

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A LEADER'S COMMUNICATION AND WORKPLACE OSTRACISM

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Abstract: The hospitality industry has a high employee turnover rate compared to other industries. As the Australian hospitality industry continues to expand, this may be detrimental to the expansion. The hospitality industry relies heavily on its employees lives in countryside to ensure its success. Workers in the industry are often subjected to emotional and physical labour to ensure that the client's expectations are met. It is therefore important to investigate the skills required by workers to ensure success. As such, the aim of this paper was to identify negative leadership styles. More importantly, the aim was to identify the characters in a pseudo-transformational leader that may trigger workplace ostracism. This paper aimed to investigate literature around pseudo-transformational leaders and the impact they have on employees.

Keywords: Australia, Hospitality Industry, Leadership, Ostracism, Transformational

JEL: Z0, Z3

I. Introduction

Due to globalisation, the business world is experiencing rapid growth. Companies are faced with the challenge of keeping up with the changes while still being able to compete (Panjaitan, 2021). As such, the hospitality sector is undergoing tremendous stress. Just like most industries, the hospitality sector depends on human capital from countryside to have a competitive advantage. The human behaviours such as compassion, empathy, contentment, and warmth are present naturally inside them. Studies have illustrated that more engaged employees are essential for the success of the business (Singh, Subramaniam, Mahomed, Mohamed, & Ibrahim, 2020). Additionally, previous studies have identified managerial behaviour as playing a key role in influencing employees. As such, an organisation's success is heavily dependant on the role of the manager (Buil, Martinez, & Matute, 2018). As Australia is one of the most sought-after holiday destinations for tourists around the globe, there has been an increase in the number of luxury hotels. Unfortunately, Australia has not been immune to the challenges that come with growth. Hotels have been faced with managerial issues that have had an impact on

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the quality of customer service. For example, there was a case at one of the luxury brand hotels. The general manager at this hotel had communication issues with her subordinates, this had a detrimental impact on the environment in the organisation. As a result, the frustration levels of the employees were heightened and gave way to workplace ostracism. This led to a decrease in the quality of customer service, which harmed the hotel. This is in line with previous research that looked at the impact of a destructive leader. The consequences of such leaders result in employees' emotional exhaustion and psychological distress (Singh et al., 2020). In the hospitality industry, a destructive leader's behaviour can result in poor customer service. This is because the employees can start feeling demotivated due to the stressful work environment (Kanwal, Lodhi, & Kashif, 2019).

An employee spends at least eight to nine hours at work. As such, employees spend most of their time at the workplace. Therefore, the leader needs to make a pleasant atmosphere to heighten the productivity of employees. However, what happens when an organisation is faced with having a pseudo-transformational leader? Literature on the effects of positive leadership is in abundance, but literature on negative leadership styles is still lacking. Weak interpersonal relationships between the leader and follower give rise to mistrust. In addition, a leader with negative communication patterns that are cynical, and manipulative may lead to the creation of ostracised employees. As such, leaders in the hospitality industry become one of the most crucial aspects as they ensure that employees have the necessary support. For example, in the case of the general manager, she acted as a pseudo-transformational leader. This is evident as she abused her power for her self-interests and acted upon the follower negatively. She was unwilling to encourage independent thought in employees, discouraged intellectual development, and showed no emphatic attitude towards others. Such negative communication has deeper implications on the mindsets of employees. It causes great unrest, raises the ostracised behaviour, and heightens psychological suffering. Employees develop a self-serving attitude, fix their boundaries, and limit their information sharing with peers. It promotes massive miscommunication between the department, tasks are delayed, there is disconnection among employees, and the customer suffers. As such, this paper aims to identify and investigate the relationship between a leader's communication and workplace ostracism. In addition, this paper also highlighted the importance of transformational leadership within the hospitality industry and provided future business implications.

II. Literature review

Transformational Leader

The leader of an organisation is one of the most important positions which comes with many responsibilities. To have a better leader-member exchange, the leader should have strong interpersonal communication skills and be emotionally intelligent (Harris, Wheeler, & Kacmar, 2009). A leader should constantly find ways to enhance creativity in

followers. This will create an environment that generates new ideas in the organisation (Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2010). A transformational leader possesses qualities that inspire followers to contribute to their organisation (Liyanage, 2020). Bass (1994, as cited in Christie, Barling, & Turner, 2011) defined a transformational leader based on four dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Idealised influence is an attribute possessed by a transformational leader. It is when subordinates respect and truly trust their leader. This dimension reflects behaviours that are ethical and moral (Dlamini, Garg, & Muchie, 2017; Liyanage, 2020). Inspirational motivation is when the leader motivates and inspires employees “to reach their full potential” (Liyanage, 2020, p. 26-27). The third dimension is where a transformational leader has individualised consideration by being aware of each employee’s individual needs (Liyanage, 2020). Lastly, intellectual stimulation is where the leader encourages employees to creatively problem solve and be innovative (Dlamini et al., 2017). A leader who has negative intentions tends to discourage creativity among the followers to keep them weak. As such, this is one of the characteristics of a pseudo-transformational leader.

Pseudo-transformational leader

A pseudo-transformational leader is defined as failing to maintain the standards required for leaders to be transformational (Christie et al., 2011). A leader who adopts the pseudo-transformational leadership style mainly follows a communication style that inhibits any criticism and protest. Thus pseudo-transformational leaders tend to censor opposing views and often manipulate information (Christie et al., 2011). These leaders manipulate their subordinates for their own interest, rarely stick to their word, and often state things that people desire to pick up. (Barling, Christie, & Turner, 2008). Barling et al. (2008) further highlighted how pseudo-transformational leaders form relationships with those companions who possess harmful intent and provide maximum benefits. This is to say that they only value individuals to the extent in which they can use them for their own personal gains (Christie et al., 2011). Moreover, they communicate rhetorically, motivate followers through tricks, and exploits through emotions. The researchers through their study demonstrated that due to pseudo-transformational leadership, followers have more perceptions of fear and abusive supervision (Barling et al., 2008). Existing literature has indicated that the behaviours of transformational and pseudo-transformational leaders may seem similar (especially to followers that are distant from the leader). This is an example of how pseudo-transformational leaders can manipulate employees’ perceptions. In addition, pseudo-transformational leaders often discourage followers from opposing their vision which is indicative of how they seek to prevent independent thought. Although transformational and pseudo-transformational leaders share inspirational motivation, they can be distinguished by the other three dimensions (Christie et al., 2011).

Christie et al. (2011) in their paper highlighted that followers are mostly aware of their leader's behaviour, self-interest, egocentric and autocratic values. The consequence of this is that it causes, frustration among the followers. In the pseudo-transformational leader, a narcissist attitude prevails inside the leader. As these leaders are self-serving, they inhibit free thinking among the followers. This increases the chances of workplace ostracism, as such situations adversely affect the intellect of the employees (Harter, 2013). Furthermore, leaders' communication styles are so exploitative that it increases anxiety and depression levels and moves the positive aura of the work (Christie et al., 2011). This sort of action turns the work atmosphere toxic. In the hospitality industry, employees spend 80% of their time communicating with others. In such a scenario, the leader needs to deliver strong interpersonal communication as this boosts the team spirit of the employees (Lolli, 2013). A manipulative communication style often leads to loss of natural endowment and high turnover, this may promote workplace ostracism. It cuts down the healthy interaction among the employees, impacts the psychological well-being of an individual, and even daily operation. (Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013).

Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism refers to the unfair, forceful, and restraining behaviours experienced at work. Feelings of isolation may then develop among employees (Kanwal et al., 2019; Khalid, Iqbal, & Hashmi, 2020). Ostracised employees exhibit the least interest in their job, and as a result, their business performance decreases. In addition, they show distrust in the leader's decision and take away from any decision-making for the welfare of the institution. A leader that adopts a pseudo-transformational leadership style will result in employees being ostracised. As a result, ostracised employees may develop antisocial behaviours such as aggression and hostility (Zhao et al., 2013). In addition, these employees may attack back as they perceive that the leader will jeopardise their career, play with their emotions, and sabotage their happiness. Employees with little political skills and less proactive behaviour tend to develop psychological distrains as well as a decrease in confidence level (Harter, 2013). Hunter further states how the ignorance of a leader impacts communication in the workplace. A leader of such character mainly suppresses their follower's behaviour and applies tactics in their communication to pull strings. Socrates stated how pseudo-leadership communication impacts roughly around 2000 years. Socrates highlighted that if the person thinks that he is already wiser than he does not have reason to seek wisdom (Harter, 2013). Such thoughts corrupt the mind of the leader as the leader loses the ability to learn and their communication patterns may lead to undesirable outcomes. Employees lose faith in their leaders and develop anxiety, frustration, and constant dissatisfaction.

Schuh et al. (2013) explained subordinate behaviour in their study. Results indicated that when subordinates found that the communication of their leader fostered the growth of the system, the subordinates developed a strong affinity towards their leader. Productivity enhanced in subordinates, and there was rapport amongst employees (Schuh

et al., 2013). Further, the researcher also explained the quality of the leader. When the leader's tone was merely factual, the employees showed less enthusiasm towards their work. In the contrast, if the quality of a leader had positive emotions, then employees showed enthusiasm in performing their job (Schuh et al., 2013). As such, this is indicative of the profound impact of a leader's tone on the psychological aspects of employee's mindsets.

Men (2014) placed emphasis on the organisation's reputation. How a leader communicates has an impact on the organisation's reputation in the market, as ostracised employees are more likely to defame the reputation of the establishment. This can happen through internal miscommunication between the department, which has an untoward effect on the earnings (Men, 2014). Furthermore, the communication competence, style, and calibre of the leader influence the behaviour of employees. Loyalty and satisfaction are the two traits that have also been emphasised. These traits help promote trust and positive feelings inside the employees (Men, 2014). Such qualities explain the issues, which take place between the supervisor and the subordinates. According to Yang and Treadway (2016), ostracised employees are more likely to undergo impaired cognitive function and violent behaviour towards others. These characteristics increase the probability of job disengagement, commitment and therefore, enhance the chances of an employee quitting (Yang & Treadway, 2016). When the market is tight, and the leader's communication style is explosive then it increases the attrition rate. Furthermore, the authors referred to the belonging theory. They stated that the ostracised employees felt alienated by their leader's communication style. Employees start to feel that the organisation does not appreciate their hard work and talent (Yang & Treadway, 2016).

Ostracised employees have low social exchange with their peers. This weakens interpersonal relationships with other departments and weakens the communication channels. Manipulative leaders make employees feel unaccepted in the organisation and leads to social destruction. Sometimes employees undermine their judgement as well (Wu, Liu, Kwan, & Lee, 2016). Furthermore, when the workplace environment becomes toxic, employees with higher job mobility tend to leave the organisation and join another establishment while employees with lower job mobility (to a lack of employment opportunities) cannot exit the organisation due. In such circumstances, those employees turn violent due to defeat and anger towards their leader (Dlamini et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2016).

Pseudo-leaders have been characterised to have narcissistic personality. Their narcissistic personality harms the employees and the organisation due to their arrogance, they are overly self-absorbed and are more likely to engross themselves in aggressive conduct. As a result, subordinates do not treat their leader with respect and do not bother to work properly. Additionally, the psychological distance between the subordinates and leaders is enhanced. Increased psychological distance inhibits the leader-member exchange quality (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016). Followers mainly learn certain organisational attributes from their supervisor, but when the same followers learn skills from a pseudo-

leader, then it is more likely that the follower would become selfish and imitate the leader's style. Moreover, due to the lack of altruistic values employees adopt manipulative communication styles (Lin, Huang, Chen, & Huang, 2015). Ostracism becomes a stressor that removes the personal resources of employees. Employees start staying silent to avoid rejection which leads to knowledge hoarding behaviour (Khalid et al., 2020). Gkorezis and Bellou (2016) illustrated the importance of information exchange between peers, the tendency to share opinions and knowledge, and how these reduce ostracism in the workplace. It also has a profound impact on the creativity of the employees and in this rapidly changing environment, innovation is critical. Neurotic and introverted employees are most affected and are more likely to develop conflicting intentions towards the organisation because of the leader's communication (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016).

Employees mainly develop negative qualities like vengeance. Such negativity impacts the communication with stakeholders and the profit margins of the organisation. In addition, employees stop contributing towards multiple affairs and do not share their thoughts as well (Gkorezis, Panagiotou, & Theodorou, 2016). A pseudo-transformational leader's negative personality promotes negative reciprocity in employees, which tends to harm the organisation. The social exchange starts to diminish, the social life of employees is affected, and leads to a rise in interpersonal deviance. (Guay et al., 2016). A Leader's communication style is a central element for a leader-follower relationship as it incorporates the leader's verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal signals. Leader's who use fierce words, commanding and dominant styles to communicate with subordinates harm employees and how employees perform (Luo, Song, Gebert, Zhang, & Feng, 2016). Hence, it is important to not create an ostracised workplace as employees are the primary resource in an establishment.

III. Logical deductions

Research demonstrates the implications of a pseudo-leader's communication to employees, and how it leads to workplace ostracism. It is clear that leaders are the most significant facet of the system. It is their responsibility to retain real talent in the organisation. Employees can easily be found but finding ones with talent is difficult. Currently, stress levels are high among employees, so it is important to maintain a harmonious atmosphere at the workplace. Communication from leaders that is exploitive, and manipulative would have an untoward impression on the employees, which directly affect customers. Mainly, leaders should be aware of their deeds, words, and keep off any manipulative form of attributes in their interactions. Such attributes do not only corrupt the leader but also makes the employees' life toxic. The leader should be advanced, creative, inspiring, visionary, and empower transformational leadership. The absence of such traits will cause emotional exhaustion and degrade social exchange. Workplace ostracism is pricey for both the organisation as well as the employees. The increase in

ostracised employees leads to rising in attrition rate, which occurs with a sizable cost. Ostracised employees exhibit little organisational identification level and are less willing to engage in citizenship behaviour. Hence, the leader should make certain to stop workplace ostracism from happening. The leader should make sure that words and deeds align. This heightens the credibility of a leader, and the employees acquire a higher degree of confidence in their leader. The leader has to make sure to put aside all the differences in the workplace and think of the organisation. The leader should possess strong emotional intelligence. Communication through emotions will serve as a process of emotional contagion, and positive implications happen to employees. As such, the communication style of a leader should be hope orientated, reality orientated, subordinate orientated, and be supportive. Thus, a leader's communication style is a vital component as subordinates always learn from their supervisors. Positive culture occurs in a top-down manner. It always starts from the top and then it travels to down to other levels. As such, if the top is negative the whole organisation soon gets jeopardised.

IV. Conclusion and future business implications

Human capital continues to be an important resource that dictates the success and failure of the hospitality industry (Singh et al., 2020). Employees in the hospitality industry are a link between the company and its customers (Buil et al., 2018). It is therefore crucial for the Australian hospitality industry to ensure that its employees are highly engaged by fostering a healthy working environment. As such, leaders who are responsible for said employees need to be chosen wisely. This paper has illustrated how transformational leaders directly predict the well-being of employees and how they perform. In addition, this paper has illustrated the consequences of a pseudo-transformational leader. This leader impacts the employee's psychological well-being decreases healthy interactions among employees, and this becomes detrimental to daily operations. Pseudo-transformational leaders may end up promoting workplace ostracism which causes a ripple effect through the organisation that leads to poor customer service.

This paper has contributed to existing works of knowledge. It has shown how employees' experiences are heavily influenced and impacted by pseudo-transformational leaders. This paper offers space for the rethinking of hiring and training strategies in the hospitality industry. Past research studies have proved that transformational leaderships are trainable. As such, owners in the industry can implement training programmes that help their leaders develop a transformational leadership style. In addition, the hospitality industry should provide training and educational workshops for supervisors and subordinates to make them aware of the harmful consequences of pseudo-transformational leaders. Lastly, implementing frequent meetings and team building can also help improve communications between supervisors and subordinates. This can help bridge any communication gap which is a core reason employees feel ostracised in the workplace. It would also be beneficial for the industry to have support systems in place

that employees can lay their grievances without repercussions. In additions, leaders should also have consequences should their behaviour be deemed as destructive. By developing such programmes and strategies, the hospitality industry may see a decrease in unethical behaviour. This will in turn improve the work environment and thus improve employee well-being. Consequently, these measures could improve high employee turnover in the hospitality industry.

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