Impact of Leadership Techniques on the Efficiency of Secretaries: A Discourse

Joseph White and Alexandra Meyertein

Department of Strategic Communication, Ariel university, Israel.

ABSTRACT

Leadership constitutes a fundamental aspect in providing direction and purpose toward attaining the goals of any society. Leadership technique is a corporate task of the top administration whose decisions determines the level to which a particular workforce gains satisfaction or dissatisfaction at work. Based on this, leadership is the main factor that distinguishes a successful organization from an unsuccessful one. This paper therefore discussed the effect of leadership techniques on the efficiency of secretaries. In line with the dyadic relationship theory, the paper analyses the relationship between a leader and an individual bearing in mind that the motivation and competence of an individual to achieving a goal is dependent on the influence of the leader. The paper therefore concluded that the impact of democratic technique of leadership on secretaries is one of active participation in the management of an organization; hence leaders must ensure that the welfare of their subordinates is made paramount.

Keywords: Leadership, Secretary, Public, Productivity, Technique

INTRODUCTION

Leadership techniques differ from one personality or circumstances to the other. According to [1], the level to which the individuals demonstrate leadership traits depends not only on their characteristics and personal abilities, but also on the characteristics of the situation and environment in which they finds themselves. Based on the fact that humans could become members of an organisation in order to achieve certain personal objectives, the extent to which they are actively involved depends on how much certainty they have that their membership will enable them realize their predetermined goals. Hence, a person will support an organisation if he believes that through it his personal objectives and goals could be met if not, the person's interest will decline. Leadership technique in any corporation is one of the factors that play major role in boosting or slowing down the interest and commitment of the individuals in a firm.

Leadership has been defined in several ways by different authors focusing on traits, behaviours, influence, interaction patterns, role relationship and as an occupation of an administrative position [2]. Similarly, [3] defines leadership as "a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal". According to [4] and [5], this definition is based on the postulation that leadership entails deliberately influencing people working in diverse capacities in a group or organisations. In the same vein, [6] and [7] put forward that leadership happens only when people are swayed to do things that are ethical and beneficial to the firm. Secretaries are among the categories of workers that come under such direct and indirect influence of leaders [8]. According to [9], a secretary is an executive assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment, and makes decision with the scope of assigned authority. [10] goes on to define a secretary as one who is supposed to aid the progress of communication between a section or department and the rest of the organization, clients, customers, and

suppliers through the use of both written and verbal forms of communication. In his opinion, [11] cited in [12] state that in addition to typing dictated letters, experienced secretaries provide information, compose routine statements, and make feasible arrangement for solution of problems. [13] summarises by saying that contemporary secretaries are expected to be multi-task and multi-skilled, have important problem-solving skill and are the first to know what is going on in the organization. [14] and [15] explain that the duties of a secretary are company-specific and person-specific and could be dependent on the nature of relationship between the secretary and the line manager. [16] further posits that secretaries are expected to provide diverse responses to suit the diverse routines of their bosses. This affirms the position earlier highlighted that secretaries are influenced by their line managers and that the leadership techniques adopted by the line managers may have an impact on their productivity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the dyadic leadership theory. This theory reflects the relationship between a leader and an individual pointing out that the motivation and the capability of an individual to a goal is dependent on the influence of the leader [17]. Furthermore, [18] makes clear that the behavior of leader is the major factor that changes a subordinate's behavior, attitudes and motivation.

The significance of leadership technique in every aspect of life cannot be overlooked. Leadership is the chief element that differentiates a successful organization from an unsuccessful one; a good administration from a bad one, a thriving business from a failed business, amongst others. Leadership plays a vital role in providing direction and purpose towards achieving goals of the organization. Research indicates that there are a number of leadership techniques adopted by managers to enable them offer proper guidance to subordinates with a view to achieving organizational goals [19]. However, it is believed that these are applied independently depending on the existing circumstance(s) within a business locale; thus, some administrators adopt and misapply leadership techniques which results in the secretary's doing more difficult work in terms of acting as a bridge between the manager and clients or visitors. This study evaluates the effects of leadership techniques on the productivities of public service secretaries. The paper further explores the functions of secretaries in public sectors and their competences with respect to leadership techniques of their superiors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to [20] cited in [21], because businesses are expected to communicate with its stakeholders, they usually require a concept called organisational communication. Organisational communication entails a situation where a person is expected to design and exchange messages in order to deal with environmental uncertainties. Usually, the one at the centre of this work is the secretary. According to [22], a secretary is an executive assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills and has the capability to take responsibility with no or less supervision, ability to make decision regarding the assigned duties, and being familiar with the work schedule of the boss as well as the boss's extracurricular activities. The ability of a secretary to perform this important function very well, may be dependent on the type of the leadership technique of the superior. This is due to the fact that leadership technique plays a key role in boosting or slowing down the interest and dedication of the individuals in the organization [23].

Types of Leadership Techniques

Leadership technique is the manner in which leaders interact or behave towards members of their team. They are various techniques of leadership which have been recognized by scholars. These include;

Democratic Leadership: This type of leadership is in form of persuasion of people in certain ways in accordance with and/or favourable to basic democratic principles and processes, like self-determination, inclusiveness, equal participation, and deliberation [24]. Conversely, [25] defined democratic leadership as a leadership technique with more emphasis on people and performance in order to achieve organizational and personal goals. It does this by pushing for a well-organized work environment, clear responsibilities and goals to get jobs done through incentives and management of individuals and groups to use their full potentials.

Autocratic Leadership
Autocratic technique of leadership according to [26], places high emphasis on performance and low emphasis on people for getting jobs done or achieving objectives through the use of authority, control, manipulation, and hard work. It presupposes that people are untrustworthy, lazy, and irresponsible, and that, members should not or have minimal involvement in decision-making, planning, organizing, and control. [27] also puts forward that autocratic technique of leadership is designed in hierarchical chain-of command environment with well-established and controlled corrective measures, which center on punishment for nonconformity.

Laissez-faire Leadership
According to [28], the laissez-faire technique of leadership is one in which there is a strong belief that members or employees knows best, how to perform their jobs, hence they do not need direct supervision. This suggests that there is a freedom of choice for employees to do as they choose. He further explains that provision of information and resources is minimal with this technique of leadership, and there is absolutely no participation, involvement, or communication within workforce, and also, employees' agreements and commitments towards goals and objectives are just assumed.

Transformational Leadership
The transformational leader according to [29] is the type of leader that supports the members' level of maturity and concerns for achievements beyond instant self-interest and self-actualization through idealized persuasion, logical inspiration or individual consideration and the well-being of others, the organization, and the society. On the other hand, [30], portray transformational leadership as a "process" in which leaders try to develop their followers by increasing the awareness of their followers about what is essential and right, and to elevate the maturity level of their followers by developing their potentials to a level that exceeds a simple exchange of reward for efforts.

Transactional Leadership
In the opinion of [31], transactional leadership involves the exchange connection that exists between the leader and the followers in meeting their own self-interest. He buttressed this by saying that transactional leader establishes a contingent reward in exchange of the efforts of the followers either through directing or by participating on what needs to be done by the followers. In connection to this behaviour as observed by [32] is management-by-exception. This is where performance of followers is supervised by leaders and disciplinary actions are taken for non-performance. However, [33], based on a prior research on leadership technique for men and women, confirmed transactional leadership as managing in such a way that clarifies subordinates' responsibilities and rewarding them for achievement of standards, as well as taking corrective actions for failure to meet objectives.

Competencies of Secretaries
[34], define competency as capability or efficiency in undertaking assigned functions and duties. [6] is of the opinion that competency has the following components - knowledge and skills, (attitudes and beliefs), verbal, numerical and spatial aptitudes, thinking and leadership abilities, general, professional and organizational knowledge. [1] identified the following competencies of secretaries needed for effective performance - secretarial competencies, office technology management competencies, communication

competencies, management competencies, personality competencies and human relation competencies.

Secretarial competencies

[16] explain that secretarial competencies encompass speed and accuracy in using the keyboard, ability to produce documents with efficient display and format, capacity to proofread and edit documents, file and quickly retrieve documents from the file, keep track of files, handle mails, draft routine letters, arrange meetings and produce appropriate minutes.

Office technology competencies

Office technology covers all electronic equipment and amenities that facilitate the procedures used to process office information. Hence, secretaries are required to have the ability to connect hardware components, boot and shut down computer, efficiently use input devices, connect and use printer and relevant equipment for duplication, use secondary storage devices, use the internet for data gathering and e-mailing, prevent viral infection of information hard wares and use software such as word processor, spread sheet and data-base management [19].

Communication competencies

In the words of [12], communication in business organizations is important to enable such organization achieve the stated objectives. Nonetheless, communication needs to be effective by way of ensuring that the intended message is received, correctly interpreted and understood, accepted and appropriately acted upon by the receiver and confirmed by feedback. For this to happen, secretaries need to have the following competencies - the ability to understand the official language, use oral communication efficiently, effectively use written communication, spell words correctly in written communication, pronounce words correctly and clearly in oral communication, use appropriate gestures to communicate, communicate with facial expressions, communicate orally with adequate tone and write legibly and logically in written communication.

Management competencies

According to [3], a manager needs to possess special abilities to succeed. Therefore management is needed in all human endeavours and by extension, all workers including secretaries in organizations need to practice good management to succeed. To do this, secretaries need the following competencies - ability to safeguard office documents from loss or willful destruction, adequately maintain work equipment and facilities, manage the work environment by properly arranging and maintaining furniture and equipment, procure relevant office stationery and supplies, properly use office hours, maintain confidentiality of office records, organize personal efforts and energy as well as those of subordinates and persistently seek solutions to problems.

Personality competencies

Personality is regarded as the physical, mental and emotional characteristics of an individual that are presented to other people. It is developed from childhood but goes through gradual changes while a person is growing up. Job satisfaction and self-fulfillment of a person are closely associated with personality. Secretaries need the following competencies to enable them relate well with people at work - ability to always maintain cheerful disposition, demonstrate team spirit, speak and deal truthfully at all times, tolerate other people, innovate workable ideas and processes, use initiative, retain self-control always, respect superiors and equals, persistently work even when extra time is needed and being polite constantly.

Human relations competencies

Human relations refer to the communication that occurs among people in an environment. [10] cited in [17] believes that human relations entail dealing with people in a way that facilitate achievement of collective goals. It is about interaction at the workplace aimed at understanding fellow workers and clients to achieve organizational goal. Secretaries need human relations competencies to answer calls, treat mails, attend to visitors, relate with the public,

superiors, subordinates and colleagues in general. These competencies includes - ability to understand and treat other people as important members of the organization, be a member of a team,

Functions/Roles of Secretaries

[6], cited in [9], identified the following functions of secretaries in an organization:

Data generation

Secretaries carry out the function of generating or collecting data by flipping through pages of files stored in the office or clicking open the documents stored inside the computer. They may also source for data or information from other establishments or institutions through surfing the internet.

Data processing and interpretation

Information simply means processed data. According to [22] cited in [2], processed data could only be information when the data is properly analysed and interpreted to serve a useful purpose. Secretaries usually carry out analysis and interpretation of data using statistical tools, simple mathematical tools, and sometimes, common sense.

Information and office management

In his opinion, [7] cited in [5], explains that the secretary's information management functions ranges from creation of all types of documents, distribution of the documents, storing and retrieval of stored documents as well as making changes in the existing documents when new information becomes available. [29] adds that, filing plays a key role in executing this function because it aids the collection of information for reference purposes and preservation. For efficiency therefore, filing should meet the following conditions - simplicity, security, compactness and comprehensiveness,

Effects of a Leadership Techniques on the Secretary's productivity

Autocratic Leadership

This technique of leadership assumes that people are lazy, irresponsible, and untrustworthy and that planning, organizing, controlling, and decision making should be accomplished by the leader with minimal involvement from

protect the interest of the supervisor, show respect to the supervisor, ability to be open, sociable and selfless, ability to listen and hear other people's opinion, etc.

clear cross-referencing, space, economy, accessibility and adaptability.

Treating correspondence

[30] defined correspondence as letters received or sent out of an office. Secretaries perform the function of reproducing manuscripts that originate from their supervisors as out-going mails from the office and receive and treat in-coming mails according to a prescribed procedure. In performing this function, secretaries are supposed to be creative, innovative and discreet.

Organizing and clerking meetings

According to [10] the purpose of a meeting may include sharing of ideas, expressing of views on topics, raising or offering suggestions or solutions to problems. Little (1970 further adds that meetings are major part of communications in an organization and that all secretaries are supposed to be familiar with the necessary procedure for a successful meeting. The procedures include preparing and serving notice and agenda, collecting and assembling relevant information to facilitate discussions or solution of problems, clerking meetings, producing the minutes and distributing them to all the people entitled to have copies.

Handling telecommunication and postal services

Secretaries ought to be familiar with the services offered by telecommunication and postal services companies and their respective charges, to enable them perform related functions promptly and efficiently.

employees [17]; [8]. Thus, the effect of such leadership pattern on people is that, they become bitter and aggressive, and this result in distortion in communications, high turnover and absenteeism, and low productivity and poor work quality. It also puts employees under a lot of rules, procedures, red tape, status symbols, and working according to

the dictates of the boss. This makes the employees dependent, less creative and afraid to seek responsibility [1].

Laissez Faire Leader

This type of leadership gives little recognition to performance and assume that people are unpredictable and uncontrollable and that a leader needs to keep a low profile and leave people alone as much as possible [19]. Hence, employees who are under this pattern of leadership are said to be indifferent, disinterested, and are resentful of the organization and their leaders [14].

Transformational Leader

[3], defines transformational leadership as a process that involve both leaders and followers supporting one another to attain a higher level of morality and motivation. Leaders who adopt this technique have strong moral values and goals which translate into behaviours and decisions that promote ethical policies, procedures, and processes within their organizations [7]. [19] propose that these leaders also help followers improve their sense of understanding of their own moral perspective and that of others. In addition, followers are influenced in selecting information based on moral relevance from available sources. Furthermore, this pattern causes followers to learn how to think about their own roles, how to make their own decisions, and how to behave in accordance with their moral identity by observing leaders' morally communicating, modeling, rewarding

moral actions, and engaging in moral behaviours [20].

Democratic Leader

[32], explains that this pattern places more emphasis on both the performance and the welfare of the employees. Hence this technique leads to high employee productivity, satisfaction, cooperation, and commitment, and that they are not subjected to rigorous controls and formal rules and procedures. Under this pattern, employees are competent and are willing to give their best, take initiative through critical thinking, communicate openly, and seek and embrace responsibilities [10].

Transactional Leader

These leaders use rational or economic means to monitor and control employees [22]. It is based on the principle of exchange where leaders offer tangible or intangible support and resources to followers and in return, followers give in their best in terms of efforts and performance [17]. Leaders who use this technique monitor employees' digression from standards, mistakes, and errors, take action when necessary leading to moral development of employees [5]. Nonetheless, [26] maintain that employees led with this pattern of leaders act in an unethical way when put under stress. In addition, employees act unethically when faced with potential punishments, such as demotion, non-payment of salary and embarrassment [11].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the impact of democratic technique of leadership on secretaries is one of active participation in the management of an organization; hence leaders must ensure that the welfare of their subordinates is made paramount. Also, leaders as a matter of necessity should see to it that their subordinates are actively involved in the affairs of management. This puts the employees (secretaries) in a better frame

of mind when they feel as part of an organization, and it makes them put in their best at work, leading to more productivity. As a leader, it is imperative to always seek to increase the developmental level of employees (secretaries); this results in major achievements and benefits for the individuals, the organization, and the society.

REFERENCES

1. Azih, N. (2013). Capacity Building in Modern Office Technology: An Imperative for Effective Secretarial Productivity. *Asian Journal of Business Management*, 5(2), 193-196

2. Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, A., and Dennison, P. (2003). A review of leadership theory and competency frameworks. Centre for Leadership Studies, University of Exeter.

3. Cohn, S. (1985). Clerical labour intensity and the feminization of clerical labour in Great Britain, 1857-1937. Social Forces, 63(4), pp. 1060-1068.

4. Dawson, C. (2009). Introduction to research methods: A practical guide for anyone undertaking a research project. Hachette UK

5. DuBrin, J. A. (1995). Leadership. Houghton Mifñin Company, New Jersey.

6. Eran, Vigoda-Gadot, (2007). Leadership style, organizational politics, and employees' performance", Personnel Review, Vol. 36 Iss 5 pp. 661 - 683

7. Ezenwafor, J. I. (2013). Enhancing the relevance of secretarial staff in the university system. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 4(3), 424.

8. Ezenwafor, J. I. and Okeke, A. U. (2011). Skills needed by confidential secretaries for effective performance as perceived by top civil servants. *African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 4(1), 15-22

9. France, S. (2009). The Definitive Personal Assistant and Secretarial Handbook – A best practice guide for all secretaries, Pas, office managers and executive assistants. London: KooganPage.

10. Fulmar, R. M. (1977). Practical human relations. London: MacGraw-Hill.

11. García-Morales, V. J., Lloréns Montes, F. J. and Verdú Jover, A. J. (2008a). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational performance through knowledge and innovation. *British Journal of Management*, 19(4):299–319.

12. Gastil, J. (1994). A definition and illustration of democratic leadership. Human Relations, 47(8), 953-975.

13. Goodnight, R. (2004). Laissez-faire leadership. *The Economic Journal*, 98(392), 755-771. SAGE Publications

14. Harris, A., and Chapman, C. (2004). Democratic leadership for school improvement in challenging contexts. Democratic Learning: The challenge to school effectiveness, 164- 178.

15. Hemphill, J. K., and Coons, A. E. (1957). Development of the leader behavior description and measurement (pp. 1–18). Columbus: Business Research, Ohio State University

16. Hogan, R., Curphy, G. J., and Hogan, J. (1994). What we know about leadership: Effectiveness and personality. *American psychologist*, 49(6), 49 - 55.

17. House, R. J., Wright, N. S., and Aditya, R. N. (1997). Cross-cultural research on organizational leadership: A critical analysis and a proposed theory. In: P. C. Earley & M. Erez (Eds), New perspectives on international industrial/organizational psychology (pp. 535–625). San Francisco, CA: New Lexington

18. Jablin, F. M., and Putnam, L. L. (Eds.). (2000). The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods. Sage Publications.

19. Jones, T. M., and Ryan, L. V., (1998). The effect of organizational forces on individual morality: Judgment, moral approbation & behavior. Business Ethics Quarterly, 8(3), 433-446.

20. Kanter, R. M. (1977). Men and women of the corporation. New York: Basic Books.

21. Katz, D., and Kahn, R. L. (1978). The social psychology of organization (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley

22. Kruse, K. (2013). What is leadership? Forbes, 4 September. Available at: http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership (accessed 17 August 2016).

23. Mensah, P., Addaquay, A. S. and Davis, M. S., (2018). Effects of Leadership Styles on Productivity of Secretaries in the Public Sector. *International Journal of Business and Management Review* Vol.6, No.10, pp.14-32

24. Obayi, A. U. (2009) Office secretarial and managerial dynamics. Enugu: PaN-Afric Pubs

25. Pringle, R. (1989) Secretaries Talk: Sexuality, Power and Work. London: Verso.

26. Richards, D, and Engel, S. (1986). After the vison: Suggestions for corporate visionaries and vision champions. In J. Adams (Ed.), Transforming leadership: From vision to results: 199-214.Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.

27. Rizki, F., Armanu, T., Surachman, S. and Rofiaty, R. (2017). Study on the relationship between Islamic leadership style, work ethics, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Russian Journal of Agricultural and Socio-Economic Sciences, 61 (1),

28. Robinson, M. and Davidson, G. (1999). 21st Century Dictionary. New Delhi: Allied Chambers

29. Schein, E. H. (1992). Organizational leadership and culture. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

30. Verschuren, P., Doorewaard, H., and Mellion, M. J. (2010). Designing a research project (Vol. 2). Eleven International Publishing. The Hague.

31. Warrick, D. D. (1981). Leadership styles and their consequences. Journal of Experiential Learning and Simulation, 3(4), 155-172.

32. Yukl, G. (2010). Leadership in Organisations (7th ed). Pearson Education. New Jersey

33. Yukl, G. (2012). Effective leadership behavior: What we know and what questions need more attention. The Academy of Management Perspectives, 26(4), 66–85.

34. Zhu, W., Riggio, R. E., Avolio, B. J., and Sosik, J. J. (2011). The effect of leadership on follower moral identity: Does transformational/transactional style make a difference? Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 18(2), 150-163.

White and Meyertein