Moderating Variables with Narcissism Example

Details
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Adika strode confidently into the office. He knew his work and he grasped that he performed well. He met with clients who believed his confidence came from a strong company product. Adika viewed himself as self assured and strived to guide his team on the right corporate path.

Conversely, Wekesa worked for Adika and saw him a different light. Wekesa viewed Adika as arrogant who felt no concern for employees’ feelings. She found that he often proclaimed unrealistic visions of the future and what the team would achieve. In meetings, Wekesa noticed that Adika did not listen to the opinions of the staff and tried to push his version, his agenda, and his ideas without regards to others.

While certainly self bias exists as a major element of human psychology whereby we judge ourselves more kindly than we assess others, the issue with Adika hits at a deeper problem in today’s workplace. How many readers know a manager in their workplace who exhibits Adika’s characteristics? Business Talk discussed the prevalent disconnect between what science knows and what businesses actually do during the research series. Thankfully, some managers increasingly apply scientific principles into their leadership techniques. Others lack self awareness.

As discussed in previous weeks, the world contains causes and effects. Cause a crime, then the effect may include jail time. Desire the effect of high profits in your company, then the causes surrounding employee motivation and their organisation citizenship behaviour should feature prominently in your thoughts. Such linear thinking of independent variables leading to dependent variable outcomes sets strong managers apart from mediocre performers.

Inasmuch, organisation citizenship behaviour scientific techniques for managers have existed since 1938. Scientists continue to uncover numerous other organisation citizenship behaviour methods that help employees build willingness to cooperate, perform dependably, innovate, and engage spontaneously at work. As discussed in Business Talk previously, executives desire their employees to display the following components of organisation citizenship behaviour uncovered by prolific researcher Philip Podsakoff among others: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue in the workplace. The five aspects pack a potent workplace recipe for outstanding performance growth.

Thankfully social scientists such as Samuel Aryee and Keyvan Salehi uncovered that a main cause of
organisational citizenship behaviour among employees entails whether those same employees trust their managers. So utilising trust building techniques, as earlier discussed in Business Talk, enhances organisation citizenship behaviour that then leads to higher profits. Business managers can try the techniques and researchers can test better ways of implementation.

However, a spanner in many offices involves Adika and Wekesa’s scenario above. Would you classify Adika as confident or as narcissistic? The American Psychiatric Association defines the term narcissism as a persuasive pattern of overt grandiosity, self-focus, and self-importance behaviour displayed by an individual or groups of individuals. Someone can internalize high degrees or low degrees of narcissism. Interestingly, narcissistic behaviour can spread in an office much like the flu.

Slight or healthy narcissism, known more commonly as confidence, brings positive benefits to workers since it increases employees’ belief in their own abilities to the point whereby their heightened self esteem boosts their performance. Healthy narcissism also includes empathy that assists an employee to master the interpersonal world, self-conscious, and a sense of control and power. Each of the before mentioned aids team formation and performance.

Unfortunately, most of Adika’s behaviour appears more as unhealthy narcissism. Researcher Roy Lubit uncovered that more extreme narcissists do a poor job at developing people, lack empathy, alienate subordinates, devalue others, insistent on having their own way, and willingly exploit others. Elsa Ronningstam takes it further and includes inflated and vulnerable self-esteem, heightened reactions to criticism, intense feeling of anger, shame, and envy, and arrogance. Mark Stein found that narcissist employees think that their department or company exists as extraordinarily special and unique.

Breaking down the above variables into a research equation, organisational trust serves as the independent variable and organisation citizenship behaviour acts as the dependent variable that managers desire from their employees. Where does Adika’s narcissism fit in? Researchers call it, in this particular example, a moderating variable. Essentially, moderating variables may enhance or hinder the relationship between causes and effects. A simple example from above, a thief robs a grocery store is a cause that should hold the effect of jail time, but the moderating variable could include police funding as to whether that thief gets caught and imprisoned.

While managers may try hard to build trust so employees perform, if a firm retains an extreme narcissist, then their narcissism can block the positive effects from higher trust and instead bring negative consequences to a company.

As a director, unconscious imperialism must end. If you retain narcissistic managers, their issues will stand in the way of you achieving your organisational goals. You either need to remove them from your company or send them for counseling.
As an executive, do you try different proven management techniques that fail to work? Search for moderating variables in your workplace that may be hindering your growth. Likewise, are you a researcher who obtains unpredictable results when testing independent and dependent variables? Look out for moderating variables. Never underestimate the power of moderating effects on your workplace and in your research.

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