

Critical Analysis of the Leadership Capabilities in Employee Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is widely recognised as a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness and employee well-being. In contemporary workplaces characterised by rapid change, increased job demands, organisational restructuring, and psychosocial challenges, the quality of leadership significantly influences employees' physical, psychological, and social health. The purpose of this paper is to offer a basis for discussion and review of the role of leadership in human behaviour and employee well-being in a work environment. This article critically examines the relationship between leadership capabilities and employee well-being through an analysis of key leadership approaches, including authentic leadership, ethical leadership etc. The paper argues that employee well-being should be viewed as a strategic organisational priority rather than merely an operational concern, requiring leaders to adopt people-centred approaches that balance organisational objectives with employee welfare. By evaluating the strengths and limitations of major leadership theories, this study contributes to the growing discourse on leadership and well-being and offers insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to create healthier, more productive workplaces. The article concludes that leadership capability is a fundamental driver of employee well-being and that organisations should invest in developing ethical, authentic, and accountable leaders to support sustainable organisational success.

Leadership is regarded as one of the cornerstones of organizational success, canvassed through various theoretical perspectives that seek to enhance its effectiveness. Similarly, employees' psych-social and physical well-being is regarded as the cornerstone of any successful organization as it is employees that are responsible for organizational performance

The purpose of this paper is to offer a basis for discussion and review of the role of leadership in human behaviour and employee well-being in a work environment. The paper discusses both the limitations and strengths of leaders to elucidate the relationship between leadership and employee well-being.

Human Capital review estimates that absenteeism costs South Africa's economy up to R19.1 billion each year, which equates to around 15% of all employees being absent on any given day (as of 09 July 2024). Absenteeism is a huge burden in workplaces, not only related to not reporting to work for any reason, but also includes late coming, extended tea and lunch breaks. As such, absenteeism has a major impact on productivity and business growth, whereby businesses lose millions of rands.

Any healthy organization targets an absenteeism rate of 1.5 %; however, South African businesses' absenteeism rate is between 3.5% and 6%. Although absenteeism cannot be prevented, it should be managed. According to studies conducted in various organizations, the twenty-first-century work environment is very stressful. Although most employers regard employees as the most important asset in a company, more importantly is the healthy and productive workforce.

According to Ganu and Nyaranga (2017), It is the researcher's assertion that absenteeism can be managed by strong leadership. Leaders are responsible for developing policies and procedures to manage employee/employer relations.

In the modern work-life, each organization should strive to position itself as an employer of choice. This can be achieved by encouraging employee well-being and employee engagement. This view is supported by World Health Organization (2024) that in 2019, 15 % of working adults were estimated to have a mental disorder while 12 billion globally is attributed lost working days per year due to anxiety and depression for \$1 trillion per year in lost productivity.

Amongst other factors, suspensions contribute immensely to employee well-being. While leadership use suspension to purge those employees who is not "aligned" with their vision, those employees left behind feel the pressure of overwork and increased workload. Uncertainty and toxic environment contribute to mental disorders and anxieties. . According to Cotterell (2022), over 305 public servants were on suspension with full pay, costing over R30 million. Suspension is legally regulated globally, and such processes are well documented. While employee health and wellness are regarded as a core support programme for employee well-being, employee health and wellness specialists' participation is limited to reactive support interventions. Yet all organisations mention that "Human Capital is their greatest assets" The International Labour Organization's (ILO) approach to advance social justice and promote decent work was built on and social dialogue. In its convention, ILO assembled 187 governments, employers, and workers' organisations as member states to approach the world of work challenges, set and monitor international labour standards, and collaborate with development cooperation partners on projects and programmes to help realise the Decent Work Agenda (ILO,1996).

As an ILO member state, South Africa has developed its labour relations legislation according to the ILO standards for decent work and social justice. The Labour Relations Act aims to advance economic development and social justice, labour peace, and workplace democratisation by fulfilling its objectives. These objectives include enforcing and regulating the fundamental rights delineated in Section 27 of the South African Constitution (Labour Relations Act (LRA),1995; South African (SA) Constitution, 1996). These objectives are delineated in Chapter 2.

The researcher advises that workplace suspension, while not a new phenomenon, is primarily labour-related. Its effect on individuals and organisations has been largely disregarded. To develop a comprehensive framework mitigating the bio-psychosocial influences of workplace suspension. In the core of this understanding, understanding the role of leadership becomes important. It is therefore important for this paper to address the issue of leadership capabilities to employee well-being.

Keywords: Leadership theories, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Servant Leadership, Organizational Effectiveness, Employee Health and Well-being

1. Introduction

Leadership for time immemorial has been a subject of scholarly enquiry and its practical relevance, in shaping how individuals, organizations and societies' function. The capability to lead effectively has been recognized as a critical determinant of success in various fields, including business, political strategy, public service and social movements. It is increasingly recognised in South Africa that workplace suspension is a significant problem in public organisations and governments (Grogan, 1996). In the recent months we have witnessed how leadership or lack thereof has affected the well-being of employee health

and well-being through the Madlanga Commission of enquiry, Parliament Ad hoc Committee on allegations of infiltrated of SAPS AND SCOPA on Road Accident Fund leadership.

The leadership theories provide structured frameworks that define leadership styles, behaviours and processes offering insights into the qualities that make effective leadership decisions. However, despite the in-depth body of research on leadership, there remains an ongoing debate about the capabilities of leadership play in enhancing employee well-being, models and frameworks across diverse contexts of leadership.

While leadership in the changing world of work has become most critical in impelling the strategy, people are the most crucial asset in assisting the organisation in achieving its goals. In several non-performing organisations, inadequate leadership is often a concern (Wakeman, 2010). Patterson, Granny, Maxfield, McMillan, and Switzer (2007) assert that leaders should be influencers to enable change; therefore, during any leadership change, a need exists for a turnaround strategy. This is, unfortunately, used as a device to purge employees. The field of political science helps us understand how differing preferences and interests can lead to conflicts and power struggles among groups within organisations. This affects service delivery, such as health, water, and electricity (Regien, Biesma, Ruari`Brugha, Harmer, Walsh, Spicer, & Walt, 2009).

Throughout history, leadership has evolved significantly, transitioning from early trait-based theories, which suggest that leaders are born with inherent qualities to more contemporary models that emphasise situational, rational, ethical and servant dimensions of leadership. Employee well-being cannot be navigated in isolation; rather, investigate various concepts related to the capability and capacity of leadership. Leadership and management are central to these concepts rather than their legality. Leadership and management occur in organisations responsible for service delivery and corporate governance, which the researcher believes are affected by employee health and well-being to preserve institutional memory. Considering this opinion, I examined several organisational behavioural theories from an employee health and wellness perspective. Various concepts and theories regarding groups and the processes of communication, decision-making, conflict, and politics used in organisational behaviour are rooted in organisational development.

BusinessTech (14 May 2022) defines bullying as a range of insulting, demeaning, or intimidating behaviours that lower an employee's self-esteem or self-confidence and may escalate to systematic adverse social acts, placing the complainant in an inferior position. Similarly, workplace suspension can be observed as a bullying tactic with comparable effects; however, several suspension cases are not recorded owing to prolonged legal disputes between parties. While some workplace practices may seem unfair, they do not constitute bullying if the employer reasonably transfers, demotes, disciplines, counsels, or retrenches employees. The researcher concurs with BusinessTech (2022) on this point; however, the emotional, physical, and professional effects remain significant, making this study critical for exploring such experiences.

Calitz (2022), in her study on bullying and the plight of South African employees, emphasises that employees often fail to prove acts of bullying in the workplace since it is not categorised as a form of harassment and violence in the ILO (2020) Convention guide. Workplace bullying is an increasing global concern with significant repercussions for employees and organisations. On an individual level, it can cause psychological and physical conditions (Botha, 2019). Reviewing these studies, there appears to be more emphasis on workplace bullying, demonstrating a divergence in research on workplace suspension

and its effects. Researchers note that suspension may have similar effects to bullying but has not been adequately investigated

1.1. Research Hypothesis

- The researcher assumes that leaders and managers may not possess the necessary skills to interpret policies and practices related to people management effectively, including conflict resolution.
- In leadership transitions, suspensions may be used to remove employees who have been with the organisation for an extended period or were aligned with the former leadership.

1.2. LEADERSHIP THEORIES

The function of a leader or manager is to keep employees motivated so they can perform at their best. According to Swart in her study material (Leadership and Change Notes, 2013:2), organisations should consistently inspire and engage employees in their roles to encourage their buy-in to changes. This observation is supported by the statement, “We overmanage and underlead, trying to control people rather than connecting to them and developing their potential” (Wakemen, 2010).

Most change theorists believe that a leader or manager monitors when employees display potential, particularly when directed to participate in specific projects. Leaders must encourage creativity and innovative perceptions instead of wanting change for change.

This was evident in the writer’s environment, where leaders hope people will turn up tomorrow with a better attitude. This only led to self-doubt, low morale, and disengaged employees. The focus was on improving claim processes, establishing performance management systems, solving the backlog, and making tough decisions by removing the “dead wood” and customer orientation. Amanchukwa (2015) remarks that leaders are often made rather than born. It is increasingly accepted that effective leaders must possess the experience, knowledge, skills, and commitment necessary to negotiate and achieve their goals. Organisations operate in an extraordinarily complex world encompassing various disciplines, such as legal, business management, organisational management, leadership, politics, social security, human resources, and finance. Integrating these aspects can be challenging in the socioeconomic and political environment where they operate; therefore, change management is crucial to yielding the positive results envisaged in their strategic objectives (Rowe, 2007).

The communities these organisations serve expect service excellence, as road accidents, rail inefficiencies, electricity disruptions, energy issues, revenue collection challenges, tourism impacts, and export complications adversely affect their lives and contribute to economic decline. For an organisation to succeed, it must manage change systematically; therefore, a systems-thinking approach in change management is essential (Rowe, 2007); however, the leadership failed to create a powerful guiding coalition when it terminated executive contracts of those who had served the organisation for more than five years, disregarding intellectual property and retaining talent.

Leadership theory literature posits that effective leadership is developed through continuous self-study, education, training, and accumulation of relevant experience. According to Amanchukwa’s (2015) leadership theories, there are several observations on leadership, including characteristics that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. This observation is further supported by Mamabolo (2022), who emphasises critical steps leaders can take to cultivate a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within organisations. The researcher elucidates some leadership theories below, not to emphasise leadership itself but to understand how workplace suspension is influenced by these theories and the prevailing leadership style at a provided point in time. The researcher holds that “Man” is a bio-psycho-socioeconomic-cultural and political being, and any disturbance in one of these aspects can disrupt a person’s overall equilibrium.

Research on the “Great Man Theory” posits that leadership capacity is innate and that outstanding leaders are born rather than made. This theory often depicts leaders as inherently heroic and destined to assume leadership roles when necessary. According to Amanchunkwa (2015), the term “great man” was employed because leadership was historically perceived as predominantly male, particularly in military contexts; however, Mamabolo (2022) contends that the Second Industrial Revolution’s introduction of women into the workforce had positive implications for this theory. She emphasises that unconscious or implicit bias encompasses perceptions, attitudes, and actions.

Contingency

Contingency theory posits that effective leadership is primarily determined by aligning a leader’s characteristics and their situationally adaptive leadership style. Consequently, contingency leadership theories emphasise environmental variables that help ascertain the most suitable leadership style for a provided context. This understanding suggests that leaders in SOEs are inclined to employ contingency theories extensively.

This approach often serves as a turnaround strategy, especially during changes in political administration. The researcher personally aligns with this perspective, citing her suspension during the leadership transition in 2015 as an example. Publicly available data substantiate this observation, indicating that several leaders in various SOEs were subjected to prolonged paid suspensions, disregarding the effect on the organisation’s financial health.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic created global disruption, necessitating contingency leadership; however, the pandemic also facilitated instances of corruption and the removal of ethical leaders. In some cases, it was used as a pretext for removing inefficient personnel, whether justified or not.

Situational

Research indicates that situational and contingency theories are similar, as they both rely on specific conditions or circumstances; however, it is recognised that diverse leadership styles may be better suited for distinct types of decision-making to achieve optimal results.

Behavioural

Amanchunkwa (2015) contends that behavioural leadership theories stem from the premise that great leaders are developed, not inherently born. This theory emphasises the actions of leaders rather than their intellectual attributes or intrinsic states. According to behavioural theory, leaders motivate and inspire individuals by elucidating the significance of tasks and their contribution to a greater purpose.

While this leadership theory emphasises group members and the realisation of each individual’s potential, leaders employing this style typically uphold high ethical and moral standards. It is observed that political leaders globally are expected to exemplify this leadership trait; however, recent events revealed instances where political leaders have fallen short concerning character and leadership. Notably, there has been significant deterioration in South Africa.

State capture significantly affected SOEs, leading to increased workplace suspensions, particularly of ethical leaders perceived as obstructing these efforts (Zondo, 2022). In 2021, Prof. Mazwe Majola launched a dialogue platform called “Conversation with Prof. Mazwe Majola”. During this time, discussions on leadership became prominent. South Africa once again showcased its exceptional leaders. Various thought leaders and think tanks introduced diverse leadership theories, including thought leadership, action-oriented leadership, authentic leadership, generative leadership, ethical leadership, and collaborative leadership (Majola, 2021).

A citation by Majola (2021) emphasises the critical elements of successful leadership as commitment, proactiveness, clarity, and innovation, achieved through positive engagement and creativity. These principles are essential to cultivating responsiveness. Human dignity, rights, accountability, responsibility, justice, sustainability, inclusiveness, and equality can be upheld according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996:108).

The researcher aligns with these principles in examining workplace suspension, emphasising the necessity to explore employees' experiences of suspension more thoroughly. Management and leadership scholars consistently emphasise leaders' crucial role in enabling organisations to achieve their objectives, fulfil mandates, and serve society effectively. This is true even as organisations evolve.

Majola (2021) stresses the importance of understanding and embracing the emotional cycle of change, noting that change is one of the most challenging responsibilities for leaders. Change often evokes fear and resistance owing to several factors, including lack of trust, beliefs about the necessity or feasibility of change, economic threats, high costs, fear of failure, loss of status and power, threats to values and perceptions, resentment, interference, surprise, fear of the unknown, peer pressure, and disruption of cultural traditions and group relations, and personality conflicts and inadequate timing (Majola, 2021).

In concordance with these views, the researcher believes the aforementioned factors significantly contribute to workplace suspension. Leadership failures in managing change effectively often result in the purging of employees perceived as threats to the change process.

The emergence of breakaway political parties, human rights violations, lack of accountability among those in power, and inadequate service delivery significantly pronounced the South African political landscape. A leadership style rooted in fear and lacking emotional intelligence can severely damage an organisation's most vital asset, its HC. Leaders deficient in self-awareness and with unresolved childhood traumas often harm those they lead. Majola (2021) posits that individuals possess diverse personalities, desires, needs, and ways of expressing emotions. He suggests that navigating these differences is crucial for success, emphasising the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) in leadership.

The researcher agrees with this view and emphasises that self-awareness, empathy, social skills, and self-regulation are essential life skills. Leaders who demonstrate these qualities can value diverse opinions, needs, and perspectives, using diversity as a driving force for organisational success rather than viewing it as an obstacle.

Multiple factors influence effective leadership including, organisational culture, industry -specific demands and individual personalities. Power dynamics in particular, place ethical consideration in leadership as the critical topic of discussion, particularly at this point in our country. It is important for scholars to examine trust, and accountability in relation to employee well-being and engagement. It is also important to examine whether leadership principles are derived from these theories are universally applicable or whether contextual and cultural factors shape the manner leadership should be practised. This research will explore these questions by conducting an in-depth analysis of each leadership theory, identifying the conceptual strengths, weaknesses and evaluating their practical application in improving employee well-being in the real world.

This research is not only important for scholars in the Health and Wellness space, but also for practitioners in leadership, policy makers, industry experts, organisational leaders and business executives. Nuances of different leadership theories allows individuals and institutions to improve decision making, make informed leadership decisions about leadership development, employee health and wellness policies and strategies, succession planning and strategic positioning of wellness services in their individual

organisation. Critical assessment of leadership theories becomes essential in a rapid changing world where leadership is required to be more agile, inclusive, empathetic and responsive.

2. Conceptual Framework

Workplace wellness programmes currently benefit over 50 million workers in the United States, aiming to reduce healthcare costs, enhance productivity, and improve employee well-being. Employee wellness programmes in South Africa aim to reduce health costs, manage absenteeism, and direct productivity or performance-related issues; however, their role in supporting policy, influencing decisions, and managing workplace suspensions is poorly understood (Jones, 2019).

The study provides context on establishing employee wellness programmes in South Africa. In 1986, the South African Chamber of Mines created a formally structured EAP. Initially, EAPs were primarily linked to specific industries, focusing on treatment and support services for alcohol and substance abuse. Since then, adopting EAPs expanded significantly across all sectors. The DPSA later recognised it as a national strategic framework following a survey by the Faculty of Humanities and Criminology at the University of Pretoria. This led to an EAPA-SA standard document, internationally well-received (Terblanche, 2009). The standard document was limited to these four core competencies:

- Marketing
- Case management
- Stakeholder relations
- Monitoring and evaluation

The researcher contends that the EAPA documents fail to direct the dynamics and development of workplace challenges. Had it not been so limited, there would have been much research and literature on various workplace issues, including workplace suspension and strategies for Employee Health and Wellness professionals. The study explored this divergence while adding to the scientific body of knowledge in the world of work.

Scholars revealed significant interest in workplace wellness programmes, globally and locally, but more research needs to be conducted. In South Africa, interest in organisations adding wellness programmes as a value-adding strategy has also increased. The researcher asserts that intentions should extend to broader strategic goals rather than being limited to a programme. Current research on wellness programmes primarily emphasises return on investment and pricing models, but it fundamentally overlooks the crucial role of strategy and policy development (Meyer, 2011).

Kanjere (2014) concurs with this perspective, asserting that wellness programmes in South Africa were implemented within various government departments as part of their transformation initiatives. These programmes aimed to enhance the well-being and working conditions within these departments to improve service delivery, health, and productivity; however, the programmes' primary focus was not aligned with an HR strategy to influence policy or change organisational culture.

Wellness programmes are recognised as intervention strategies aimed at promoting employee well-being. Kanjere (2014) further contends that wellness programmes are designed to be preventive and promotive, facilitate personal change, and provide support. While the researcher concurs with this perspective, it is contended that the role of EHWP has been limited to operational aspects rather than strategic initiatives. The researcher perceives workplace wellness programmes in South Africa as mere formalities and superficial additions rather than effective strategies grounded in behavioural theory.

As a wellness practitioner, the researcher posits that EHWP has more potential to support behavioural theory and measure health indices than currently observed in organisations. Kanjere (2014) remarks that Public Health Theory advocates for health promotion, enabling individuals to acquire control over and improve their health; however, the researcher contends that this observation is limited. According to the WHO, (1948), “health” encompasses complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This definition implies that mental health involves more than just the absence of mental disability or disorder. The WHO (2019) classified mental health as an international disease. Consequently, EHWP requires revisions to direct the relevant societal dynamics of the twenty-first century.

Conversations with Prof. Mazwe Majola in *Leaders in Leadership* present various perspectives on resilient, decisive leadership for organisational success. Topics include leadership challenges, responses to COVID-19, authentic servant leadership, ethical leadership, accountability, courageous leadership, and generative leadership. Leaders should perceive employee wellness as a strategic partner (Majola et al., 2021). Ramoshaba (2021) asserts that lacking generative leadership skills creates new problems globally and emphasises the need for leaders to embody courage and resonance. Future leaders are challenged to adopt an integrated approach to world concerns.

Management expects EHWP to act as crisis managers and direct issues caused by the HR department and leadership; however, management often fails to distinguish the role of EHWP from that of HR practitioners, whose responsibilities extend beyond administrative tasks. These responsibilities include providing expertise on conflict resolution and mitigating workplace performance challenges, conflicts, and suspensions (Jomrog & Overholt, 2014).

The researcher observes and contends that the role of EHWP within an organisation is intricate owing to their need to serve diverse constituencies, such as employees (who should be the primary focus), line management, top management, organised labour, and particularly HR practitioners, including ER practitioners. To effectively navigate this power dynamic, the EHWP must adhere to core principles and professional ethics, often challenged, as EHWP are also employees of the organisation (EAPA-SA, 2017).

The researcher observes that emotions and integrity are integral to the role of EHWP in the workplace, especially regarding the diverse constituencies they serve. While organisations operate based on policies and procedures, EHWP operate through their thoughts, ethics, feelings, expertise, and organisational expectations. EHWP must regulate and separate their emotions from their professional ethics; otherwise, they might be perceived as resistant, non-compliant, or aligned with employees (Alicia, 2017). HR practitioners should also manage their emotions, which can be perceived negatively and positively. According to Mokgolo (2017), growing evidence supports interventions to assist employees, particularly HR practitioners. Mokgolo (2017) emphasises interventions, promoting employee health, work behaviours, and well-being associated with HR policies and practices cultivating positive work relationships.

While the researcher concurs with this perspective, further research on interventions, policies, and procedures explicitly targeting workplace suspension is necessary. Mokgolo’s (2017) study on workplace bullying supports this recommendation. The data collection process emphasised the need for future studies to comprehensively represent HR practices in examining workplace bullying. Such studies could help develop customised initiatives and response strategies to eradicate organisational bullying.

Distinguishing between employee well-being and leadership theories and principles is essential for a comprehensive understanding the field. Studies demonstrate that leadership theories are frameworks developed to explain and predict leadership capabilities, leadership behaviour and effectiveness in people management. The researcher critically argues that EHWP's play a significant role in organisations by contributing to conscious, ethical, and productive HC through applying systems and leadership theories.

3. Review of four leadership theories

3.1 Authentic Leadership

Srivastava and Dhar (2019) further define authentic leadership as the leader's ability to influence followers' attitudes through commendable behaviours such as transparency in relationships, displaying behaviour that aligns with the leader's own beliefs and values and rendering fair decisions



Components of Authentic Leadership (Walumbwa, Avolco, Gardner, Wensing, & Peterson; 2008)

Contemporary workplace settings are increasingly complex and fraught with problems such as staff shortages and burnout (AONL 2023). As such more dynamic and responsive leader are required. These occurrences are well documented (AONL 2023) and beginning to encourage Wellness Specialists and scholars alike to call for a more responsive, ethical and authentic relational style of leadership. Indeed, the study conducted by the researcher in Experiences of workplace suspension, recently in five State Owned Entities (SOEs) in South Africa has found that employees who have been suspended and dismissed, regards well-being is a top priority for leaders. Moreover, participants recognise that significant challenges exist and indeed lie ahead. Qualitative data from this study indicated that leadership in organisation was a considerable challenge, notably how to effectively support employees, interpret employment policies and practices during these challenging times. They also noted that leadership influence for optimal organisational culture. Specific concerns included:

- Trauma and brutality
- Humiliation
- Anger
- Broken trust

- Lack of re-integration post reinstatement

Coupled with authentic leadership, transformational leadership is one of the most recommended approaches when one takes into consideration the above specific concerns (Ystaas et al. 2023). Included, for example, as a recommended approach within State Owned Institutions (Moon, Van Dam, and Kitsos 2019). However, its implementation should focus much on being recommended as useful in practice, rather than emanating from a strong empirical basis. In as much, the literature is replete with studies, such as Moon, Van Dam, and Kitsos (2019) that describe the attributes of transformational leadership among leaders, without any substantive exploration of its impact in practice. Systematic reviews that explore the impact of transformational leadership, does not highlight supportive elements for of traumatised or displaced employees.

Consequently, the significant gaps that exist in the context of the overall impact of transformational leadership in organisations lead authors to conclude that significant gaps in leadership still exist, and particular attention is needed to enhance wellness leadership so that it improves client health and well-being cultures (Ystaas et al. 2023).

3.2 Ethical Leadership

Ethical Leadership refers to the practice of leading with integrity, fairness, and respect for others while consistently applying ethical principles to decisions, policies, and relationships

Ethical leadership is leadership that is directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of others. It is thus related to concepts such as trust, honesty, consideration, charisma, and fairness. Specific aspects were as follows:

- Employee well-being is reactive
- Bullying
- Vulnerability and insecurity
- Distractive leadership

Ethical leadership involves leaders and managers making decisions based on the right thing to do for the common good, not just based on what is best for themselves or for the bottom line.

While profits are important, ethical leaders take into consideration the needs of customers, communities, and employees in addition to company growth and revenue when making business decisions.

Ethical leaders encourage their team members to model this behavior, too. They help to build a workplace culture that values transparency, collaboration and inclusion, and where everyone feels safe to share their voice.

They can also help organizations recruit and retain top talent Professionals are increasingly seeking out companies whose leaders strive to do the right thing. Generation Z, who will make up 25 percent of the workforce by 2025, demands leadership ethics more than generations that came before them.

“Gen Z is not going to negotiate. They have strong values and ethics, and they don’t bend them because of intimidation or because they are just getting a paycheck,” said Michael McCarthy, instructor at Harvard Division of Continuing

3.3 Accountability Leadership

Accountability is a key component in leadership. Essentially, it is the act of holding yourself accountable to others. To be an effective leader, you must be able to hold yourself accountable for your actions and decisions, as well as the actions and decisions of those who report to you. It is particularly evident in South Africa since the (6th of July 2025) after Commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi public declaration of alleged

infiltration and corruption in the South African Police Services and the establishment of the Madlanga Commission of enquiry thereof

From a theoretical perspective, definitions of accountability leadership is as follows:

- Corporate governance definition – leadership accountability and responsibility are defined as fundamental pillars of good corporate governance (GCG), alongside transparency, independence and fairness.
- Academic medicine definition – in academic medicine, leadership accountability is defined through measurable outcomes and clear progress indicators, with an emphasis on systemic, rather than ad-hoc, responsibilities for driving institutional change.
- Stakeholder-focused definition – responsible leadership is distinctively defined through its relational focus on:
 - Active engagement with stakeholders
 - Balancing diverse stakeholder interests
 - Building social capital
 - Ensuring long-term sustainability of society and the natural environment
- Ethical framework definition – leadership responsibility encompasses ethical dimensions, including:
 - Prevention of corruption and fraud
 - Ethical use of information
 - Maintaining accountability standards
 - Proper use of communication and technology
 - Enforcement of organisational ethical values
- Contemporary corporate definition – more recently, interpretation frames of leadership accountability and responsibility within environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices tend to emphasise:
 - Legal adherence
 - Risk mitigation
 - Ethical practices
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Corporate decision-making accountability

With the diversity of these definitions shows that leadership accountability and responsibility tend to be defined as context-dependent concepts that continue to evolve with changing organisational needs, societal expectations and research development.

3.4 Servant Leadership

Servant leadership desire to involve others in decision making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and intensify the growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational health and well-being. The words servant and leader are usually thought of as being opposites, yet they are not.

Servant leadership is regarded as a moral-based leadership where leaders are required to prioritize the fulfilment of the needs of followers, namely employees, customers and other stakeholders, rather than satisfying their personal needs. Although the concept is not new among both academics and practitioners, it seem to receive growing consideration in the last decade, due to the fact that it can positively affect a series of individual and organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, lack of or absence of Servant Leadership has been viewed by participant in the recent study of

exploring experiences of employees who have been suspended and is characterised by specific feelings of:

- Post -Traumatic Distress Syndrome (PTDS)
- Low self-esteem
- Bullying
- Balance of power or lack thereof
- Lack of psycho-social support
- Non-supportive

In particular, the latest trend in literature has focused on the identification of the precursor, mediating and moderating mechanisms at the basis of this relationship, as well as on the development of a common scale to measure the construct across diverse economic and cultural contexts. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the evolution of the scientific literature that has developed on the concept, to identify the main criticalities and provide avenues for future research. A dynamic methodology called has been applied, combining the Systematic Literature Review approach with the analysis of bibliographic networks.

The Characteristics of a Servant leader



3.5 Critical analysis of Leadership theories

For the purposes of this paper, the four theories and leadership styles become important to give context into why leadership capabilities are critical to curb unnecessary nuances caused by workplace suspension from a health and wellness perspective. The impact of one losing one's job or suspended from one's job is not only loss of income but it is multifaceted as explained below:

Psycho-social; in that some individuals regard their work or job as the definition of who they are, it gives meaning to exist and is aligned to their purpose. This may lead to individual suffer from post trauma distress syndrome, anxiety and mental and or psychological disorder.

Physical; most individuals employees develop chronic health issue related to stress, social isolation and anxiety for an example; hypertension and diabetes

Professional Isolation; these individuals feel isolated as they lose friends and their professional reputation is adversely affected. In a nutshell, all these require ethical leadership, accountable leadership, authentic leadership and Servant Leadership who are empathetic, can take responsibility and accountability into making sure the work environment is conducive to well-being to achieve organisational goals.

4. Conclusion

The recent climate in the South African context, clearly demonstrated how authentic, servant, ethical and accountable leadership was lacking. The ethical and moral decay which has over time governed South African businesses and public servant with serious consequences in service delivery and the rise of mental health issues in the workplace leading to high rate of absenteeism, ill health and poor performance. It is now than ever Employee Health and Wellness plays a significant strategic role than an operational role. Further research is needed to explore further evidence based on leadership capabilities in people management.

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