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EXAMINING AND COMPARING GOOD AND BAD LEADERS BASED ON KEY LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS: A LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY

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Abstract

In this exploratory study, the authors use and apply a developing new leadership theory and principles (Ivanov, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) to identify beliefs generally called, known, or understood as bad leadership vs. good leadership. The authors test some of these principles in the leadership case study based on one of the authors' work experiences in a large military organization in the United States. As part of the effort, the authors apply and evaluate some of the aspects of the new leadership theory to understand if the study can validate and support a further development of the theory. The authors describe and provide examples of good leaders as well as bad leaders in organizations, and

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attempt to explain key differences in people who should and who should not be placed in the leadership roles. Besides a theoretical development and testing of the new leadership theory, this study also seems to concur with conclusions and findings of other leadership studies, and provides a new foundation for reevaluating leaders in various organizations.

Key Words: leadership, key leadership characteristics, leaders, organizational leadership

Introduction

Jaques (1966, 1986, 1988, 2000) developed new leadership and organizational theories that focus on leadership roles, leadership and organizational systems. Deming (1986, 1988, 2000) also developed a different set of leadership and organizational principles that focus on other aspects of the organizational system, and which appear complimentary to each other (Ivanov, 2021).

However, looking at leaders as people, there are many various leadership traits accentuated and developed by many theoreticians over the past few centuries, most notably Machiavelli (1490), and well as other scholars. Dixon (1976) accumulates multiple historic military leadership case studies, in a way, continued by Ricks (2012), in which both analyze many military commanders and campaigns.

Ivanov (2006, 2011, 2020, 2021) has been attempting to come up with a unifying body of knowledge to bridge the theories developed Jaques, Deming, and other thinkers. This paper, perhaps, is another contributing foundation towards the development of a new leadership theory that would accept the theoretical and empirical findings of Jaques, Deming, Dixon, Milgram, Harvey, and several other theorists.

This work is still in development, and likely will remain so for many years. As part of this effort, Ivanov developed a set of *Key Leadership Characteristics* (2021). A part of this set consists of these leadership traits:

Table 1. Sample of Key Leadership- Characteristics

Characteristic	Comments & Notes:
Collaboration	Good leaders solicit cooperation.
Competition	Toxic leaders stress competition.
Doubletalk	Toxic leaders doubletalk.
Planning	Toxic leaders cannot plan.
New Ideas	Toxic leaders hate new ideas.
Flexibility	Toxic leaders are rigid.
Accountability	Toxic leaders blame others.
Treatment of Subordinates	Toxic leaders do not care and have little regard for those whom the pretend to lead.

Applying these characteristics in practice, to specific leaders, the authors test these traits. One of the authors of this paper analyzes military leaders through his work experiences in a large U.S. military organization. The goal of this study was to identify good and bad leaders using this subset of leadership characteristics developed by Ivanov (2020, 2021), and also test this aspect of

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the new and developing leadership theory (Ivanov, 2021).

Leadership Case Study

Introduction

One of the authors of this paper served in the United States Armed Forces. This experiential case study focuses on the personal experience while serving in the military. For example, other scholars use similar analyses, identifying bad and good leaders by getting opinions of their subordinates (Ricks, 2012).

No classified information or any other identifications are used in this paper, only generalized personal observations. All people's names have been further coded as Leader X or Leader Y, following McGregor's conventions for generally aggregating bad and good leadership (2006).

Good Leaders Collaborate

Leader Y has been in his role for about six years. With his knowledge and understanding of the environment of the organization, and its practices and policies, he guided and helped.

Leader Y focused on trying to think of the positive aspects of the job. Rather than getting distracted by the negative aspects, he recommended creative ways to encourage.

Leader Y-2 was another great leader that helped hone ideas on what it means to lead and to lead a team effectively. He was also a senior leader in the organization. His teachings and interpretations of the environment were completely different than most other leaders. Leader Y-2 focused on encouraging the psychological comfort of his team; he cared about his people.

Both leaders promoted the idea of collaboration over competition. They also taught and demonstrated how to stand up for their subordinates with the help of organizational policies and practices that were implemented.

Bad Leaders Compete

Leader X was toxic, as judged by his subordinates. He was always competing with everyone to satisfy the quotas. This competition would directly affect the work of the team. In one instance, there was competition between all stations to see which station could perform the most repairs in a day. Leader X initiated the process by promoting this competition to their respective subordinates by trying to convince them that this competition would be fun, and the winner would get pizza. The results were the opposite, but he did not care.

Leader X's doubletalk tricked many, with the resulting competition underway. During that time, the team members were emailing their accomplishments and capacity to produce a copious number of repairs, including submitting false reports of completed repairs. While it made Leader X look good to his higher-ups, his subordinates had to endure considerable workload with minimal breaks.

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Eventually, everyone was tired from this competition, and the work began to slow down. Leader X questioned why team members felt unmotivated to work at a higher rate. The results of the competition didn't affect just our station negatively, but everyone.

The competition that was promoted by Leader X and other Leaders like-X taught how not to be a leader. Rather than working collaboratively with other units, Leader X wanted everyone to operate against the other teams. It had an inherent, negative affect on the practices that were necessary to conduct operations, drastically reducing morale in the organization.

Another toxic leader was Leader X-2. In one case, because of a plumbing maintenance emergency, all water fountains were shut down. Many teammates were thirsty. Leader X-2 saw a water bottle, and forced to empty it. Leader X-2's attitude to the situation showed two aspects of how not to be a leader. First, operations tend to flow better when team members have the resources they need to operate at optimum capacity, including the most basic needs, such as food, shelter, and water. Another aspect learned was that it is not proper to separate leaders from regular team members. Isolating people propagated *anaclitic depression* in the workspace, as mentioned in Harvey's seminal works (1998).

Five Traits of Good Leaders

Leader Y was always planning to account for maintenance emergencies that would present themselves. He made it a priority to be available to his subor-dinates for assistance, portraying his ability to be flexible, taking the responsibility to ensure that we were doing the job correctly, all while treating everyone with respect and dignity.

Leader Y introduced a new way to think about how to avoid getting stuck on the negative aspects of conducting operations. This innovative and different perspective showed that he could find new solutions to the problems of morale that were faced by many team members. He satisfies the five leadership criteria:

1) Planning
2) New Ideas
3) Flexibility
4) Accountability
5) Treatment of Subordinates

According to Ivanov's developing theory (2020, 2021), Leader Y is considered to have good leadership qualities, which we have verified through personal and experiential work experience in this study.

Another Leader, Y-2, provided insights into his ability to take responsibility for the well-being of his subordinates. He was flexible, took responsibility to ensure that his subordinates were well-prepared, and treated his subordinates with positivity and encouragement. Leader Y-2's planning wasn't always perfect, but there were many times that his plan came through to the benefit of the team. We would also classify him as a leader with good qualities, experientially confirming the new theory.

Toxic Leaders

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Leader X's zeal for competition decreased most of the subordinates' ability to function. Leader X didn't show any flexibility to let his staff rest appropriately for the next workday. He had no respect for his subordinates, who were trying to follow his random orders, and he took no responsibility when subordinates were producing less output due to fatigue. Leader X didn't welcome innovation and would only require compliance with his orders.

Leader X-2 would try his best at planning for sudden shifts in the workflow, but staff would end up underprepared because of his poor planning. Leader X-2's planning was non-existent, similar to Dixon's findings in many failed military commanders (1986).

Leader X-2 didn't exhibit any care for his subordinates, or had any flexibility to provide necessary resources to perform duties. He pushed an agenda that promoted competition. When subordinates made mistakes because of his poor leadership, he would not to take responsibility to train his staff. He was incapable to accept new ideas and concepts that could be applied to the work environment to promote improvement. Working under Leader X-2, one always had to be on guard for his tricks, as he only cared to look good to his superiors, easily tricking subordinates to speak ill against each other, including reporting negative disciplinary actions against themselves.

Case Study Conclusion

Leaders Y, Y2, X, and X2 taught and demonstrated a lot about leadership.

Leaders Y and Y2 showed that there were innovative ways to deal with situations. They emphasized the importance of collaboration amongst colleagues and being able to lead others in an effective and meaningful way to accomplish organizational goals.

Toxic leaders like Leader X and X-2 illustrated the dangers of abusing authority for personal gain, and how not to conduct yourself as a leader. They displayed attributes that would promote organizational ill, many tendencies of poor leadership, authoritarian tendencies, and traditionalist approaches to problems that would only benefit themselves.

General Findings and Conclusion

The case study tested Ivanov's developing new leadership theory and principles (2020, 2021). Having applied a small subset of Ivanov's *Key Leadership Characteristics* (2020, 2021), the effort partly validated that it is possible to gauge good and bad leaders via these traits. The authors hope that by accentuating these important leadership characteristics, leaders themselves would strive for some self-improvement, and would mildly consider to be at least partly open to new ideas, allow subordinates to cooperate, would plan forward, treat subordinates with respect and care, and take some responsibility for the team.

These qualities are likely difficult for many leaders to consider, outside of an academic PowerPoint or a values-plaques on the wall, but perhaps they would help some. This study also motivates the authors to continue on their

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quest to develop a better leadership theory that would help the growing civilization and society, in which leadership plays a great role.

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