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Rafi Mahmoud Al-rwaidan

Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Al al-Bayt University, Mafraq, Jordan,
rwaidan@aabu.edu.jo

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The Fear of Leadership: Critical Review

Rafi Mahmoud Al-rwaidan*

Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Al al-Bayt University, Mafrqa, Jordan

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Abstract: The fear of leadership, which refers to staff members' reluctance to assume leadership roles, is a significant topic that is the subject of this conceptual study. This is particularly true in organizations that may experience ineffective and subpar leadership, a toxic internal work environment, and difficulties in a competitive business environment. The current study first identified the negative effects of fear of leadership and its primary causes (fear of new experience, fear of making mistakes, fear of leading in a company that is sinking, bad leadership, fear of the post-leadership period, and fear of making others your enemies), and then it discussed what can be done to lessen this fear.

Keywords: Leadership, fear of leadership, bad leadership, mistakes and failures, unhealthy culture

1 Introduction

There is no doubt that leadership is not a supernatural ability and leaders are not a special breed of human being capable of achieving what others could not, no matter what they did. Additionally, leadership is not a job that fits into the system of job descriptions or an administrative role where the person in that position may fulfill all of the qualifications. Therefore, it must be highlighted that leadership is that specific combination of the leader's distinctive qualities, the circumstances that supply the leader's position, and the employees who support the leader and give him or her strength to do new things or accomplish things that have not been accomplished in the past [1,2]. Leadership is the ability to create a difference through a new vision, new way of working, or influencing others to achieve goals. Therefore, the importance of leadership is not in the position or powers that accompany this position, but in the effective ability to make the company better achieve business results or to outperform competitors in the market [3,4].

Leadership is defined as a process of influencing a group to achieve goals [5]. The ability to excite others and lead them toward desired goals is the essence of leadership. Because of this skill, it appears that individuals who ardently want to have a leadership role are focused on leadership. Persuading a group to accept responsibility for a group problem is another definition of leadership [6,7,8]. The definitions of leadership emphasize that leadership is a process of influencing others to act according to what the leader desires in order to achieve the goals of the company. Therefore, the fundamental role of a leader is to take on the duties of others in planning, inspiring, and carrying out the tasks necessary to realize the objectives of the organization. This responsibility may frequently seem burdensome, unwelcome, and unpleasant to many people [9,10,11]. Therefore, the fear of taking responsibility for leadership constitutes a major obstacle for many individuals who may see that self-leadership is better than leading others because it is linked to a limited responsibility that is determined by the individual's responsibility for himself without taking responsibility for others [12,13]. This knowledge makes it possible for the fear of leadership to appear to be a rational and completely legitimate fear. This study focuses on the anxiety of accepting leadership responsibilities as a typical and understandable situation in the workplace. In many circumstances, the fear of leadership appears to be a normal worry with explanations and justifiable causes. This paper is a conceptual investigation of this fear and aims to shed light on its sources and effects.

2 Fear of leadership

The fear of leadership can be linked to other concepts such as: fear leadership (leading is not based on fear) and leadership phobia (Leadphobia). Fear of leadership is different from fear leadership or fear-based leadership in which leadership seeks

* Corresponding author e-mail: rwaidan@aabu.edu.jo

by forcing employees to do what it wants by relying on the force of coercion. In this case, the leadership uses the fear of the employees to carry out the required instructions and tasks in order to avoid the punishment that the leadership will impose on those who violate its instructions [14, 15]. Therefore, it appears that fear is the most effective motivator for getting followers to do what the leader wants. Fear of leadership is distinct from "leadphobia," which is an exaggerated and unfounded fear of any responsibility for what others do, even if that responsibility is limited and only lasts for a brief time and is more closely related to the nature of the work than it is to the roles of other people [16, 17]. "Leadphobia" is usually related to a traumatic personal experience or circumstances that relate to the individual more than they are to work. The leadership, with its decision-making authority and the use of the company's resources according to its vision, is desirable and sought after by individuals [18]. However, there are those who do not wish to be a leader or a manager responsible for others. Fear of leadership means not striving to be a manager at any organizational level in the company. It also refers to the employee's refusal to be promoted to a position in which he is responsible for others or for business results in the event of success or failure in the company [19, 20].

According to Aycan et al. (2014), fear of Leadership is defined as the fears that employees feel and the hesitations they harbor about possible negative consequences of accepting leadership roles and responsibilities [21]. This definition does not encompass all aspects of employee fear of leadership, as there are many factors, some relating to employee personality traits and others to the organizational culture of the company, and the negative consequences of leadership failure do not tell the whole story. Therefore, the fear of leadership appears in many cases to affect a large number of employees who see that the leadership so difficult task [22, 23]. Also, failures as a dark side in leadership are much more than successes in leadership [24]. There is also the unhealthy culture that does not tolerate mistakes and failures in the work, generates strong fears of assuming any leadership responsibility in the company [25].

3 Effects of fear of leading

In the event of success or failure, leadership plays a strategic role in the firm and the outcomes of its work. Additionally, it serves as an example for staff members to follow in terms of taking charge of resource management, productivity growth, market share expansion, and profit maximization. The current management of the corporation may continue indefinitely due to a fear of leadership. Planning for the leadership's replacement is challenging. In many cases, the company can get new employees from outside the company but it is very difficult to get leaders from outside. Therefore, fear of leadership represents a strategic dilemma in a company that expects that with time there will always be a number of enthusiastic candidates for leadership positions. Undoubtedly, this fear leads to a decrease in this number with the continuation of the increasing causes and risks that feed the fear of leading.

The fear of leadership can prevent the organization from having possibilities for the emergence of new effective leaders, and over time, it causes people to favor simple tasks with little responsibility over tasks that are more challenging and demanding. Additionally, this fear fosters reliance on the leader for everything, which causes the company's leaders to focus on numerous less crucial aspects rather than the most crucial strategic issues for the company's survival and expansion.

4 Reasons for fear of leadership

The fear of leadership can be explained by the responsibility that can arise as a result of the leadership position in the company. This responsibility is linked to employees with many fears: fear of the new experience, fear of making mistakes, fear of leading in the sinking company, bad leadership, fear of the post-leadership period, fear of becoming an enemy of others. All these fears lead to the reluctance of some or many employees of leadership and the desire to stay away from it.

Fear of the new experience: If the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, then the oldest and strongest of all fear is the fear of the unknown [26]. Leadership as a higher position with high responsibilities, tasks and expectations represents a new and unique experience that differs from its predecessors for individuals who were not in the leadership position previously. In working life as in assuming a leadership position in the company, the new experience can be a kind of unknown related to changing the status quo as a stability and calm state to a new state characterized by uncertainty and high risk. In both cases, anxiety, tension, and the expectation of great difficulties can be associated with this new experience, which is the experience of leadership. Because these jobs are typically traded between the same members of senior management, leadership experience is not available to the majority of employees in all firms, and there are few leadership positions and fewer people who hold them. As a result, a lot of workers experience a common fear of taking on a new leadership role, especially given that this experience will be accompanied by a serious lack of knowledge and experience. This experience will also be associated with a perceived loss of personal control [27].

Fear of making mistake and failure: Although effective management experience recommends not being afraid of mistakes, learning from mistakes [28,29]. The error management is very important to improve functional and organizational performance [30]. We know that all employees make mistakes in their work, including the leadership that can make mistakes, however, these mistakes and the associated failures and negative results, remain a major obstacle that generates fear of leadership in companies. According to [24]. The dark side of leadership, failure in leadership, can be a valuable teaching tool. The loss of a company's reputation, revenue, and credit is frequently caused by mistakes and wrongdoings [31]. Because the failure or error is tied to the owner, who must pay the losses and difficulties that follow from it, the fear of failure or mistake is therefore seen as a normal emotion among employees. Because the error is linked to its owner, who must endure the losses and obligations associated with it, employees are said to experience fear of mistakes as a typical emotion. Depending on the differences between individuals, some employees may accept the attempt and the associated potential mistakes, but other employees simply do not accept mistakes and see that it leads to heavy burdens and major problems at work. There are additional difficulties and dangers to the fear of mistake and failure associated with the fact that the mistake of leadership (such as the wrong choices and decisions) usually means the mistakes of the whole company. The fear of these mistakes increases anxiety, stress and fear of leadership, which, when mistaken, may lead to the failure of the entire company.

Fear of leading in sinking company: The desire to lead may be strong in successful and recovering companies, but this desire turns into fear and aversion in sinking companies. In today's business environment, there are a lot of failed companies a lot of models explain it [32]. These sinking companies are increasing the fear of leading. In periods of jumping from a sinking ship, leadership is the last option, but also the worst. In these circumstances, being a subordinate is better than being a leader. The fear of leadership becomes rational and common among all. In today's business world, a large number of companies are threatened with exit from the market, fear of leadership in these sinking companies appears as an option in many cases. Numerous signs point to a company's impending doom, including bankruptcy, insolvency, an early exit from the market to prevent anticipated losses, and lost opportunity cost (the cost of missed chances to earn higher returns on a comparable investment) [33]. In the United States, existing businesses fail by 51% every four years, according to [34]. This indicates that businesses are unable to adapt to changing market conditions, such as transitioning to the new economy (the digital and knowledge-based economy) or working in industries where pandemic conditions are prevalent. Thus, in times of crises and pandemics, the fear of leadership is relatively common.

Bad leadership: In the leadership literature, there are many models of poor leadership such as: ineffective, negative, bad, poor, evil, negative, toxic, descriptive or unethical leadership [35,36,37,38,39]. These types of leadership have a negative and harmful impact on the work environment and the relationship of employees with leadership. The direct result of this is an increase in the fear of leadership that is hateful and bad and leads to negative outcomes that harm the company and employees. Therefore, the fear of leadership is increasing and growing due to bad leadership in its various forms, which is prevalent in many companies.

Fear of the post-leadership period: Even successful leaders who are used to bright lights and talked about out loud, know that the post-leadership period will be very difficult. After leaving the leadership, there will be no lights or exciting interest, but rather a difficult decline and severe isolation that reveals that the business world is a world directed to the present and that the great past has no real impact. Also, its learned lessons are not a good commodity in a rapidly changing environment. The leaders are also acutely aware that all of their aides and admirers, who are currently affiliated with them, won't be there when they are no longer in positions of leadership because their presence is related to the leadership position and not to the leader. The retiring leaders of their posts are bearing a tremendous personal loss in this situation. For those who observe that the driving experience involves harmful behaviors linked to the desire for the spotlight and regret for the bad behavior of others, the fear of leadership may be anticipatory in this case.

Leader as an enemy of others: When the leadership is thirsty for power, it provokes crises in order to intervene in them with orders against the employees [8]. Over time, it creates a work environment characterized by hostile leadership that makes leadership the enemy of all and the cause of conflicts between managers themselves and between them and employees. This unfriendly and ineffective leadership is a symptom of the organizational illness that prevents the business from reaching its objectives [40]. Leadership becomes the enemy of everyone in the toxic workplace, which is characterized by conflicts and hostilities. This leadership gives rise to a number of fears, the chief of which is the fear of leadership because it tends to create more problems and crises than it does successes and initiatives.

5 Discussion: What to do?

Effective and efficient leadership represents the most influential engine in achieving great achievements in the company through the efficient exploitation of resources and motivating employees in order to increase productivity and achieve superiority in the market. So the company needs new leaders at all levels and functions. The fear of leadership is a major obstacle to the formation and emergence of new leaders in the company. The question: What to do with fear of leadership seems logical and important in companies that suffer from the mistakes of negative and bad leadership and the increased

possibilities of failure in their projects and activities inside and outside the company. In an unhealthy work environment and with bad leadership values and practices in the company, changing leaders is not sufficient in addressing the problem of fear of leadership.

An environment where mistakes and failures are accepted as a normal part of doing business in a competitive climate is conducive to taking responsibility in general and leadership responsibility in particular. Employees are more open to new experiences, such as leadership experience and its weighty responsibilities, when they view mistakes and failures as sources of intensive and intelligent learning [41,42]. According to [43], there is no doubt that corporate culture plays an important role in making mistakes and failures in a project more or less acceptable. Story telling about the experiences of successful leaders in the company helps employees look towards playing a leadership role in order to create new stories about their successful leadership. Perhaps this sharing stories will change the idea of leadership from being a great responsibility of the leader only to leadership as a real source of positive contribution to the development of the company and writing its history and exciting stories. Modern business practices promote work teams as a way to build collective efficacy for tackling challenging issues and delivering the commercial solutions that businesses require [44]. In a highly competitive company climate, multidisciplinary work teams and self-managed teams offer an important chance to create leaders in business problem-solving and innovative and hard tasks. Self-managed teams practice empowerment, independence, and collective leadership, which lowers the fear of leadership and serves as a good source for finding staff members who are prepared for leadership positions.

Leadership is a combination of the personal characteristics, knowledge and experiences of leaders. For this, an effective training program directed at developing leadership is considered one of the important means in modern companies that seek to plan the succession of the current leaders in order to continue the company without problems and crises related to the lack of leaders [45]. The company's adoption of a leadership development program can be a systematic attempt to confront and overcome the fear of leadership.

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