

Collective Leadership and Employee Commitment: A Theoretical Review

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Abstract: Managing the workforce has become a serious challenge during this era. Therefore, this study investigates how employee commitment could be improved through collective leadership. Extant literature that supported this were reviewed and found that collective leadership has played a significant role in organizational performance especially as it improves employee work behaviour. Although, there is less research studies that examine collective leadership and employee commitment in literature. However, this paper made attempt to bridge this gap in literature by adopting two dimensions of collective leadership with respect to two measures of employee commitment. The study also examines Leader–Member Exchange theory and Social Identity Theory that support the concepts. After critical review of past literature, the study conclude that collective leadership can improve employee commitment only when leaders ensure effective communication, build Leader-Team Exchange and engage in network development that will facilitate the awareness of expertise and distribution of roles within the company. Considering the above, the study recommended that management ought to adopt the concept of collective leadership by ensuring effective communication flow vertically and horizontally. They should develop Leader-Team Exchange and build both the team's network as well as the leader's individual network to improve employee commitment.

Keywords: workforce, leadership, work behavior, company.

INTRODUCTION

Employee commitment has produced many advantages to both the business and the individual workers throughout the years. It guarantees organization's activities to run smoothly in order to meet its objectives. Individual workers felt a feeling of belonging and pleasure from their work. As many scholars have shown, the significance of employee commitment to organizational goal achievement cannot be overstated (Yilmaz & Okluk-Bökeolu, 2008; Lambert & Hogan, 2009; Park *et al.*, 2014; Visagie & Steyn, 2011). Employees with strong commitment emotions have a beneficial impact on organizational performance (Yilmaz & Okluk-Bökeolu, 2008), since they reduce the frequency of negative behavior and enhance service quality.

Employees who are committed are more productive and compatible, with higher levels of satisfaction, loyalty, and accountability. They continue to notice that organizational commitment not only improves performance in a certain job, but also motivates them to do numerous voluntary activities that are required for organizational life and high achievements (Park *et al.*, 2014). Employee commitment, according to Lambert and Hogan (2009), decreases employee turnover. Employee turnover is defined by Lambert and Hogan as the scenario in which workers either willingly or involuntarily leave their employment. According to Allen *et al.*, (2010), voluntary turnover is initiated by the employee,

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such as quitting and taking another job, whereas involuntary turnover is initiated by the organization, such as when a company dismisses an employee due to poor performance or when organizational restructuring occurs.

Despite the many benefits of employee commitment, research indicates that leadership has an effect on employee commitment. Previous research on leadership and organizational commitment, for example, has included participants from various cultural backgrounds and produced equivocal results on the relationship between leadership and employee commitment (Takao, 1998). However, studies that examine collective leadership and employee commitment are limited and lack specificity concerning different dimensions of collective leadership, resulting in a gap in the literature. As a consequence, this has led the present study to theoretically examine how collective leadership promotes employee commitment to be able to fill this knowledge gap. In addition, considering the importance of collective leadership in improving employee commitment, another purpose of the research was to adopt theories that are useful in describing the link between collective leadership in improving employee commitment. To achieve this, the research used the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory and Social Identity Theory (SIT) in studying these variables.

Statement of Problem

Collective leadership is a critical factor that can improve employee commitment. However, many organizations tend to ignore the concept of collective leadership, instead, focused on other leadership styles because they felt that collective leadership seems to be too slow and, even more, can lead to chaos. They thought it introduces additional difficulties, making it appear to be a poor substitute for the prevailing concept of individual leadership, which is clearly favored in certain Western societies, particularly those with Anglo-American origins.

Collective leadership is said to be tiresome and bureaucratic, and it may also lead to aimlessness since organizational results are inextricably linked to top-level decisions. Consequently, many failed to see the importance of collective leadership in achieving corporate goals, which has an impact on employee commitment. Therefore, it was crucial to analyze the prior research on collective leadership and how it may be applied to increase employee engagement, and this evaluation serves as the basis for the current study. The study also provided recommendations on how management might use collective leadership to improve employee commitment by drawing on two theories to support the concepts of collective leadership and employee commitment.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine how collective leadership enhances employee commitment. However, the study objectives are;

- i. To examine the how collective leadership through communication improves employee commitment.
- ii. To ascertain how Leader–Team Exchange enhances employee commitment.
- iii. To ascertain network development improves employee commitment.

Scope of the Study

The study's content a focus is placed on relevant literature from the domains of social sciences and management that examined the idea of collective leadership and employee commitment. The research focuses on three aspects of collective leadership (communication, leader-team exchange, and network development) along with three indicators of employee commitment (affective, continuous and normative commitment). Two theories that promoted the concept of collective leadership and employee commitment were also examined in the research.

Significance of the Study

This research will create a great impact on managers' mind for adopting collective leadership concept in leading with respect to leadership in the organizations to enhance worker commitment. Decision makers will use the study findings in their decision making as relate to the leadership approach will improve employee commitment to the organization. Scholars will use this study as foundation for future research through gap identifications in the present study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Theories underpinning this study include; Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory credited to Dansereau *et al.*, (1975) and Social Identity by Tajfel (1978). Dansereau *et al.*, (1975) established the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory to explain the process through which a leader's responsibilities and expectations are formed with each subordinate. They claimed that high exchange relationships result from viewing leadership as an ongoing exchange relationship that develops during role-playing exercises. Consequently, throughout the relationship, the amount of leeway a superior gives member to negotiate their position predicts future behavior from both the superior and the subordinates. Managers establish leadership exchanges (influence without authority) with a limited group of their members, while others develop merely supervisory ties (influence based primarily upon authority).

According to Yukl *et al.*, (2009), the Leader–Member Exchange theory proposes that high-exchange partnerships (employer-employee interactions) are characterized by a high level of respect and trust, as well as expectations for reciprocal exchange. The leader gives subordinates what they want, such as fascinating assignments, more responsibility, and more pay, and the subordinates respond with hard effort and devotion to the leader. Subordinates merely fulfill the formal duties of their employment in low-quality trade relationships, and the leader does not offer further advantages. Over time, exchange connections alter and are strengthened by the leader's and subordinates' actions.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory proposes that individuals in companies categorize themselves in social categories such as personal qualities which provide them with identification that leads to good outcomes like dedication (Todd & Kent, 2009). This idea was used to link collective leadership and employee commitment in this study. Tajfel (1978) proposed the Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explain the psychological foundation for intergroup prejudice. Individuals give emotional values to themselves considering their knowledge of themselves within groups and comparisons with other groups. They stated that the individuals in question identify with a group and are perceived by others to be members of that group. As a result, a group of individuals who identify as belonging to the same social category experience some emotional investment in this common self-description and come to some degree of social agreement over the group's and its membership's evaluation.

Social identity theory argues that understanding not only that we belong to particular groups, but also that we are distinct from members of other groups, enhances our sense of who we are (Haslam *et al.*, 2009). Individuals categorize themselves and others into different social categories such as organizational membership, gender, ethnicity, age cohort, or religious affiliation, according to Jones and Volpe (2010), and perceive their participation in specific groups based on social roles and role connections. Todd and Kent (2009) looked at the drivers of employee behavior based on SIT in previous research.

Conceptual Framework

Friedrich *et al.*, (2009) investigated three aspects of collaborative leadership in their conceptual framework: communication, network growth, and Leader–Team Exchange. In the group leadership viewpoint, these three dimensions (communication, network building, and leader–team interaction) are regarded as three essential areas where leaders may focus since each aspect is linked to significant team outcomes. Hence, the present research analyzed three factors and reviewing previous studies on collective leadership as it can be used to improve employee commitment.

Concept of Collective Leadership

In developing the framework for collective leadership, Friedrich *et al.*, (2009) presented an integrated assessment of the literature on collectivistic leadership, taking into account the individual, team, network, and organizational variables that may have an impact on the development of collective leadership. They define collective leadership as a dynamic process whereby a designated leader, or group of leaders, selectively draws on the skills and expertise of a network as needed. The leaders play crucial roles in the emergence of collective leadership by contributing their unique knowledge, skills, and expertise to facilitate the process, their development and use of the network around them, and their actions to share the leadership role, either explicitly or implicitly. This is a key distinction between collective leadership and other leadership models (Mumford *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, the development and use of the network is crucial for information exchange, understanding player linkages, and access to network knowledge that can make it possible to distribute leadership positions differently than in the past.

Communication

The mechanism by which the leadership position is shared is communication, and it is essential in building the trust required for the growth of leaders and the ability of the primary leader to delegate the role to others. Collective leadership necessitates communication. Friedrich *et al.*, (2009, 2014) define it as a precondition for comprehending the team's issue, establishing common objectives, determining where relevant knowledge is located in the network, and sharing leadership responsibilities. This dimension includes activities that help to create the circumstances for collaborative leadership to develop, such as creating clear communication expectations that encourage followers to participate, such as encouraging feedback exchange, information sharing, or establishing communication standards (Friedrich *et al.*, 2009, 2014). It also involves activities like voice and consultation that encourage the sharing of ideas and enable a collaborative decision-making process. The importance of communication in increasing employee engagement cannot be overstated or overlooked.

Leader–Team Exchange

The explicit delegation of the leadership function to others, either to particular people (delegation) or in a more generic manner, is included in Leader–Team Exchange. The dimension encompasses the majority of behaviors often associated with collectivistic forms of leadership, such as shared and distributed leadership (Friedrich *et al.*, 2009),

additionally, the activities that the leader explicitly distributes the role, such as through delegation or utilizing others on the team due to their specific expertise (Friedrich *et al.*, 2009; Konczak *et al.*, 2000). The leader empowers team members by supplying them control over decision-making and resource allocation, suggesting that they are self-sufficient and do not need permission. Here is a kind of shared leadership in which the leadership position is shared or authority is delegated to others on the team.

Network Development

The network inside the team in organizations is the artery through which it runs. Both the team's network and the leader's personal network are necessary for collaborative leadership to be successful. Because it enables awareness of information and the role distribution, a well-developed network is required for collaborative leadership to emerge. Klein *et al.*, (2006) found that network awareness, or leaders and team members' knowledge of the linkages and accessible expertise in their networks, was linked to collaborative leadership enactment and, ultimately, team performance. Kramer and Crespy (2011) learned that the focused leader intentionally building connections inside the team enhanced collaborative leadership in a research. Some academics even go so far as to argue that the web of connections is collective leadership in and of itself (Carter & DeChurch, 2012). Understanding how the leadership position may be distributed via the selective use of expertise within a network requires an understanding of how leaders perceive and interact with their networks, as well as how structural aspects of the leader's network affect these processes.

Friedrich *et al.*, (2014) discovered that an established network was linked to collaborative leadership activities in a favorable way. If information is the currency of collective leadership (expertise being a kind of information) and communication is the means of transmission, networks are the means by which it is accessible and shared. Over the past ten years, there has been a noticeable increase in the study of social networks, particularly in regards to their implications for leadership processes like emergence, informal leadership, and leader performance (Kilduff & Tsai, 2006; Sparrowe *et al.*, 2001). (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006). If leaders in collective leadership actions value employees' commitment by strengthening their network connections with them, employee commitment may be increased through network development. Because of this, workers will feel closer to the company.

Concept of Employee Commitment

Employee commitment, according to Lambert *et al.*, (2009), is the condition in which workers' feeling of devotion to their particular company aligns themselves with corporate objectives and ideals. Workers who are dedicated to the company on an emotional level are those who see their personal employment connection as being consistent with the business's objectives and values, according to Beck and Wilson (2000). Meyer *et al.*, (1993) proposed that the view that commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the business and has consequences for the decision to continue or stop membership in the organization is shared by all three types of commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1991) found three distinct components that represent (affective, continuous and normative commitment). Acceptance and internalization of the other party's objectives and ideals, readiness to expend effort on their behalf, and a deep emotional connection to them are all characteristics of affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mowday *et al.*, 1979). This normative component is defined as the moral commitment that workers have to remain with the business. Meyer and Allen's three-component model has perhaps undergone the most empirical examination and has arguably garnered the most support (Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

Affective Commitment

This refers to a worker's propensity to stay with a company because of their emotional attachment to it. Understanding the affective components may help an industrial or organizational psychologist offer better services to workers who are unsure about their futures, are undecided about taking another opportunity, or are unhappy with their current employer's stance. High affective commitment employees remain with a company because they want to. Strong proponents of sustainability tend to remain because they feel they ought to. Those who adhere to norms fervently remain because they feel they should (stay). The majority of prior research concentrated on emotional involvement, with the result that strongly devoted employees will most likely continue to work for the company because they desire to (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Continuous Commitment

Understanding the costs of leaving the organization is part of the commitment to stay (Meyer & Allen, 1991). People who are committed to their companies keep going because they believe the price of leaving are too great. This sort of dedication demonstrates that employees remain because they have put in too much effort (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen (1991) investigated the impacts of a person's perception or weighing of costs and risks associated with leaving an existing company. It further said that, since they are required to do so, employees' continued participation is

contingent on their commitment. Continuous commitment is therefore a key part based on the assessment of the organization's economic benefits obtained by individual associations (Beck & Wilson, 2000).

Normative Commitment

A feeling of responsibility to continue working with a company is commonly known as normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen (1991) consider a sense of commitment based on a sense of duty to be the third of the three traits. This is more of a perceived societal duty than a personal commitment, in which one remains loyal to an employer who pays for services rendered (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Allen and Meyer (1990) include normative commitment in their three-dimensional model of organizational commitment. Although, normative commitment is the least common of the aspects, Allen and Meyer (1990) noted that it offers an equally legitimate perspective on commitment. People's work behavior is driven by a sense of duty, obligation, and loyalty to the business. Moral considerations keep organizational members loyal (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Singh & Gupta, 2015). The normative devoted employee stays with a company as a result of ethically right to do so, regardless of how much prestige or pleasure the company provides over time.

Collective Leadership and Employee Commitment

The connection between employee dedication and desired employment outcomes may help explain why academics are interested in these issues. Employee dedication appears to have an effect on how they behave at work. Several decades of research have shown that an organization's and individual employee's organizational involvement may have positive impacts (Riketta & VanDick., 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, organizational commitment has a connection with greater knowledge-sharing (Alvesson, 2001), organizational citizenship and better organizational performance (Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Riketta, 2002; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005). According to Bergmann *et al.*, (2000), organizations can help businesses survive and enhance their competitiveness by retaining the best workers who are devoted to the business. Collective leadership will increase workers' commitment, particularly when people perceive that efforts are made to improve their performance. Many studies on research and development teams and senior management teams, such as the ones discussed, show the worth of collective leadership in connection to these organizational trends. In two recent studies on research and development teams, the advantages having multiple leaders are highlighted.

Howell and Boies (2004) investigated the part of product champions in the R&D process, concluding that the involvement of many leaders with unrivaled expertise had a substantial impact on project success. The effectiveness of sharing leadership duties was one of the findings in the field of top management teams more generally. Whereas these efforts usually consider a shared responsibility, rather than a leadership or core management team, and use information selectively in a network, they do not entirely rest in one person, but they are critical in demonstrating the leadership advantage.

Despite numerous researches on factors that affect employee commitment, there is little or no evidence that collaborative leadership has an effect or improves employee commitment. The idea of collaborative governance underpins the idea that such leadership styles may boost employee engagement, but they're uncommon in study until the results are effectively conveyed. We must recognize that the organization's employees represent the main task-makers, working under the supervision of supervisors and management instructions. The business won't be capable accomplish its objective if the workers are reluctant to do the necessary duties. The decision is in the hands of the leaders to utilize communication, leadership exchange, and team development to inspire and enhance their workers and raise their commitment.

CONCLUSION

In these efforts we have attempted to recognize and analyze various historical backgrounds of three dimensions of collective leadership behaviour, thus evaluating components of the collective leadership. The conclusions indicate that leaders can actually promote collective leadership in their teams in various ways and that these forms of collective leadership are connected to different leadership characteristics and are applied at a different rate depending on team characteristics and task characteristics. In this research, we tried to foster the notion that collaborative leadership would increase employee engagement, and particularly contribute to the knowledge of collective leadership framework provided.

Communication, team-leaders exchange and network development was identified in the current research to enhance employee commitment. However, to be able to share comments, or to take part in consultation, communication requires greater contact between the leader and the following and within the team network. The leader may assist to promote the reorganization and exchange of information inside the newly formed group or unit, therefore giving the chance for people of expressing their problems and thoughts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on several studies examined and the conclusion drawn in this study, the following recommendations are put forward;

- i. Management should ensure that they adopt the concept of collective leadership by ensuring effective communication that promote the communication of ideas and facilitates a collective decision making process, such as voice or consultation in order to improve employee commitment.
- ii. Management should ensure that Leader-Team Exchange be practiced for the explicit division of the leadership responsibilities to others, both to specific individuals (delegation) or in a more generalized way as this will improve employee commitment.
- iii. Management should make sure that managers develop both the team's network and the leader's personal network as it plays a crucial part in the creation of collective leadership. This is because it will help spread knowledge of expertise and the job, which will increase employee commitment.

Organizational leaders should adopt

Implications for Management

Following the trend of increasing study on collectivist behavior, practitioners' suggestions have also been expanded to include positive elements of communication, team exchange and network of collective leadership growth. While collective leadership is indicative of achieving success teams that is compatible with this research, the study underlines the importance of considering the three aspects of collective leadership and its underlying processes, instead of treating such leadership as a form. As far as the current research is concerned, this could represent a totally different style of leadership in cases when more subtle kinds of collective leadership should be promoted via communication and network growth, and Leader-Team Exchange can be encouraged. Moreover, it means that a leader who utilizes particular kinds of collaborative leadership may best fit certain circumstances and enhance staff engagement.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study examines how collective leadership enhances employees' commitment theoretically. As such, it focuses on three variables from the viewpoint of collective leadership among others. Thus, with the help from extant literature reviewed, the research showed that collective leadership improves employee commitment thereby adds to existing literature that explained how collective leadership enhances organizational effectiveness. The examination of collective leadership contributes to expertise in literature since there is a scarce of studies that analyze the connection the collective leadership has with employees' commitment in literature thereby increases the knowledge of these concepts in literature.

Areas for Future Research

This study was a theoretical research that did not involve testing of hypothesis to ascertain if there is a significant relationship between collective leadership dimensions and employee commitment measures. Thus, the study could not actively generalize extent to which collective leadership affects employee commitment. Hence, this demands that further studies should be conducted empirically to examine the extents of the relationship between collective leadership dimensions and employee commitment for more detail findings and generalizations.

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