

Research article

# Leader's behavior

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## Abstract

Many researchers have shown that groups and teams at a workplace can be effective in accomplishing tasks geared towards the achievement of organizational goals efficiently. However, the success of such teams and groups are dependent on the maturity of the teams and groups themselves, their cohesiveness and the behavior of their leaders.

Contrastingly, groups and teams can suffer from groupthink, which stifles creativity, can engage in antisocial behavior, and suffer from poor leadership, which adversely affects the performance of the teams and groups. Much research has revealed different leadership styles and the organizational situations they fit in best.

**Keywords:** leaders, behavior, work group, team

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## 1.0 Introduction

In this era of volatility in the business environment and weak global economy, ensuring that businesses are successful is a challenging task for many business organizations today. In addition, in many workplaces today, the workforce is becoming increasingly multicultural owing to the ease of movement of labor and globalization particularly in organizations that have international presence (Erez, 2011). As such, managers spend endless hours thinking over how to improve the performance of their business and stay ahead of their competition with the limited resources that they have. Indeed, managers are aware that human resource is perhaps the most valuable resource that an organization can possess, particularly if it is well developed and utilized.

## **1.1 Problem statement**

According to Jenh and Mannix (2001), organizations have been shifting towards team-based structures because of increasing demands for flexibility and efficiency, yet proper management of such teams remains elusive, complicated, and controversial. There is increasing interest in understanding how the behavior of a leader influences the actions and attitudes of team and group members. Already, initial research by Bandura (1977) revealed that leaders could help shape the attitudes and behaviors of followers by employing strategies that are based on high level of specific pertinent psychological resources. In addition, organizations are increasingly grappling with sourcing and training of managers, who would lead teams and groups derived from their workforce, to greater performance heights, and thus linking management with leadership intimately. However, research has shown that leaders may possess qualities that are different from those of managers, which if utilized, can make groups and teams at the workplace either unsuccessful or successful. One such study was performed by Burke and his colleagues (2006), which sought to investigate the relationship between the behavior of leaders and performance outcomes of teams. Their findings indicated that indeed, leadership behavior indeed mattered particularly when seeking to performance outcomes of teams. In particular, task focused and person focused leadership behaviors contributed equally towards the effectiveness of teams and that leaders needed to be trained in both types of leadership behaviors if they were to facilitate effectiveness and high performance of any type of teams at the workplace (Burke, et al., 2006). However, they conceded that there were research gaps regarding why leadership in teams mattered and under which condition were such leadership pertinent considering that many organizations today for many different kinds of teams at their workplaces, further complicating the interpretations of findings of existing researches (Burke, et al., 2006).

As such, it is pertinent to identify clearly, which leadership behaviors not only influenced work teams and workgroups within a workplace, but also which of these behaviors contributed to the success of such groups and teams.

## **2.0 Review of the literature**

### ***2.1 Overview of leadership behavior and work groups or work teams***

Various leadership styles are associated with workgroups and work teams at the workplace. In order to understand these relationships, it is pertinent to first interrogate the meanings and types of leadership styles, workgroups and work teams.

### ***2.2 Leadership styles***

Van Vugt, Hogan and Kaiser (2008) came up with a pragmatic definition of leadership, which was that it was the process of developing a team and guiding it to success and victory in a given task. From a functional theoretical perspective, leadership involved the identification of obstacles between groups followed by the goals of the groups and finally finding approaches of overcoming such obstacles (Van Vugt, Hogan & Kaiser, 2008).

### 2.3 Work groups and work teams

Workgroups and work teams are interchangeable terms particularly in the business environment although subtle differences exist between them. Table 1 enumerates the different characteristics of work groups and work teams as perceived by Kreitner, Kinicki, and Cole (2007). Kozkowski and Bell (2013) observed that research on groups and teams at the workplace had migrated substantially towards the disciplines of organizational behavior, organization psychology, and human resource management and increasingly away from social psychology. Nonetheless, common characteristics existed between work groups and work teams, which included their composition that comprised of two or more individuals aiming at accomplishing tasks with organizational relevance, sharing of one or more goals that were common among the members, social interacted, exhibition of task interdependencies, maintenance and management of boundaries and exchange of influences with other units (Kozkowski & Bell, 2013). However, there were differences in characteristics between work groups and work teams as perceived by Kreitner, Kinicki and Cole (2007), as enumerated in table 1.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of work groups and work teams

Aspect	Work group	Work team
Goal	Information sharing	Collective performance
Synergy	Neutral and sometimes negative	Positive
Accountability	Individual	Individual and mutual
Skill	Varied and random	Complementary

Despite these differences, leaders of workgroups and work teams had the responsibility of influencing their effectiveness through fostering atmospheres and environments conducive for coordination, communication and cooperation (Kozkowski & Bell, 2013).

### 3.0 Method

This research endeavors to answer four questions, which are:

1. Which leadership behaviors affect workgroups at the work place?
2. Which leadership behaviors contribute to the success of work teams at the workplace?
3. Which leadership behaviors stifle the performance of work teams at the workplace?
4. How can leaders develop behaviors that have a positive influence on the performance of groups and teams at the workplace?

To answer these questions, a phenomenological approach that has been suggested by Houser (2009) shall be employed. In the suggestions, Houser (2009) asserted that perceptions of participants were best unraveled by the employment of the phenomenological approach in qualitative research. Wiersma and Jurs (2009) supported this observation by asserting that the phenomenological approach laid emphasis on the manner in which participants of a study perceived their experiences, which in this case are the experiences of managers and employees with team leaders and group leaders in their organizations. As such, several strategies of

collecting data in studies employing the phenomenological approach are abundant and include observations, interviews and focus groups discussions, which shall be employed in this study.

### ***3.1 Sampling and participation***

Sampling in a research is dictated by the research goals, questions and objectives (Padgett, 2008). In agreement, Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) opined that the sample size in a research depended on the goal of the study and the research questions to be answered. As such, a small sample size that is often used for qualitative research shall be employed. Specifically, three companies located in Erie, Pennsylvania in the United States shall be chosen from diverse industries, namely Time Warner Erie, American Biodiesel Energy, Inc., and Lake Erie Web Design. These companies have been drawn from the media, energy and information technology industries respectively in order to generate a universal view across workplaces in different industries. In addition, these companies represent different organizational sizes although they are all profit making enterprises. From these companies, participants shall be selected from among the employee and manager population with each company providing five employees and two managers. Notably, the companies are located in the metropolitan area of Erie in order to ease communication and travel for both the respondents and the researcher while making the data collection process inexpensive and cost effective at the same time.

## **4.0 Significance of this study**

Since work teams and workgroups are becoming commonplace in contemporary organizations and business enterprises, it is pertinent to identify how leaders, through their behavior, can contribute positively to the success of such teams and groups at the workplace. Such information is particularly pertinent to organizations that are striving to improve their performance through teams and groups drawn from the workforce therein. Indeed, the contribution of employing work teams and work groups towards successful performance of tasks cannot be overstated, yet organizations grapple with the management of such teams and groups within their workplaces. It is to the interest of the management in organizations, when particular leadership behaviors that can contribute positively to the performance of teams and groups and ultimately the entire organization can be identified and inculcated. In addition, educators and trainers of managers would benefit from the findings of this research, because such information can contribute to the enrichment of the training curriculum, considering that leading of teams and groups at the workplace successfully remains misunderstood, complex and lacking in sufficient evidence from research.

In addition, the human resource development strategies inside organizations would benefit from the finding of this research because they would be able to choose individuals with the behaviors known to contribute positively the success of groups and teams at their workplaces, depending on the circumstances in which the organization are operating. As such, through professional development programs, emerging leaders can be initiated into acquiring facilitative behaviors as their being groomed to take up leadership positions in teams and groups at their workplaces (Burke, et al., 2006). Considering that workplaces are becoming increasingly multicultural, it follows that, groups and teams formed within such workplaces would consist of members drawn from diverse cultures as well. As such, leaders of such teams and groups are keen to acquire behaviors that reflect their sensitivity towards cultural diversity within groups and teams and as such, develop

their cultural intelligence. Already, Werner and DeSimone (2009) have observed that there are demographic changes in contemporary workplaces, which present both opportunities and challenges too human resource development professionals within and outside organizations.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The proliferation of workplaces with diverse characteristics such as age, location, culture among others have made teams and groups more complicated to manage and thus a challenge to their leaders. Clearly, much research has focused on the functionality of the team and group leaders with little focus on the influence of the behavior of leaders on the performance and ultimate success of the teams and groups they lead. The expected results of this study should advance pertinent knowledge in effective group and team leadership and thus facilitate the training and development of skilled leaders who possess behaviors that are facilitative to the high performance of their teams and groups.

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