Unpacking the Specific Leadership Practices Negatively Impacting Employees' Motivation within Guyana's Public Sector

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Abstract

This paper unpacks the specific leadership practices that negatively impact the motivation of employees within Guyana's public sector. It is written based on the doctoral thesis "An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector – A Case Study," which is authored by Sven Douglas. The thesis was done utilizing a mixed-methods approach; the study combined qualitative structured interviews with public sector leaders and quantitative surveys administered to a broader range of public servants. The analysis was done using statistical tools available for social sciences. These were Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Microsoft Excel. The findings revealed the majority of employees within Guyana's public sector are managed using effective management practices. However, many of these employees are not benefiting from these effective practices. These areas that require improvement are inclusion in the decision-making processes, timely and constructive feedback and support, and commending efforts that provide positive reinforcement. It was recommended that managers and supervisors expand their management net to include all employees within their span of control to engage in those areas where they are failing. Methods of capturing demotivated employees were also recommended. These included regular staff meetings, workshops and think tanks where subordinates can share their ideas and opinions.

Keywords: Communication, Decision-Making, Empowerment, Feedback, Leadership, Motivation, Transparency.

Introduction

The manner in which managers lead lays the foundation for organizational culture and employee motivation. This significantly affects productivity and job satisfaction [6]. Guyana's public sector plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's economic and social landscapes. Therefore, leadership practices have the potential to present unique challenges, or benefits that could affect employees' motivation.

Guyana's public sector, characterized by its highly bureaucratic structure and critical role in the development of the nation, requires leaders who encourage and build motivation and commitment among its workforce. Nevertheless, based on the timely case study which was done by the author to delve into the influence of leadership on employees' motivation in Guyana's public sector, several prevailing practices, including overall positive, but at low levels – communication and transparency, timely and constructive feedback and support, and commending efforts that provide positive reinforcement, which all serve as impediments, have emerged. However, central to these issues is the lower-than-desired employees' involvement in decision-making that affects work. This often limits creativity and innovation, trust and communication, job

satisfaction and morale, and ultimately, production [1]. Although there may be challenges in the implementation, inclusive decision-making, and employee engagement lead to a sense of enfranchisement among staff [31].

Leaders in Guyana's public sector need to understand that their functions in relation to the motivation of their subordinates are critical to the operational effectiveness of the state's apparatus. Therefore, those leadership traits that foster high levels of motivation, thereby leading to higher levels of productivity, need to be cultivated and championed by all leaders and include every subordinate. By addressing these specific issues, Guyana's public sector can foster a more motivated and efficient workforce, which translates to the efficient and enhanced delivery of public goods and services.

By identifying those specific leadership challenges that negatively impact employees' motivation within Guyana's public sector, the research minimized the gap in knowledge on the cause of the lower level of output by the employees. The thesis recommended further research in this area, to eliminate the existing gap in knowledge. It also offered recommendations for fostering an environment that supports motivated and engaged public servants.

This article seeks to highlight those specific leadership practices within Guyana's public sector that hinder employee engagement and motivation, impacting overall performance and the delivery of the best possible public goods and services to the citizenry.

Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research were as follows:
1. To determine the specific leadership practices that have a significant impact on employees' motivation within Guyana's public service.
2. To explore and recommend effective leadership practices that can easily be implemented to enhance the motivation of

employees within the public sector of Guyana.

Review of Literature

Over the past century or so, leadership forms in the public sector have evolved. Public sector leadership has been divided into administrative management and political leadership [24]. After the publication of the leadership styles framework in the 1960s, many other industrial psychology–based and organizational behavior frameworks have emerged. During the 80s and 90s, however, leadership studies expanded from that historical, influential, but individualistic trait and behavioral literature to include studies of full leadership constructs, followers, leadership contexts, power, influence, organizations, radical change, and strategic leadership [24].

More recently, research in leadership has transformed towards an exploration of the behaviors, attributes, and styles that are identified as effective in organizations and locations across the world. Much of the available research on leadership within the public sector can be categorized according to the following leadership theories: transformational, transactional, and authoritarian in public organizations. The prevalent leadership styles found in Guyana's public service are transformational, democratic and autocratic. This confirms the literature of Rosenbloom, Kravchuk, and Clerkin.

There are several important similarities between these leaders and the potential challenges that they all face, such as analyzing and satisfying stakeholder expectations, political influence, public accountability, working within structural and resource constraints, and having the flexibility to meet political and administrative objectives [10]. Good leadership and ethical conduct in public service can help foster pride and public trust in public employees, contribute to effective operations, and contribute to happier and less stressful work climates. Unquestionably,

diversity and inclusion in leadership are valuable. They can promote new ideas and alternative ways of thinking, prevent ethical lapses resulting from a homogeneous point of view, and create a system more reflective of the society it seeks to protect [4].

A number of scholars have listed gaps in public leadership research. For example, there is a need for a better application of governance trends to leadership in the public sector. Such research is necessary because there may be differences in the way leadership, management, and executive functions are practiced in the private and public spheres. As a result of the lack of adequate research on the subject, it is often assumed that public service leadership is practiced in the same way as private sector leadership [7]. Though there are many commonalities, there are distinctions. The differences are quite prevalent; one approach indicates an increasing shift from the management of programs towards the management of populations (public), indicating a more holistic, long-term approach to service delivery [11], and the other focuses on managing universal as opposed to heterogeneous needs [14].

Notwithstanding, the aim of the sectors must be to serve the public, be it for financial or social profits. As such, both sectors depend on employees who are motivated to perform. There are some leadership practices that impact employee motivation. Understanding how these leadership practices influence employee performance is crucial for enhancing organizational production and, in the case of the public sector, delivering public goods and services. For success in this area, a positive work environment must exist.

Specifically, within Guyana's public service, several leadership practices contribute to employee motivation. These include, but are not limited to, communication and transparency, goal setting and vision sharing, recognition, and rewards systems, the provision of timely and constructive feedback,

empowerment and delegation, professional development and training, commending efforts that provide positive reinforcement, empowerment in decision-making, and creating a supportive work environment [19]. However, this literature review will address those that were included in the author's research within Guyana's public sector that had, though overall positive, less than the desired score for high levels of motivation and a workforce that would produce enhanced public goods and service delivery.

Timely and Constructive Feedback and Support

Constructive feedback is that which is done with the aim of improving the quality of future outputs. It is the provision of useful comments, advice, or suggestions that are directed to identifying weaknesses or providing new perspectives and improving behavior or work outcomes [3]. If not done in a timely manner, then it becomes useless, as the intended objective of the feedback will not be met.

Therefore, timely and constructive feedback is pivotal in improving the standard of work within a team or organization. Further, it enhances learning, adjusts strategies, and creates and builds an environment that nurtures support and growth, thereby enhancing the motivation of the employees within that work environment [3]. This type of feedback not only focuses on recognizing what should be improved but also recognizes team members' achievements, fosters positive emotions, and encourages further individual effort, thus reinforcing their motivation and commitment [26].

It was noted that in the world of business, companies with strong feedback cultures outperform their peers in both engagement and productivity. It also significantly affects the retention rate in organizations that embrace timely and constructive feedback [30]. However, when there is a lack of this form of motivation, employees and, by extension, the

organizations they serve suffer. Employees fail to clearly understand the desired behavior, levels, or quality of production and where they may need to improve. This may result in repeated errors and the hindrance of personal and professional growth in the employees [17].

Communication and Transparency

When employees understand the goals and strategies of their organizations, their place in that puzzle, and the rationale behind the decisions relating to the execution of those strategies in the achievement of the goals, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated [2]. Transparent communication is sharing information, whether good or bad, to subordinates, superiors, and colleagues. When this is done effectively, it creates a reciprocal relationship, as employees perceive an environment characterized by fairness and respect. Such environments enhance trust, thereby fostering increased collaboration, innovation, and the open sharing of ideas [20]. When these characteristics exist within work environments, employee motivation skyrockets.

Transparent communication is essential for bottom-up support and timely and accurate feedback. When employees trust their employers and superiors to be forthcoming with them, they tend to be more motivated toward the achievement of the organization's goals [29]. On the contrary, organizations that do not encourage environments characterized by transparent communication foster an untrustworthy working environment. Such environments breed many issues, including employee conflict, low morale, and poor decision-making. These all contribute to high attrition, low engagement, and decreased productivity [13].

Commending Efforts that Provide Positive Reinforcement

Simply put, gratifying positive behavior will encourage it to be repeated. Commending employees' efforts provides them with positive reinforcement that boosts their motivation and commitment to achieving the organization's goals. Managers and employers strengthen that required behavior by providing a reward after a desired action. It tells the staff or employee that their actions are correct and pleasing, thereby encouraging such actions to be repeated [18].

Therefore, positive reinforcement is pivotal in strengthening employee motivation and acknowledging and encouraging desired behavior. Employees receiving recognition and praise for their efforts gives them a sense of value, which leads to enhanced commitment and motivation. These characteristics form the basis of increased productivity [18].

On the other hand, workplaces that lack positive reinforcements tend to have employees with low morale and motivation. These organizations foster an environment of discomfort among staff, which essentially leads to reduced productivity, understaffing, and high turnover rates [12]. Within the public services, these effects translate to poor delivery of public goods and services to the population, who are looking to the government to do right by them. Senior managers in public service organizations have a critical role to play, as when they fail to motivate their subordinates, the government of the day is blamed for the organizations' failures [21].

Empowerment in Decision-Making

Trust and responsibility to make necessary and sometimes critical decisions with roles are invaluable [28]. When employees are empowered to make decisions or participate in the decision-making process of the team or organization, their confidence is enhanced, and an environment of collaboration and innovation is encouraged [16]. In such an environment,

employees tend to be highly motivated. Therefore, productivity is high, turnover is low and the people they serve are happy.

Empowerment in decision-making leads to enhanced employee engagement, motivation, creativity, and ownership of both successes and failures [9]. Employees with these characteristics tend to go the extra mile, thereby significantly increasing production levels and surpassing organizational goals. In the context of public services, the citizens stand to benefit from improved public products and services delivered in an efficient manner. The government gets a good name, as it should.

On the contrary, when employees are not empowered to make decisions or participate in decision-making, it significantly affects their morale, motivation, and productivity [23]. Essentially, the employees lose their trust in their seniors and tend to feel left out of the organization's gains. Further, as employees are meant to wait until the authorized personnel makes the relevant decisions, the decision-making process and cycle tend to slow down; the organization begins to lose its employees [25]. In the public sector, the citizens begin to suffer from a lack of efficiency, and the public service becomes ineffective.

Research Design

This article is based on the case study "An Investigation of Leadership Styles' Influence on Employees in Guyana's Public Sector." This case study was done using a mixed-method design. Such a design is beneficial, as it provides the opportunity to combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative data, thereby allowing the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Further, richer insights and better explanations of the complex relationships permit the researcher to answer the "how" and "why" alongside the "what" of the research questions [22].

Based on the foregoing, the mixed method was deemed ideal for the complex topic. Data were collected from a random sample comprising of 502 public sector employees from Guyana. Of the sample, 492 were junior managers to the lowest unskilled staff, while the remainder were senior managers.

Questionnaires were used to collect all data from the junior management level and below, while structured interviews were used for data collected from the senior managers. The questionnaires were used because of their advantages: scalability, cost-effectiveness, simplicity, and speed [8]. The structured, in-person interviews were used for the senior managers. This method of data collection offers the same advantages as the questionnaires. Further, since the research assistant was meant to meet the participants in the data sample at the junior management and below levels, conducting the interviews with the senior managers came at no extra cost.

The data collection tools were tested for validity and reliability. This was done by conducting pilot tests and making the necessary changes based on the recommendations of the pilot sample. Finally, ethics were considered when conducting the research. Special attention was placed on protecting the participants' identities and data security. The participants were also advised of their rights in relation to responding to the questions. For instance, they were informed that they could have refused to answer any question or stopped the questioning at any point.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using the statistical tools Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Microsoft Excel (MS Excel). The data were then used to generate tables and pie charts for users' ease of understanding. MS Excel was used, as it provided effortless management of the data, including access to the raw data and display of the information. Meanwhile, SPSS and ANOVA were used to analyze the data, create models based on statistics and compare

data. Of the many available commercial software, these were selected because they offer a means of analyzing large volumes of data, with less potential to have errors than MS Excel. Further, they allow researchers to investigate cause-and-effect relationships between variables [27] [5].

Results

Based on the areas investigated, the research highlighted the actions negatively influencing employees' motivation within Guyana's public sector. When questioned about constructive feedback and support, only a slight majority, 59.3% of the respondents stated that they benefit from this between a quarterly and an annual frequency. This percentage amounts to 292 out of a population of 492 respondents. This leaves an alarming 200 people on the negative end of this important management practice. Constructive feedback is essential for the development of subordinates. Failing to provide this frequently is a common managerial mistake that eventually leads to the underdevelopment of staff and low motivation [32].

Employees who are empowered to make decisions are highly motivated and perform well above the standard of their counterparts who are left out of the decision-making processes [16]. Of the research sample, 39.1%, or 192 respondents stated that they were not part of the decision-making process of their organizations. This is a high number, considering each employee within a department has a specific piece of the objective puzzle for which they are responsible. When motivated staff must depend on demotivated staff to complete their work, they cannot produce as much as they would in a team of highly motivated members. Essentially, the entire organization suffers when enough, and not necessarily the majority, of the employees have low levels of motivation.

Many employees also reported lower than desired levels of communication and transparency. More than 29% of the respondents stated that their leaders fail to be transparent and communicate effectively with them. This amounts to more than 141 employees within those targeted organizations. Such actions by managers and supervisors can only serve to foster an environment of mistrust, which will translate to lower engagement and lower productivity [13]. Further, due to the lack of understanding, employees risk losing sight of the organization's vision, thereby losing their sense of purpose in the puzzle which will eventually plunge them into a demotivated state [13].

As alluded to in the literature review, when not sufficiently managed, these management practices lead to decreased staff motivation, resulting in low productivity and poor organizational performance. Meanwhile, when motivated employees are driven to engage and perform, confronting challenges with a positive spirit translates to high productivity levels [15]. In the context of Public Service, enhanced delivery of public goods and services, happy citizens.

Research Gaps and Future Direction

There are some limitations to the research. A broader sample was not engaged due to the Researcher's resource constraints, including time, and willingness to participate on the part of the targeted sample. Additionally, there is the possibility of political influence, which may result from some of the actions demonstrated by some senior managers within Guyana's public sector. This may explain why some staff are being treated differently regarding those actions that influence employee motivation. However, more research was recommended in this area since there is not much existing work specific to Guyana's public sector.

Summary

Many employees within Guyana's public sector are demotivated due to Management's failure to provide constructive feedback and

support to each employee. Although most of the sample stated that they received feedback and support, an alarming 40.7% of the employees never or hardly received any. This can only serve to hurt the organizations in which they exist.

The data revealed that 29.9 percent of the employees within Guyana's Public Service are not engaged transparently and do not have sufficient communication between them and their seniors. Though most of the employees stated that they have good transparency and communication with their seniors, the others should not be left out, as all employees are essential for achieving the organizational goals.

Additionally, some employees experiencing biased treatment from management will lead them into a state of demotivation, feeling like they are less critical than others. This will serve to decrease productivity and the delivery of goods and services in an efficient manner.

One hundred and forty-one employees of the total 492 reported that they are not empowered by management in the decision-making process. This accounts for 39.1 percent of the sample. This figure is staggering because most employees are engaged in this process. Therefore, management knows the organizational benefits of empowering employees. This should be extended to all the employees if the organizations are to produce at their optimum level.

The leaders of the targeted organizations leave, although not the majority, many employees are demotivated with actions that they are already extending to most of the staff. If senior employees extend their sound management practices to this minority but significant group of employees, those organizations can perform much better and enhance the delivery of public goods and services.

Conclusion

Guyana's public sector is critical to the development of the nation. Therefore, it requires leaders that foster an environment of motivation and commitment. These leaders must understand their functions and how they impact their subordinates' drive to be efficient and productive. Consequently, those leadership practices that promote high levels of motivation, thereby leading to enhanced productivity, need to be cultivated and championed by all leaders and include every subordinate. Essentially, the research minimized the gap in knowledge on the cause of lower output levels by employees within Guyana's public sector.

This article examined the specific leadership practices that impact employees of Guyana's public sector motivation. It reviewed the literature on effective management practices, such as timely and constructive feedback and support, communication and transparency, empowerment in decision-making, and commending efforts that provide positive reinforcement.

The research results highlight that many employees within Guyana's public sector are demotivated as they are left out of the loop of good management practices. While most respondents who participated in the research claim that they experience good management practices, the minority is still important for the proper functioning of the state apparatus. Therefore, there is a need for improvement; Guyana's public sector leaders must expand their good management net to capture all the subordinates within their management scope.

Finally, the thesis recommended further research in this area to eliminate the existing gap in knowledge. It also recommended fostering an environment that supports motivated and engaged public employees.

Recommendations

To improve the levels of motivation among the employees of the public sector in Guyana, it is recommended that the leaders of those organizations encourage communication channels through which all employees under

their management and supervision may engage in constructive discussions and make their ideas visible to management for their consideration. Such channels can be regular staff meetings, think tank sessions, and workshops designed to solicit opinions and ideas.

Additionally, managers and supervisors must create a climate of inclusion by encouraging the participation of their subordinates in decision-making. This is especially important in areas like strategic objectives, organizing, and policymaking.

Conflict of Interest

Acknowledgment

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