LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH SELF-LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The purpose is to explore self-leadership as the pillar for effective leadership practices comprehensively.

Methodology used: The study is a literature-based study which draws on existing research on self-leadership. The study reviews various sources, including academic journals, books, and articles.

Findings of the study: The study finds that self-leadership is complex and multifaceted. It includes a variety of skills and abilities, such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, and self-efficacy. The study also finds that self-leadership is essential for effective leadership. Leaders who can effectively self-lead are more likely to be successful in their roles.

Conclusion: The study concludes that self-leadership is a valuable resource for leaders, researchers, and organisations. It is a key component of effective leadership and can help leaders achieve their goals and objectives.

Recommendations: The study recommends that leaders develop their self-leadership skills. They can do this by setting goals, monitoring their progress, reinforcing their successes, and believing in themselves. Organisations can also support self-leadership by providing training and resources to their employees.

Keywords: *Self-Leadership, Leadership Practices, Theories, Concepts*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership has long been recognised as an essential factor in the success of organisations across various industries (Lussier & Achua, 2016). According to Northouse (2019), leadership theories focus on the influence of individuals in providing guidance and motivating others

toward shared goals. Self-leadership has become integral to effective leadership practice (Daud, 2020). Self-leadership demands ownership of actions, behaviours, and drive, improving personal and organisational outcomes (Neck et al., 1995). They added that it empowers leaders to cultivate positive relationships, inspire others, and navigate challenges with resilience and adaptability by emphasising self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-direction.

Self-leadership is self-driven and independent of others (Neck et al., 2019). Self-control improves performance (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). It enhances effectiveness, intrinsic desire, autonomy, environmental mastery, and physical and mental wellness. Behaviour-oriented management and intrinsic motivation affect self-control (Mutalib et al., 2022). It also establishes goals and uses human resources (Browning, 2018). Finally, behavioural and cognitive techniques help people control their behaviour and achieve their goals (Kusdinar & Haholongan, 2019). Self-leadership and self-management began in 1986 (Manz, 1986). Self-management motivates externally, while self-influence is internal (Stewart et al., 2019). Self-management emphasises work, while self-leadership emphasises standards, goals, and scenario analysis (Palmen et al., 2020).

The authors added that social cognitive, self-control, self-regulatory, intrinsic motivation, and positive psychology theories underpin self-leadership. Self-leadership stresses how supervisors affect employees (Kazanjian, 2017) and provides an alternative point of view in organisational psychology (Stewart et al., 2019), while leaders in the past motivated and guided subordinates to achieve the goals of an organisational (Pearce & Manz, 2005). Stewart et al. (2019) state that due to constant changes in the operational context, knowledge, and the organisation's growth, leaders need more answers to the many difficulties; thus, businesses need every employee's creative energy and understanding. Thus, subordinates are motivated to develop, and self-leadership creates standards.

THEORIES OF SELF LEADERSHIP

This article used self-regulatory, social cognitive, self-determination, self-management, and positive psychology theories to analyse self-leadership as an effective leadership practice.

Social Cognitive

Social cognitive theory, derived from social learning theory, presents a triadic reciprocal causation model that links individual, environmental, and cognitive components (Neck et al.,

2019). Personal, behavioural, and environmental factors affect behaviour (Browning, 2018). Bandura (2023) defined personal, behavioural, and environmental factors as mental, beneficial, and biological occurrences like behavioural judgmental and self-regulation inspirations, specific behavioural habits of an individual, and social factors like family, job context, and social networks influencing emotions and actions. Bandura concluded that these three elements affect the situation, activity, and societal constraints. Kessler (2013) says people can set performance standards. People can plan and govern their behaviours based on ability and results to increase performance because humans learn by watching, imitating, and replicating role models. Gavriel (2005) explains behaviour through unique concepts, beliefs, and aims. Gavriel asset that past similar experience has a big influence on how they will handle the current challenge. Thoughts influence conduct. Behaviour is altered by self-reflection. Learning self-efficacy boosts confidence, according to social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is confidence in one's abilities (Bandura, 2023). Self-efficacy boosts confidence and self-assessment, essential to self-leadership (Gavriel, 2005). Social cognitive theory links natural incentives and constructive thinking pattern strategies to self-efficacy, which enhances task confidence. The social cognitive theory emphasises that the self-regulatory system consists of monitoring oneself, oneself judgments, and oneself reactions, which are the fundamental self-leadership principles. Behavioural focus strategies of self-observation and self-discipline help people manage their behaviours and set behavioural standards for good outputs (Neck et al., 2019).

Self-Determination

The theory emphasises behavioural self-regulation and personality development as motivators (Holroyd et al., 2015). According to Yun et al. (2006), the theory suggests three psychological prerequisites for personal and social development: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Competence brings a desire to learn, master, and exceed in one's field, and to challenge oneself by exploring the environment. Relatedness is the need to join a group, associate with others, and communicate with others (Alves et al., 2006). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affect the theory (Holroyd et al., 2015). According to the authors, intrinsic motivation comes from within, while extrinsic motivation comes from incentives and punishment.

Self-motivation is intrinsic, and a physical reward is an extrinsic incentive. For example, when an employee learns a new skill for fun or professional advancement. The authors said that

intrinsic motivation allows people to satisfy psychological needs and act on their interests for self-satisfaction. Self-determination precedes intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, especially natural reward strategies, builds self-leadership. Intrinsic motivation helps people do difficult jobs they dislike or are bad at (Neck et al., 2019). Self-determination theory relates to self-leadership. According to Neck & Houghton (2006), it promotes intrinsic motivation of natural reward and focused behaviour by problem resolution, positive emotions, job satisfaction, creativity, innovation, and higher outputs, which are key to self-leadership.

Self-Management

Self-management comes from clinical psychology and requires choosing a low chance but potentially better short-term behaviour (Manz, 1986). Focusing on long-term rewards drives self-management (Neck et al., 2019). The authors added that clinical literature lists self-punishment, goal setting, control, observation, and cueing methods. These methods were used to treat smoking and eating disorders. Organisational theorists labelled these tactics self-management (Manz & Neck, 2004). Self-control and self-management were later employed in self-leadership behaviour-focused strategies (Neck et al., 2019). Self-management helps conformity, ignores standards and influences how discrepancy reduction is made, not why (Manz, 1986).

Self-leadership surpasses self-management and requires positive thinking, self-management, and motivation (Manz, 1986). Self-leadership manages performance standards' goals, appropriateness, and inconsistency (Neck et al., 2019). Self-leadership uses superordinate behaviour norms to decrease inconsistencies (Manz, 1986). Self-management is self-influence. One could examine a goal's validity and appropriateness rather than just achieving it. Self-leadership theory influences behaviour rather than managing it. Self-leadership encompasses self-management and cognitive-based behaviour modification. Self-leadership addresses exemplary conduct.

Self-Regulation

Neck et al. (2019) interprets self-regulation as comparing activities to a benchmark. Imagine a person's performance falls below expectations. The individual will modify their effort and behaviour to close the gap. The theory ignores criteria selection. Basic self-regulatory systems have a complete external impact. This end of the spectrum contrasts with complete internal

influence. Self-leadership tactics are part of self-regulation. The tactics can boost self-regulation by boosting self-focus, self-goal setting, feedback, and confidence related to work. Self-leadership entails tactics to promote self-regulation, not an alternative theory of self-influence.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology investigates positive human functioning on biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global levels (Neck et al., 2019). According to Gavriel (2005), positive psychology was a reaction to psychology's conventional concentration on mental health issues. Positive psychology focuses on building human strengths like resilience rather than fixing what traditional psychology sees as wrong. He noted that individuals confuse positive psychology with positive thinking. However, optimism is one of many positive psychological notions. Traditional psychology eliminates impediments to well-being. However, positive psychology adds well-being facilitators like resilience. Well-being has five pillars, according to Godwin et al. (1999). The pillars are pleasant feelings, engagement, connections, meaning, and accomplishment. They say the five pillars are essential to self-leadership, intrinsically motivating, and beneficial to well-being.

SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

Neck et al. (2019) proposes behavioural, natural reward, and thought pattern self-leadership techniques discussed in the following section.

Behaviour-focused methods change habits, promote good behaviour, and discourage bad (Neck et al., 2019). They stated that self-observation, goal planning, rewards, discipline, and cueing are used to alter behaviours. Self-observation teaches when, why, and how to observe a necessary activity (Alves et al., 2006). To perform well, one must know when to behave well and when to behave poorly. Neck et al. (2006) argues that self-goal setting guides self-leadership. Goals motivate and evaluate performance in this strategy. It promotes self-evaluation of long-term and daily goals. Self-reward follows task completion (Pearce & Manz, 2005). Self-discipline or self-correction involves self-evaluation and constructive action. It replaces guilt-related or negative behaviours with good ones (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Pearce & Manz (2005) asserts that self-cueing uses reminders and constructive signals to alert the self of important tasks and reduce undesirable cues from non-essential duties.

Intrinsic incentives increase task identification (Houghton et al., 2005). The authors recommend making tasks fun. Self-determination theory enhances intrinsic motivation (Manz & Neck, 2004). Natural compensation helps people value uninspired labour. This emphasises focusing on the task's benefits rather than drawbacks. According to Neck et al. (2019), natural reward strategies include incorporating and emphasising natural incentives in work. When people feel in charge of their environment, they feel competent and self-controlling activity (Alves et al., 2006). Appreciative and fun workers perform better and feel competent (Osborne, 2022).

Negative thoughts and assumptions are eliminated in constructive thinking (Politis, 2006). Politis adds that positive thinking boosts performance by detecting and replacing unhealthy thoughts. Thought self-leadership, or constructive thought pattern approach, visualises success (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-talking, identifying and eliminating negative attitudes and assumptions, and self-esteem-boosting is constructive thinking practices (Drucker, 2008). To stop dysfunctional thinking, analyse concepts and assumptions, eliminate them, and replace them with rational ones (Mutalib, 2022). Challenge beliefs and alter life experiences to embrace realistic ideas. Neck et al. (2019) list eleven dysfunctional thinking categories "extreme thinking, over-generalisation, mental filter, disqualifying the positive, mind reading, fortune telling, magnifying, and minimising, emotional reasoning, use of should statement, labelling and mislabelling, and personalisation. The second is self-talk (Mutalib, 2022). Self-talk boosts self-esteem. Predicting success is the third strategy. Constructive thought pattern tactics assist someone in developing a behaviour pattern that boosts confidence, motivation, and performance, which is key to self-leadership (Neck et al., 2019).

I have identified several concepts from self-leadership literature. The concepts include self-motivation, self-regulation, locus of control, self-awareness, and self-efficacy. The concepts may impact individual, group, and organisational performance, as discussed in the below section.

Intrinsic motivation is vital to individual performance and satisfaction (Neck et al., 1995). According to Arnold & Schoonman (2008), leaders should identify and align their intrinsic motivators with organisational goals. By setting meaningful and challenging goals, leaders can enhance their commitment and drive to achieve desired outcomes, thus, self-leadership.

Self-regulation entails managing self-thoughts, emotions, and behaviours and aligning them with long-term goals and values (Politis, 2006). Politis stated strategies and practices for cultivating self-regulation, including mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and stress management techniques. These tools enable leaders to respond effectively to adversity, make informed decisions, and regulate their behaviour to positively impact their teams and organisations (Neck et al., 1995).

According to Lefcourt (2014), the locus of control is how individuals perceive events unfolding. People who can influence their behaviours and the consequences of their situations are said to have an internal locus of control. Those with an external locus of control feel that their environment influences their behaviour. According to Drucker (2008), leaders with an internal locus of control practice self-leadership by making intelligent decisions, accepting responsibility, and taking calculated risks while adapting rapidly.

Self-awareness is the foundation of effective leadership. Leaders can make decisions that align with themselves by understanding their strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs (Fox, 2011). Fox asserts that practices like self-reflection, personality assessments, and feedback mechanisms help leaders to understand themselves, enabling them to recognise their blind spots and develop a growth mindset, enabling personal and professional development, thus enhancing self-leadership. Self-efficacy is confidence in completing tasks and overcoming obstacles (Bandura, 2003). Self-mastery increases self-efficacy, which boosts leadership (Padilla et al., 2007). A leader with self-efficacy is confident, persistent and has a high output at the place of work (Maddux, 2009). Maddux asserts that self-efficacy relates to self-leadership.

ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SELF LEADERSHIP

Self-leadership creates a sense of empowerment among employees. That is by encouraging workers to be responsible, align their decisions, and work with organisational goals and values. This empowerment increases job satisfaction and motivation as employees feel greater control and autonomy (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). With self-leadership, individuals are accountable for their actions and outcomes. They are more likely to set challenging goals and take responsibility for achieving them. This accountability mindset promotes a culture of high performance and personal growth, benefiting the organisation (Belasen, 2021).

Companies require employees that adapt quickly to new challenges and opportunities in rapidly changing environments. Self-leadership enables individuals to be more agile and flexible in their approach to work. They can identify and capitalise on emerging trends, seek learning opportunities, and proactively adjust their strategies, increasing organisational adaptability (Alimo-Metcalfe & Nyfield, 2008). Self-leadership encourages individuals to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills (Manz & Sims, 2001). They mentioned that when employees have the authority and confidence to make decisions within their spheres of influence, it reduces bottlenecks and empowers faster decision-making. This decentralised decision-making process promotes agility and innovation throughout the organisation (King & Rothstein, 2010). Implementing self-leadership within an organisation requires a supportive culture, clear expectations, and ongoing development opportunities (Kazanjian, 2017). Organisations should provide training and resources to help individuals develop self-leadership skills and create an environment that encourages autonomy, accountability, and collaboration.

APPLICATIONS OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

Self-leadership requires excellent self-management. Motivation, discipline, and self-awareness are needed (Banjeree, 2015). Self-leaders create goals, plan, and hold themselves accountable. In addition, they prioritise activities, manage time, and pursue personal development (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Personal growth requires self-leadership. Owning actions, making meaningful objectives, and learning and growing can improve skills, knowledge, and talents ("Self-Management and Personal Development," 2012). Self-leadership helps people recognise their talents and limitations, better themselves, and flourish. For example, a sales manager self-leads by setting sales goals, creating a plan, and reviewing performance. Boosting positive cues, reducing negative cues, self-observation, practice, reminders and attention focusers, self-reward, self-punishment, self-talk, and mental imageries help him stay motivated and concentrated. Sales managers attain their goals through self-leadership.

In team leadership, self-leadership entails leading oneself while influencing and motivating team members toward shared goals (Krauter, 2022). It requires building trust, initiating open communication, and supporting team members. A self-leader in a team leadership role demonstrates personal integrity, resilience, and empathy. For example, a project manager exemplifies self-leadership for their teams. He takes charge, communicates well, and cares

about his people. He empowers team members to self-lead by giving them responsibility. Self-leadership in the team improves performance and collaboration (Daud, 2020).

Organisational self-leadership affects the whole organisation. It aligns personal values with the organisation's mission, vision, and goals (Alimo-Metcalfe & Nyfield, 2008). This self-leader is strategic, adaptable, and ethical (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). They said that self-leadership makes people more responsible, proactive, and ambitious. They become problem-solvers and seek inventive solutions. Self-leadership helps organisations thrive. For example, a technology firm director self-leads by embracing the organisation's principles and objectives. The director fosters innovation and personal growth by offering resources and training. He empowers all employees to take the initiative, make decisions, and contribute to the company's success by encouraging self-leadership. Therefore, understanding effective leadership starts with oneself before other individuals and organisations. People considering leadership can enhance their effectiveness by understanding self-leadership aspects, theories, and applications. By adopting self-leadership practices, leaders can manage themselves, set goals, motivate others, and make informed decisions. The implications of self-leadership emphasise that leaders who deeply understand self-leadership principles are well-equipped to navigate complex challenges and inspire their teams toward success.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced throughout this study, self-leadership is a critical competence at the individual, team, and organisational levels. It involves the capacity to self-manage, set goals, maintain motivation, and hold oneself accountable while encouraging similar behaviours in others. At the team level, self-leadership fosters trust, promotes open communication, and enhances performance. In the organisational context, it aligns with strategic goals, stimulates innovation, and creates a culture of responsibility and proactive behaviour. These elements underscore the pivotal role of self-leadership in driving personal growth, enhancing team collaboration, and achieving organisational success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisations should foster a culture of self-leadership through integrated approaches, including comprehensive training programs, promoting an environment of empowerment, encouraging open communication, recognising self-leadership behaviours, and ensuring

alignment with organisational goals. Such initiatives cultivate individual growth and team cohesion and contribute to organisational success.

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