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Introduction

In particular, leadership in the organisation management process is one of the critical factors determining the necessary results of today's organisations' operations. In the present world, where there is a fast change in globalisation and technology and a diverse workforce, leadership has never been able to be as important as it is today. The dynamic nature of the current business scenario requires a leader who is not only able to solve problems. Still, it should also be able to create, embrace diversity and promote and implement ethics. As organisations encounter these complex challenges, the need to comprehend and practice several leadership theories attracts more attention Ndungu (2024).

This work aims to critically discuss the leadership situation within today's organisations concerning the range of leadership theories, including assessing their applicability. This research will intentionally try to look at leadership constructs as conceptual models and actual leadership behaviour practised in organisations to analyse how different leadership styles could be appropriately implemented in various organisational environments. With the understanding of the Key Leadership theories, The trait theories approach, The behavioral theories of transactional leadership, Servant leadership, and Transformational leadership, this analysis will reveal the merits and demerits of the best applicable approaches as they are put into practice (Freeman & Velamuri, 2020).

The theoretical orientation of this analysis is that although there are several tenant leadership theories, the nature of modern organisations is such that a more pluralist and inclusive view of leadership is needed. Leaders must also apply different approaches and fit them into the complexity of globalisation and digitalisation and call for diversity and inclusion. By identifying critical aspects of leadership from these theories, this analysis will also show how leadership needs to be vibrant, creative, adaptive, and ethical to help organisations achieve sustainable success (Johnson, 2023).

Leadership Theories and Their Applications

Trait Theory

Trait theory centers on defining properties important in administering organisational change, inspiring people, and possessing innovative ideas in the turbulent contemporary business world. This section does not intend to expand on the theory but rather to highlight how it manifests in modern organisations.

The trait theory is applied to identify and develop individuals demonstrating traits necessary for success. To illustrate, at Google, the firm's leader, Sundar Pichai's leadership, is a perfect example of this orientation. Sundar Pichai can adapt to the challenges present in the competitiveness of the technology market; he is emotionally intelligent promoting teamwork and idea generation. Pichai's emotional intelligence leans on the self-retention of feelings and feelings for others, which has helped Google navigate transitions and the subsequent development stages (Bariso, 2021). Likewise, the leadership at Apple pointed to the visions of Steve Jobs. This quality brought profound alterations to Apple, thus propelling the company to the forefront of the technological industry (Isaacson, 2019).

Since the leadership competencies of adaptableness, emotional intelligence, and visionary insight are complex, organisations can create leadership that can meet demands and achieve continuous success. This application of trait theory goes a long way in proving that trait theory is fundamental in the real world as a guide in developing leadership traits that fit the needs of contemporary organisations.

Behavioral Theories

Behavioral theories, as the name suggests, target the behavior of the leaders and not their personalities, claiming that everyone makes a good leader because leadership is all about acquired behaviors. These theories often differentiate between the functional and the interpersonal roles of leaders in organisations, and there are different types of leaders for other types of organisations.

As it will be seen, when applied, Behavioral theories refer to and encourage the particular behaviors that will promote objectives in an organisation. For instance, at Amazon, a more task-oriented leadership style is characterised by Jeff Bezos, a result-oriented leader who emphasises productivity more than people. His strategy has propelled Amazon into one of the

world's largest online shops while also marrying operational efficiency (Smith, 2020). These elements pertinent to behavioral leadership theories were conspicuous in Bezos's leadership of Amazon as the company fought to establish itself where competition was rife and needed a leader to ensure work got done.

On the other hand, Marc Benioff, CEO of Salesforce is behind the people-oriented strategy, where the material and spiritual values of the employees are satisfied, and the company contributes to civil society development. Benioff has claimed to have fostered a positive work culture, which persists at Salesforce and has been acknowledged in all works relating to this success factor, as well as high employee engagement and loyalty (Bililies, 2022). In the context of the present work, behavioural theories underline the importance of relationships and the support of employees' needs in achieving sustainable, long-term organisational benefits.

Transactional Leadership Theory

According to Klein (2023), transactional leadership theory, focuses mainly on providing structures, expectations and reward systems based on the performance of the lead people. Managers who support this approach focus on personnel direction with considerable concentration on work structure and punishment or reward system. It is on the accomplishment of specific objectives and the exercise of control through set procedures.

Transactional leadership occurs in organisations that require specifications of goals and contingencies to achieve organisational objectives. For example, the leaders in Mary Kay Cosmetics use transactional leadership, giving goals to be met, such as sales achievement, with promised incentives, such as bonuses or recognition. This encourages workers to obtain their targets and fosters the company's performance and achievement (Dempsey, 2024).

In the same way, Bill Gates Microsoft deployed a transactional leadership whereby he set goals, assessed performance, and linked it with motivation through a reward system. From these incidents, it was evident Gates kept on structured goals and performance measures to ensure that Microsoft stayed ahead of its competitors in the technology industry while at the same time creating a structure of responsibility and productivity (Lopez, 2024). This element of transactional leadership shows how practical this approach is in organisations that aim at efficiency, productivity, and accomplishing set objectives.

Servant Leadership Theory

According to servant leadership theory, the general concern of the leader is not the self but rather the people they lead. This type of leadership involves problems for people, organisations, and the environment, and the job of a leader is to nurture people in the organisation.

Servant management is facilitated by leaders who commit huge attention to employees' welfare and corporations' societal responsibilities. For instance, Howard Schultz, the Chief Executive Officer of Starbucks, promotes servant leadership by providing quality health care for employees, sponsoring education for his employees and coming up with social responsibilities. Schultz's method has fostered the pool of a devoted and responsible team of employees and built the company's image as a socially responsible business (Chris, 2023).

In the same way, Tony Hsieh of Zappos fashioned Zappos' culture as a people-first organisation by focusing on the employees'. Hsieh ensured that he encouraged servant leadership; thus, employees working at Zappos were pleased, resulting in high customer satisfaction and an organisational culture defined by happiness (Rivas, 2021). Through this application of servant leadership, it is clear how emphasising employees and creating a favorable culture necessary for organisational endurance and commitment can be attained.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership theory depends on the leadership's task interfacing process and the extent to which the leadership takes time to set high, appealing goals for performance. The leaders who use this leadership style are admired for their capacity to create change and encourage employees to work towards achieving organisational goals.

Transformational leadership is used in organisations like Tesla and SpaceX by leaders including Elon Musk. As evidenced by contemporaries and business analysts separately, one cannot lack compelling evidence of how visionary Musk has been and how he motivates teams of engineers to deliver monumental innovations at both ventures. When the goals are more audacious, like the colonisation of Mars or shifting the world to sustainable energy, Musk challenges his employees to work harder and get the most from themselves. His leadership style thus demonstrates the critical concepts of transformational leadership in the call for and creation of new ideas towards attaining visionary, uncompromising objectives (Smith & Turner, 2019).

Contemporary Leadership Challenges and Strategies

Leadership in Remote Environment and Digital Evolution

The COVID-19 outbreak has led to the almost sudden transfer of many organisations to implementing working-from-home policies, pressuring leaders to reconsider how they approach decision-making, teamwork, and change management. The leadership of remote work needs much more than digital tools; it implies new leadership styles compatible with remote work. The leadership substitution theory holds that there are circumstances under which specific conditions can assume the role of, or partially supplant leadership, and it is also of use here. This theory postulates technology and self-managing teams as the surrogates of leadership when practising in the wilderness.

GitLab is a fully remote company, and as part of this approach, the leaders introduced the concept of autonomy into the system and used all the advanced digital tools available. Moreover, GitLab management has developed the principle of being remote by default. As the company's structure is relatively decentralised and distributed, it is crucial to provide transparency, documentation, and a strong team identity so that the employees stay productive and aligned. This approach is based on the leadership substitution theory, which has enabled GitLab to achieve high performance and innovation since employees are distant from one another (Martins, 2022).

Sustainability and Ethical Leadership

This need has emerged due to organisations' pressure to act sustainably and ethically; thus, ethical leadership is essential in directing organisations toward the right path. Among the works that might be valuable to discuss is stakeholder theory, which presupposes that business leaders should consider the needs of all the stakeholders (Ilyas et al., 2020). It empowers organisations to pursue the interests of the investors with those of the workers, consumers, society and nature.

Based on stakeholder theory, Patagonia's case illustrates the ethical leadership issue well. That is why Patagonia's top management focuses on sustainable and ethical solutions that would be right for the company and the world. Other evidence comes from the company's activism for the environment through, for instance, the 1% for the Plane programme, which shows the orientation towards ethical leadership based on the stakeholder approach. By using this strategy, Patagonia has been able to build its brand further and make customers who are environmentally sensitive faithful customers (Johnson, 2019). Through the case of Patagonia,

the authors show how a business that makes ethical decisions while applying stakeholder theory can be socially and financially successful.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are no longer matters of moral responsibility in the contemporary organisation but the means to transform organisations into more innovative and effective centres. Initially, leaders are faced with the challenges of managing a multicultural workforce in a way that will see diversity as an asset. A suitable leadership theory in this case is the complexity leadership theory, which focuses on handling CAS. This particular theory roughly implies that leaders should create a climate for diversity by promoting attitudes that foster emergent processes that help organisations to be innovative or, in other words, make them more resilient.

An example of this approach can be observed in the case of Accenture, where leadership has brought full-scale programs to get the most out of a diverse employee base. Accenture's skill is reflected in its Inclusion Starts with I initiative and education programs in diversity. By practising complexity leadership theory, Accenture has fostered an organisation where input from everyone is considered in problem-solving situations and encouraged, leading to better solutions (Williams, 2020). shows that complexity is possible as the organising principle and can be used to promote both diversity and innovation.

Critically Discussion of Leadership Realization

Strengths and Limitations of Leadership Theories

Leadership theories offer positive solutions where one can derive models for managing an organisation's affairs. However, they come with certain drawbacks. Still, these theories have the advantage of presenting systematic solutions to specific problems, such as the stakeholder theory, which emphasises ethical decision-making as leadership that corresponds to the common good (Freeman & Velamuri, 2020). However, a considerable weakness is that such theories may be less fluid or flexible in accommodating changes inherent in leaderly practice. For instance, though transformational leadership is praised for creativity, it can prove not beneficial in situations that demand stable risk-minimising leadership (Needle, 2021).

In practice, leaders realise that they use a combination of the theories to manage the existing organisational frameworks. For instance, Leadership Substitution Theory is evident in the rise in remote work; organisations like Twitter adopted it during the pandemic, relying on

technology to oversee their employees' tasks. However, to achieve this, they also had to assume some aspects of transformational leadership because they needed to ensure motivated and engaged employees during this transition (Smith, 2021). It is for this reason that, in reality, leadership is often different from what theory prescribes by making people integrate and accommodate.

Future Directions in Leadership

New demands appear, especially in the modern age, where globalisation and information technology changes are quickly occurring. However, even the most developed traditional leadership theories do not seem sufficient to describe the leadership of today's world. New theories, which centres on fluidity and learning, are becoming fundamental in growth (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Evolving checks and balances happen within the framework provided by this theory to improve organisational resilience from current leadership challenges.

An example of this approach can be observed in Netflix as the leadership is getting ready for the future, focusing on integrating AI and data analytics as the primary tools for management and decision-making and as the main methods of introducing innovations. These technologies, in turn, are employed by Netflix's leaders not only to develop the algorithms for content customisation but also to solve the ethical problems of artificial intelligence in creating and delivering content. This is linked to the adaptive leadership approach since they work in the technological area and must address emergent challenges in sociotechnical systems (Johnson, 2023). Following that, we can state that the readiness to address new conditions will remain a vital competence that leaders have to develop for the further success of organisations.

Conclusion

Therefore, this paper stresses the importance of leadership in dealing with factors in modern organisations. Analysing leadership theories like trait theory, behavioral theories, transactional leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, it is apparent that leadership is not just a concept that can be understood in black/white. Instead, it's an action proving more complex than just theoretical understanding. How leaders can incorporate and tailor these theories to face the conditions resulting from globalisation, technology, and a diverse workforce is critical for the success of organisations (Needle, 2021).

As organisations keep changing, leadership development becomes indispensable for management teams. Managers must act to improve their competencies, and management approaches must remain sensitive to newly emerged organisational contexts. Hence, future leadership's goal is to transform, create new methods for operation, and find the right balance between the moral code and business values to ensure constant development and success in the challenging global context (Smith, 2020).

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