Confronting the Dark Side of Leadership: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

In an organization, there are a number of manipulative, unethical, hardhearted and narcissistic employees. Employees sometimes believe that these components assist them to step the corporate ladder to leadership positions, and this gives rise to the concept of dark leadership. Dark leadership has the negative intension and effects that result not only from the negative quality of the leaders, but also their followers and contributing surroundings. This paper will analysis different definitions of dark leadership given by different researchers. The researcher developed a dark leadership model highlighting the pros and cons of the leadership styles existing and about to exist in today's corporate world. In addition, the role of followers and the surroundings may give rise to the concept of dark leadership to a great extent. In the end, the article focuses on an integrated conceptual framework of discovering indications of potentially negative leadership as the dark side of any leadership.

Keywords: Conductive Environment, Dark Leadership, Distrust Culture, Followers, Narcissism, Power

1. Introduction

A leader of a department or organization affects four things, first one is the employee who is working under him either in inspirational way or motivational way or in any other way, second is the organizational goal for which he is hired, third is the working culture and climate which is the basis of satisfaction for every employee and the last one is the change which is implemented or proposed to implement for the betterment of both employees and organization.

Now, the qualities, beliefs or the culture which a leader follows impacts all the above four elements in different-different ways.

With the effect of globalization and modern technology, easy access to information, people misuse authority in business, politics, and religion. It gives rise to the concept of dark leadership. Dark leadership has been defined as an organized and recurring behavior by a leader, supervisor, manager that distort the legitimate interest of the organization by damaging the organization's objectives, tasks, resources and effectiveness, and job satisfaction of subordinates. Due to dark leadership the efficiency of personnel starts declining, it starts affecting cost-benefits relationship of the organization negatively, increases turnover rate, growth in personnel transfers (Wilson-Starks, 2003), reduce performance, groupthink (Schmidt, 2008), increase dissatisfaction

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and neutralizing organizational commitment (Mehta and Maheswari, 2013). Now a days, there has been an increasing attention to the studies focusing on the dark side of leadership. (Tepper, 2007; Burton *et al.*, 2014) The dark side of leadership is basically the destructive side of practical implications.

2. Literature Review

Uymaz (2013) recognized the following six types of dark leadership: i) authoritarian leadership, ii) inadequate leadership skills iii) unethical behaviors iv) inability to deal with new technology and other change) callousness toward subordinates v) nepotism. Uymaz (2013) specified that some of the terms used in the study for the development of scale had been taken from the study by Shaw *et al.* (2011) Shaw *et al.* (2011) developed a scale to measure the nature of dark leadership and identified seven dimensions of dark leadership. Dark leadership is claimed to outcome in decreasing personnel efficiency, adversely affecting cost-benefit relationship for organizations, high absenteeism rate, increasing personnel transfer (Wilson-Starks, 2003), poor performance, groupthink (Schmidt, 2008; Kýrbaç, 2013), decreasing satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mehta and Maheswari, 2013).

Researchers Costigan *et al.* (2011), conducted research on the impact of affect-based trust on innovative behaviors among coworkers in high power-distance culture like Turkey and Russia, and low power-distance culture like the United States and Poland. The findings indicate that higher ratings of innovative behaviors among coworkers in higher power-distance cultures is the result of increase in trust, than in lower power-distance cultures. Zhou (2010) suggested that a critical and fruitful future opportunity for research on creativity would be to discover the relationship between the dark side of leadership and employee creativity.

According to Einarsen *et al.* (2007) the dark leadership has been defined as "the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and the motive, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates".

According to Hogan and Kaiser (2005) leadership has been considered as a reciprocal relationship between leader and follower, where the leader uses social influence to persuade people to set aside their own interest to meet organizational goals. Kellerman (2004) identifies that leaders may involve themselves in corruption, by lying, cheating, and stealing, or

otherwise assigning their self-interest ahead of the organization's legitimate interest. Kellerman (2004) also identify the negative leader behavior positioned on a scale ranging from ineffective to unethical. Although unethical and immoral actions are not good, it is very difficult to prove that egocentrism worse. Kets de Vries (2003) said that "it is only to be expected that many narcissistic people, with their need for power, prestige, and glamour, eventually end up in leadership positions. Their sense of drama, their ability to manipulate others, their knack for establishing quick, superficial relationships serves them well in organizational life."

Wilson-Starks (2003) said "dark leadership is a leadership approach that harms people - and, eventually, the company as well - through the poisoning of enthusiasm, creativity, autonomy, and innovative expression." Hornstein (1996) identifies "a dark leader as one whose primary aim is the control of others, and such control achieved through methods that create fear and intimidation. Ashforth (1994) describes "a dark leadership as someone who uses their power and authority oppressively, capriciously, and perhaps vindictively".

According to Conger (1990), Howell and Avolio (1992) ethical leaders use hierarchical power to assist others, on the other hand to take personal advantage and self-promotion unethical leaders

use power. Howell and Avolio (1992) elaborates that unethical leaders use power and force to inflict their goals while censuring opposing horizon. Narcissism is acknowledged as a leading cause of 'negative' leadership behaviors (Higgs, 2009). Trust in a leader reflects the followers' trust in the system that the leader symbolizes. If there is a small perceived difference in the manner a leader reflects the followers' trust in the system, then distrust culture will come forth; and it will lead to the establishment of dark leadership.

Dark leadership should be responsible for negative behavior for both employee and at the organization. However, some researchers determined dark leadership as an oxymoron and verified that leadership is a constructive method. Holding this opinion, one may suggest that whether or not a non-destructive leadership is good leadership, may not legitimate all the times. Researcher says that non-destructive leaders bring no value to the organizations they work for. A researcher says that leader's negative intentions are the necessary part of destructiveness which leads to the process developing dark leadership. Leadership could have two sides, the dark side and the bright side. Hence, dark side of the leadership is potentially becoming dominant in spite of the fact at the beginning it starts with the bright side of leadership.

On the basis of the various review following conceptual model is developed which shows the how the leader will become dark leader and what factors affects dark leadership and what is the impact of dark leadership on the followers and the surroundings and environment.

3. Research Methodology

This research is exploratory research. This research is empirical in nature throwing the light on the concept of dark leadership and its existence in today's corporate world. Presence of demodulation will make an impact or diversify the concept. It is based on secondary data. It is represented through a leadership showing various traits of a leader in today's scenarios. The objective of the study is to i) to study the effect of dark leadership on today's corporate world ii) to build a model for enhance and development the real leadership style.

4. Framework

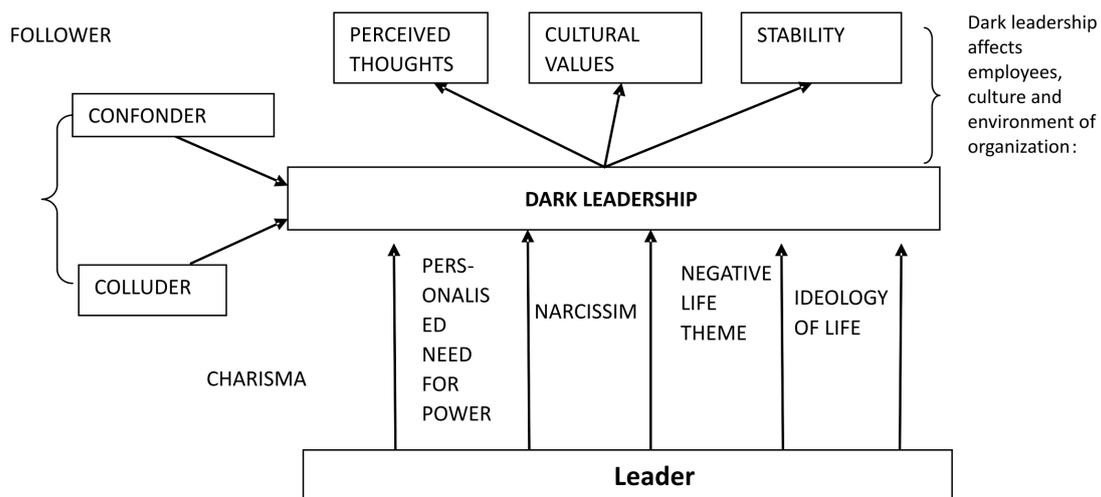Dark leadership affects employees, culture and environment of organization:

Figure 1: Model of Dark-Leadership

A leader is a person who makes followers by influencing other through his actions and word. A good leader can get work done efficiently and efficiently by the followers/employees. But sometime due to the situation or personal nature of the leader leads to dark leadership concept which impact followers/ employees and the organization as a whole negatively. Factors responsible for giving rise a dark leadership in a leader are:

a) **Charisma**: It is said by the researchers that all the charismatic leaders are not destructive, but the many of destructive leaders are charismatic and it is the charismatic power, in concurrence with the followers and the surroundings that lead to harmful outcomes.

b) **Personalized need for power**: Conger, 1990, Howell and Avolio (1992) elaborates that the ethical leader's use hierarchy power to assist others whereas to take personal advantage and self-promotion unethical leaders make use of power. Howell and Avolio (1992) identifies that unethical leaders make use power and coercion to impose their goals while censuring opposing views.

c) **Narcissism**: It is connected to charisma and the personalized need of power and involves dominance, grandiosity, arrogance, entitlement, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure (Rosenthal and Pittinskya, 2006). Researchers argue narcissism is associated with destructive leadership (Conger, 1990; Hogan *et al.*,1990; House and Howell, 1992; Maccoby, 2000; O'Connor *et al.*, 1995; Rosenthal and Pittinskya, 2006).

d) **Negative life themes**: It reflects 'the extent to which the leader had a destructive image of the world and his or her role in the world' (O' Connor, J. *et al.*, 1995, p. 539) and can be traced to early life experiences. O'Connor *et al.* (1995) depict how a traumatic childhood can dispose individuals to destructive leadership. The ability to ignore the feelings of others and exploit them for personal advantage is a defining feature of psychopathy (Hare, 1993), but is also associated with narcissism and the un-socialized use of power (McClelland, 1970; 1975; Rosenthal and Pittinskya, 2006).

e) **Ideology of hate**: Hatred is a powerful sensation. Hate is often born from fear, it is manipulated by those who would seek to employ it. Fear and hatred have played their part in the darkest chapters of olden times.

Followers' role in the leadership process is very significant. Some researcher points out that there will be no leadership without followership. Moreover, there are certain followers who are not able to resist authoritarian and abusive leaders. Due to this followers require safety, security, group membership, and predictability in unpredictable surroundings. Some of the followers take benefit from destructive activities and thus added to the concept of dark leadership. Followers comprise of two groups: i) conformers, and ii) colluders. Conformers follow the dark leaders out of fear whereas colluders take active participation in a dark leader's objective. Moreover, conformers concentrate on the unfulfilled basic needs, negative core self-evaluations. On the other hand, colluders are high in ambition. They are ambitious for their positions and involve in exploitative relations and to fulfill their personal needs they are ready to adopt coercive activities. However, colluders tend to have unsocialzed values, i.e., values that focus on greed and selfishness which are to a great extent similar to the characteristics of dark leadership.

Dark leadership affects organization elements like employees, surrounding, culture etc. in different-different ways.

Surroundings and environment: Environmental which factors are important for destructive leadership are instability, perceived threat, cultural values.

a) **Instability**: At the time of instability, leaders can improve their power by recommending radical change to reconstruct order (Bass,1985; Burns, 1978) Leaders taking power in unstable surroundings are also allowed more authority because instability needs quick action and unilateral decision making (Janis and Mann, 1977). Instability refers to the structural stability of the social system where rules of organizations are clearly defined and systematically applied over a period of time. The higher the degree of instability, the more prone is to have dark leadership.

b) **Perceived threat**: Perceive threat concerns with structural and organizational instability. When people are confronted with perceived threat, they are more willing to take over the concept dark leadership.

c) **Cultural values**: Hofstede (1991) suggest that culture is concerns with the preferences for various communal situations and therefore forms an emergent leadership. Luthans *et al*. (1998) elaborate dark leaders who validate the avoidance of uncertainty, collectivism, and high power distance.

5. Implications and Conclusion

The resolution of dark leadership underlines the negative consequences that define the quality of life of employees and destiny of the large organization, while defining the characteristics of individual leaders. It is crucial not to be captured in just concentrating on the charisma of an individual in choosing a leader. The impact of dark leadership can be monetary as well as it can affect the reputation of the company. This can result in spoiling the culture of the organization. However; the dark leadership should be assessed in its ordinary environment, in respect of the connection between leaders, followers and the surroundings. Dark leadership is very contextual in nature. This signifies that depending on the followers and the surroundings, the dark side of leadership could become dominant. While considering the negative effects of dark leadership we should remember that there are positive effects also like sometimes. The diplomatic nature of Dark leader can help to efficiently take out work from employees which can be beneficial for the organization. Without hesitation they can ask and force people to work across holidays or extended hours on weekdays whenever it is important or urgent or critical.

To win some tenders for the organization, dark-leaders can be helpful as they will find all means to win the deal by hook or crook.

Or, at some unfortunate times of layoffs, these employees can be helpful to deal with the employees who are getting laid off as you have to lose your emotions at that time.

To come up the ladder, the dark leader will definitely give some extra hard work which can sometime benefit the organization.

Sometimes, to counter the surrounding and culture of the organization, such leadership can be useful. The dominance of such leaders can help improve the culture which was already spoilt.

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