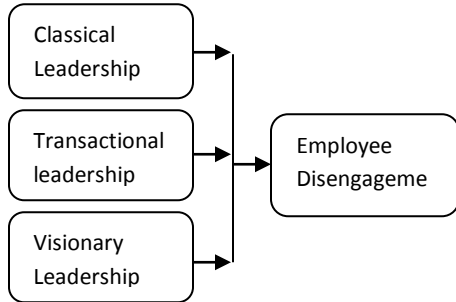
Kahn’s study and definition of personal engagement and work engagement has received more attention from other authors and academics and is becoming a popular topic in business and management circles. Other authors like (Saks, 2006; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Watt and Piotrowski, 2008; Fine, Horowitz, Weigler, and Basis, 2010) also defined engagement in many ways and have own perceptions and perspectives of what employee engagement actually is which makes it difficult to trace who first developed the cost of employee engagement and how best to define it.

The subject NGO in Kenya conducted a survey in 2015 and the results were that the engagement rate is at 69%. This was conducted by an external consultant and the indicators measured looked at the staff care, development, training, leadership, culture and agility. The Survey did not get the 31% of the disengaged staff state the factors that lead to them being disengaged. This NGO like any other private business organization in Kenya is faced with a high number of staff who are disengaged.

This personal engagement theory assisted the study in determining factors that make staff withdraw from giving their best at workplaces. The theory helped to yield understanding of what types of variables influence how organization employees

perceive themselves, their work and the relation between the two.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable Dependent Variable

Leadership styles

Leadership has been defined differently by various authors for decades. Literature reviews a wide range of definitions; (House and Aditya, 1997; Yun et al., 2006; Alas, Tafel, and Tuulik, 2007). In understanding leadership many scholars intentionally broke it down in smaller components focusing on various facets like decision making, while others studied trait, behavioral, contingency and visionary or charismatic leadership approaches that have been identified as prominent in the literature according to (House & Aditya, 1997). As Drath, (2001) described, effective leadership is one that requires alignment between both leaders and followers’ ideas, about leadership and yet followers have often ignored in definition of leadership.

Avery, (2004) proposed four paradigms of leadership – the classical, transactional, visionary and organic paradigms. Each reflects a different type of leadership. The paradigms for the purpose of this paper will be described as ‘style’. Literature indicates that leadership has not been universally defined. However, the approach proposed by Avery, (2004) and Bergsteiner, (2008) regards leadership as a phenomenon based on the

interaction between leaders and followers within the organization culture and systems.

Classical leadership is one of the oldest styles and Avery, (2004) refers to it as being dominance by a pre-eminent person who commands and maneuvers others to act towards an objective which may not be explicitly stated. The other employees in the organization generally adhere and follow the directives of the elite leader without questioning their commands and go ahead to execute mainly out of fear of consequences of disobeying or out of respect for the leader or both. This leadership style is limited where the leader cannot command and control every action especially when situations become more complex and beyond that leaders’ capacity of one person. Classical leadership style employs an autocratic style for making decisions and rarely involves followers in the process. Followers are not given any powers in the organization. As a result classic leaders tend to be highly directive and this enables them to employ unskilled followers and as a result the operations of an organization become routine and predictable. Staff retention in this kind of leadership is minimal.

Transactional leadership is a managerial leadership that focuses on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance; it is a style of leadership in which the leader promotes compliance of his/her followers through both rewards and punishments. The leaders here pay attention to follower’s work and are effective in crisis and emergency situations as well as for projects that require to be carried out in a specific way. The followers and the leaders engage and interact and negotiate agreements (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Under transactional leadership, followers agree with, accept, or comply with the leader in exchange for monetary rewards, praise, and resources, or even to avoid disciplinary actions (Bass, Jung, Avolio, and Berson, 2003; Avery, 2004). Transactional leadership depends on the leader’s

skills, confidence in his or her selected direction, and cooperation from the followers. Such leaders attempt to persuade and influence followers to achieve certain ends, taking some account of the followers' viewpoints as part of the negotiations. For transactional leadership to succeed (Drath, 2001) suggests that leaders should employ interpersonal skills to motivate, direct, control, develop, teach, and influence followers more than they themselves are influenced.

With Avery's (2004) classification, the transactional style overcomes some limitations of classical leadership by considering and involving followers. Which makes it possible for the leader to obtain more information and ideas, and followers can be developed and have their personal needs recognized. Transactional leadership has its own limitations; followers can perceive the monitoring typical of transactional leadership as constraining, lowering their likelihood of contributing to organizational objectives. A transactional leader's corrective interventions and management-by-exception can upset some followers and decrease their performance as explained by (Ball, Trevino, and Sims, 1992). In times of rapid change and uncertainty, transactional leadership becomes limited, particularly when greater commitment is needed from followers, or if followers need to be willing to make major changes to their mindsets and behaviors (Bass, 1990; Drath, 2001). It is unrealistic to expect a transactional leader to predict and negotiate all the needed changes in relatively complex situations, and during incremental change (Bass, 1990). Lastly, a transactional leader is likely to approach decisions with a heavy focus on short-term payoffs (Avery, 2004).

Visionary leadership is also known as transformational or charismatic leadership. This idea of leadership adds a new dimension to leadership studies- it is the future vision of

leadership and the emotional involvement of employees within the organization as described by (Avery, 2004). The visionary leaders are expected to provide a clear vision of the future, develop a road map for the journey ahead and be able at the same time to motivate the followers. Certain aspects of visionary leadership seem to be universally recognized according to (Den, H., House, H., Ruiz, Q. and Dorfman, 1999). The characters of visionary leadership include trustworthiness, just, honesty, inspirational, encouraging, positive, motivational, among others.

Regardless of the popularity of the visionary leadership, there are limitations as Avery (2004) and Naler & Tuschman (1990) pointed out; that the unrealistic expectations put on visionary leaders can bring disappointment if things don't work out. Innovation can be inhibited if people become unwilling to disagree with a visionary leader and visionary leadership is not necessarily synonymous with good leadership as pointed out by (Westley and Mintzberg, 1989).

On the moderating characteristics for the leadership styles, Mathieu (1990) points out that individuals need for achievement generally aspire to accomplish difficult tasks and to maintain high standards of performance. Shore, Sy and Strauss, (2006) state that individuals vary in their reactions to situations involving perceived equity or inequity even when it comes to leadership. The employees are sensitive to feeling of favoritism. Need for clarity from employees is described by Lyons (1971) as an extent to which a subordinate feels the need to know what is expected of him or her and how he or she is expected to do her job.

Leadership at every level is crucial to functionality and performance of an organization. Leaders with loyal followers have a greater chance of attaining exceptional outcomes with employees focused

towards one vision (Brown, 2006). For an organization to succeed in today's work environment, it must foster employee engagement so that each individual employee buys in and takes ownership in the organizations and themselves (Baumruk, 2006). Effective leadership with managerial skill is a combination that can excel employees in performing at a higher level (Goldbach, 2005).

Research Methodology

A case study research design was selected for the study. Case studies emphasize detailed analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships, (Yin, 1997). Time and availability of data are also important considerations in the determination of the case study.

In this study, the target population was a nongovernmental organization in Nairobi Kenya which began humanitarian support to Somali communities in 1980 in collaboration with United Nations High Commission for Refugees. According to the figures extracted from the NGO, the study targeted 36 senior management staff responsible for designing effective ways of keeping on check the determinants of employee disengagements in the organization in their respective teams within the organization.

In order to meet the objective of the study, open and closed ended questionnaires were used to collect the primary data developed by the researcher. The questionnaires were used to obtain primary data from the sampled population, who were the departmental heads and senior managers. All the respondents were asked the same questions in the same order. The questionnaires provide both qualitative and quantitative data. Secondary data was also used, extracted from previous research reports and company documents review. A descriptive study was analyzed based on secondary

data obtained from available financial statements derived from the website of the NGO under study.

Qualitative analysis was done on the information collected from the results of the questionnaires; quantitative analysis was included, both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data from which findings were presented using tables, graphs and pie charts.

Results and discussions of the findings

The study attained a response rate of 80%. The study found that the characteristic leadership styles desired are those that distinguish the kind of leaderships that promotes innovation, equity sensitivity, and seeks to give clarity as well as the need for achievement by employees. The study found out that leaders not adapt one particular leadership style but should use situational leadership according to the teams and objectives they wish to attain.

The results agreed with Kimando, Njogu and Sakwa, (2012) who in their study found that when workers are being led by leaders who work in line with promotion of employees', the standard of innovation will be high, equity sensitivity will be achieved and clarity of information will be achieved through employed technology and innovation. Their results further suggested that private organization that embraced technology, improved the life of employees. The results were also consistent with Hua, (2011) who assert that the leadership style is deemed appropriate for the firms in a competitive environment. Leadership style by adding value to the employees in production of products and services can provide sustainable competitive advantage compared to poor leadership style since the competitive advantage cannot be easily copied and customers attach more weight to products attributes other than employee's relation.

Summary of the findings

Eighty three percent of the respondents stated that disengagement factors emerge within leadership styles. The respondents cited various factors that hinder them from feeling engaged; supervisory styles, recognition and praise, acknowledgement of one's performance, as well as fairness- equity with other employees. Majority of respondents cited dissatisfaction with the authoritarian leadership style employed by their supervisors which caused discontent. The respondents wanted to be trusted to perform their jobs without being micromanaged, to be part of decision making process, and for proper communication of company objectives and direction. They cited knowledge of expectations

Conclusions

Leadership is very crucial to functionality and performance of an organization; how leaders provide direction, coach, correct and motivate employees has a direct impact on whether the employees take ownership and engage at their work therefore for the problem of employees disengagement to be curbed in the organization they should consider the qualities of a good leader..

Recommendations

Leadership is very crucial to functionality and performance of an organization; how leaders provide direction, coach, correct and motivate employees has a direct impact on whether the employees take ownership and engage at their work.

Building the relationship between a leader and his/her followers requires an appreciation from the leader for the personal values of those who would be willing to give their energy and talents to accomplish shared objectives. The literature reviewed together with analysis of the research findings highlights leadership behaviors that are more conducive to increasing engagement in the workplace as well as those behaviors that detract from it. Leaders play an important role in the development of engagement by projecting the ideals and characteristics that are tied to engagement drivers, such as being supportive, and providing a vision to the employees.

As such, leaders need to strategically determine the leadership style that best fits their business and business units and adopt it. This can be done through meetings amongst the senior leaders in the organization to determine what leadership style is best for the organization and different teams within the business units. Managers need to be trained on leadership through organized leadership seminars and management courses by consultant groups. Managers growing within private organizations should be trained before being promoted to leadership roles. The training should be on holistic approach to leadership, employee involvement and inclusiveness and leadership relations with employees in order to foster a good supervisor-employee relationship. A vast amount of literature is available to help and guide and develop a leader.

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