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THE PRICE OF OVER-CONTROL: HOW STRICT LEADERSHIP ERODES EMPLOYEE MORALE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Rosliza Md Zani

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah
rosliza568@uitm.edu.my

Syukriah Ali

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah
syukriah@uitm.edu.my

Anita Abu Hassan

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah
anita397@uitm.edu.my

INTRODUCTION

Excessive authoritarian leadership, or overly strict leadership, is marked by high levels of control and harsh penalties, which can adversely impact employee welfare and organizational effectiveness. Leaders who micromanage or enforce strict regulations typically establish work settings where employees feel restricted, diminishing their capacity to take initiative or make choices. This results in decreased motivation, reduced job satisfaction, and inadequate performance. Studies suggest that authoritarian leadership approaches, marked by control and stringent oversight, often correlate with adverse organizational effects like diminished creativity, decreased productivity, and elevated turnover rates (Pizzolitto et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2018). Grasping these impacts is crucial for organizations aiming to cultivate an engaged and high-performing team.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OVERLY STRICT LEADERSHIP

Excessively rigid leadership frequently manifests through actions like micromanagement, intense supervision, and harsh tactics. Micromanagement happens when leaders scrutinize every aspect of their employees' work, indicating a deficiency in trust and diminishing employees' feelings of autonomy and ownership regarding their responsibilities (Mackey et al., 2015). This neglect frequently leads to employees experiencing feelings of being unappreciated and disheartened. Moreover, authoritarian leaders might depend on disciplinary actions, like punishing small mistakes, which creates a fear-based atmosphere. This kind of strategy prevents learning and hinders development because employees are more apt to react defensively rather than to enhance their skills. A further trait of excessively rigid leadership is the unwillingness to delegate duties, as leaders believe they are the sole individuals able to accomplish tasks accurately. This not only raises the leader's burden but also denies employees the chance to showcase their skills and add significant value to the organization (De Hoogh & Hartog, 2008).

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT OF OVERLY STRICT LEADERSHIP

The consequences of excessively strict leadership are extensive, impacting both employees and organizations. A significant result is employee discontent. Overbearing control

and harsh penalties foster a workplace atmosphere where employees sense a lack of trust and feel they are always being watched, resulting in diminished morale and reduced job satisfaction (Men et al., 2022). Rigid leadership similarly suppresses creativity and innovation. Workers in these settings frequently turn risk-averse, choosing to stick to familiar protocols instead of suggesting innovative concepts due to concerns about criticism or failure (Pizzolitto et al., 2023).

Additionally, overly strict leadership increases employee turnover. When employees perceive their work environment as rigid and oppressive, they often seek out organizations that offer greater trust and empowerment. High turnover disrupts organizational stability, increases recruitment costs, and affects overall team performance (Harms et al., 2017). Productivity also suffers under strict leadership. When leaders insist on micromanaging and controlling every detail, employees face delays in decision-making and reduced efficiency, as they must seek constant approval for their actions. This lack of autonomy leads to dependency and slows down workflows, reducing overall productivity (Mackey et al., 2015).

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Organizations can address the adverse effects of overly strict leadership by implementing strategies that promote trust and autonomy. One key approach is to foster employee autonomy by empowering employees to make decisions. According to Deci and Ryan's (2013) self-determination theory, autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation, leading to better performance and higher satisfaction levels. Leaders should also adopt a participative leadership style that involves employees in decision-making processes. This approach encourages a sense of ownership and aligns team objectives, improving both employee satisfaction and organizational outcomes (Pizzolitto et al., 2023).

Another critical strategy is to encourage open communication between leaders and employees. Regular feedback sessions provide opportunities for employees to voice concerns and clarify expectations, fostering an environment of trust and mutual respect. By establishing avenues for open communication, organizations can clarify misunderstandings and foster stronger connections between leaders and their teams (Harms et al., 2017). These strategies not only reduce the negative impacts of excessively rigid leadership but also foster a nurturing work environment that promotes creativity, involvement, and productivity.

CONCLUSION

Excessively authoritarian leadership, characterized by micromanagement and harsh penalties, leads to significant adverse effects on employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. These leadership approaches foster settings marked by low morale, diminished motivation, and high turnover, ultimately obstructing creativity, productivity, and overall organizational success. By building trust, advocating for participative leadership, and facilitating open communication, organizations can create a positive and empowering workplace culture. This transition to a more encouraging leadership approach boosts employee satisfaction, fosters innovation, and aids in the long-term growth of the organization.

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