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The Effect of Responsible Leadership on Key Stakeholders in Schools The case of Beirut-Lebanon

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Abstract

This research targets responsible and ethical leadership in schools and how it affects teachers, student, parents, and the community. The main problem is that responsible leaders at schools are trying to exhibit ethical and responsible behaviors towards the teachers, students, parents, and the community; however, their behaviors are not effectively communicated to these stakeholders; thus, the leaders are causing an immense negative effect on the multiple stakeholders in the schools. In order to scrutinize and evaluate the situation, the researcher conducted a study using quantitative and qualitative approach. The survey was distributed to 1000 teachers and 1000 parents; in addition, the interview was conducted with five different schools that are diverse. After the surveys and interviews were analyzed, it was deducted that responsible leadership does have an immense effect on the multiple stakeholders in the schools such as; teachers, students, parents, and the community. Responsible and ethical leaders' behaviors and decisions must be guided by the different stakeholders' interest and views. Also, it is not enough for leaders to behave ethically and in a responsible manner; they have to communicate these behaviors effectively to the stakeholders. Furthermore, in order for an organization to succeed, it must understand the importance of including the different stakeholders in their decision-making process, because these stakeholders have the ability to affect the organization as much as it affects them. An action plan was recommended to the leaders in order to better convey their ethical behavior to the stakeholders.
Keywords: Responsible leadership; Ethics; Stakeholders; Community.

1. Introduction

The definition of leadership can fall under many categories, where some say that it is an art while others say it is a science. Leadership is a phenomenon that have puzzled many researchers with its definition and types.

According to Shi and Ye (2016), there is a new style of leadership that is evolving. It is a new theory that surpasses all the existing leadership styles that we know of. It directs the organization to a new view that will allow it to outstand opposition in the industry by considering all stakeholders, and by allowing it to grasp new opportunities.

According to Maak and Pless (2006), the leader will focus on creating a more ethical and socially responsible relationship with all the stakeholders; thus, the leader will care about both internal and external stakeholders rather than following the conventional leadership styles which focus on the relationship between the leader and the follower.

Finally, responsible leadership paves the way of having a good relationship between the leader and the follower. Followers tend to be influenced by leaders that are ethical and socially responsible. According to Maak and Pless (2006), leaders can support the employees by teaching them how to be socially responsible and ethical. This will create a strong collaboration and teamwork that will help the organization to maintain stakeholders, according to Freeman (1984).

1.1. Research Problem

According to Freeman (2004), a business develops many relationships with different stakeholders such as; employees, customers, distributors, suppliers, financiers, and the community. Each of these stakeholders has an interest in the business and they affect and get affected by the business. Consequently, leaders have to develop and maintain these relationships.

Under responsible leadership, leaders will tend to develop a mind-set that focuses on stakeholders which means that values and ethics are now intertwined within the business process. According to Freeman (2004), this mind-set is referred to as "Enterprise strategic thinking" which can help the business grasp new opportunities and outstand competition. The enterprise strategic thinking covers three categories: the basic value proposition, the principle of stakeholder cooperation, and societal standards of conduct (Freeman, 2004).

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1.2. Objectives of the Graduate Project

The aim of this study is to scrutinize responsible leadership and its correlation with specific stakeholders, which are the students, parents and the community, and how the responsible leadership affects the teachers in the school. The objectives of the study are the following:

RO 1: To understand the effect of responsible leadership onstudents, parents, and the community.

RO 2: To understand the effect of responsible leadership and the teachers in the school.

1.3. Research Hypothesis

The research question: What effect does responsible leadership have onteachers, students, parents, and the community?

H 1: The effect of responsible leadership on students, parents, and the community.

H1-0: There is no effect of responsible leadership on students, parents, and the community.

H1-1: There is an effect of responsible leadership on students, parents, and the community.

H 2: The effect of responsible leadership on the teachers in the school.

H1-0: There is no effect of responsible leadership on the teachers in the school.

H1-1: There is an effect of responsible leadership on the teachers in the school.

2. Overview of the Sector/Domain/Organizations

Leadership is a broad term that can be practiced anywhere, regardless of the type/style of leadership that will be exercised. Specifically, responsible leadership is very important to be applied and practiced everywhere,and in all sectors/domains in order for the company to be able to develop and maintain good relationships with all stakeholders while developing an ethical and socially responsible workforce (Maak and Pless, 2006).

The educational sector is a crucial sector that oughtto adopt responsible leadership because the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Thus, schools will focus on enhancing the community and delivering top notch education and ideologies to their students which is done through the teachers (Stone-Johnson, 2013). According to (Stone-Johnson, 2013), education is one of the main sectors where change can really happen and where change can be sustained throughout the years.

Furthermore, responsible leadership works in 360-degree way, it focuses on the teachers, students, parents, and the community itself (Stone-Johnson, 2013). This style of leadership will no longer only direct the change towards the student or the school, but it will bestow change on the entire community; thus, changing all the aspects (Stone-Johnson, 2013).

According to Stone-Johnson (2013), schools that practice responsible leadership can help its students attain great achievements and allow the teachers to implement such a positive change within these students. The students will not only become more active and aware individuals in the community, but they will also give back to the community and enhance it Stone-Johnson (2013).

This research will analyze five schools in Lebanon. All the stakeholders of each school will be studied in further detail to see how they are affected by the school. The stakeholders are the teachers, students, parents, and the community.

Each stakeholder is affected by responsible leadership and they are all interrelated to one another (Maak and Pless, 2006). Because when responsible leadership is implemented effectively, it will influence the relationship between the leader and the teachers (followers), which will also directly affect the students and indirectly affect the parents and the community (Stone-Johnson, 2013).

Many schools in Lebanon don't apply responsible leadership; thus, they lack to create a change within their stakeholders. They are oriented towards making a profit while forgetting that these students are the future.

They miss the chance to resolve problems that are present in the community by addressing these problems through teachers and students (Stone-Johnson, 2013). The school can produce this change by enhancing their relationship with the teachers whom will teach the students.

The school's curriculum can also be designed in a way that will support the ideologies of responsible leadership and to allow change to be smooth and effective (Stone-Johnson, 2013). For this to be done, the school's focus has to not only be about making profit but also to implement responsible leadership.

This research will mainly target five schools that are in Lebanon which are International College (IC), Wellsrping Learning Community, Amjad School, American Academy of Beirut (AAB), and Sunrise School.

3. Responsible Leaderhip and the Mulitple Stakeholders

According to Maak and Pless (2006), leaders have a responsibility towards all the stakeholders. They have to understand the stakeholders and reach to solutions that are beneficial to all parties. Such leader has to create a brighter future that conveys ethics and social responsibility.

According to Pless and Maak (2011), responsible leadership is the key to many gaps in the modern business world. It solves problem on both a theoretical and a practical level. For the theoretical part, it focuses on how ethics and social responsibility affect the organization. For the practical part, it helps the organization take better decisions to satisfy all of its stakeholders.

Responsible leadership, which is also known as ethical leadership, has come into view after the plenteous scandals that have hit many organizations. Stakeholders will no longer accept to sit back and watch how organizations act freely without ever considering the wellbeing of the community (Maak and Pless, 2006). However,

scandals are not the only reason why responsible leadership has emerged. Another reason is that now stakeholders know that the organization can contribute, participate, and enhance the community (Pless, 2007).

3.1. The Importance of Responsible Leadership that Affects the Multiple Stakeholders

According to Shi and Ye (2016), responsible leadership allocates great importance on both the employees and the organization. Responsible leadership develops and sustains change within the organization that will affect all the stakeholders and allow the organization to have a positive impact on the society.

3.2. Case Study

According to a study done by Dinham (2005), responsible leadership, which is an ethical leadership, is considered to be an important factor in outstanding educational outcomes. Responsible leadership is all about influencing the multiple stakeholders and interacting with them in order to achieve mutual benefits (Dinham, 2005). In the educational sector, cooperation and collaboration between the leader and the stakeholders such as; the teachers and the students, is very important. The responsible leader's vision, values, commitment, empowerment, and collaboration with the multiple stakeholder is the way to educational success (Dinham, 2005). Research has shown that responsible leadership creates a school that fosters a positive culture and it facilitates teaching and learning (Dinham, 2005).

3.2.1. Importance of Responsible Leadership at the Individual Level

Followers or employees mimic the leader's actions, especially if they were influenced by him/her. Followers work with the leader very closely and they need to have a good relationship with each other because leadership is all about the interaction between the leader and the followers.

3.2.2. Importance of Responsible Leadership at the Organizational Level

Responsible leaders are a part of the organization and they are the ones that drive and implement change within it. Leaders work within the organization in order not to only accomplish its goals but to also drive a good change within it while working the multiple stakeholders in and out of the organization.

4. The Ethical Behavior of Responsible Leadership That Affects the Multiple Stakeholders

Ethics is an important part of responsible leadership and there are several ethical behaviors that have to be displayed by the leader; such as honesty, integrity, fairness, and concern for others (Bello, 2012). According to Bello (2012), responsible leaders perform good behaviors and abstain from doing bad behaviors which can have a direct or indirect effect on the stakeholders.

Responsible leaders lead by example and always do as they preach, this will ensure that followers really follow in their footsteps (Bello, 2012). An ethical leader is willing to compromise many things in order to do the right thing; thus, the leader is setting an example in the organization (Bello, 2012). Simply, responsible leaders have to develop a mind-set that states "Everybody can win when you win the ethical way".

According to Maak (2007) method of the stakeholder framework, he stated that other than satisfying stakeholders; the responsible leader has to have leadership ethics. Maak (2007) stated that responsible leadership obliges the leaders to consider ethics when making decisions; Responsible leaders realize that there are multiple stakeholders that they need to satisfy while keeping in mind ethics and socially responsible behavior (Maak, 2007).

4.1. Case Study

According to recent research, universities are more focused on making money and maximizing their profit rather than really focus on delivering proper education to students (Natale *et al.*, 2015). A serious problem discussed within this research is that the university misleads the students to meet with advisors who are more of a salesperson rather than an advisor, the research shows that these advisors try to force students to take the maximum number of credits per semester, regardless if they are able to really learn anything or not, which is highly unethical nor is it beneficial for the students (Natale *et al.*, 2015). This case study emphasizes the need for ethical behavior and it explains that education is not a profit making venture that schools or universities must pursue; however, it is a service for the public that will enhance their knowledge and well-being (Natale *et al.*, 2015).

4.2. Decision Making and the Multiple Stakeholders

The responsible leader is working in a challenging environment and will always be faced to make decisions that are ethically correct towards the multiple stakeholders (Bello, 2012).

Ethical Decision Making

Responsible leaders are mere humans that are prone to forget or misjudge information; thus, they have to accept that they are normal people that can make mistakes in order for them to be honest with themselves before anyone else, and to take the right decisions to satisfy all stakeholders (Bello, 2012).

Responsible leadership is concerned with creating value for stakeholders and having concerns for the humanity, because in the end, ethical leaders are normal people that are trying to make the world a better place (Pless and Maak, 2011).

5. The Effect of the Responsible Leadership's Role on the Multiple Stakeholders

Leaders are operating in a dynamic and a changing environment, which compels them to face many challenges along the way. However, leaders have the vision and the skills to understand the changing environment, to reduce its uncertainty, and to create a compelling image for the stakeholders, also leaders can gain the help of the organization and its employees (Maak and Pless, 2006).

Organizations pass through crises and the stakeholders hold the organization accountable for all the negative impact that they cause; thus, the leaders are expected to provide solutions that not only benefit shareholders but also stakeholders, so that they can regain the trust of the stakeholders and regain their success and legitimacy (Maak and Pless, 2006).

This leads to the fact that responsible leaders play different roles with the different stakeholders. According to Maak and Pless (2006), the stakeholders are not searching for a hero or a knight in a shining armor; they simply expect the leader to be collaborative and cooperative. Thus, in the modern business world, the leader's orientation has shifted from only trying to satisfy shareholders and moved to focusing on the stakeholders and how to build stronger relationships with them (Maak and Pless, 2006).

Schools and Ethical Leadership

Schools must consider responsible leadership when it wants to really improve and enhance its performance because extra sessions, enhancing test taking skills, or technical solutions are short lived, and what really remains is the effect of the responsible leadership and the transformation it bestows on the multiple stakeholders of the school (Stone-Johnson, 2013). According to Stone-Johnson (2013), leading employees is not the only way responsible leaders operate because they also lead through their employees and they take it on their shoulders to improve the well-being of all stakeholders. Responsible leaders are committed to their vision and they are able to carry out these responsibilities and to handle failures, and they share their success with all the stakeholders because they know that change happened due to their collaborative efforts (Stone-Johnson, 2013).

6. The Effect of the Responsible Leadership's Relationship with the Multiple Stakeholders

Responsible leaders deal with multiple stakeholders in and out of the organization, they socially interact with these stakeholders and build relations with them (Maak and Pless, 2006). Responsible leaders have a vision that is ethical towards the multiple stakeholders and they are determined to do what is best for the greater good (Maak and Pless, 2006).

Today's challenges have forced organizations to hire responsible leaders that will allow them to gain a competitive advantage over the competition by having good and positive relations with the stakeholders (Maak and Pless, 2006). Responsible leaders are no longer profit-oriented, in today's world, the responsible leaders focus on the all the stakeholders (Maak and Pless, 2006). Thus, Responsible leaders are concerned with building and fostering relations with these stakeholders in order to maintain the success of the organization (Stone-Johnson, 2013).

Responsible leader is regarded to be both a cultivator and facilitator (Maak and Pless, 2006). As a cultivator, the leader will focus on the quality of the stakeholder's relationships and its value, and as a facilitator, the leader will focus on the relational process, which is how to build and maintain these relationships (Maak and Pless, 2006).

When leaders listen to the different stakeholders they are better able to take decisions that will satisfy everyone.

7. Research Methodology

This research requires different data collection methods due to its nature; hence, using only one method would limit that amount of information needed to analyze the study further.

This study examines the correlation between the dependent variables in this study which are the teachers, students, parents, and the community, while the independent variable is the responsible leadership. The quantitative data collected will be analyzed through IBM SPSS Statistics 25 through a descriptive analysis which summarizes the data gathered from a sample of the population, and the qualitative data will be analyzed through identifying reoccurring beliefs and ideas.

Sampling

Random sampling was the method used in conducting this study. Hence, the researcher chose people at random in order to save time and money

In order to avoid errors which are common in random sampling, the largest population possible should be surveyed.

This research focused on school principals, teachers, students, parents, and the community in Lebanon.

8. Study Limitations

Although this research was prepared in a careful and organized manner; however, there are always limitations and shortcomings. The first limitation is the lack of information about some schools. Thus, little information can be gathered about the background of the schools to further analyze their level of responsible leadership. The second limitation is confidentiality and secrecy issues because some people might distort information in the survey or the interview. The third limitation is the human factor which is that some people, who have filled the survey or conducted the interview, may have not been in the mood or really motivated to do the extra effort of analyzing the questions and giving the accurate answer. The fourth limitation is the cooperation of the interviewees because some teachers and parents felt compelled to fill the survey rather than really be interested in filling it out and focusing more on it. The fifth limitation is school restrictions. The sixth limitation is the data collection process because the absence of the researcher affects the way teachers and parents respond to the survey. The seventh limitation is time. The ninth limitation is the access to literature because there was not enough journals and books that discuss the effects of responsible leadership in schools on multiple stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, and the community. The tenth limitation is the sample size. Due to time and financial restrictions, there was only a sample of 1000 teachers, 1000 parents, and five schools in Lebanon, which is a small proportion of all the teachers, parents, and schools in Lebanon.

9. Findings and Results

The survey with the teachers and the parents has shown that the behavior of theschool's principal really affected them, whether it was positive or negative. However, the teacher's survey showed that most of the principals are working hard on being more ethical and responsible. On the other hand, the parent's survey showed that the principals are not really being able to display the true behaviors of an ethical and responsible leader. The reason for this paradox is probably because teachers work more closely with principals than parents do, which means that they are able to truly see how hard the principal is working.

The interviews conducted with the five principals have shown that they are very concerned with the well-being of the teachers, students, parents, and the community. Furthermore, the interview has shown that these principals know that their behaviors affect these stakeholders and they are scrutinized by these stakeholders. Thus, they are monitoring their actions and they are including these stakeholders in their decision-making process in order for the school to succeed.However, the surveys have shown that these leaders are not effective in conveying their actions to the teachers and the parents.

Finally, the data analysis has shown that responsible leaders have an effect on the multiple stakeholders that they work with; thus, they have to keep the stakeholder's interest in mind, so that they can work together in order to accomplish the mission and vision of the school.

10. Conclusions

Responsible and ethical leaders are under the obligation of behaving in a proper manner towards the multiple stakeholders of the organization. They are the make or break of the organization and they are responsible to direct the organization in an ethical and responsible manner. Thus, these leaders understand that leadership is a responsibility and not just a role of power. They carry the responsibility of acting properly and ethically towards all the stakeholders of the organization regardless of how challenging it might be.

This research has shown that responsible and ethical leadership has an effect on the multiple stakeholder of the school such as; the teachers, the students, the parents, andthe community, because the leader's action paved the way for the reaction of these multiple stakeholders.

Responsible leaders are expected to take into account the different and sometimes conflicting interests of these stakeholders; The responsible leaders are aware of the importance of their decisions and how it results in different effects on the multiple stakeholders. Thus, these responsible leaders are able to think outside the box and provide solutions that will satisfy the different stakeholders.

Responsible leaders are very important for the change of the organization because they are the ones that are able to lead this change and collaborate with the different stakeholders to maintain this change. When they all work together, they are able to achieve mutual benefits which will eventually satisfy the multiple stakeholders and increase the legitimacy of the organization.

First of all, responsible leaders affect their followers highly because they work together. Thus, these followers are influenced and inspired by these ethical leaders and in return they are prone to exhibit an ethical behavior. In the school, the principal works hand in hand with the teachers in order to achieve success. Teachers are humans and they are affected by the principal and his/her moods and behaviors.

Second of all, responsible leaders affect the organization itself because they are responsible for the image that is displayed to the outside world and they are responsible for the direction that the organization takes. In the school, principals work according to the mission and vision of the school.

For any organization relationships are an important element. Organizations value the importance of developing and maintaining solid relations with the multiple stakeholders. These relationships will allow the organization to prosper and further succeed because it is able to change for the better. Schools have the obligation to listen to the different feedback of its stakeholders. All these stakeholders are interconnected and their collaboration all together is highly important to achieve success for the school, and to really be able to change the world into a better place for the current and upcoming generations.

Responsible leadership affects the multiple stakeholders; however, it affects them in different ways, because these stakeholders have different expectations, interests, and direction. Thus, ethical and responsible leadership has a different effect on each of them.

The teachers in the school are highly affected by the principal because he/she is their boss. They work together in order to improve the school and allow it to reach new heights. The survey questions directed towards the teachers has shown that the leaders are trying to foster goodwill with the teachers and they are doing the effort to listen to them. This has a positive effect on the teachers because they know that they are heard, and this leads to increase their motivation and commitment towards the school.

The students are also highly affected by the principal because most of the principal's decisions has a direct or indirect effect on them. For example, curriculum changes, building renovation, changing teachers, or even adding extracurricular activities. These all and much more has an effect on the students and their wellbeing. They spend so much time at school and they get to develop their personalities there even further. The school can also help students find their proper orientation in life from a very young age.

The parents are an outside stakeholder which is greatly affected by the principal as well. Parents play an important role in pushing their children to better; however, parents are more cooperative when they feel like the principal is a responsible and ethical person who cares for their children and is truly interested in their well-being. Parents are rarely objective towards their children which makes the job harder for the principal. The survey questions have shown that the parents don't really feel the extent of the effort that the principals are trying to exert, which means that principals are under the obligation of being more effective in communicating their efforts.

An important stakeholder that may at times be overlooked is the community. The community is where everyone lives together and share common characteristics; these people are affected by one another. Furthermore, the school's principal also has an effect on the community because he/she carries the responsibility of increasing the awareness of the students about the community. In addition, the principal has to teach the students how to give back to the community in a proper manner and how to be able to enhance it for the sake of everyone.

To conclude, responsible and ethical leadership has to be found within every leader because they are the image of the company and they are the ones that take it fame or burn it to ashes.

11. Recommendations

Ethics and responsibility are a part of every leader's behavior; it is not a matter of what type of a leader he/she is; they are all obliged to be ethical and responsible. They have a responsibility towards the several stakeholders that are affected by the organization and the leaders know that these stakeholders affect the organization in return.

The leader's actions are not properly reflected to the teachers and parents; thus, an action plan is needed to help the leaders better exhibit their ethical behaviors and to increase the positive effect on the multiple stakeholders.

First, the leader has to have a mind-set which states that being ethical and responsible doesn't simply mean to follow rules and regulations. Leaders have to exhibit behaviors that show the multiple stakeholders that they are aware of their interest and that they care enough to take the stakeholders' interests into consideration when making decisions.

Second, the leader has to know that profit is never ahead of stakeholders' interest; thus, stakeholders have to feel that leaders care about them. Hence, leader's decisions have to benefit the multiple stakeholders of the organization rather than simply increase the organization's profit at everyone's expense. In addition, leaders have to communicate these benefits to the stakeholders in order for them to see it.

Third, followers are influenced and affected by the leader; thus, they will mimic what the leader. So, when the leader is responsible and ethical, the followers will display the same behavior because they are affected by their leader and influenced by him/her through rational techniques and emotional appeals. Hence, leaders are able to lead by example.

Fourth, leaders gain more acceptance over their decisions when they communicate with the multiple stakeholders and take their feedback into consideration. This effects the stakeholders and it helps develop a strong sense of trust and commitment with the organization. Stakeholders become more collaborative when they are heard.

Fifth, stakeholders are affected by the decisions that leaders make. The stakeholders will feel more empowered and they know that they are a part of that decision which makes them more accepting of it. Leaders know that they can't implement decisions on their own and they need the help of the multiple stakeholders to ensure that these decisions are effective.

Sixth, communication with stakeholders is very important because their opinion matters and because they may actually provide feedback that can change the course of the organization to the better; thus, leaders have to communicate with the stakeholders and provide an open-door policy.

Seventh, leader can create proper guidelines that will explain to the multiple stakeholders what is ethical and what is not. In this way, stakeholders have a clear understanding of what can be and what can't be done.

Eighth, leaders have to keep training themselves on taking the morally correct decision because being ethical is not an easy task and sometimes they will face heavy rejection or opposition; thus, they have to train themselves to stay on the right track and not stray away from what is right. Leaders have a moral compass that has to be checked from time to time in order for them to be sure that they are taking the decision that is beneficial for everyone.

Ninth, leaders have to evaluate their decisions properly and not fall into the pitfall of justifying their decisions as morally correct. Leaders are humans and humans are prone to justify their actions and decisions in order not feel that they have done something unethical or irresponsible; thus, they have to evaluate themselves.

Tenth, leaders have to reward ethical behavior in order to reinforce it further. When stakeholders are rewarded for being ethical; it will turn into a habit rather than a behavior that is conducted every once in a while. Thus, leaders will train stakeholders how to be ethical just as they train the stakeholders on what to avoid.

To conclude, ethical and responsible behavior is an important element that must be found within leaders and within the different stakeholders; without ethics and responsibility, the organization will suffer. Furthermore, ethics and responsibility have a positive and fruitful effect on everyone; thus, it is a behavior that helps everyone to achieve their goals while taking other into consideration. As Linda Fisher Thornton (2018) said: "Leadership responsibility is multidimensional and cannot be described in one or two words. It is personal, interpersonal, environmental and societal".

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