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The Role of Corporate Leaders in Enhancing Interpersonal Relationships within an Organization: A Case Study of FastLearn Technologies Ltd

Maureen Mulozi and Dr. Collins Otieno Odoyo



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Maureen Mulozi

Post Graduate Student, Graduate School of Business, University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

Email: mulozilubo@gmail.com

Dr. Collins Otieno Odoyo

Lecturer, Online Instructor, Astria Learning, University of Zambia

Email: collins@astrialearning.org

Abstract

Purpose: Interpersonal relationships are seen to play a vital part in the success and/or failure of many organizations. In managing human resource, the aspect of interpersonal relationships is a concern as it may or may not border on the work performance of the organization. This study aims to find out the role that corporate leaders play in enhancing interpersonal relationships within the organization.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design. In conducting this study, literature on subject was reviewed as secondary data and primary data was collected through the use of self-administered questionnaires, focus group discussions and interview guides. The data collection instruments consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions. The target population for the study comprised of all the 55 employees, management inclusive, of FastLearn Technologies Ltd who were part of the study. The data collected was entered into a Microsoft Excel sheet for analysis and interpretation and provision of recommendations thereafter.

Findings: This research has revealed that interpersonal relationships within the organization actually do have an impact on the organization's productivity. The impact can either be negative or positive depending on the role that corporate leaders play to encourage or discourage interpersonal relations.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study advocates for management and corporate leaders to encourage employees to engage in team activities. It further advocates for them to develop conflict resolution strategies and policies that would provide a win-win situation for both the employee and the employer.

Keywords: *Interpersonal relationships, corporate leaders, employees, organizations.*

1.0 Introduction

Places of work are seen to have some form of interpersonal relationships among employees. These relationships are used to refer to associations between two or more people that may be long term or short term. This association might be founded on surmising, love and fortitude, ordinary business cooperation, or another kind of friendly responsibility among employees. Interpersonal relationships are formed in to context of social cultural and other influences. Interpersonal relationships usually involve some level of interdependence. Individuals in associations will generally impact one another, share their considerations and sentiments, and participate in exercises together. Due to this relationship, most things that change or effect one individual from the association will quite often affect different individuals from a similar association.

The relationship between corporate leaders and employees does not only affect employee performance, but may also affect the relationship between employees and organizations. Corporate leaders, as the people in charge of day to day operations of an organization, not only manage the organization's affairs but also deal with the general employee affairs. Entrusted with the task to communicate organizational goals, visions and ideas to employees, corporate leaders are responsible for maintaining and implementing organizational rules and systems and even have the final say on promotion, retention and dismissal (Manta & Harges, 2013).

In a sense, corporate leaders at all levels are spokespersons and role models of their own organizations. Studies conducted on interpersonal relationships have indicated that workplace relationships directly affect a worker's ability to work and be productive which also has an impact on the organization at large (Manta et al., 2013). The importance of the role played by corporate leaders in enhancing interpersonal relationships in an organization therefore cannot be overemphasized. Research has demonstrated that interpersonal relations at work can improve individual employee attitudes such as job satisfaction, job commitment, engagement and the perceived organizational support among others. Interpersonal communication and relationship in recent years has been consistently placed high as an important requirement for conducting successful job performance in organizations (Obakpolo, 2015).

Performance of members of any organization depends on the ability to effectively interact with their superiors, subordinates and co-workers within the organization and consumers, suppliers and general public outside. It can be argued that job performance is determined by the workers' level of participation in the day to day running of the organization. It could also be described as the ability to combine skillfully the right behaviour towards the achievement of organizational goals and objectives (Obakpolo, 2015). Interpersonal relationship refers to a strong association among individuals working together in the same organization. Studies have shown that employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. Relationships are necessary for existing systems and are the hub of organizations. It is through relationships that organizations maintain stability and provide a sense of belonging for the employees (Sias, 2008).

For any organization to achieve its aims and objectives, the people that make up the organization must consist of people with similar aims, objectives and insights; people who will cooperatively join hands to achieve what an individual cannot achieve in isolation. FastLearn Technologies Ltd is not an exception on the organizations that seek and value interpersonal

relationships. The organization has gone through various transformations in the recent past with various management changes both at lower and top level. These changes both in structure, and personnel brings with it some concerns regarding the role played by corporate leaders in enhancing interpersonal relationships in the organization. Thus, FastLearn Technologies Ltd would present as a good case study in establishing the role of corporate leaders in enhancing interpersonal relationships within the organization.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Good performance by members of any organization depends on their ability to effectively interact with one another within the organization and the general stakeholder population. Interpersonal relationships, therefore, are a very important issue that should not be taken for granted by any organization if it is to achieve its set goals (Song & Olshfski, 2008; Obakpolo, 2015). Many organizations, FastLearn Technologies Ltd inclusive, experience human relation problems which lead to the business operation problems. Human relation problems are perceived to be due to faulty interpersonal relations among others. Efforts should therefore, be made by corporate leaders to enhance the interpersonal relations of the people at work within the organization (Obakpolo, 2015).

If the people that make the organization do not relate positively with one another, then the goals of the organization would hardly be achieved. Hence, for a healthy atmosphere in any organization to exist, the people must understand their differences; there must be the “give and take” phenomenon which is the basis of a true and genuine interpersonal relationship. It is therefore, based on this premise and the problems that are associated with interpersonal relationships that this study was formulated.

1.2 Objective of the Study

In light of the above mentioned problem statement, the research was being undertaken to meet the following objectives:

1.2.1 Main Objective

To identify the role of corporate leaders in enhancing interpersonal relationships within the organization.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

In order to achieve the main objective of the study, the following specific objectives of the research were identified:

1. To identify common corporate leadership practices that affect interpersonal relationships in an organization.
2. To explore how interpersonal relationships impacts employee productivity in an organization.
3. To determine the influence of corporate leadership on interpersonal relationships in an organization.

1.2.3 Research Questions

1. What are the common corporate leadership practices that affect interpersonal relationships in organizations?
2. How do interpersonal relationships impact employee productivity in organizations?
3. How do corporate leaders influence interpersonal relationships in organizations?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this study was the path-goal theory, also known as the path- goal theory of leader effectiveness or path-goal model developed by Robert House in 1971 and revised in 1996. The theory states that leaders' behaviour is contingent to the satisfaction, motivation, and performance of his or her subordinates. The theory was inspired by the work of Martin G. Evans in the 1970s in which the leadership behaviour and followers' perceptions of the degree to which following particular behaviour (path) will lead to particular outcome (goal). The path-goal theory assumes that leaders are flexible and that they can change their style as situation requires. The intervening variables include age of the leader, education qualifications, training, environment and follower's characteristics (Robbins & Coulter, 2014).

This theory is useful because it reminds corporate leaders that their central purpose is to help subordinates define and reach their goals in an efficient manner by enhancing interpersonal relations (Robbins and Coulter, 2014). Northouse (2006), identifies four (4) important practices of corporate leaders as follows:

- i. Directive leader who lets subordinates know what is expected of them;
- ii. Schedules work to be done and gives specific guidance on how to accomplish tasks;
- iii. Supportive leader who shows concern for the needs of followers and is a friendly, participative leader who consults with group members and uses their suggestions before making decision; and
- iv. Achievement oriented leader who sets challenging goals and expects followers to perform at their highest level.

The purpose of the path goal theory is preferred in this study because it is envisaged that the recommendation from this study based on the findings would lead to enhanced interpersonal relationships within an organization. Therefore, the path-goal theory model shows the influence of leadership practices on interpersonal relations in an organization. The other theory that was adopted in this study is the transformational theory of leadership. This theory investigated the social exchange and interpersonal dynamics of leaders and followers. The theory also described how different kinds of leader behaviours and interactions between leaders and followers empower the followers. The theory perceived leadership as the process by which social systems change through the structuring of roles and relationships (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

2.2 Leadership Styles and their Effect on Employees

2.2.1 Transformational Leadership

This is the style of leadership in which the leader uses his influencing power and enthusiasm to motivate his followers to work for the benefit of the organization. Here, the leader seeks the requirement for change in the existing organization culture, gives a vision to his subordinates, incorporates mission and implement the change with the dedication of his followers (Robbins and Coulter, 2014). In transformational leadership, the leader acts as a role model and as the motivator, who offers vision, excitement, encouragement, morale and satisfaction to the followers. The leader inspires his people to increase their abilities and capabilities, build up self-confidence and promotes innovation in the whole organization (Abdelhalfiz et al., 2015).

A study by Abdelhalfiz et al., (2015) in Saudi Arabia showed the highest score received by the transformational style of leadership than transactional and laissez-faire style of leadership. According to Abdelhalfiz et al., (2015), citing Avolio and Bass (2004), a transformational leader is an inspirational leader who promotes encouragement and inspiration among the followers by inculcating a meaning in the assigned work while transactional leaders cater for followers' immediate self-interest by providing rewards to inspire them.

2.2.2 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is a leadership style whereby the objectives and goals are predefined and the leader uses rewards and punishment to motivate his followers. Transactional leaders display behaviours associated with constructive and corrective transaction. The constructive style is labelled; 'reward achievement' (contingent reward) and the corrective style is labelled; 'monitors mistakes' (management by exception either active or passive). Prizes and penalties are the two major tools used by a transactional leader to inspire their subordinates, that is, if an employee achieves the target within stipulated time, he or she is given a prize for his or her work, whereas if the task is not completed within the required time then he or she will be penalized for the same (Abdelhafiz et al., 2015). The study done in Amman by Abdelhafiz et al., (2015) showed some positive relationship between transactional leadership styles with respect to interpersonal relationships in an organization. Whereas transformational leaders uplift morale, motivation and morals of their followers, transactional leaders cater to their followers' immediate self-interest (Bass, 1999).

2.2.3 Laissez-faire Leadership

A laissez-faire leader lacks direct supervision of employees and fails to provide regular feedback to those under his supervision. This leadership style hinders the production of employees needing supervision. The laissez-faire style produces no leadership or supervision efforts from managers, which can lead to poor production, lack of control and increasing costs. Doci (2015) described the laissez-faire leader leadership as the passive end of leadership spectrum in which lack of leadership lays. This type of leadership style is characterized by avoidance of taking leadership responsibilities, decisions and actions even in dire circumstances. The Laissez-faire leader exercises little control over his group, leaving them to sort out their roles and tackle their work, without participating in this process himself or herself. In general, this approach leaves the team floundering with little direction or motivation. A study done by Abdelhalfiz (2015) in Saudi Arabia reviewed a negative relation between laissez-faire style of leadership and interpersonal

relationships in an organization. Similar findings were drawn from a study done in Iran by Ghorbanian in the year 2011 whose findings indicated no significant relationship between the laissez-faire management style and interpersonal relationships compared to transformational and transactional style of leadership. In addition, laissez-faire fails to inspire their employees as transformational leaders do.

2.2.4 Autocratic or Directive or Dictatorial leadership

Autocratic, also known as dictatorial or directive leadership style is embedded in leaders having full organizational power and authority of decision making in their hands without sharing it with their subordinates (Al-Ababneh, 2013). Managers make decisions alone without the input of others and possess total authority and impose their will on employees and no one challenges their decisions. This type of leadership can damage the organization irreparably by forcing their followers to execute strategies and services in a very narrow way, based upon a subjective idea of what success looks like. Interpersonal relationships are typically eliminated by autocratic leadership which is promoted in transformational leadership style (Ojokuku, Odetayo, and Sajuyigbe, 2012).

2.2.5 Democratic (Participative) Leadership

A democratic leader may be described as a leader who involved employees in decision making, delegated authority and used feedback as an opportunity for coaching employees. The democratic leadership style or participative leadership values the input of team members and peers, but the responsibility of making the final decision rests with the participative leader. Participative leadership boosts employee morale because employees make contributions to the decision-making process. The participative leadership style focuses on team support, autonomy, motivation, commitment, and team member development, job satisfaction, employee performance and group cohesion and also in building interpersonal relationships which autocratic leaders do not support (Robbins and Coulter, 2014).

2.2.6 Situational Leadership

The situational leadership manifests itself as behaviour related to task and behavior related to relationship with the group. Situational leadership style suggests that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to leadership. The situation will guide the leadership and this is influenced by various conditions that are present at a particular time (Herser & Blanchard, 1988). Ability and willingness are an interacting influence system and a significant change in one will affect the whole. Ability is the knowledge, experience and skill an individual or group brings to a particular task or activity. Willingness is the extent to which an individual or group has the confidence, commitment and motivation to accomplish a specific task (Hersey et al., 1996). A leader must identify the ability and willingness levels in their followers before applying the leadership style of directing, coaching and supporting interpersonal relationships in an organization.

2.2.7 Servanthood Leadership

The servanthood leadership focuses primarily on the growth and wellbeing of the people and the communities to which they belong. The servants-leader shares power and puts the needs of others first and helps people develop interpersonal relationships as much as possible. Servant-leadership influences individuals and groups to better achievement in an organization thus providing

greater creative opportunities for its people and raises the capacity for them to form strong association among themselves. Servanthood leadership assumes that employees working together ought to share a special bond for them to deliver their level best. A servant-leader's primary motivation and purpose is to encourage greatness in others while organizational success is the indirect derived outcome. It nurtures participatory empowering environment and further encourages interpersonal relationships of followers thus influencing a more effective motivated workforce and ultimately a more successful organization (Greenleaf, 1996).

2.3 Leadership Effect on Employee Interpersonal Relationships

Modern research revolves around exploring and understanding the mechanism as to how corporate leaders influence subordinates. In other words, researchers have started examining the mediation mechanisms which may possess the potential to explain the phenomenon toward employees' in-role and extra-role performance. The proponents of social exchange theory argue that subordinates will be more likely to respond by their feelings through in-role and extra-role performance behaviours when they perceive that their leaders attend to them fairly on an individual basis, positively through their continuing interactions (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Research conducted in 2015 by Ambrose et al found that corporate leaders directly affect their subordinates' daily life with positive attitudes and interactions based on justice and equity. This supports the results found by Li et al., (2017) and Meyer et al., (2018) who found that corporate leaders are the role models who give priority to their organizational or followers' concerns over their self-interest and build loyalty and devotion among them thereby building trust and certainty about the authenticity of their visions among the followers. In response to this, their followers react and accept the change initiatives and are more likely to perform their high-risk tasks. This type of initiative induces a sense of energy and sacrifice among the followers to perform more effectively beyond their self-interest and contribute in a better way toward bigger organizational objectives (Sousa et al., 2017).

Positive relationships at work receive increasing attention in business studies. They are regarded as stimulators of positive attitude to work and employee well-being, and restraints of employee overloading. They provide employees with a higher sense of meaningfulness, safety and availability. Employees are more willing to invest their energy in organizational citizenship behaviours. As the result, various positive effects for the organization performance are reported, such as effective knowledge management creativity, job satisfaction and commitment and decrease in absence and employee turnover (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

Raymund (2014) focused on determining the interpersonal skills and administrative influence of school administrators of West Visayas State University–Janiuay Campus (WVSU-JC) and to determine the extent of teaching performance among college faculty. The findings revealed that the Interpersonal Skills of School Administrators of WVSU-JC are very clearly evident in their support to the faculty. The school administrator's ability to allow teachers high degree of initiative and creativity in their work make them to be more dedicated is very clearly evident in their influence; when it comes to teaching performance students getting help from the teacher heads; the interpersonal skills, administrative influence, and teaching performance are interrelated and interconnected. The enhancement of one will also enhance the other two (Raymund, 2014).

Positive leadership approaches are defined by their focus on positive capabilities that can be measured, developed and which lead to performance improvement, and by the inclusion of the positive organizational context that leaders foster. Leaders play an important role in enabling extraordinary performance through positively divergent behaviours. It is not just about creating positive emotions in people. Positively deviant leadership places an emphasis on “what elevates individuals and organizations (in addition to what challenges them), what goes right in organizations (in addition to what goes wrong), what is life-giving (in addition to what is problematic or life-depleting), what is experienced as good (in addition to what is objectionable), what is extraordinary (in additions to what is merely effective), and what is inspiring (in addition to what is difficult or arduous).” Positively deviant leadership is associated with the promotion of outcomes such as interpersonal flourishing, meaningful work, and virtuous behaviours, positive emotions, and energizing networks. This shows that corporate leaders have an important influence on employee interpersonal relationships (Raymund, 2014).

2.4 The Dynamism of Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are dynamic systems that change continuously during their existence. Like living organisms, relationships have a beginning, a lifespan, and an end. They grow and improve gradually, as employees get to know each other and become closer, or they gradually deteriorate as the employees drift apart. As postulated by Knapp's model for interpersonal relationship, there are ten stages consisting of: (i) initiating, (ii) experimenting, (iii) intensifying, (iv) integrating, (v) bonding, (vi) differentiating, (vii) circumscribing, (viii) stagnating, (ix) avoiding, and (x) termination. These ten stages can be grouped into three overlapping and integrated phases namely (i) the coming together phase, (ii) the relational maintenance phase, and (iii) the coming apart phase (Ada et al., 2008).

Knapp's relational development model portrays relational development as a ten step process, broken into two phases. The model suggests that all of the steps should be done one at a time, in sequence, to make sure they are effective. However, not every relationship will go through these stages of development in the same way. Knapp's model is more prescriptive, but also presupposes that the relationship will ultimately dissolve, as evident in the five "coming apart" stages that make up the second half of the model. However, Knapp himself has said that his model is also descriptive (Ada et al, 2008).

The model describes what seems to happen, not necessarily what should happen. The model proposes that coming apart need not be seen as inherently bad, just as coming together need not be seen as inherently good. The following stages are identified by the type of communication behaviour that occurs in a given stage as well as the proportion of that type of communication behaviour to another. In this case, proportion may constitute the frequency with which the acts occur or to the relative weight given to certain acts by those involved (Ada et al., 2008).

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The descriptive study design allowed the researcher to systematically define and interpret the facts and characteristics of a given phenomenon, population, or area of interest and thereby provided the preliminary and exploratory

studies to allow researcher gather or collect information, summarize, present and interpret data for the purpose of clarification.

3.2 Study Population

The study population consisted of employees from FastLearn Technologies Ltd. The total population of FastLearn Technologies Ltd is 55 staff.

3.3 Study Sample

The study was carried out as a complete census for the whole population of the FastLearn Technologies management and employees. The management team was included in the census as they are involved in the running of the day to day activities of the organization. A total of forty-eight (48) employees were part of the focus group discussions with the researcher and seven (7) people from the management team were given then the self-administered questionnaires and were interviewed by the researcher. This brought the total study sample to fifty- five (55) respondents. It should be noted that it was not be possible to generalize the results because the census population is small. In view of the complete census, issues of validity and reliability were covered as all members of the population were given an opportunity to respond to the developed questions.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The complete census method was used in this study. This was because the population size was small. Selecting a sample from the study's population of 55 would limit the validity of the results. Management team was purposefully targeted because they were believed to have more knowledge on the operations of the organization and would provide the relevant information in relation to the study. Every member of the population at FastLearn Technologies Ltd was either interviewed or part of the focus group discussions.

3.5 Data Collection Method

Three research instruments were used to collect data. These are Questionnaires, Interview Guides and Focus Group Discussions. The use of these instruments was meant to achieve triangulation in data collection. It was considered necessary to triangulate using these methods of data collection in order to strengthen validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Furthermore, the justification for the use of triangulation in data collection methods was due to the sensitive nature of the study in which no single source of information could be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective on a study. It should be noted that during the process of collection of the primary data, the researcher was present to ensure that assistance and clarification was offered to the respondents at all times whenever need arose. Secondary data was collected from already existing, prepared or developed information which was obtained from reading journals, text books, previous research, publication, magazines and reports.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data that was collected was scrutinized for consistency and correctness. The questions were classified and codified for easy data analysis and interpretation. The data collected was entered into the computer for analysis and interpretation using a computer program or software called Microsoft Excel. Microsoft Excel made difficult analytical tasks easier and prevented the researcher from making mistakes or even forgetting certain details or items. The package also had

an ability to easily and automatically convert data into statistical charts, percentages and mathematical manipulation that were easily dealt with using the in-built functions of the package.

4.0 Presentation of Findings, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

The study comprised 48 lower level and middle level employees of FastLearn Technologies Ltd and 7 members of the management team. The study was composed of 35 males and 20 females. The majority of the employees were in the age range 20 to 30 years old while the oldest were in the age range 41 to 50 years old. The education levels of the respondents showed that majority of them at 42% of the total respondents possessed Bachelor’s Degrees while the minority at 4% only possessed Secondary School Certificates. Table 1 and figure 1 show the age distribution and educational attainment of the employees respectively.

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-30 years	31	56%
31-40 years	16	29%
41-50 years	8	15%
51- 60 years	-	-
Above 61 years	-	-
Total	55	100%

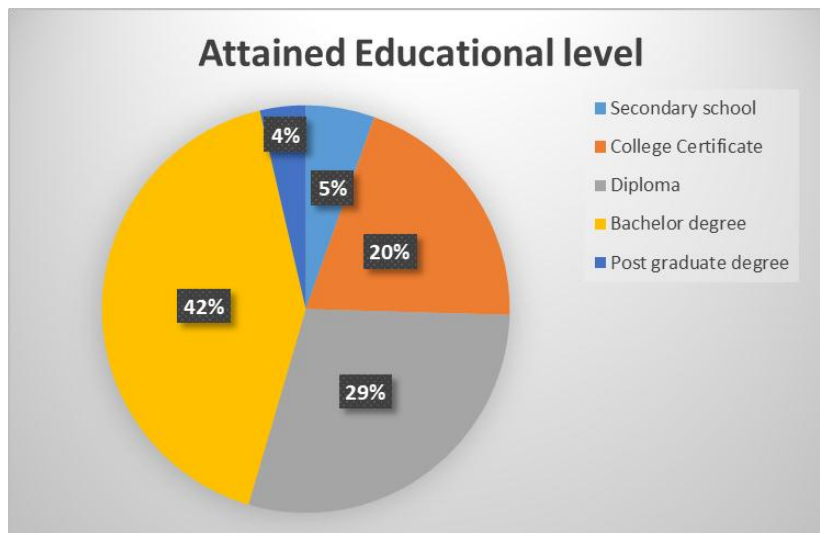


Figure 1: Distribution of attained education level

Figure 1 shows the attained education levels of the respondents. It shows that 42% of the employees had attained Bachelor’s Degree as their highest education level, 29% had Diplomas; 20% had College Certificates; 5% had Postgraduate Degrees and another 23% had

Postgraduate Degrees, while 4% of the employees stated that they had only attained Secondary School Certificates.

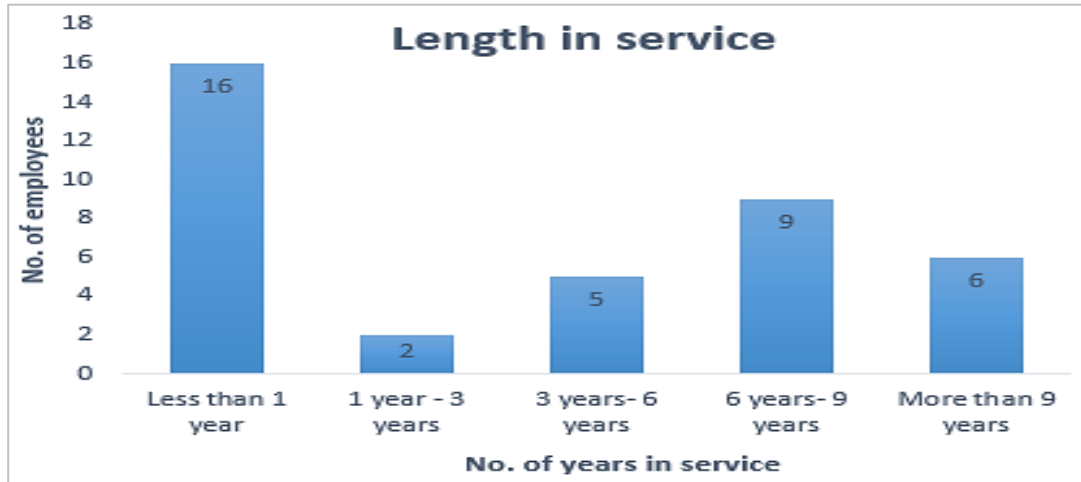


Figure 1: Number of years worked for FastLearn Technologies Ltd

Figure 2 indicates that the majority (16) of the employees recently joined the Organization and have worked for the FastLearn Technologies Ltd for less than 1 year; 9 of the respondents stated that they have worked for the organization for the period 6 – 9 years; 6 of the respondents stated that they have worked the organization for more than 9 years; 5 of the respondents stated that they have worked for the organization for the period 3 – 6 years; while 2 of the respondents have worked for the organization for the period 1- 3 years. It should be noted that of the respondents, majority of them were Sales Representatives, seconded by Information Technology Officers, while the minority were those who hold management positions.

4.2 Common corporate leadership practices that affect interpersonal relationships

When asked if they thought their supervisors’ leadership influenced the way the employees’ interpersonal relationship was with others in the organization, 44 of the employees with a percentage rate of 80% responded affirmatively while 11 of the employees with a percentage rate of 20% responded with a no. Figure 3 shows the response rates obtained.

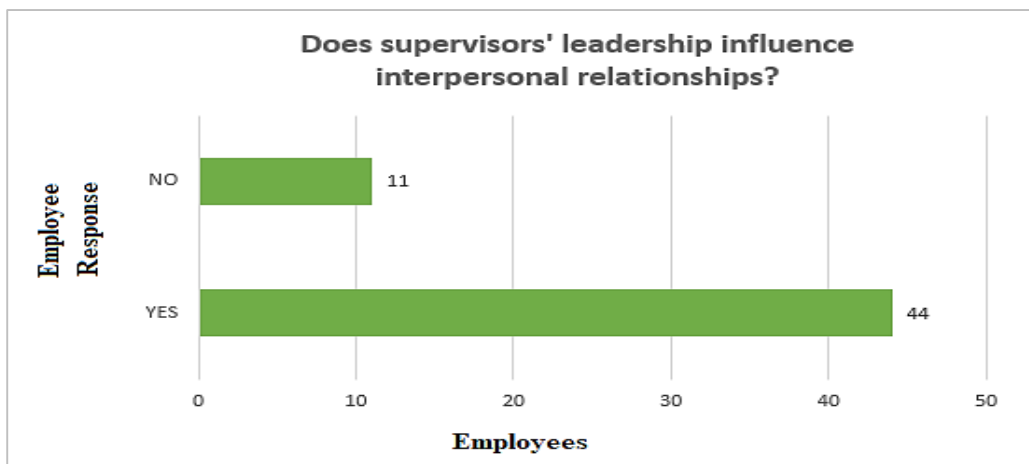


Figure 3: Does Supervisors' leadership influence interpersonal relationships?

When the employees in the lower and middle level positions at FastLearn Technologies Ltd were asked what they knew about how corporate leadership enhances interpersonal relationships in an organization, majority of them at 46% said it fosters team work among employees. Standing at 20% of the employees said corporate leadership acknowledges the available expertise that each employee possesses. Standing at 18 % of the employees said that it helps employees learn about each other’s personal interests while 16% of the employees said that it is used to enhance social support among employees. Figure 4 shows the employee perception on how corporate leadership enhances interpersonal relationships in an organization.



Figure 4: Employee perception on how corporate leadership enhances interpersonal relationships in an organization

When the lower and middle level employees were asked for the specific corporate leadership practices that they see as contributing to enhanced interpersonal relationships, 33% of them, as the majority group, said the practice of promoting a positive work environment; 27% of the employees said leaders who practice being empathic and use positive language and attitude when addressing employees respectively; 7% of the employees said leaders who inform employees on a regular basis that they care and are concerned about the welfare of the employees. Standing at 6% of the employees provided the minority response of the practice by leaders encouraging employees to engage in dialogue whenever they feel aggrieved or have personal matters that require the attention of management. Figure 5 shows the response obtained from the respondents.

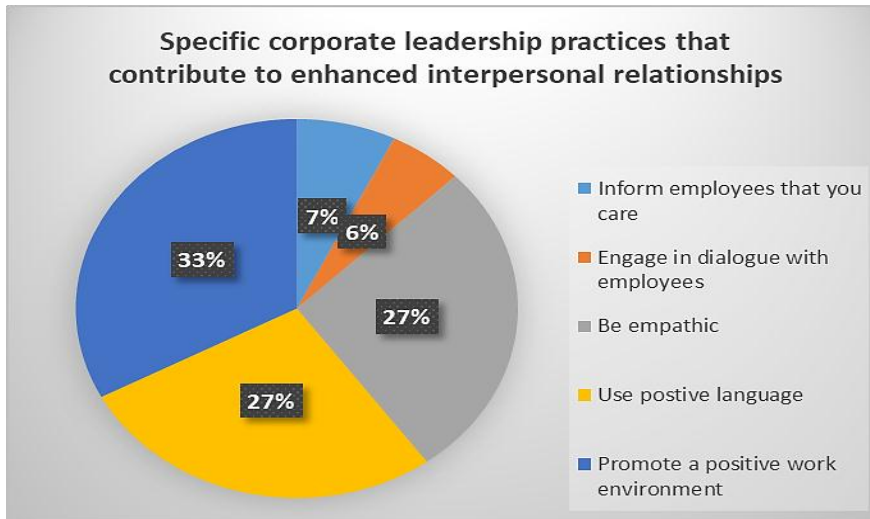


Figure 5: Specific corporate leadership practices that contribute to enhanced interpersonal relationships

When asked to indicate the specific things employees liked about their corporate leaders that help to enhance interpersonal relationships at the organization, thirty-three (33) employees with a percentage response of 60% indicated that they liked their leaders encouraging employees to respect organizational values. Twenty- two (22) employees with a percentage response of 40% indicated that they liked it when their leaders encouraged them to set goals at individual level that would feed into the mainstream organizational goals. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the obtained responses.

Table 2: Specific things employees like about their corporate leaders that help to enhance interpersonal relationships

Employee response	Frequency	Percentage
Encourages respecting Organizational values	33	60%
Encourage goal setting	22	40%
Total	55	100%

When asked to indicate the specific things employees disliked about their corporate leaders that hinder interpersonal relationships, 51 employees with a percentage response of 93% indicated that they did not like their leaders discouraging employees who held senior positions from interacting with employees who held junior positions. Four (4) employees with a percentage response of 7% indicated that they did not like it when their leaders said one thing but when it was time to implement what was said during meetings, they implemented the opposite of what was discussed. Figure 6 shows the response obtained.

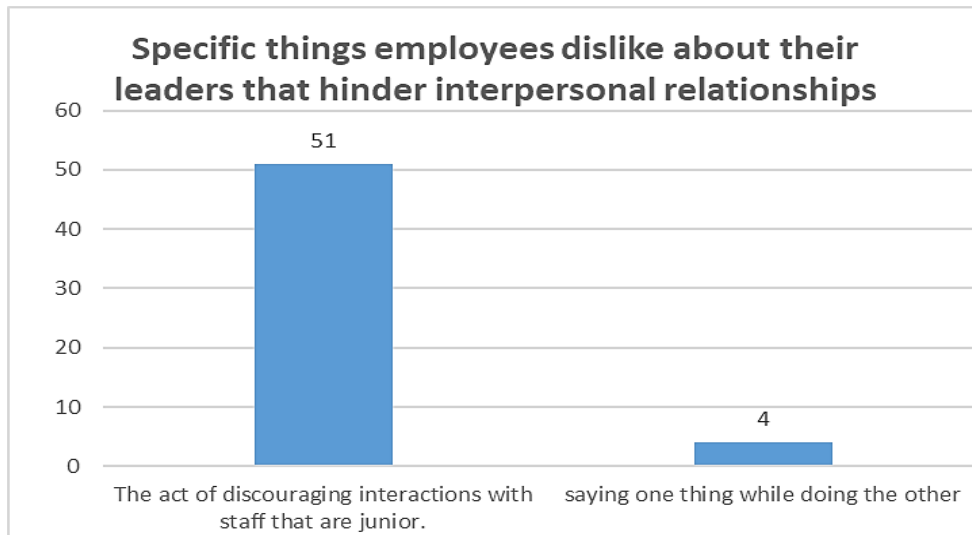


Figure 6: Specific things employees dislike about their leaders that hinder interpersonal

When asked to give the common corporate leadership practices that negatively affected interpersonal relationships, forty- seven percent (47%) as the majority response said that leaders who tend to be more concerned with the completion of tasks and have no regard for the employees’ feelings. Thirty-eight (38%) of the employees stated that corporate leaders who favour a certain category of employees over others. Thirteen percent (13%) of the employees stated that leaders who are intolerant of other employees’ feeling. With the minority response number at two percent (2%), employees stated that leaders who have no specialized abilities in conflict management. Figure 7 shows the analysis of the responses.



Figure 7: Common corporate leadership practices negatively affecting interpersonal relationships

When asked for the type of leadership that they thought was particularly practiced at the organization, 71% of staff responses from the management team indicated that the leadership style practiced was autocratic while 29% of the staff responses from the management team indicated that the leadership style practiced was democratic. The figure 8 shows the response rate from the staff from management on the type of leadership that was practiced.

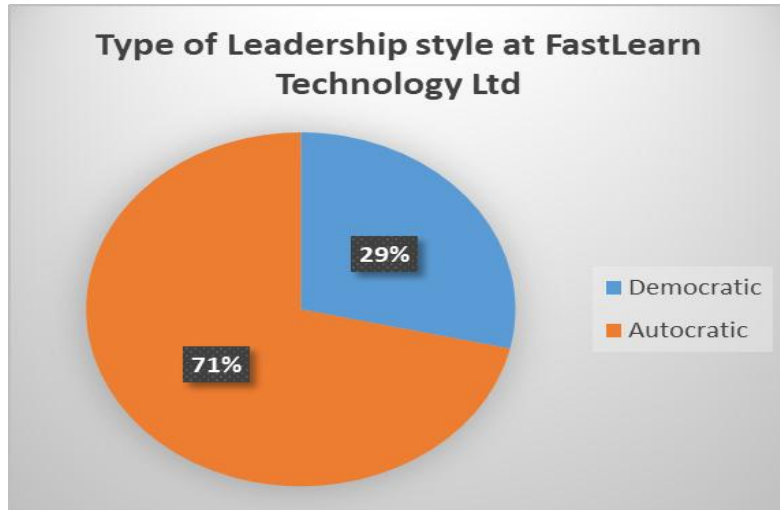


Figure 8: Leadership style practiced at FastLearn Technologies

4.3 The impact of interpersonal relationships on employee productivity

When asked what they perceived interpersonal relationships' impact on work productivity to be, majority of the employees at 76 % gave the response that interpersonal relationships hinder productivity if the relationship with other employees is bad while if it is good, there is morale to work. Thereby, attaining high productivity levels if there is morale to work. The minority responses from the employees at 24% indicated that interpersonal relationships at a place of work have no impact on work productivity. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the responses.

Table 3: - Interpersonal relationships' impact on work productivity

Employee response	Frequency	Percentage
It hinders my productivity if the relationship is bad while if it is good, there is morale to work leading to high productivity.	42	76%
No impact on work productivity	13	24%
Total	55	100%

4.4 Ways in which corporate leaders influence interpersonal relationships

When asked how corporate leaders influence interpersonal relationships within an organization and ensure that interpersonal relationships are enhanced, with the majority response percentage at 54% of the employees were the responses that corporate leaders encourage team work. Thirty- five percent (35%) of the employees responded that corporate leaders enhance interpersonal relationships by creating deliberate programmes that employees that encourage

employees to be open about their social and personal feelings. Standing at 8% were employees who did not give any response on how corporate leaders enhance interpersonal relationships within the organization. Figure 9 shows the analysis of the responses obtained.



Figure 9: How corporate leaders influence interpersonal relationships

When asked for the strategies that were put in place to enhance interpersonal relationships at the organization and to ensure that people are proud to be associated with each other, staff from the management team gave the responses; i) creation of a positive attitude towards the organization culture for all staff; ii) encouraging open communication and active listening by corporate leaders; and iii) acknowledging the expertise that each staff possesses. The obtained responses are broken down in percentages as indicated in figure 10.

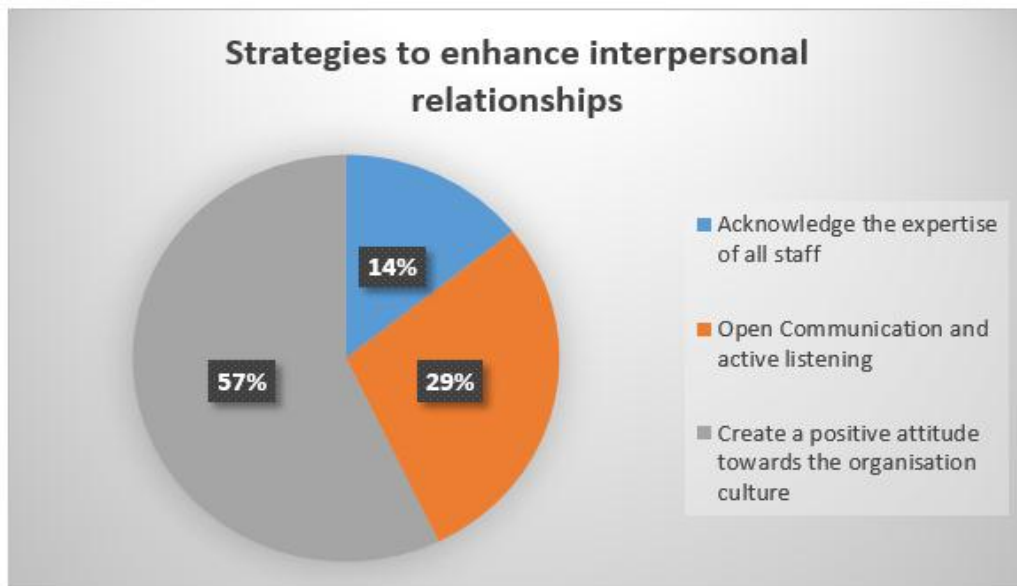


Figure 10: Strategies used to enhance interpersonal relationships

When asked who was involved in developing the strategies above, the management team staff shared a mutual response of a collective involvement by all employee representation from the top level to the lower level at the time of strategic planning for the organization. When asked if there were elements that made it difficult for the management staff to enhance interpersonal relationships, staff from the management responded affirmatively that truly there were elements that made it difficult for them to enhance interpersonal relationships. The reasons provided for the response were given with the majority of the respondents citing differences in individual cultural values as the main element. They lamented that the individual cultural values affected the way employees communicate, which is key for interpersonal relationships to work. They also lamented on issues of not allocating time away from all work activities to focus on interpersonal activities that would pave way for employees to learn about each other's interests.

When the staff from the management team were asked to give their opinion on whether the leadership styles at various levels in the organization influence interpersonal relationships, they all responded with a positive answer. They attributed their positive response to the deliberate activities put in place such as encouraging team building activities and advocating for open communication at work. When asked for the ways in which they thought their leadership influences interpersonal relationships, 3 of the staff from the management team, representing a percentage of 43% of the responses gave the response of negotiating with employees on a number of issues that affected them before a decision could be made. The other 3 staff from the management team representing 43% of the responses obtained was the answer that open communication was a way of leadership used at the organization to influence interpersonal relationships. One (1) staff representing 14% of the responses obtained from the staff from the management team gave a response that engaging in conflict resolution techniques was one of the ways in which the leadership influenced interpersonal relationships. The breakdown of the responses is indicated in the table below.

Table 4: Ways in which leadership influences interpersonal relationships

Employee response	Frequency	Percentage
Negotiate with employees on a number of issues that affect them	3	43%
Conflict resolution	1	14%
Open communication	3	43%
Total	7	100%

When asked to give recommendations on how corporate leaders can enhance interpersonal relationships in an organization, 27% of the employees recommended that the corporate leaders should identify employees that may seem to be in conflict with one another and resolve the existing conflict; 24% of the employees recommended that corporate leaders create a work atmosphere where leaders can be approached for mediation when employees are at conflict with one another; 22% of the employees recommended that corporate leaders should encourage all employees to be free to engage in dialogue about issues affecting them through means such as employee sessional counselling; 15% of the employees recommended that corporate leaders take

keen interest in team building activities; while 7% of the employees recommended that corporate leaders exercise impartiality when passing judgement between one or more employees who may have differences among themselves. With the least percentage recommendation at 5% of the employees was that corporate leaders should develop a conflict resolution policy at the work place to facilitate for ways in which conflicts among employees are resolved. The figure below shows the analysis of the responses.

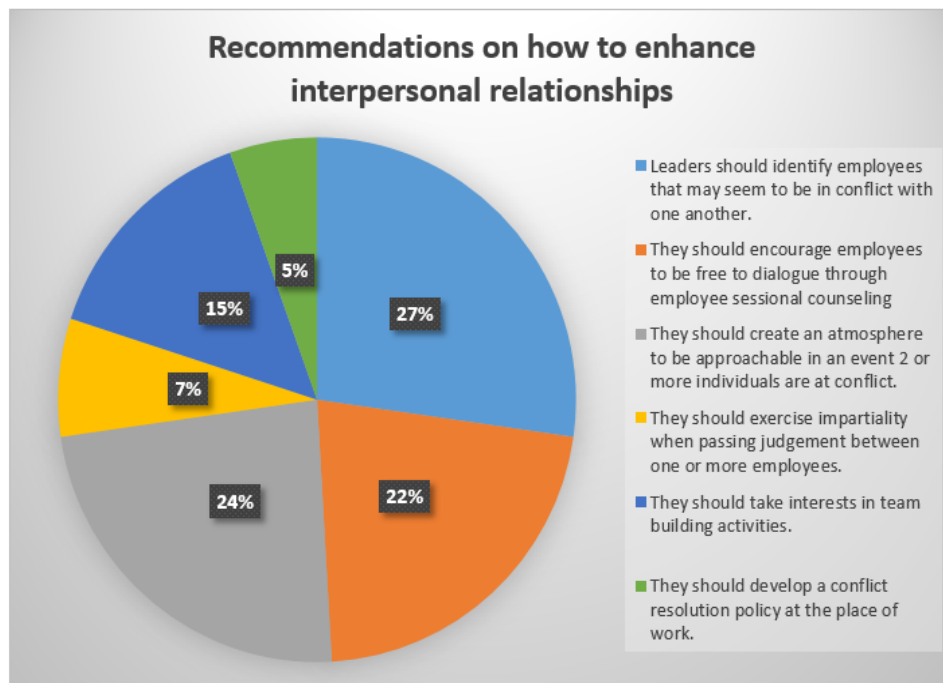


Figure 11: Recommendation on how to enhance interpersonal relationships in an organization

5.0 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendation

5.1 What are the common corporate leadership practices that affect interpersonal relationships?

When asked questions in line with the common corporate leadership practices that affect interpersonal relationships, majority of the respondents indicated that promoting a positive work environment and respecting the organizational values were some of the practices that affected interpersonal relationships in a positive manner. The findings from this study's responses resonate with the observation made by (Robbins & Coulter, 2014) who saw employee input in team work as a contributor towards the attainment of the organizational goals and thereby valuing the overall organizational values. On the other hand, most of the respondents indicated that leaders who tend to be more concerned with the completion of tasks and have no regard for the employees' feelings exhibited negative practices of corporate leadership with regards to interpersonal relationships. They further provided the negative practices as those exhibited by corporate leaders who favour a certain category of employees over others and those leaders who are intolerant of other employees' feeling and lack empathy. The negative practices by the corporate

leaders as provided by the respondents relate with the thought provided under the autocratic leadership. Interpersonal relationships are typically overshadowed by this type of leadership which largely focuses on what the leader wants while sidelining the views of the other employees (Ojokuku, Odetayo & Sajuyigbe, 2012).

5.3 How do interpersonal relationships impact employee productivity?

The study revealed that there is an impact that is observed from interpersonal relationships on productivity at a place of work. This is observed in the writings of Lee and Dawes (2005) who argued that the greater the density of relationships within the organization, the greater is the impact on organizational efficiency and productivity. This is supported by the responses obtained from the employees from FastLearn Technologies Ltd who indicated that interpersonal relationships hinder productivity if the relationship is bad while if it is good, there is morale to work. The morale to work would eventually lead to productivity at a place of work.

Furthermore, the study findings from the respondents indicated that corporate leaders as well as management staff advocate for team work among employees. Team work may be regarded as a factor that leads to the attainment of the set goals for the organization. This is in line with Eiesenberger et al (2002)'s observation that productivity increases tremendously when employees work together in groups as compared to an individual employee working in isolation.

5.4 How do corporate leaders influence interpersonal relationships?

When asked questions associated with how corporate leaders influence interpersonal relationships, majority of the responses obtained indicated that corporate leaders encourage team work and create deliberate programmes that would pair employees to work on particular activities that bring them closer to one another as an entity belonging to one organization. The responses obtained co-relate with the provisions of democratic leaders as reviewed in the literature in chapter two of this paper. The democratic leaders focus on team support, autonomy, motivation, commitment, and team member development to attain the required job satisfaction, employee performance and group cohesion within the organization (Robbins et al., 2014).

5.5 Conclusion

The study revealed a number of significant findings in relation to the objectives and the reviewed literature. One of the salient and major finding that this research has revealed is that interpersonal relationships within the organization actually do have an impact on the organization's productivity. The impact can either be negative or positive depending on the role that corporate leaders play to encourage or discourage interpersonal relations. All in all, the study observed that corporate leaders do play a role in enhancing interpersonal relations within the organization.

Finally, the broader implications of these findings are to find out the role of corporate leaders in enhancing interpersonal relationships at FastLearn Technologies Ltd. This research hopes to be the basis on which other research works can be begun as well as an addition to the already existing body of knowledge on the subject of corporate leaders and interpersonal relationships. If the recommendations stated in this paper are adopted for implementation, they may help in enhancing interpersonal relationships through the roles of corporate leaders at FastLearn

Technologies Ltd and/ or any other organization in an effort to uphold the work productivity and have a unified workforce.

5.6 Recommendation

The study makes the following recommendations to management at FastLearn Technologies Ltd and all the relevant stakeholders:

1. Management should ensure that corporate leaders encourage team building activities such as employee retreats to create a hospitable environment for employees to interact and be unified.
2. Corporate leaders should encourage all employees to be free to engage in dialogue about issues affecting them through means such as employee sessional counselling.
3. Corporate leaders should create a work atmosphere where leaders can be approached for mediation when employees at conflict with one another.
4. Management should develop conflict resolution strategies and policies which will be in favour of both employees and the employers. The strategies and policies will be used to facilitate for ways in which conflicts among employees are resolved.
5. Management should conduct sensitization programmes in which employees can be educated about the various professions and expertise housed by the organization.

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