Impact of Leadership Style on Employee Performance (A Case Study on a Private Organization in Iraq)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact of leadership style on employee performance. A sample size of 100 was used from one private organization in Selangor, Malaysia using convenience sampling technique. The study used quantitative approaches, and a questionnaire was designed. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to determine the impact of leadership style on employee performance. SPSS software was used in analysing the questionnaires. Demographic analysis, normality test, reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha), descriptive analysis and regression analysis were presented. Descriptive statistics show that the most significant value associated with employee performance is democratic leadership style followed by laissez-faire leadership style and autocratic leadership style. Democratic leadership style has the highest mean value corresponding to 3.783 and standard deviation value of 0.8123, laissez-faire leadership style scores the second highest mean value corresponding to 3.415 and standard deviation value of 0.5855, and autocratic leadership style has the lowest mean value corresponding to 3.403 and standard deviation value of 0.7331 indicating that autocratic leadership style is poorly correlated with employee performance. Regression coefficient analysis shows that there is a significant and positive impact of democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee performance. Autocratic leadership style beta coefficient value is -0.167 with a significant value of 0.025 which is higher than 0.01, hence autocratic leadership is found to have a negative significant impact on employee performance.

Key Terms: Leadership; Employee Performance; Democratic Leadership; Autocratic Leadership; Laissez

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of leadership style on employee performance in private companies iraq. Leadership is simply "the art of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of goals" (Guterresa et al,2020). Leadership plays a crucial role in creating an enthusiastic atmosphere and culture in an organization (Ohemeng tet al,2018) proclaimed that effective leadership style could promote excellence in the development of the members of the organisation. According to Skoogh (2014), it is safe to say that leadership has played an important role since the dawn of history of mankind. Since corporations strive to search great leaders that can lead them to success, endless efforts have been put out by researchers to identify how best leaders operate. As a result, many leadership theories had been developed over the years. Lewin's Leadership Style (1939) identified that there are three different leadership styles; democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire (**Sari et al, 2021**). In 1964, "Grid" was established by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (Molloy, 1998). Hersey and Blanchard (1969) developed a leadership theory that is now known as the situational leadership theory (**Ekhsan & Setiawan, 2021**). In 1970's, transformational theory which focused on motivations and values in measuring how leaders approach power was developed by Burns (1978) and was later expanded by Bass (1985) (Levine, 2000). Bass (1985) transformational

leadership theory focused on how a leader influences followers by his/her qualities (Levine, 2000).

The importance of leadership style is not unknown and it is shown by a significant number of studies that have been conducted on leadership style in developed and developing countries (**Razak et al, 2018**).; Iqbal, et al., 2015; Mohammed, et al., 2014; Paracha, et al., 2012; **Wulandari et al, 2021**). Lewin's leadership style, however, appears to be a significant subject where leadership style is concerned as various studies have been conducted on Lewin's leadership style (Bhatti, et al., 2012; Khan, et al., 2015; Leng, et al., 2014; Anbazhagan & Kotur, 2014; Yao, et al., 2017; Ping, 2015; Omolayo, 2007; Benjamin, 2015; Longe, 2014; Kotur & Anbazhagan, 2014). In iraq particularly, similar kind of studies have also been conducted (Arham, 2014; Leng, et al., 2014; Nasir, et al., 2014; Lo, et al., 2009; Soha, et al., 2016).

In iraq, employees especially in governmental agencies are long criticized for poor performance, lack of flexibility, inefficiency, poor accountability and red tape (Said, et al., 2015). Leadership in Malaysia has long been linked with preference for hierarchy and relationship (Ansari, et al., 2004). According to **Pawirosumarto et al, 2017**), iraq is best known as a place where leaders have the most authority and power, laws and regulations are set by the leaders, and leaders control and they are the decision maker (**Al-Sada et al, 2017**). As stated by **Ichsan, et al, 2021**), Malaysian employees are obliged to obey, implement and they do not allowed disagreeing with their leaders. "Seniors (superiors or elders) are respected and obeyed. They are the decision-makers and subordinates are obliged to implement. In general, societal norm dictates that juniors do not disagree with seniors. Thus anger and hostility against a superior are suppressed and displaced, and the tendency is to appease the superior" (**Fakhri et al, 2020**)

This research sought to investigate and understand the impact of different leadership styles (autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire) and their effects on employee performance in organization. After completion the study on this topic, this research will be beneficial for employees to identify which leadership style is good for them in terms of work satisfaction and the success of their careers. It can be beneficial for leaders to understand which types of leadership impacts on employee performance and how employees can also be motivated

through proper leadership. It is helpful to companies in Iraq too in identifying great leaders that can improve performance of the company and lead the company to great success.

Research Objectives

1-To examine the impact of Democratic Leadership Style on Employee Performance

2-To examine the impact of Autocratic Leadership Style on Employee Performance

3-To examine the impact of Laissez-Faire Leadership Style on Employee Performance

2.0. Literature Review

Tannenbaum, Weschler and Mussarik (1961) defined leadership as "interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of the specialized goal or goals" (Mohiuddin, 2017). According to Northouse (2004), leadership is directing a group of people to accomplish designated goal (Ilham, 2018). Mohiuddin, 2017 defined leadership as a process where one person exerted influence intentionally to a group of people in an organization through relationship, structure, and guide. Leadership, as defined by Saputra, & Mahaputra, (2022) is how the leader communicates in general and relates to people, the way in which the leader motivates and trains the subordinates and the way leaders provides direction to his/her team to execute their tasks. Sharma & Jain (2013) defined leadership as a process of which a person influences other people to accomplish an objective and directing in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

Mohiuddin, 2017and Ilham, 2018) proclaimed that democratic leadership influences people in a manner consistent with the basics of democratic principles and processes, such as deliberation, equal participation, inclusiveness and self-determination (Priarso, et al,2018). According to White & Lippitt (1960), democratic leaders actively encourage and stimulate group decisions and group discussions (Choi, 2017). Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995) defined characteristic of democratic leaders as influential, helpful, knowledgeable, a good listener, encouraging, guiding, respecting and situation-centered (Ray & Ray, 2012). Mullins (1999) stated that democratic leadership style centralised more on people and interaction is greater within the group

(Saputra, & Mahaputra, 2022).

In accordance to Priarso, et al, 2018), autocratic leadership is where manager retains as much power and decision-making authorisation as possible. Melling & Little (2004) stated that autocratic leaders are high-handed leaders and are the centre of every activities that go on in the establishment and all authority emanated from them and ends with them (Akor, 2014). According to Iqbal, et al. (2015), autocratic leaders are characterized by an "I tell" philosophy; autocratic leaders tell other people what to do. Nwankwo (2001) and Enoch (1999) described autocratic style as a leadership style where leaders exclusively make decisions and production is emphasized at the expense of any human consideration (Akor, 2014).

Deluga (1992) proclaimed that laissez-faire leadership style is associated with unproductiveness, ineffectiveness and dissatisfaction (Koech & Namusonge, 2012). According to Bass & Avolio (1997) and Hartog & Van Muijen (1997), laissez faire leaders avoid making decisions, the provision of rewards and the provision of positive/negative feedback to subordinates (Mester, et al., 2003). Jones & Rudd (2007) described laissez-faire leadership as leadership in an inactive form characterized by unwillingness to be actively involved and a view that the best leadership comes from disassociation from activities. (Sariet al, 2021). stated that these leaders avoid active participation in responsibility of goals setting and avoid being involved when leadership direction is needed (Ejimabo, 2015).

Kurt Lewin and colleagues (Sari et al, 2021).) defined three classical styles of leadership in decision making: autocratic, democratic and laissez- faire (Billig, 2015). proclaimed that democratic leaders believe in group participation and majority rule in the decision making, autocratic leadership style imposes tight control and expects obedience and laissez-faire leadership style has low involvement of activities, leaving matters to their followers and very little involvement in decisions making.

Situational leadership originally was developed by Hershey and Blanchard (1969; 1979; 1996) to describe leadership style and stress the need to connect leadership style to the maturity level of the followers (McCleskey, 2014). According to Wulandari et al, 2021). this theory emphasized that instead of applying just one leadership style, successful leaders should change the leadership style based on the details of tasks and the maturity of their followers as well as having a rational understan



Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

This leadership encourages innovation, team work, creativity and people are often being engaged in projects that lead to increased performance, job satisfaction and increased productivity (Pawirosumarto et al, 2017). Iqbal, et al. (2015) stated that democratic leaders makes no suggestions, however they enquire the opinions of others. This leadership promotes all team members to participate to make final decision and develop entire process to reach their goals (Wulandari et al, 2021). One of the major benefit of democratic leadership style is that the process facilitates in development of some additional leaders who can majorly sere the organization and have active involvement on the part of everyone in the team (Ohemeng et al, 2018). Democratic leaders encourage and invite team members to play a significant role in the final decision making process but the ultimate power relies in the hands of leaders and he/she guides the team on what to do, how to do, and employees communicate their suggestions, experience and recommendations (Skogstad, 2015).

H1: Democratic leadership style has positive significant impact on employee performance.

Autocratic leadership represents all those leaders who makes decision without the consent of team members and is usually applied when quick decision is taken and team agreement is not important for acquisition of successful results (Boehm, et al., 2015). Little opportunity are given to staff and team members to make suggestions, even if it is in the best interest of the team or organization (Amanchukwu, et al., 2015). An autocratic leader mostly makes selection on the basis of their own judgments and ideas that rarely include follower's advice and these leaders have absolute control over the group (Zareen, et al., 2015). According to Iqbal, et al. (2015), autocratic leaders give orders without explaining the reasons or future intentions.

H2: Autocratic leadership style has positive significant impact on employee performance.

In this style the performance of workforce entirely relies on team member's ability, skills and capabilities (Adler & Reid, 2008). Team members are free to take decision in their own way and leaders provide complete freedom to subordinates to work as per their own way and take major decisions (Coyle-Shapiro, 2013). Some renowned researchers have stated that Laissez-Faire style had led to increased job satisfaction and better performance of employees, but could be damaging if team does not manage their time well or if they are not self- motivated to do their work efficiently (Martin, 2013). Laissez-Faire leadership style usually leads to increased chaos in the organization as every individual believe him or her as own leader (Monzani, 2015).

H3: Laissez-faire leadership style has positive significant impact on employee performance.

1. Methodolgy

Research Design and Strategy

This study conducted explanatory research as the study needs to investigate the impact of leadership styles on performance of employees. The explanatory research design involved formulating the hypothesis and collecting the information on this basis that leads to achievement of the objectives of the research. Also, the researcher needs to measure the performance and its variations due to different styles of leaders and thus quantitative method is used as it is the most suitable for the study. This will help in analysing the information statistically and determining the impact as per the objectives defined. **Data Collection**

The most suitable method to collect primary data is to distribute questionnaire. A five- point Likert scale questionnaire was developed to provide the respondents ease of answering the questions as per their level of agreement (McLeod, 2008). The Likert scale follows the format of: 1) Strongly Disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4) Agree; 5) Strongly Agree. The development of the questionnaire was based on the following variables; democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership and employee performance.

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed using convenience sampling method to employees from different departments such as administration department, marketing department, sales department, production department, human resource department, service department, finance department and management. Convenience sampling method was applied as it is affordable, easy and subjects are readily available (Etikan, et al., 2016). However, only 130 questionnaires were filled. 30 respondents filled the questionnaire yet they did not complete it and other 20 did not cooperate, which gives a total of 100 valid responses hence a total of 67 percent valid response rate.

Accessibility and Ethical Issues

It is important to have the permission of the involving party before carrying out an investigation, hence the researcher came to a consensual agreement with the management and the HR department to ensure no complications arose. Also, the researcher distributed questionnaires only during break time as interrupting the subjects during work hours is inappropriate and may affect responses. Furthermore, the researcher made sure no violation of confidentiality (of personal information and responses) arose. The researcher ensures no revelation of identity or other personal information was enquired when preparing questionnaires. There were also issue of trust from the respondents; however, confidentiality was

guaranteed to avoid unnecessary issues.

Data Analysis

Quantitative approach was used in this study and it involved using statistical tools to evaluate the collected facts and data. SPSS is the software used in analysing the collected data to gain meaningful conclusions. Data analysis, normality test, reliability test, descriptive analysis and regression analysis was conducted by using SPSS to determine the impact of leadership styles on employee performance.

2. Results And Discussion

Demographic Analysis

Demographic analysis is a technique used to measure age, sex, and racial facts and how it changed overtime through basic demographic process of fertility (births), mortality (deaths) and migration (territorial movements) (Lucas, 2002).

Varia	ables	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
	Female	68	68	68
Gender	Male	33	33	100
	21-30	44	44	44
Age	31-40	35	35	76
1.90	41-50	21	21	96
	51 and above	2	2	100
	Junior Management	23	23	24
Job Positio	Middle Management	32	32	61
n	Senior Management	27	27	90
	Top Management	6	6	100
	500 and below	35	35	33
Salary	500-600	33	33	65
<i>J</i>	600-10000	24	24	92
	10000 and above	8	8	100

Table 2 Demographic analysis

The demographic characteristics of this research were measured by gender, age, job position and salary. Gender was categorized into females and males; 69 females and 31 males. The percentages are 69 percent and 31 percent respectively. Age was grouped into 21- 30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51 and above; the frequency of respondents are 44, 35, 21 and 2 respectively. The percentages are 44 percent, 35 percent, 21 percent and 2 percent respectively. Job position was grouped into four categories; junior management, middle management, senior management and top management, with the frequency of 23, 32, 27 and 6 respectively. The percentages are 23 percent, 32 percent, 27 percent and 6 percent respectively. Salary was grouped into four categories; 500 and below, 500- 600, 600-10000 and 10000 and above, with the frequency of 33, 34, 24 and 8 respectively. The percentages are 35 percent, 33 percent, 24 percent and 8 percent respectively.

Reliability Test

The criteria of Cronbach's alpha for establishing the internal consistency reliability is: Excellent (α >0.9), Good (0.7< α <0.9), Acceptable (0.6< α <0.7), Poor (0.5< α <0.6), Unacceptable (α <0.5).

VARIABLES	NO. OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA VALUE
Overall	21	0.829
Democratic	5	0.902
Autocratic	5	0.769
Laissez-Faire	5	0.506
Employee Performance	6	0.874

Based on the above table, the overall Cronbach's alpha value is 0.829. This shows that data have a good reliability in internal consistency. Democratic has the highest Cronbach's alpha value (0.902). This shows the highest reliability in internal consistency of 5 questions. Autocratic has the second highest Cronbach's alpha value (0.769) which means that the data is highly reliable. Laissez-faire has the lowest Cronbach's alpha value (0.506) which shows the data has poor reliability. The employee performance in Cronbach's alpha value is 0.874 which also shows that data is highly reliability in internal consistency.

Descriptive Analysis

In descriptive analysis, the variable is ranked by referring to the values of standard deviation and mean. The highest value of standard deviation from mean indicates the independent variables produce highest impact on the dependent variables.

	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Democratic	100	3.783	.8123	
Autocratic	100	3.403	.7331	
Laissez-Faire	100	3.415	.5855	
Employee Performance	100	3.721	.6721	
Valid N (listwise)	100			

Based on the table above, democratic leadership style has the highest mean value corresponding to 3.783 and standard deviation value of 0.8123 indicating that democratic leadership style is highly correlated with employee performance. Laissez-faire leadership style scores the second highest mean value corresponding to 3.415 and standard deviation value of 0.5855 indicating that laissez-faire leadership style is fairly correlated with employee performance. Autocratic leadership style has the lowest mean value corresponding to 3.403 and standard deviation value of 0.7331 indicating that autocratic leadership style is poorly correlated with employee performance.

Regression Analysis

When Durbin-Watson are at value of 2, it means there is no auto correlation, value approaching 0 means there is positive correlation, and value towards 4 means there is negative correlation. The rule of thumb is that a "good fit" model is predicted by a minimum of 60 percent variance in dependent variable making the model for the research a good fit by having a value of Adjusted R Square higher than 60 percent. Durbin-Watson test calculates the auto correlation of the residual from the regression analysis which state that the acceptable range for Durbin-Watson is within the range of 1.5-2.5.

Table 6 Model summary ^b					
Mode l	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin- Watson
1	.729 ^a	.531	.516	.46758214698 26 47	1.659
a.		().	issez-Faire, Au ole: Employee F	tocratic, Democi Performance	ratic

According to the above table, R square value is 0.531 which indicates that 53.1 percent of the dependent variables can be predicted by independent variables. The adjusted R square is 0.516 which shows that model is not a good fit model as the value is less than 0.60. The Durbin-Watson value shows no auto correlation among the selected respondents for this study as the value falls in a range of 1.5-2.5.

Additional analysis will be on coefficients where the range of alpha value of 0.05, 0.001 or 0.01 is used to explain the significant of the variable.

Model		nstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.477	.362		4.081	.000
	Democratic	.481	.064	.582	7.542	.000
	Autocratic	154	.068	167	-2.274	.025
	Laissez- Faire	.277	.090	.242	3.071	.003

As per shown on the above table, democratic leadership style beta coefficient value is 0.582 with a significant value of 0.000 which is lower than 0.01, hence democratic leadership is found to have a positive significant impact on employee performance. This finding is similar to Ojokuku, et al. (2012) where they found that democratic leadership style, in which employees are allowed to have sense of belonging, believed higher responsibility can be carried out with little supervision, and leaders help followers achieve their visions and needs, enhance organizational efficiency. This had been supported by Iqbal, et al. (2015) and Bhatti, et al. (2012) research.

Autocratic leadership style beta coefficient value is -0.167 with a significant value of 0.025 which is higher than 0.01, hence autocratic leadership is found to have a negative significant impact on employee performance. This finding is similar to Jayasingam & Cheng (2009) where they found autocratic power produces negative influence on employee performance. This has been supported by Puni, et al. (2014) and Akor (2014) research.

Laissez-faire leadership style beta coefficient value is 0.242 with a significant value of 0.003 which is lower than 0.01, hence laissez-faire leadership is found to have a positive significant impact on employee performance. This finding is similar to a study conducted by Chaudhry & Javed (2012) in which the result indicates that there is positive and significant relationship between laissez faire leadership and employee performance. This had been supported by Nuhu (2010) and Sougui, et al. (2016) research.

Discussion

The results indicate that democratic leadership has a positive significant impact on employee performance. This supports Iqbal, et al. (2015) that stated under the influence of democratic leadership employees to some extent has discretionary power to do work that leads to a better performance. Therefore, democratic leadership produces more motivated employees that eventually leads to an increased performance. **H1**: Accepted

The results show that autocratic leadership has a negative significant impact on employee performance. This supports Jayasingam & Cheng (2009) that stated autocratic leaders dominates all actions and decisions all the while restricting the innovativeness and creativity of employees. Therefore, autocratic leaders tend to limit the performance of employees. **H2**: Rejected

The results show that laissez-faire leadership has a positive significant impact on employee performance. This supports Sougui, et al. (2016) that stated laissez-faire leaders allow freedom on how employees do their work and employees perform with no leadership barriers. Therefore, employee's performance is better as employees enjoy working with less authority from leaders. **H3**: Accepted

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Hypothesis	Beta	Sig	Result
	value		
H1: Democratic leadership style			
has a positive significant impact	0.582	0.000	Accepted
on employee performance			
H2: Autocratic leadership style			
has a positive significant impact	-0.167	0.025	Rejected
on employee			
Performance			
H3: Laissez-faire leadership style			
has a positive significant impact	0.242	0.003	Accepted
on employee performance			

Table 8	Summary	of hypothesis
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3. Conclusion

Based on the results, democratic leadership style has a significant positive impact on employee performance. This indicates that when democratic approach is applied, performance of employees would increase. Therefore, Malaysian leaders is encouraged to adopt democratic leadership style and involve team members in the decision making process since it is confirmed that performance of employees is the best under this style of leadership. Malaysian leaders should encourage innovation, team work and creativity that leads to job satisfaction, increased productivity and subsequently increased performance.

Autocratic leadership style, however, shows a significant negative impact on employee performance. This indicates that performance of employees would not increase when autocratic approach is applied. Even though Malaysian leaders prefer and are most known to lead through autocratic leadership style, in the view of globalization, autocratic leadership style may no longer be accepted by employees who are now becoming

more knowledgeable, independent and competent.

Laissez-faire leadership style has positive impact on employee performance, which indicates that employee performance would increase when laissez-faire leadership style is applied. Laissez-faire leadership style is considered as moderate leadership style. This technique is being suited when employees understands their responsibilities well and possess strong analytical skills. This approach can be used when leaders are very much confident on team members and in any condition should not blame each other for mistakes.

Recommendation

Organizations need to have highly capable leaders to lead their employees in daily operation and accomplish the organizational goals. Based on the findings of this research, democratic leadership style has greater impact than laissez-faire leadership and autocratic styles in terms of employee performance. In order to stay in the competitive business environment, it is recommended that the right leader with high capability be identified at all levels of the organization, especially public sectors in iraq. Organizations in Malaysia should make use of the recommendations to adopt democratic leadership instead of autocratic leadership style. It should be known that employees are the most important asset in the organization, and employee performance highly depends on leadership style. Organizations with good leadership capability will further improve performance. Therefore, serious attention should be given to make leadership a higher priority.

Limitations

This section defines the limitations that are possible in accomplishing the research in a successful way. There are various aspects that may lead to limit the accuracy of research outcomes. The first point of concern is regarding sampling. As selecting a sample cannot access the complete population, there can be differences in assumptions made on the part of complete population. Further other limitations involve the interest of respondents in answering the questions. They might be influenced to answer it without concerning over its seriousness and fill it so as to save their time. As the sample selected is from 100 respondents, it cannot justify the impact of leadership style on employee performance issue on the base from the same organization because of large number of population cannot be studied with a sample. Also the problems they face in the organization. The sample of the study might be another limitation. The organization is a private sector company, which governmental agency might have limiting the impact they could have on their surroundings. Thus these limitations explain the hurdles that researcher might face in completing the investigation and fulfilling all the aims and objectives with better accuracy.

Future research Direction

The upcoming research may be conducted with inclusion of more and different variables such as gender of superior and number of years working with superior. As only one organization participated in this study, future researcher could widen the number of organizations. The future researcher can enlarge a bigger sample data size in different industries such as travel, banking, retailing services and hospitality industries for a broader view. Furthermore, researcher can expand this model to include employees work outcomes such as turnover intention, work performance and work commitment. In addition, the future researcher should focus on other organizations – be it government sector or private sectors -

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