LEADERSHIP AND WELL-BEING IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Fernando Messias
University of Algarve
Faro, Portugal
fernandobrmsmessias@gmail.com

Júlio Mendes
Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics (University of Algarve)
Faro, Portugal
jmendes@ualg.pt

and

Ileana Monteiro
Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics (University of Algarve)
Faro, Portugal
imontei@ualg.pt

ABSTRACT

The suggestion that leaders have an impact on employee’s well-being is neither novel nor particularly startling. Research documenting the effects of leadership on employee well-being has been available for over 30 years (Day & Hamblin, 1964) and the conclusions of this research would not surprise any adult who has held a job for any length of time (Gilbreath, 2004). Several studies have found that leaders’ behavior affects employees well-being. The available evidence supports the notion of two opposite effects of leadership on well-being. First, positive leadership behaviors have a positive impact on well-being. Conversely, negative leadership behaviors have adverse consequences for individual well-being. What may be surprising is just how extensive are the effects of leadership on individuals well-being.

Key Words: Leadership, well-being, hospitality, management.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is in many ways similar to management. Leadership and management both involve influence, entail working with people, and are concerned with goal accomplishment. Nevertheless, the functions of leadership may also be seen as quite different from management. While management produces order and consistency, leadership produces change and movement. In this perspective the primary functions of management are concerned with planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling.

The primary functions of leadership are concerned with establishing direction, aligning, motivating, and inspiring people. As a leader, the manager must contend with the challenge of ensuring that subordinates fully accept the plans and programmes outlined for the hotel and are committed to working toward their successful implementation. This requires that the general manager pays careful attention to the work roles of monitor and disseminator of information.

The suggestion that leaders have an impact on employee’s well-being is neither novel nor particularly startling. Research documenting the effects of leadership on employee well-being has been available for over 30 years (Day & Hamblin, 1964) and the conclusions of this research would not surprise any adult who has held a job for any length of time (Gilbreath, 2004). What may be surprising is just how extensive are the effects of leadership on individuals well-being and the impacts of well-being in the quality of tourism experience.
LEADERSHIP

According to Jafari (2003) leadership is generally regarded as essential in the functioning of any tourism organisation. Success or failure within any such system is very commonly attributed to the quality of leadership. Leadership is the process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership may be defined as a person embodying the will of a group; as a combination of special traits or characteristics that individuals possess enabling them to induce others to accomplish tasks; or as the things leaders do to bring about change in a group. The leadership process involves leaders, those who engage in leadership, and followers, those toward whom leadership is directed.

It is difficult to find one overall definition of leadership, but most definitions of leadership contain the elements found in Stogdills (1974) classic definition of leadership as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement. Leadership is a process involving three key elements: influencing others to behave in a certain way; working with people in a group context; and influencing group members in the direction of goal accomplishment. More recent discussion of the notion of leadership tends to highlight the leader as a manager of meaning, focusing on how leaders engage in “sense-making” in the organization. In both cases leadership is seen as a process whereby the leader identifies what is important in the organizational context.

A recent perspective on leadership can be summarized under the label “new leadership approach,” referring to a number of approaches to leadership that emerged in the 1980s that focus on similar themes, although applying slightly different terms to describe the new kinds of leadership with which they are concerned: transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, visionary leadership, or simply leadership. Together these labels reveal a conception of the leader as someone who defines organizational reality through the articulation of a vision, based on a reflection of the organization's mission and the values that will support it. The new leadership approach then depicts leaders as managers of meaning rather than in terms of an influence process.

An important intellectual impetus for the ideas associated with the new leadership approach derives from Burns's (1978) distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership refers to the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers in which the former offers rewards for compliance with his or her wishes. In Burns's (1978) view the effectiveness of such leadership is limited to the implicit contract between leader and followers. The transformational leader raises the aspirations of his or her followers such that the leader's and the followers' aspirations are fused. Transformational leaders are able to engage their followers to achieve something of significance and also to morally uplift them. Charismatic leadership is often described in ways similar to transformational leadership. Charismatic leaders act in unique ways that have specific charismatic effects on their followers. The personal characteristics of a charismatic leader include being dominant, having a strong desire to influence others, being self-confident, and having a strong sense of one's own moral values.

It has been argued that transformational and charismatic leadership were constructs of the late 20th century. The increasingly distributed nature of leadership combined with concerns about the dark sides of charisma has led to attempts to reconceptualize the notion of leadership. Important elements in these post-charismatic and post-transformational leadership models are truly distributed leadership in teams, learning from experience and failure, and leadership practice as more consciously made public and open to challenge and testing. Thus, definitions relevant to the concept of leadership tend to focus “on the personal qualities, behaviors, styles and decisions adopted by the leader” (Arnold et al, 2009, p. 482), where that individual has been “appointed, elected, or informally chosen to direct and co-ordinate the work of others in a group” (Fiedler, 1995, p. 7). However, a trawl through the working practices of those recognized by their workforces as excellent leaders reveals that however that person has come to be leader, the fundamental key to positive leadership is “understanding how to engage people” (Higgs, 2005). This in turn require a grasp of a range of the emotions, for it is these as we have seen which matter to individuals. Therefore it is not surprising that the concept of transformational leadership is that most cited in the relevant journals and is the style which is strongly linked with demonstrating emotional intelligence (Judge and Bono, 2000; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

The key components of transformational leadership are: Recognizing workers abilities and encouraging their development; Facilitating others ownership of actions and the thinking precedes them; Shaping and sharing a positive vision which enthuses others; Charismatic qualities which gain respect, including taking responsibility, showing determination, sharing success and placing the needs of the group above the leader’s own. What has often been presented as an opposing model of leadership, also
outlined by Burns (1978) is transactional. Under this approach, the leader administers rewards only if targets are met and intervenes only when problems arise, rather than anticipating such difficulties. However, individuals do vary between the two types of leadership and some of this may relate to just how active they like to be, or deem how much personal energy is at their disposal. It has been suggested that components of transactional leadership, such as control over rewards for employees are also linked with strong interpersonal skills (Barling et al., 2000). Allied to transformational leadership style is the concept of charisma which lies with the perceptions of the employees, almost as though leadership is in the eye of the beholder (Arnold et al, 2005). In analyzing what it takes to be seen as charismatic, Conger et al (2000) refer to a leader’s sensitivity to the needs of others, a willingness to take personal risks, as well as possessing an appreciation of the difficulties of the working environment. This seems to represent a blend of emotional intelligence and strategic awareness. Through personal contact it is more likely that a manager can demonstrate trust and consideration for employees, as well as the structure which helps to steer the organization towards its goals or indeed sort out situations which requires improvement (Blake and Mouton, 1964). The increasingly global nature of organizations means that managers require a greater international understanding of behavior.

WELL-BEING

The well-being and well-being at the working place constructs encompass objective as well as subjective aspects, and also multi-dimensional characteristics, either positive or negative. Well-being is understood in two perspectives: objective and subjective (Diener, 1984). At the working place, well-being is usually approached in two major dimensions: the state of being ill and the state of not being ill (Griffin e Dannan, 1999), and occasionally is related to satisfaction at work. Locke (1976), Crites (1969), Mueller and McCloskey (1990), Muchinsky (1993), Newstrom and Davis (1993) have related satisfaction at work to an emotional state, while others, like Arnold, Robertson e Cooper (1991), thought of an attitude towards work, and also considered that concurrently to well-being (well-being vs. malaise, ill vs. not ill), satisfaction at the working place can be related to two independent dimensions. There is great need of further research on well-being issues, namely those on subjective well-being. Simões et al.’ (1999; 2000) research has contributed to reviewing main findings and conclusions in this field.

A useful definition of a healthy workplace is one that encompasses the physical environment (i.e, the traditional domains of occupational health and safety), the psychological environment (i.e, job stress) and the practice of healthy behaviors. This is a comprehensive definition that encompasses a diverse array of healthy behaviors and conditions. Leadership in organizations has been associated with every aspect of the healthy workplace. Although the majority of research in psychology on well-being has been inductive, with a focus on assessments of happiness and life satisfaction in the population and on the determining antecedents and consequences of well-being, two broad theoretical strands can be distinguished (Keyes & Waterman, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993):

a) The first of these has alternatively been termed the “hedonic” view, or “emotional well-being” – in this tradition, well-being is conceptualized as an effectively pleasant state (“pleasure and pain” approaches according to Diener, 1984)

b) Proponents of the second tradition, the “eudaimonic” view, also called “psychological well-being”, claim that well-being cannot – and should not be – reduced to pleasure, that well-being comprises living in accordance with one’s inner self, one’s “demon” (daimon); the focus here is on living a meaningful life and on achieving self-realization as a fully functioning person.

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Several studies have found that leader’s behavior affects employee’s well-being. The available evidence supports the notion of two opposite effects of leadership on well-being. First, positive leadership behaviors have a positive impact on well-being. Conversely, negative leadership behaviors have adverse consequences for individual well-being. For example, Gilbreath and Benson (2004) found that positive supervisory behavior (e.g., increasing employee control, improved communication and organization, considering employees and their well-being, just treatment of employees) predicted employee well-being over and above the effects of age, lifestyle, social support from co-workers and at home, and stressful
work and life events. Similarly, Van Dierendonck et al (2004) found that high quality leadership behavior was associated with increased employee well-being. Other studies have focused on the notion of transformational leadership – shown to be an effective leadership style. In two studies, Arnold et al (2009) provided evidence for the link between transformational leadership and well-being. Moreover, they began to consider the mechanisms through which these linkages occur. Specifically, Arnold et al (2009) found that transformational leadership helped employees to experience more meaning in their work environment, and that these perceptions of meaningfulness predicted individual well-being. Other potential mechanisms also seem promising. For example, a recent experimental study showed that “charismatic leaders enable their followers to experience positive emotions” (Bono & Llues, 2006; 331). Another study found that transformational leadership behavior was positively related to mentoring and negatively related to job-related stress (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). The positive effects of effective leadership extend to the physical consequences associated with stress.

These actions demonstrate that employees well-being is worthy of investment and commitment from managers, and that the challenges of improving the employees work experience are important. Another thing that the managers can do is to provide an environment in which employees can completely immerse themselves in their work without unnecessary interference or interruptions. Organizational leaders influence the health of the workplace in two primary ways:

a) because their organizational position and power, leaders create the organizational conditions that lead to a host of health related outcomes;

b) the behavior of leaders toward individuals or “leadership style” exerts an influence on health related outcomes.

Leaders are suggested to have a direct impact on the most common job stressors - workload and pace, roles stress, career concerns, work schedules, interpersonal relations, job content and control – in accordance with Sauter, Murphy & Hurrel (1990). This suggestion has received at least initial empirical support (Skogstad et al, 2007). Similarly, Gilbreath (2004) suggested that supervisors (as the most immediate manifestation of leadership in the organization) influence a diverse array of psychosocial job conditions including task autonomy, demands, control, balance, and self-efficacy. In doing so, supervisors make a direct contribution to individual well-being by creating the conditions that either promote, enhance or detract from employee positive health-related employee behavior in the workplace.

In the past 10 years, more research has been conducted on transformational leadership than on all other leadership theories combined (Judge & Bono, 2000). The resulting literature clearly illustrates that transformational leadership positively affects critical organizational attitudes and outcomes (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998). Empirical data largely support effectiveness of such behaviors. For example, leaders use of transformational leadership behaviors is associated with subordinates satisfaction (Hater & Bass, 1988; Koh, Steers & Terborg, 1995), commitment to the organization (Barling, Weber & Kelloway, 1996; Bycio, Hacket & Allen, 1995; Koh et al, 1995), trust in management (Barling et al, 1996), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Koh et al, 1995). Laboratory-based experimental investigations show that transformational leadership styles result in higher task performance (Howell & Frost, 1989; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Field studies also support the performance impact of transformational leadership. In longitudinal studies, for example, Howell and Avolio (1993) linked transformational leadership to unit financial performance. Similarly, Barling et al (1996) showed that subordinates perceptions of supervisors transformational leadership led to enhanced affective commitment to the organization and, through this effect on affective commitment, to enhanced group performance. Barling et al (1996) on a field experiment in which training leaders in transformational leadership resulted in improved branch-level financial performance. Transformational leaders go beyond exchange relationships and motivate others to achieve more that they thought was possible (Bass, 1998). Bass and Avolio (1990) suggested that the transformational leadership style comprises four dimensions, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

In demonstrating these behaviors, transformational leaders may have a dramatic effect on followers. First, of particular importance for this discussion, Shamir, House and Arthur (1993: 578) note that transformational leadership gives meaningfulness to work by infusing work...with moral purpose and commitment”. Moreover, transformational leaders implicitly and explicitly tell followers what is important in the workplace, about their work, and about themselves (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; White & Mitchell, 1979). In doing so, transformational leaders create a sense of meaning which, in turn, may translate into enhanced well-being among followers (Arnold and Barling, 2009). Although the foregoing discussion focused on the notion of transformational leadership, we also recognize that failing to enact positive leadership, or refusing to engage in the most basic leadership behaviors, may also be a source of stress for individuals. Passive leadership can be defined as comprising elements from both the laissez-faire and management-by-exception (passive) styles articulated in the theory of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Leaders who use the laissez-faire style avoid decision-making and the responsibilities
associated with their position (Bass, 1985; Hater & Bass, 1988). Leaders engaging in the management by exception (passive) style do not intervene until problems are either brought to their attention or become serious enough to demand action (Bass, 1985).

The leader who fails to provide feedback or who fails to stand up for employees (Neuman & Baron, 2005; Skogstad et al, 2007) is displaying passive leadership. To some extent such behaviors may be characteristic of passive aggression (Buss, 1961). Not surprisingly, passive leadership is generally considered to be ineffective. For instance, Howell and Avolio (1993) reported that passive management by exception is negatively related to business unit performance and laissez-faire leadership is generally accounted to be the least effective style (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Frisher and Laarson (2000) found that leaders lack of initiative is negatively related to subordinates satisfaction and efficiency. Kelloway et al (2006) suggested that there were both conceptual and empirical is (a) distinct from and (b) has negative effects beyond those attributable to a lack of transformational leadership skills. Bass (1985) distinguished active and passive leadership as separate higher-order factors underlying his leadership measure. Researchers since investigated this distinction, often combining Bass and Avolio’s (1990) management by exception-passive and laissez-faire dimensions into a single higher-order passive leadership dimension (Bycio et al, 1995; Den Hartog et al, 1997). Garman, Davis-Lenane and Corrigan (2003) found that management by exception (passive), is negatively correlated with transformational, but positively correlated with laissez-faire, leadership. In the same study, active and passive management by exception emerged as independent constructs, thereby furthering the empirical support for the distinction between active and passive leadership. Is is generally accepted that passive leadership correlates negatively, and transformational leadership positively, with numerous organizational outcomes (Den Hartog et al, 1997; Howell & Avolio, 1993). Recent research has begun to change this emphasis, documenting the destructive impact that passive leadership has on individual and organizational outcomes (Kelloway et al, 2006; Skogstad et al, 2007). First, in a recent study, Kelloway, Mullen and Francis (2006) examined the impact of transformational and passive safety leadership on safety outcomes. Following Barling, Loughlin and Kelloway’s (2002), earlier analysis, they examined the associations between leadership and safety related outcomes.

The results of this study showed that passive safety leadership was both empirically distinct from transformational leadership and negatively related to safety outcomes. Moreover, passive leadership offered an incremental prediction of outcome variance (i.e, over and above that attributable to transformational leadership). Kelloway et al (2006) suggested that passive leadership may explain variance beyond that attributable to transformational leadership for other leadership related outcomes. Similarly, Skogstad et al (2007) empirically tested the suggestion made by Kelloway et al (2005) that passive leadership may be a root cause of workplace stress. Consistent with this suggestion, Skogstad et al (2007) found that laissez-faire leadership by one’s supervisor led to the experience of conflicts with co-workers and role stress (i.e., conflict and ambiguity). In turn, role stress and conflict predicted the experience of bullying and psychological distrust. As the authors note, their data are consistent with the view that laissez-faire or passive leadership is not a neutral form of leadership but, rather, is a destructive leadership style that impairs individual well-being. Furthermore, passive leadership can be identified by particular leadership is not merely the absence of leadership behavior (be it transformational or otherwise), rather the behaviors expressed by passive leadership are observable and quantifiable.

CONCLUSION

The last twenty years has seen enormous changes in the workplace in the developed and developing world. Jobs are no longer for life, hours of work are longer, major restructuring in organizations are a regular occurrence, new technology is hastening the pace of change and demanding an immediacy of response and the two-earner family is now the average family, creating problems of balance between work and home. These changes have created key issues for organizations about developing and maintaining well-being in the workplace.

Research indicates that in order to improve performance and gain competitive advantages, tourism organizations must differentiate tourism products through the development and implementation of programs and processes of quality improvement. The delivery of high quality services and experiences is a critical success factor to tourism organizations. Employees’ well-being and satisfaction, service quality and customer satisfaction, and high quality tourism experiences are relevant constructs, all of them related to the understanding of the role leaders are to perform in competitive organizations. At the heart of these endeavors is a strong belief that currently employee satisfaction, loyalty and commitment influence
tomorrow's customer satisfaction, loyalty and commitment and, ultimately, the organization's profit and growth.

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REFERENCES


