

A Study on Leader's Traits That Influence Motivation Among Employees in Klang Valley, Malaysia

Aida Shaari, Nik Fazdlina Nik Lah

Faculty of Business, UNITAR International University, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: aida@unitar.my

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Abstract

Employee motivation plays a significant role in propelling them to perform their job with enthusiasm and efficiency. Motivation increases task engagement, performance, and commitment, which leads to positive impact to the profitability of the company. Additionally, motivated employees have a high tendency to stay for a longer period, which lowers turnover and hiring expenses. Conversely, lack of motivation in the workforce can result in poor morale, deficient performance, and decrease in productivity, which leads to negative impact to the bottom line. Leaders must acknowledge the need to have a motivated workforce to prevent negative repercussions to the organization. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how a leader could contribute to inculcate employee motivation. The evolving nature of leadership and the diverse cultural nuances in the workplace have created diverse traits among leaders. This research is focusing on specific leadership traits: leader's behaviour, leader's trust and leader's communication skill and to explore the impact of these leader-specific factors on employee motivation within the dynamic organizational landscape of Klang Valley. This study was conducted using survey responses from employees working mainly in private sectors in Klang Valley. 200 questionnaires were distributed using convenience sampling method and only 104 responses were usable. Data collected was analysed using SPSS software. The outcome revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between a leader's behaviour, leader's trust and leader's communication towards employee motivation. Therefore, organization leaders can improve their employees' motivation by practicing the positive influential behaviour, trust and communication strategies revealed in this study.

Keywords: Leader's Behaviours, Leader's Trust, Leader's Communication, Employee's Motivation

Introduction

Employee motivation is important in modern workplaces, as it impacts satisfaction, engagement, performance, productivity, retention, and profitability (Tenney, 2024). Leaders must inspire, empower, and motivate employees to reach their full potential. Dryselius & Pettersson (2021) mentions that there is strong relationship between employee motivation and positive organizational outcomes, including productivity. In the case of remote work arrangements, diverse and agile workplaces would demand leaders to adapt their strategies to ensure sustained work motivation. This study aims to explore the nature of leadership behaviour, leadership trust, and leadership communication in an organization. The findings will offer practical application for organizational leaders, HR practitioners, and policymakers, helping them to tailor their leadership development programs and practices to create motivated workforce that enhances individual and organizational performance.

Kibiki (2018) stated that well-motivated employees would influence the efficiency of the organization and could lead to achieving the organization's vision and goals. According to Vasudevan (2022) motivation is an essential topic in management, thus motivating employees become one of the most crucial responsibilities or roles in leadership. Vasudevan (2022) also stated the strength of interaction between managers and employees is an essential factor in employee motivation. Theoretical knowledge and practical applications in business leadership depend on the understanding of how leadership practices support these goals and could increase employee motivation. Unethical leaders are not able to establish an ethical culture within the organizational structure, nor can they create a good working environment. This may further degrade the output of their subordinates (Ko et al., 2017).

This research aims to bridge the existing gap in knowledge and understanding in addressing several key areas regarding leadership traits that influence employee motivation among the workforce in the Klang Valley. This study explores the elements influencing employee motivation that are related to the leaders by comprehending the complex relationships that exist between managers and their staff. Due to that, the aim of this study is to meet the following objectives and to sought answers for the following questions:

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between leader's behaviour and employee motivation.
2. To investigate the relationship between leader's trust and employee motivation.
3. To investigate the relationship between leader's communication and employee motivation.

Research Questions

1. Does leader's behaviour have significant relationship with employee motivation?
2. Does leader's trust have significant relationship with employee motivation?
3. Does leader's communication have significant relationship with employee motivation?

Literature Review

Employee Motivation

Employee motivation is crucial for any organization because a motivated workforce will carry out their task as per required by the company's operational standard. Motivation is a factor that inspires the eagerness and enthusiasm in individuals to be devoted towards a task and to make constant exertion to accomplish that task (Rahman et al., 2021). Malik & Naseem

(2011) stated that motivation is a psychological process that gives behaviour purpose and direction. It is defined as Internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested in, and committed to a job, role or subject and to exert persistent effort in achieving a goal. Rahman et al (2021) further mentioned that if the motivation is high, employees will work harder, the workplace becomes more joyful, absenteeism will be reduced, satisfaction will be enhanced, workplace rules and regulations will be observed, and employees will do their best to actualize the organization's goals and strategies. He also found that employees with high motivation are thought to have better work performance, and overall resulting in a better, more productive, and effective institutional performance.

Leaders should know how to motivate their employees to do and deliver their work. Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person not just as an employee are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability (Wingard, 2020). If employees are satisfied with the support from the leaders, they will put their best effort to perform the given tasks.

Leader's Behaviour

The role of leadership behaviour in shaping employee motivation has been a focal point in organizational studies globally. Various leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, and authentic leadership, have been extensively explored. In the Malaysian context, cultural nuances and organizational dynamics may accentuate or modify the impact of these behaviours on employee motivation. Prior research has identified certain leader behaviours, such as inspirational motivation and supportive interactions, as positively influencing employee motivation. However, a nuanced understanding specific to the Malaysian context is vital for guiding leadership development initiatives.

Leadership behaviours are the combination of specific characteristics that leaders have and the actions they take. Strong leadership behaviours make someone an effective leader. Negative leadership behaviours can undermine their credibility and make them less convincing, effective, and inspiring (Personio, 2024). Based on article written by WGU (2020) the behavioural leadership theory focuses on how leaders behave and assumes that these traits can be copied by other leaders. This hypothesis, often known as the style theory, contends that good leaders can be developed through learnable conduct instead than being born. Leadership behaviour is a major topic of discussion in behavioural theories of leadership. According to one theory, observing a leader's behaviour is the best way to anticipate their performance as it can influence employee's motivation.

H1: Leader's behaviour has significant relationship with employee motivation.

Leader's Trust

The study will provide insights into how trust in leadership contributes to employee motivation. Identifying trustworthy leader behaviours will assist organizations in cultivating a positive work culture centred around trust and collaboration. Increased trust in leadership has the potential to reduce turnover rates, contributing to employee retention. Understanding the factors that build and sustain trust can be instrumental in talent

management and organizational stability. Trustworthy leaders positively impact employee well-being, job satisfaction, and engagement. This research will highlight the importance of trust in creating a supportive work environment that fosters motivated and committed employees.

According to Håvold, et al (2020) trust is a component of job security and psychological security, which are critical drivers for motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction which are trust results in a motivated and energized workforce ready to commit to their job and perform better. A leader who cannot build trust will not have any followers. Belief is the fundamental quality of a leader, and believability violations can negatively impact a team's output. If someone seems dishonest or like they'll take advantage of them, people are not likely to follow them. On the other hand, when followers believe in a leader, they are prepared to be open to the activities of the leader.

(Baquero, 2023) in her research on authentic leadership found out that leadership trust has positive impact on work engagement and consequently towards employee motivation in hotel industry as the industry demands high levels of interdependence, cooperation and sharing information horizontally and vertically in the organization structure, therefore, leader's trust is crucial for effective operation.

According to Zak (2017) building a culture of trust makes a meaningful difference in an organization. Employees in high trust organizations are more productive, more energetic, have better collaboration with colleagues. Zak shared a survey done by Price Waterhouse Cooper in 2016 which reported that 55 percent of CEOs think a lack of trust is the biggest threat to their business. Certainly, companies whose employees consider them as "high trust" are experiencing a lot of advantages: their employees report 74 percent less stress, 106 percent more energy at work, 50 percent higher productivity, 13 percent fewer sick days, 76 percent more engagement, 29 percent more satisfaction with their lives and 40 percent less burnout.

H2: Leader's trust has significant relationship with employee motivation.

Leader's Communication

This study will identify communication strategies that leaders can employ to enhance employee motivation in Klang Valley. Effective communication is key to conveying organizational goals, fostering understanding, and inspiring employees to excel in their roles. Communication plays a pivotal role in building strong relationships between leaders and employees. This study will explore the relationship between leadership communication and employee motivation, revealing how leadership communication can create a motivational climate that fuels exceptional work performance.

Strategic communication is getting the right message, through the right media, to the right audience at the right time and with the right effect. It implies effectively reaching and communicating clearly to a targeted audience with specific constraints. Effective communication affects employee motivation and outcomes (Verma, 2013).

The concept of communication can simply be defined as a process by which people exchange information, express their thoughts, feelings, ideas and views in discussion with other people using verbal or nonverbal expressions, signs and writing to convey message among themselves in the society (Aruma, 2018). Successful leadership requires strong communication skills, such as coaching and empowering communication techniques to improve employee motivation. When people listen and believe that they are being heard, they feel motivated to connect and engage.

Communication also helps to build trust and transparency between employees and management, which can lead to improved job satisfaction and higher levels of productivity. Fundamental problems faced by many employees and consequently business organizations, happened because of internal communication breakdown. Poor communication leads to reduced productivity and morale and misunderstandings tend to appear when people are not sure who is responsible for what and have no open channels for asking for clarification or help (Santhiram, 2022).

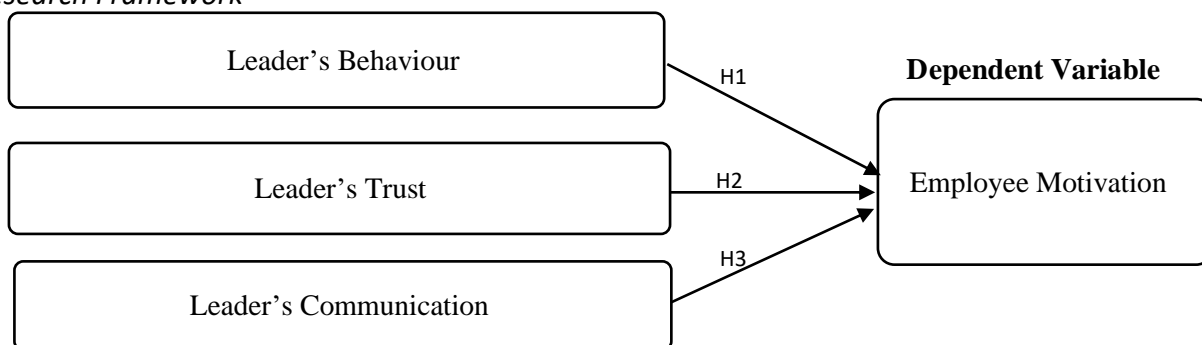
Leaders who communicate respectfully to people will positively influence employees which will bring out good organizational behaviour. These leaders are transformational leaders who use charisma in their effective leadership communication to influence employees for desired or appropriate organizational behaviour and consequently will positively influence employee motivation (Enyioko, 2021)

H3: Leader’s communication has significant relationship with employee motivation.

Research Framework

The research framework as per figure 1.0 below is a sketch that has been created to meet the research objective studied in this paper. It shows the relationship between dependent variables and independent variables: leader’s behaviour, leader’s trust and leader’s communication which are the main factors for leaders influencing employee motivation in Klang Valley.

Figure 1.0
Research Framework



Methodology

To find solutions and answers in meeting the objectives of this study, several methods were used to collect data and analysis was done through Statistical Analysis Software. One of the methods used in this study is the quantitative method. It is done by distributing

questionnaires to the respondents who are working in the private sector in the Klang Valley Area. The researchers found quantitative study appropriate in the study. This is a descriptive study which allows researchers a way to explore questions that could not be examined with experimental procedures. Quantitative research is very well suited to establishing cause-and-effect relationships, to testing hypotheses and to determining the opinions, attitudes, and practices of a large population. Researchers found that quantitative research is the most widely utilized quantitative data collection approach. This is because quantitative research provides more opportunities for transparent and clear responses or comments than other research methods. Plus, all the data of the respondents will be protected for privacy purposes. Besides that, the descriptive study used intended to show how the variables are related since the researcher is interested in determining the leader’s factors that influence employee’s motivation in the Klang Valley Area. Additionally, the descriptive study gives the researcher the chance to carefully consider the variables that might affect employee’s motivation and provides important suggestions for future research. The last method that being used in this study is cross-sectional process. This method is used because the questionnaire is distributed widely to respondents within 2 weeks to collect data to complete this research. The data is divided into a specific target sample, namely employees who only working in the Klang Valley Area especially in the private sector.

Findings

The following findings are based on the research accomplished during the project, a survey of employee’s motivation in Klang Valley. Three methods of analysis were used to analyse normality analysis, reliability analysis and correlation analysis.

Reliability Analysis

The validity and reliability of the constructs was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis and found no concerns. Based on the reliability analysis, it shows that Cronbach’s Alpha value for dependent and independent variables of employee’s motivation, leader’s behaviours, leaders trust, and leaders communication are above 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978) as shown in Table 1.0. Therefore, the items are consistent enough to show that the measurement is accurate and have good internal consistency.

Table 1.0
Reliability Analysis

| Reliability Analysis | Cronbach’s Alpha | No. of Items |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Employees Motivation | .947 | 5 |
| Leaders Behaviours | .953 | 5 |
| Leaders Trust | .941 | 5 |
| Leaders Communication | .942 | 5 |

Correlation Analysis

Table 2.0 above shows results of correlation analysis. This analysis was used to show the significant relationship between dependent and independent variables. When the significant value is 0.05 and below, it shows that the variables are statistically significant. Based on the results above, there are significant relationships between dependent variables and independent variables hence the significant value is 0.001.

Table 2.0
Correlation Analysis

| | | Correlations | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Emp_Motivation_New | Leaders_Behavior_New | Leaders_Trust_New | Leaders_Communication_New |
| Emp_Motivation_New | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .829** | .860** | .923** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 |
| | N | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| Leaders_Behavior_New | Pearson Correlation | .829** | 1 | .910** | .889** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | <.001 | | <.001 | <.001 |
| | N | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| Leaders_Trust_New | Pearson Correlation | .860** | .910** | 1 | .924** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | <.001 | <.001 | | <.001 |
| | N | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| Leaders_Communication_New | Pearson Correlation | .923** | .889** | .924** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | |
| | N | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |

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

Key Findings

Table 3.0

Key Findings

| Hypothesis | p Value | Finding |
|--|---------|-----------|
| H1: Leader's behaviour has significant relationship with employee motivation | <0.001 | Accept H1 |
| H2: Leader's trust has significant relationship with employee motivation | <0.001 | Accept H2 |
| H3: Leader's communication has significant relationship with employee motivation | <0.001 | Accept H3 |

Table 3.0 above shows the summary of key findings for this research. The result shows that there is significant relationship between a leader's behaviour, leader's trust and leader's communication with employee motivation (p value <0.001). Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 were accepted. These findings indicate that when there is positive leader behaviour, good empowerment from a leader's trust and good communication between leader and employee will increase employee motivation level.

Discussions

Employee motivation plays important role for organization success. Motivated employees will be more productive and efficient in their work and have greater sense of commitment towards their tasks. Previous research has highlighted that leadership plays important role in employee motivation (Naile & Selesho, 2014; Sougui et al., 2017). This study probed deeper into leadership by focusing on three of the leadership factors: leader's

behaviour, leader's trust and leader's communication and their relationship with employee's motivation from a perspective of employees that working in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

This study proved that leader's behaviours had a significant and positive influence on employee's motivation. Great leaders lead people to success, and cultivating good leadership behaviours can play a pivotal role in inspiring, commanding respect and driving business success higher (Personio, 2024). Positive leadership behaviours can improve employee motivation, reduce absenteeism, and staff attrition and even reduce the chances of employee burnout.

Next, leader's trust also plays a big role in affecting employee's motivation in Klang Valley. The results revealed a positive and significant relationship between the leader's trust and the employee's motivation. Trust in the leader is crucial for increasing staff productivity and fostering a healthy work environment. Leadership enhances employees trust because leaders demonstrate consistency in their actions and beliefs (Baquero, 2023).

Finally, communication is one of the important leadership traits. Researchers have revealed how vital communication is to lead effectively (Enyioko, 2021) and this study enhanced that understanding by proving that leader's communication plays significant role on employee motivation. A leader's effective communication ensures that employees are clearly understand their roles, responsibilities and the organization's goals. Employees who know what to expect and understands how their tasks contribute to larger objectives will be more likely to feel motivated.

In conclusion, the outcome from this study can be used by organizations to inculcate good and positive behaviour among their leaders. Leaders are expected to demonstrate integrity, respect and ethical behaviour as this will create motivated workforce. This study also revealed that leader's trust will lead to motivated workforce. When trust exist in the working relationship, employees feel secure in their roles and are willing to take initiative, to innovate, and to go the extra mile in completing their tasks. Finding from this study will help leaders to understand the importance of communication towards employee motivation, thus leaders will take the initiatives to create healthy and motivated work environment by encouraging open communication between leader and employee and should collectively develop and facilitate trainings for new employees in setting up the right and clear direction and expectation (Khan & Sardar, 2021).

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