Effective Leadership Style at Royal Saudi Air Force

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ABSTRACT

Many organizations adopted leadership style that welcomes participation in business planning and decision making. Successful organizations in the world today value leadership as their main tool in gaining competitive edge. Leadership has been the concept for many successful individual and organization in their pursuit of higher goal. Royal Saudi Air Force is determined to restructure its leadership style. Several leadership style is being considered to help the institution becomes responsive to their duties and obligations. This research study found that Royal Saudi Air Force pilots and enlisted personnel have high level of awareness about leadership style. The salient points to enhance active participation identified by the respondents validly infer their higher level of awareness of good leaderships and the qualities organization should imbibe to attain its goal. The presence of conclusive evidence from the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) reject the claim of null hypothesis that there is no significant difference on the level of leadership awareness among the Royal Saudi Air Force officers and enlisted personnel.

Key words: Bureaucratic, Competitive edge, Leadership style, Organizational structure

Introduction

The concept of leadership has been understood as the practice of common authority in which an individual or group of individuals can join the support and assistance of others in the accomplishment of a common goal. A leader is a person has the ability to make people follow or obey him or her for a specific mission. A leader is also understood as somebody who guides and directs others for a noble cause or otherwise. In effect, leadership therefore is described as organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal. Leadership studies came up with different theories such as traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision, values, charisma, and intelligence.

Leadership in the Air Force refers to the art of indirect or direct influence in creating a condition for the organization to accomplish the goals successfully. The lower officers exercise a direct influence on their subordinates while senior officers employ both indirect and direct methods in influencing the people under his command (Roche et al., 2004). Influencing others in the Air Force can be indirect which means sending orders, regulations, and operating procedures from the higher command down to the chains of authority (Creacy, 2009). Influencing others can also be direct which means personal contact by the senior officers to its subordinates (Roche et al., 2004). The definition may be an abstraction but it shows some important aspects of leadership in the Royal Saudi Air Force. Officers of the Royal Saudi Air Force are familiar with bureaucratic leadership style, which is prevalent in most military branches. The Saudi forces are equipped with mainly leadership from the top and with western hardware. Main suppliers are companies in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Both the UK and the US are involved in training programs conducted in Saudi Arabia (Royal Saudi Air Force, 2014).
Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to determine the suitable leadership style in the Royal Saudi Air Force.

- To determine the awareness level of Royal Saudi Air Force officers and enlisted personnel on leadership style
- To investigate which leadership style Air Force officers and enlisted personnel find more appropriate on their organizational structure
- To identify salient point of every officer and enlisted personnel in Royal Saudi Air Force that can enhance active participation toward modernization of the organization
- To offer recommendation that can benefit the leadership style in the Royal Saudi Air Force.

Hypothesis

The null hypotheses of the research project states that

- $H_0$ There is no significant difference on the level of leadership awareness among the Royal Saudi Air Force officers and enlisted personnel
- $H_0$ There is no appropriate leadership theory on the organizational structure of Royal Saudi Air Force.

Review of Literature

Business organizations compete in the industry to gain market leadership. According to Colangelo (2000), competition in the industry encouraged organizations to improve its human capital and make them innovative leaders. Air Force leadership may not be competing with market leadership or sustainable revenues but the Air Force is competing against time and modernization (Harper, 2010). Leadership awareness plays an important trait for air force personnel and officers because of the demand of the times (Ciolan, 2012). Little has been said that several private companies envy the Air Force for producing and having endless supply of good leaders. Some big businesses would funnel young officers and enlisted service members from the Air Force into the private sector business landscape (Blankenship, 2010). Although technical skills are one basis of recruiting people from the Air Force, the main reason remains the leadership style of Air Force leaders. Air Force leadership is known for its discipline, steadiness, character, performance, integrity, and caring. This makes leadership in the Air Force a universally articulated phrase and very comprehensive. Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that Air Force leaders are trying to develop (Harper, 2010). According to Black (2006), Air Force transformational leaders display four transformational characteristics such as charisma, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These leaders attracted members’ strong feelings of identity (charisma), They send clear messages of mission and purpose, developed excitement in the workplace, and strong expectations through images and meaning (inspirational leadership).

Research Methodology

This research project uses quantitative method with descriptive design. The primary data were gathered through survey questionnaires distributed to randomly selected sample from senior officers and enlisted personnel. Primary data collection procedure took place in the main headquarter of Royal Saudi Air Force in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The 100 respondents involving senior officers, pilots, and enlisted personnel received invitation letter, informed consent form, and survey questionnaire. Simple mean average was used to interpret the collected data from the survey form. Each dependent and independent variables were plotted on the distribution table. To validate the claim of the hypothesis, the method used was one-way ANOVA. The use of One-Way ANOVA procedure tested the hypothesis that the means of two or more groups are not significantly different.
Analysis and Interpretation

Profile of the respondents

Of the 100 respondents based on their position in the Royal Saudi Air Force, 12 or 11.8% senior officers participated to answer the survey questionnaire. Twenty nine or 28 percent were Junior officers, thirty nine or 38.2% were Pilot, and 20 or 19.6% were enlisted personnel. Of the 100 respondents, based on their length of service in the Royal Saudi Air Force, 45 or 44.1% served for 5 to 10 years, 42 or 41.2% had served for 11 to 20 years, and 13 or 12.7% served the Royal Saudi Air Force for 21 years and above. Of the 100 respondents, based on their civil status, 71 or 69.6% were bachelor and 29 or 28.4% has family status.

Awareness about coaching leadership style based on demographic factors

Based on their position in the Royal Saudi Air Force, the senior and junior officers rated the mean average of 1.00 and 1.14 respectively expressing strong agreement that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style. The pilot and enlisted personnel rated a mean average of 2.0 and 2.45 respectively expressing agreement that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style. Based on their length of service in the Royal Saudi Air Force, those who serve the Air Force from 5 to 10 years with 1.118 mean averages strongly agree that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style. Those who serve the Air Force for 11 to 20 years and those 21 years and above with 2.00 and 2.69 mean average agree respectively that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style. Based on their civil status in the Royal Saudi Air Force, the Bachelor with 1.59 mean averages strongly agrees that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style. The respondents with family with 2.03 mean averages simply agree that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style.

Awareness about delegating style of leadership

Based on their position in the Royal Saudi Air Force, the senior and junior officers rated the mean average of 1.00 and 1.24 respectively expressing strong agreement that they understand the meaning delegating style of leadership. The pilot and enlisted personnel rated a mean average of 2.13 and 2.95 respectively expressing agreement that they understand the meaning delegating style of leadership. Based on their length of service in the Royal Saudi Air Force, those who serve the Air Force from 5 to 10 years rated a mean average of 1.24, strongly agree that they understand the meaning delegating style of leadership. Respondents who serve the Air Force from 11 to 20 years have 2.24 mean average, simply agree that they understand the meaning delegating style of leadership. Respondents, who served for 21 years and above got 3.08 mean averages, neither agree nor disagree, that they understand the meaning delegating style of leadership. Based on their civil status in the Royal Saudi Air Force, the Bachelor with 1.65 mean averages strongly agrees that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style. The respondents with family have 2.52 mean averages simply agree that they are aware of the characteristics of coaching leadership style.
TABLE NO: 1

Appropriate leadership theories for the organizational structure of Royal Saudi Air Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Theory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trait theory</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill theory</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency theory</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectancy theory</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional theory</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational theory</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the preference of the respondent which leadership theory is appropriate for the organizational structure of Royal Saudi Air Force. Of the 100 respondents, expectancy theory got 29 or 28 percent, followed by transformational theory with 22 or 21.6%; skill theory with 20 or 19.6%; contingency theory with 14 or 13.7%; transactional theory with 10 or 21.6%; and the last choice is trait theory with 5 or 4.9%.

TABLE NO: 2 Hypothesis test

$H_0$: There is no significant difference on the level of leadership awareness among the Royal Saudi Air Force officers and enlisted personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>63.909</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31.955</td>
<td>139.617</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>22.201</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86.110</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>36.056</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.028</td>
<td>149.417</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>11.704</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.760</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>6.220</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.110</td>
<td>20.991</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>14.370</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20.590</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA test showed all the means for all groups are equal. At .05 level significant value of $p$ must be lower to reject the claim of the hypothesis. The F statistics determines if the variations between the sample means is significant. The conditions to test the hypothesis include random samples taken, the standard deviations are the same, and the participants are normally distributed ($p = .0$). Because SPSS gives the same degrees of freedom (df = 2 for all groups), the $p$ is .0, and the F = 139, 149, and 20.9, we have conclusive evidence to reject the claim of null hypothesis that there is no significant difference on the level of leadership awareness among the Royal Saudi Air Force officers and enlisted personnel.
There is no appropriate leadership theory on the organizational structure of Royal Saudi Air Force.

### ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>58.295</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19.432</td>
<td>67.066</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>27.815</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86.110</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>28.441</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.480</td>
<td>47.108</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>19.319</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.760</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.768</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.589</td>
<td>9.642</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>15.822</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20.590</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA test showed all the means for all groups are equal. At .05 level significant value of \( p \) must be lower to reject the claim of the null hypothesis. The \( F \) statistics determines if the variations between the sample means is significant. The conditions to test the hypothesis include random samples taken, the standard deviations are the same, and the participants are normally distributed (\( p = .0 \)). Because SPSS gives the same degrees of freedom (df = 3 for all groups), the \( p = .0 \), and the \( F = 67.06, 47.11, \) and 9.64, we have conclusive evidence to reject the claim of null hypothesis that there is no appropriate leadership theory on the organizational structure of Royal Saudi Air Force.

### Analysis and Discussion

The points of discussions are focused on awareness of leadership style, appropriate theory in organizational structure, salient points to enhance active participation toward modernization of the Royal Saudi Air Force, and recommendations mentioned by the respondents. Royal Saudi Air Force puts more value on leadership. Ever since it’s formal organizational set up, Saudi Royal Air Force had been contemplating on situational leadership style. Within this context, Royal Saudi Air Force seemingly practiced a more bureaucratic style of leadership than situational leadership. Based on the finding of this study, the mean average of 2.27 suggests that awareness on leadership style falls under agreeable level. According to Liu, Liu, & Zeng (2013), leadership style gives the leader the ability to provide directions, plan implementation, and motivating subordinates. Leaders can exhibit different style of leadership depending on the environment they are operating. The military and the air force are institutions succumb to authoritarian or autocratic style of leadership because the leader has to keep strict and close control over their followers (Alarcon et al., 2012). Aside from authoritative and democratic style of leadership, laissez-faire leadership style the subordinates are given all the rights and power to make decisions. This type of leadership cannot be used in the Royal Saudi Air Force because it will violate the rule of direct line of command from top to bottom members of the organization. According to Baker (2013), laissez-faire style can be called "hands off" leadership style because the leader delegates the tasks to their followers while providing little or no direction to the followers. If the leader withdraws too much from their followers it can sometimes result in a lack of productivity, cohesiveness, and satisfaction.

It is critical for Royal Saudi Air Force to maintain the chain of command to facilitate direct order for the security of the country. Royal Saudi Air Force respondents agree that there are aware of the leadership style and accept the best leadership style necessary for their organization. Among the three leadership styles presented, the most applicable for Royal Saudi Air Force is authoritative or autocratic style of leadership because of the conditions and objectives of its existence. Royal Saudi Air Force is a business organization and does not operation within a competitive industry. The organization has one
goal that is to protect the best interest of the country and to protect its people. Chain of command and direct supervision of the people entrusted to carry the task are very critical. People in the Royal Saudi Air Force express agreement on the existing leadership style in their organization. They are aware that the Air Force is a national military organization that performs primarily aerial warfare. To be more specific, the respondents are fully aware that their organization is the branch of a nation's armed services distinct from an army, navy or other branch. Typically, air forces are responsible for gaining control of the air, carrying out strategic and tactical bombing missions and providing support to ground forces. Many people in Royal Saudi Air Force are also responsible for operations of military space, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), and communications equipment. Some air forces may command and control other air defense assets such as antiaircraft artillery, surface-to-air missiles, or anti-ballistic missile warning networks and defensive systems. In addition to pilots, Royal Saudi Air Force has ground support staff that support the aircrew. In a similar manner to civilian airlines, there is supporting ground crew as pilots cannot fly without the assistance of other personnel such as engineers, loadmasters, fuel technicians and mechanics. However, some supporting personnel such as airfield defense troops, weapons engineers and air intelligence staff do not have equivalent roles in civilian organizations.

With regard to the claim of participants that the level of awareness of the Royal Saudi Air Force leadership style, we can say, they are also well aware of the nature and the objectives of their institution. It can be said also that other leadership style may have come to their knowledge but in considering them appropriate to Royal Saudi Air Force may not be practical. The analysis proves the willingness of the members of Royal Saudi Air Force to follow orders and commands because there are meant to secure peace and stability in the air space of Saudi Arabia. Survey questionnaire participants considered expectancy theory as the most appropriate leadership theory for Royal Saudi Air Force organizational structure. Transformational theory is the second choice but in deeper analysis it shows resemblance on expectancy theory. Other theories such as skills, contingency, and transactional are also being considered but on minimal scale. Trait theory did not appeal much to the participants. The life of Royal Saudi Air Force people is surrounded with various challenges that require too much effort to handle. The choice of expectancy theory suggests that Royal Saudi Air Force people also believed their leaders should try to increase the belief that good performance will result in valued rewards. It is important for them to see clearly the reward process at work.

Active participation toward modernization of Royal Saudi Air Force are as follows:

- Communication with 1.06 mean average suggesting strong agreement
- Teamwork with 1.23 mean average suggesting strong agreement
- Recognition and reward with 2.18 mean average suggesting agreement
- Effective leadership with 1.63 mean average suggesting strong agreement
- Support of each member with 1.07 mean average suggesting strong agreements

The goal of Royal Saudi Air Force is to protect the aerial space of Saudi Arabia and its people and not to compete or earn profits like business organizations. In the Royal Saudi Air Force, effective communication is vital because it is bound by its loyalty and allegiance to the king of Saudi Arabia. Members of the Air Force received mandate from higher authority and obey the hierarchy at all cost. Any type of organization can flourish only when all objectives are achieved effectively. For efficiency in Royal Saudi Air Force, the people in the organization must be able to convey their message properly. Effective communication in Royal Saudi Air Force can be achieved when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted between multiple entities and acted on in a desired way. This effect also ensures that messages are not distorted during the communication process.
Conclusion

Recommendation that can benefit the leadership style in the Royal Saudi Air Force.

Some of the major recommendations suggested by respondents include;

- Leadership in the Royal Saudi Air Force must remain closely collaborating with the Saudi Arabia Defense units.
- Bureaucratic style of leadership remains the most ideal form of leadership for Royal Saudi Air Force because this organization does not compete for profit or any recognition but to serve the country and its people.
- Modernization in the Royal Saudi Air Force should remain an on-going process.
- The ministries should always look after the security and welfare of the family of the pilots and enlisted personnel of the Royal Saudi Air Force.
- Team building and team working should be included in the training of incoming Air Force people.
- Include in the requirement for recruitment higher level standard of academic proficiency.
- Non college graduate or equivalent should not be accepted as pilots for the Royal Saudi Air Force.

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