Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Commitment of Consultants in South African Management Consulting Firms

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ABSTRACT

The paper is focused at addressing lack of commitment challenges by the consultants as a result of ineffectiveness of transformational leadership and other motivation factors at the management consulting firms in Gauteng Province, South Africa. A Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to determine the relationship that exists between transformational leadership and consultants’ commitment variables. The sample size of the study was 100 respondents who were randomly selected from the 50 management consulting firms in Gauteng Province. The study reflected that there is an existence of a significant relationship between transformational leadership and consultants’ commitment. The study recommended that leadership in management consultancy firms should embrace the transformational leadership style in order to enhance the commitment of the consultants. The consulting firms should put relevant policies and procedures that are targeted to meet the well-being of the consultants in order to retain and establish a strong dedicated team of professionals.

KEYWORDS

Affective, Continuance, Leadership, Organisational Commitment, Transformational Leadership

1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a complex subject that has captured the attention of many scholars and practitioners. Protagonists of leadership have defined it in various ways and there is no accepted definition so far (Zhang, Zhang, Sun, Lytras, de Pablos and He, 2018, p.1966). In their view, Ennis, Gong and Okpozo (2018, p.1) defined leadership as a dynamic factor that influences the behaviour and attitudes of the employees at the workplace. Leadership in this case plays a crucial role to manage, integrate and motivate the employees through effective utilisation of the resources that are available to meet the organisational objectives.

Lussier and Achua (2010, p.6) purports that the widespread proposed definition of leadership is: “the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organisational objectives through change.” Leadership is regarded as a function of management that is directed at influencing the followers to achieve the desired organisational objectives. Northouse (2017, p.27) adds that leadership is an activity of influencing the subordinates to achieve the desired organisational objectives. Leadership entails influencing, participative involvement and provision of direction with the view to initiate the needed change to all the players within the organisation (Yukl and Yukl, 2009, p.247).

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Leadership is capability to influence and motivate the subordinates. A successful leader has the ability to challenge the behaviour and attitudes of the employees. Leadership involves the capacity to create a conducive working atmosphere and encourage the subordinates to go beyond the expected and achieve the desired objectives (Dalakoura, 2010, p.244).

According to Dalakoura (2010, p.244) the qualities of a good leader are:

- Ability to communicate - a strategic leader should be an effective communicator with the ability to communicate the vision of what needs to be accomplished;
- Innovativeness – An effective leader should be real and practical with the ability to be innovative towards the implementation of the organisational vision;
- Honesty – a strategic leader should be honest, be able to embrace successes and failures. Be in a position to select some strategies over others and provide the reasons for taking such actions;
- Diplomacy – a strategic leader should acquire diplomat skills in order to be able to effectively manage conflicts through the application of negotiation skills to solve organisational problems; and
- Humility – a leader should be humble. Humility is one of the most desired attributes which a strategic leader should have. A humble leader will apologise when he/she has made a mistake and should always share the credit with others (Dalakoura, 2010, p.244).

It is critical for leadership to adopt a strategic leadership style that is ideal for the organisation. The adopted leadership style should have the capacity to develop the employees’ skills, instill employee positive self-image, bring employee confidence and improve the well-being of the employees (Fiaz and Sadiw, 2017, p.145).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is a broad subject that embraces a variety of leadership styles. This paper is however going to deal with the transactional, charismatic, laissez-faire and transactional leadership styles.

2.1 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership style focuses on exchange of goodwill between the organisational leaders and employees. This leadership style thrives mainly in the exchange of favours between the leaders and the employees. This leadership style is designed to meet the personal interests of the employees (Ohunakin, Adeniji and Akintayo, 2016, p.369). Transactional leaders are employee motivators, they encourage employees to excel beyond their limits. Transactional leadership style is anchored on three dimensions which are: management by exception, passive management by exception and contingent rewards (Ohunakin et al., 2016, p.369). The three pillars are as discussed below:

- Active management by exception: This is a process where transactional leaders take an active role of monitoring the subordinates’ work, check for the deviations from the regulations and standard operation procedures and take remedial action to correct mistakes (Ohunakin et al., 2016, p.369).
- Passive management by exception: Transactional leaders can intervene on circumstances where standards are not met and when the performance does not meet the desired expectations. Punishment may be used in response to deplorable performance (Ohunakin et al., 2016, p.369).
- Contingent Rewards: Transactional leadership style links the objectives to the rewards, clarifies expectations, sets commonly agreed objectives, avails adequate resources and provides different types of rewards for successful performance (Ohunakin et al., 2016, p.369). This type of leadership sets specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART) objectives for their subordinates.
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