The Effects Of Leadership Behavıor Towards Employee Engagement Among Cıvıl Servants At Local Munıcıpal Councıls In Terengganu, Malaysıa

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Abstract

This study was conducted to identify the types of supervisor leadership behavior and employee engagement at three municipal councils in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia. The three city councils were the City Councils of Kuala Terengganu, Dungun and Marang, all placed under the state government. The objectives of this study were to find out the types of leadership behaviour that predicted employee engagement, as well as the effects of different leadership behaviors towards employee engagement. Three hundred and fifty city council employees took part in the study selected through convenient sampling technique. The findings revealed that there were significant, high and positive relationships among and between all dimensions of leadership behaviour (task oriented, relation oriented, change oriented) towards employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption). In addition, it was also discovered that all elements in leadership behavior (task oriented, relation oriented, change oriented) influenced employee engagement with the variable task oriented as the greatest predictor. It is recommended that employees in the government sector should be given tasks appropriate to their job duties and responsibilities to enhance their engagement. The study also revealed that civil servants preferred task oriented leaders because they provide clear guidance to perform job duties and responsibilities thus shaped highly engaged employees. However, both relation-oriented and change-oriented leaders also predicted employee engagement among civil servants at the city councils.

Keywords: Leadership Behavior, Employee Engagement, Municipal Council, Civil Servants

1 Introduction:

In today's complex economy, leadership behavior and employee engagement in particular have become indispensable in every organization. Leadership is the fundamental attribute for organizational success. The concept of leadership behavior had developed from an original structure comprised of two types of behavior, which were task-oriented leadership behavior and relation-oriented leadership behavior (Fernandez, 2008). However, Li (2016) added a third dimension of leadership behavior called change-oriented behavior, which was thought to positively affect employee engagement. Employee engagement is an extensive topic that deliberates on the harmonious relationship between workers and the organization. Employee engagement springs a strong position from which decision makers and leaders can develop strategies to rise engagement and to attain competitive advantage over others through the use of intangible value (Bethencourt, 2012). According to Hewitt (2016), the overall engagement scores in Malaysia rose from 53% in 2003 to 59% in 2011, before dipping to 53% again in 2012 but getting back up to 56% in 2013. Though the number fluctuated, still, about half of employees surveyed were disengaged at work. Raza, Ansari, Asad, Humayon, Hussain & Aziz (2017) found that only 25% of employees engaged in their work, while Yee (2012) found that only 17% employees were engaged in their organizations, 63% were not engaged and 20% were disengaged totally. These figures revealed that employees were mentally strained but forcefully pushing themselves up to work in the organizations.

2 Literature Review

2.1. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the commitment that involved a connection between the employee and his or her work or tasks with the organization. According to Robert (2006), an engaged employee at the workplace will typically show higher productivity and is committed to the organizations. Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker (2002), referred the term of employee engagement as employees with persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.

2.1.1. Vigor

Vigor is characterized by high level of energy and mental resilience while working and the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and being persistent even in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). Li (2016) defined feeling vigorous at work is personal feelings that contain physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness. Shirom (2006) also found that vigor is a good sentimental response to on-going interactions with significant elements in a job and work environment that relate to physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness. According to Shirom (2006), vigor is a good sentimental response to an ongoing interaction with significant elements in a job and work environment related to physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness. Shirom (2006) further described vigor as contextualized individuals' work situation that brings positive emotion that lasts days and even weeks.

2.1.2 Absorption

Absorption is characterized by being immersed in one's job that time passes quickly, having difficulty detaching from one's work and forgetting what's going on around them (Schaufeli & Bakkar, 2004). Schaufeli *et* al., (2002) reiterated that absorption is conceptualized as a pleasant state of total immersion in one's work, characterized by time passing quickly and being unable to detach oneself from the job. Absorption describes an employee's total engagement level as being one hundred percent engaged and content with their work where one finds it hard to detach oneself from work.

2.1.3 Dedication

Dedication as defined by Schaufeli *et* al., (2006), is someone who is strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. According to Schaufeli *et* al., (2002), an employee that has dedication actually has a strong psychological identification with his or her job, highly inspirational, enthusiastic, and strongly involved in his or her work and eventually achieves a sense of pride when engaging in doing great job. Schaufeli & Bakkar (2004) came up with some modification to the definition of dedication, which is characterized by being proud of and feeling a sense of significance of one's job.

2.3 Leadership Behavior

Leadership behavior provides insights into effective leadership of divisions, departments, and teams. Eicher (1998) defined leadership behavior as guiding and personally developing others, promoting opportunities for growth, being future-oriented, embracing uncertainty, communicating organization direction, developing key relationships and especially inspiring subordinates to do better.

Leadership behavior comprises of constructs that can function at the individual, group or organizational level. According to Yukl (2002), leadership measurement focuses on organizational effectiveness that includes task oriented, relations oriented and change oriented leadership behaviors. Leadership behavior offers understanding on effective leadership of divisions, departments, and teams. Leadership behavior is not classified as a particular behavior category; it significantly consists of employees' attitudes, behaviors, emotions, morale, and perceptions (Momeni, 2009).

2.3.1   Task Oriented Behavior

One component under Leadership Behavior is the sub-variable known as Task Oriented. Northouse (2001) reported that employees who are prone to task oriented behavior generally assist goal accomplishment of both the department and the organization. Dweck's (2008) research found that task oriented leadership behavior emphasized on how an individual's goal will affect self-evaluations of skill, effort, and provenances for failure or success. Choosing challenging tasks, exerting more effort, showing sustained or improved performance, and being more persistent in the face of failure are characteristics of a task-oriented person. For task-oriented leadership behaviors, lower risk is perceived and less belief is required (Mayer *et* al., 1995). Bass & Avolio (1997) described task oriented leadership behavior to include contingent reward and managing by exemption.

According to Brown et. al (2005), task oriented leadership will incorporate initiating structure, providing information about tasks, issuing rules, and threatening punishment for disobedience. Oborn (2010) said that task oriented leaders were not consistently related to performance, but a pattern of consistent interactions. Cumming and Hall (2004) found that task oriented leadership behaviors are categorized by having higher levels of self-efficacy and a leader's anxiety for achieving the task (Yukl, 2006).

2.3.2   Relation oriented

Relation oriented behavior is related to greater employee performance only when there is a high level of professional respect. Relation oriented behavior presents concern and care for others and facilitating cooperative behavior (Judge, Piccolo & Ilies, 2004). According to Yukl (2006), relation oriented behaviors involved concern for people and interpersonal relationships, and there is ample evidence from eras of research that employees can increase mutual trust, cooperation, and satisfaction with the leader.

According to Nilufer (2018), relationship oriented leadership is an approach which focuses on job satisfaction, motivation and work-life balance of the employees. Relations oriented leadership behavior explained the greatest amount of variance in affective commitment, somewhat less variance in normative commitment, and no variance in continuance commitment (Brown, 2003). Followers will feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and given surrounding with relations oriented behavior (Northouse, 2001).

On the other hand, Bass (1990) stated that relations oriented leadership behaviors focus on the quality of the relationship with followers, whereas, task oriented leadership behaviors focus on the task to be accomplished by followers. Relation oriented behavior highlight presenting concern and care for others and facilitating cooperative behavior (Judge *et* al., 2004). According to Yukl (2006), relation oriented behaviors involve concern for people and interpersonal relationships, and there was ample evidence from eras of research that they were can increase mutual trust, cooperation, and satisfaction with the leader.

2.3.3   Change Oriented

According to Yukl (2012), change oriented leadership behavior refers to leadership behavior that involves expressing an appealing vision and encouraging innovative thinking. Change oriented leaders provide

information, showing and comparing other work units with better performance. It is important to know the changes between task-oriented, relations-oriented, and change-oriented leadership behaviors because each is relevant to effective leadership in different situations.

Change oriented leadership behavior is a conceptual tool with no objective reality that can predict or explain a supervisor's influence on important outcomes, Ivancevich, (2011). Gil, Rico, Alcover & Barrasa (2005) stated that change oriented leadership behavior will help supervisors expand team climate.

Yukl (2002) also stated the five different leadership behaviors to transform organizational performances which are: taking risks to promote necessary change, thinking and explaining why the need for change is necessary, monitoring the external environment, envisioning change by proposing innovative strategies or new visions and encouraging innovative.

3 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the relationship between leadership behavior and employee engagement. Three research objectives were formulated for this study: (1) To find out the level of leadership behaviour and employee engagement, (2) To examine the relationship between the leadership behavior and employee engagement and (3) To identify the effects of leadership behavior towards employee engagement. In relation to that, the researchers formulated a few hypotheses for this study which were:

H_{1a} There is a relationship between task oriented behavior and employee engagement.

H_{1b} There is a relationship between relation oriented behavior and employee engagement.

H_{1c} There is a relationship between change oriented behavior and employee engagement.

H_{2a} There is a relationship between task oriented behavior and vigor.

H_{2b} There is a relationship between relation oriented behavior and vigor.

H_{2c} There is a relationship between change oriented behavior and vigor.

H_{3a} There is a relationship between task oriented behavior and dedication.

H_{3b} There is a relationship between relation oriented behavior and dedication.

H_{3c} There is a relationship between change oriented behavior and dedication.

H_{4a} There is a relationship between task oriented behavior and absorption.

H_{4b} There is a relationship between relation oriented behavior and absorption.

H_{4c} There is a relationship between change oriented behavior and absorption.
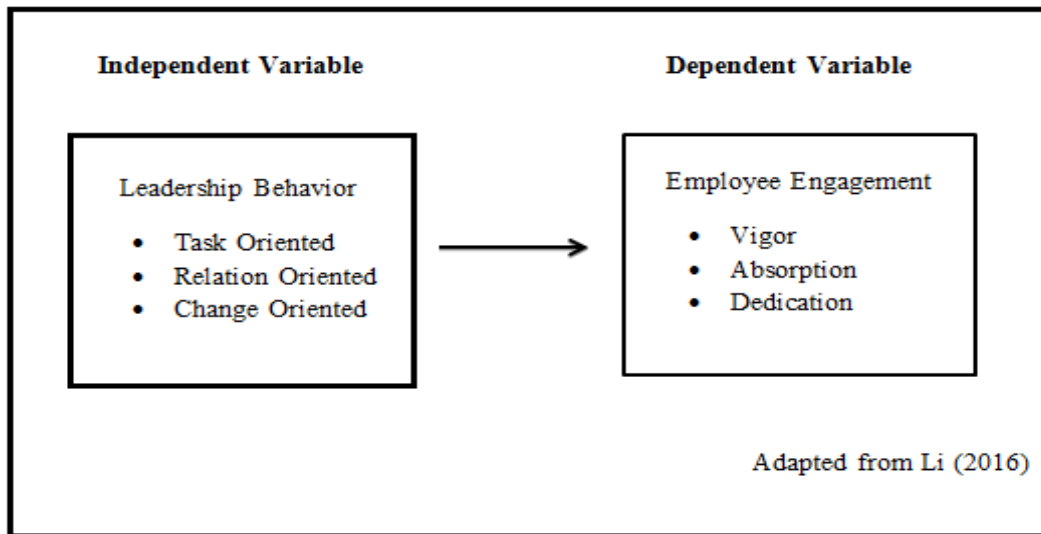
Figure-1. Conceptual Framework on the Relationship between Leadership Behavior and Employee Engagement

4 Methodology

The data was collected in three local authorities in Terengganu, Malaysia. The three local municipal authorities were Kuala Terengganu City Council, Dungun City Council and Marang City Council. In order to determine the sample size of this study, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was used as a reference. The sample size suggested was 302 respondents as the potential population was 1352 employees. A convenience sampling technique was used in collecting data from the respondents. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) stated that convenience sampling technique refers to the collection of information from members of the population who are conveniently available to provide it. The instrument for leadership behavior comprised of 18 items adopted by Yukl (2012) while employee engagement was measured by 17 items developed by Schaufeli & Baker (2003), encompassing a total of 35 items for a complete instrument for both leadership behavior and employee engagement. Descriptive, correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the data in order to answer the objectives of this study.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was used to measure the internal consistency of the items that are used in the questionnaires. The most common model to be used is Alpha. According to Sekaran (2010), the value of alpha level of more than .60 will result in the instrument being reliable for research purposes. Full statistics of reliability analysis derived from the actual data is shown in Table 1 below. The results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha for independent variable and dependent variable are above minimum .70, indicating the reliability of these measures.

Table-1 Reliability Analysis (Actual Data)

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha

Independent Variables		
i. Task Oriented	5	.903
i. Relation Oriented	6	.935
i. Change Oriented	5	.915
Dependent Variables		
i. Vigor	5	.903
i. Absorption	5	.745
i. Dedication	5	.896

5.2.   Pearson Correlation Analysis

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was applied to determine the relationship between the leadership behavior and employee engagement among employees at local authorities in Terengganu, Malaysia. The findings from this analysis were used in order to determine whether the hypotheses of the study accepted or rejected. The researchers used a guideline developed by Cohen (1988) to explain the strength of the relationship of the variables in terms of the value of Pearson Correlation (r) and the direction of the relationship for the variables used in the study.

Table-2. Pearson Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Task Oriented	1						
Relation Oriented	.770**	1					
Change Oriented	.743**	.748**	1				
Vigor	.673**	.603**	.630**	1			
Absorption	.490**	.537**	.522**	608**	1		
Dedication	.573**	.511**	.557**	.712**	.560**	1	
Employee Engagement	.668**	.636**	.658**	.895**	.836**	.869**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It was found that that leadership behavior had significant, positive and large relationship with employee engagement (r=.714, p<.01). The highest correlation under the leadership behavior exists between task-oriented leaadrship behaviour and employee engagement when r=.668, p<.01. This is followed by change-oriented leadership with employee engagement when the correlation indicates that r=.658, p<.01. The least correlated is relation-oriented behaviour with employee engagement when r=.636, p<.01. Thus, the second objectives of this study was achieve with all the hypotheses were accepted. Sunborn & Oehler (2014) conducted a study on employee engagement then published it stating that leadership and employee engagement are complimentary in achieving success.

This research found that task oriented, relation oriented, and change oriented behaviors all significantly and positively affected employee engagement with task oriented having the strongest effect on employee engagement. A more sophisticated study between the leadership behaviour and employee engagement was conducted by Xu and Thomas (2011), found that task oriented and relation oriented behaviors positively affect employee engagement. The three types of leadership behavior which are task oriented, relation oriented, and change oriented was also studied by Fernandez (2008). Fernandez explored the effects of the leadership behaviors on employee's perception on job performance and job satisfaction in public sectors. He found that task oriented behaviors negatively correlated with job satisfaction.

However, Xu & Thomas (2011), task oriented is the most appropriate leadership behavior for an organization's climate.

5.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

The findings from the regression analysis between leadership behavior (task oriented, relation oriented, change oriented) and employee engagement are shown in Table 2 below. The independent variable which is leadership behavior (task oriented, relation oriented, change oriented) showed the result of R square was at .514. This explained by 51.4% of the variance (R square) in the employee engagement. The value for Durbin-Watson was 1.701 which was in the range of 1.5 to 2.5 as one of the assumptions for regression analysis. Task oriented was the highest predictor for employee engagement at local authorities in Terengganu with 31.8% of the variance predicted employee engagement (β= .318,p<.005). Collinearity statistic indicated that the result met the requirement for regression with the value of VIF<10, Tolerance >.1.

Table-3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Task Oriented	.318	4.978	.000	.344	2.911
Relation Oriented	.172	2.664	.008	.338	2.957
Change Oriented	.293	4.767	.000	.372	2.690
R Square		.514			
F		122.171			
Sig. F Change		.000			
Durbin-Watson		1.701			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Based on the findings in Table 3, the researchers can conclude that task oriented was the greatest predictor towards employee engagement at local municipal councils in Terengganu. This is followed by Change Oriented and Relation Oriented. In essence, all elements under the indpendent variable were found to have influenced employee engagement. Li (2016) also found that task-oriented, relation-oriented and change-oriented behaviors were significant positive predictors of employee engagement. Yukl (2012) pointed out that leaders with change leadership skills may provide a better strategy for responding to a threat or opportunity, but involving people with relevant expertise usually results in a better strategy and more commitment to implement it. Other previous studies also found that organizational politics have an influence on employee engagement and performance at work (Eldor, 2017).

6 Recommendations and Conclusion

Several recommendations are derived from this study to boost leadership behavior towards employee engagement among employees.

1.   The organization and manager should provide clear guidelines on the tasks assigned to their employees. Ambiguous instructions and guidelines can create negative environment at the workplace to every employee. It will drive employees to confusion or lack of direction.

2.   To ensure good outcomes of leadership behavior and employee engagement, the organization should design appropriate interventions to continuously train the leaders or managers so that they can always provide necessary guidance to their employees.

3.   An alternative way to encourage the level of leadership behavior and employee engagement is by valuing the employees and their contribution to the workplace and taking care of their well-being. The organization and manager should explore their employees' expertise and utilize it. This will make the employees feel that they are valuable and will influence the leadership behavior and employee engagement.

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