Strengthening Loyalty and Performance of Government Office Employees: Exploring Leadership Strategies

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Abstract – Maintaining loyal and high-performing employees is critical to organizational productivity, higher teamwork, innovation, and personal satisfaction. This study investigates strategies employed by leaders in strengthening loyalty and the performance of government office employees. This study used a qualitative-descriptive approach and gathered primary data from interviews with key informants, including the head division, three section chiefs, and four employees. The results show that employee loyalties and performances were demonstrated through their ability to complete tasks, cooperate, work punctually, and provide good services. Leaders employed some critical strategies: motivating employees, building effective communication, fostering work relationships, and performing work supervision. The techniques used were associated with a positive work environment, such as the achievement of targets, the establishment of good cooperation among employees, the creation of a family atmosphere at work, and the occurrence of a pattern of mutual relationships between employees and leaders.

Keywords – employee loyalty, employee performance, leadership strategy.

DOI: 10.18421/SAR63-03
https://doi.org/10.18421/SAR63-03

1. Introduction

Work loyalty is essential for the organization in improving productivity, image, and growth [1], [2] and for the employee in their personal and professional performance [3]. Similarly, high-performing employees would foster organizational growth, development, and sustainability [4]. Thus, maintaining employee loyalty and performance is critical for corporate leaders. Employees in an organization hold knowledge, thoughts, desires, encouragement, power, and skills. Appropriately managing all employee potentials will produce quality employees.

Loyalty is a person’s attitude to remain steadfast and obedient to the organization, reflected through work discipline, responsibility, devotion to their abilities and expertise, and honesty at work [5]. Loyalty is closely related to the achievement of organizational goals [1]. First, commitment can encourage employees to do their best work beyond the established standards because loyal employees feel comfortable with the work environment, work relationships, self-appreciation, quality of supervision, and work duties. Second, loyalty also causes a reduction in the number of employee turnover, layoffs, and employee absenteeism rates.

Employee performance can be defined as (1) a person’s ability to perform specific tasks that are relevant to their abilities, expertise, experience, and knowledge; (2) the opportunity to do things related to technology, and (3) the willingness to be able to achieve the goal [6]. Defining performance is an organizational way to ensure employees perform tasks as expected while still paying attention to the organization’s goals, size, and assessment. In short, employee performance is the ability to fulfill tasks and roles, complete routine tasks, and behave in the workplace, including quality and quantity.

Quality employees can fulfill their responsibilities effectively and analyze and solve problems in the work environment.
In addition, in the social aspect, employees who perform well can communicate with colleagues or across the department, establish relationships and cooperation, and have high empathy [7]. Diverse factors are associated with employees’ performance, including environment (training culture, management support, environmental dynamism, and organizational climate), work characteristics (work environment, job autonomy, work communication), and employees (intrinsic motivation, skill flexibility, skill level, proactiveness, adaptability, commitment) [8]. Other researchers detailed factors that positively influence employee performance: compensation, motivation, leadership, work environment, performance appraisal, work experience, training, education, and job satisfaction [9].

Keeping employees loyal and performing well is critical to organizational productivity, higher teamwork and internal cooperation, innovation, and personal satisfaction [1], [6]. Furthermore, organizational performance is highly dependent on the quality of employees’ performance [4]. Excellent employee performance will bring about the progress of the organization. Therefore, encouraging employees to remain loyal and perform well requires the role of the leader as a central figure, representing the corporate image, the highest power holders, and decision-makers regarding the organizational cycle [10]. The biggest challenges facing leaders today are environmental change in the industrial revolution 4.0 era and disruption, needing a new paradigm in leadership. This new paradigm may include a shift from competence to collaboration, focus on many things to building relationships, and stability to change [11].

Leaders’ determination to a reasonable and appropriate strategy and the ability to provide direction make them know, attract, and retain committed and high-performing employees. Successful leaders are those whose followers are productive and satisfied with their leadership [12]. In other words, the leader is responsible for providing earnest attention and effort in fostering, managing, and directing employees [13]. The right mentoring will provide job satisfaction for employees.

Leaders of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) of East Java Province continue to strive for excellent quality services for the community, career development, and work capabilities of employees. However, what leaders do to improve employee loyalty and performance, particularly in the MoRA environment, is unexplored. Previous studies indicate positive relationships between leadership style, staff loyalty, and performance [14]. Servant leaders [15], communicative leaders [16], participatory leaders [17], transformative leaders [10], and e-leadership implementers [18] are more likely to have loyal and performing employees.

This study aims to uncover leaders’ strategies for increasing employees’ loyalty and performance at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of East Java Province. Specifically, this study seeks to explore (1) contextualized meaning and the correlates of employee loyalty and performance, (2) leaders’ strategies taken to improve employee loyalty and performance, and (3) the impact of the strategies on the work environment. The results of this study broaden horizons and provide practical learning about efforts that can improve and strengthen employee loyalty and performance in government and non-government offices.

2. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach as the researchers seek to describe and analyze strategies taken by leaders for maintaining employee and staff performance in depth. Qualitative research aims to find and describe narratively the activities that take place and their impact on life [19]. This kind of research prioritizes the process and meaning of the information obtained and explains the condition of the object under study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the head of the education division, three section heads, and four staff working at the MoRA East Java, determined purposively. The discussions took place in their respective office and lasted about one to two hours for each informant. Before conducting interviews, informants were given a short explanation of the study’s purpose and focus. Data were analyzed using a common approach to qualitative data analysis [20], including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to construct the meaning of the data.

Furthermore, an inductive method of data analysis and a logical interpretation was applied. Comparing the data’s emerging themes was implemented to ensure validity and accuracy before the conclusion drawing [21]. Using this approach, we delineated emerging strategies initiated by leaders in maintaining employee loyalty and performance and their outcomes.

3. Results and Discussion

This section showcases and analyzes the study’s primary findings in connection with the research objectives. Furthermore, the researchers consider the possible consequences of these results for both theoretical advancements and practical applications.
3.1. Employee Loyalty and Performance

Loyalty means an employee’s willingness to give all his abilities, thoughts, skills, and time to participate in achieving goals. Loyalty is displayed through the daily attitudes and behaviors of employees at work. A person’s organizational performance is evaluated using a series of behaviors and activities based on the organization’s expectations and goals [9]. In this study, employees demonstrated loyalty by realizing tasks, cooperation, discipline, and good service delivery. The ability to complete tasks can be seen from employees’ totality in their work. Based on the results of interviews, employees showed loyalty and performance by completing tasks well based on their primary duties and functions, work targets, allotted time, and transparent work reporting.

The completion of tasks performed by each employee cannot be separated from the labor division in the organization that concerns various job specifications. The division of labor makes it easier for leaders to train substitutes for employees who cannot attend or be transferred if the work involves few tasks. However, if the work consists of a limited number of jobs, the employee can become an expert in doing the work. A high level of expertise will result in better output quality [22], [23]. Working together to complete tasks is a form of employee loyalty and performance. Cooperation is the willingness to give and receive contributions from or to others in achieving the intended goals. Cooperation is the combination/synergy of the strengths of several people to accomplish a goal. The advantage of teamwork is the emergence of various solutions that are individually unresolved [24].

The attitude of labor discipline indicates the loyal attitude and subsequent performance of employees. Discipline in organizational life means that all employees are willing to obey the organization’s rules and regulations without coercion voluntarily [25]. Employees who can control themselves and comply with applicable norms mean providing positive support to the organization in implementing the programs set to accelerate the achievement of organizational goals regarding the discipline of education unit employees.

The work discipline at the MoRA office may be categorized as sufficient because some employees are still late for work and absent from work. Absence of work is sometimes unavoidable because each employee has problems such as family, illness, or essential affairs. Several factors affect employee absences, including severe illnesses/accidents, personal issues, boredom at work, excessive workload, low morale, poor working conditions, lack of supervision, transportation problems, poor physical fitness, inadequate employee nutrition, stress, and dissatisfaction [26]. Services are activities provided to prepare, assist, and take care of goods or services from one party to another. This current study found that employees showed their loyalty and performance through the ability to provide good service to the community and other agencies. Quality service is provided to meet the needs and expectations of customers. Criteria for public services include effectiveness, acceptability, affordability, efficiency, fairness, and relevance [27]. The characteristics of quality public services are punctuality of service, both waiting time and processing time, ease of obtaining services (including location/room where services, availability of information, and others), comfort in getting services, friendliness and courtesy in providing services, the existence of supporting attributes of services such as the cleanliness of the room, air-conditioned waiting rooms, and accuracy of benefits including being error-free [27].

Employees at the MoRA East Java demonstrated the provision of exemplary service. When there is a decision from the central government which is understood differently by the community, employees provide direction and guidance to the community. In addition, when the service is deemed unable to meet the community’s needs, they will consult the head to find a solution to the problem.

The study also found that personal and work factors affect the loyalty and performance of employees. Personal factors include knowledge, level of education, abilities, skills, creativity, innovation of individuals, and perceptions of the organization. Meanwhile, job factors include job demands, salary, the role of individuals in the organization, and the suitability between abilities and work. The findings are not much different from the existing theories, suggesting that expected rewards, motivations, abilities, needs and traits, perceptions of tasks, internal and external rewards, perceptions of the level of compensation, and job satisfaction are factors that affect employee loyalty [5], [14]. Furthermore, activities at and outside work, perceptions of the situation, gender, level of appreciation, reference groups, cultural/value background, education, and experience can affect employee productivity [28].

The MoRA East Java evaluated employee performance using Work Performance Assessment (WPA), which assesses employee work quality and quantity and is carried out annually. In considering the work quantity of employees, the MoRA used a monthly performance report written by each employee regarding what work has been done for one month. Employee Performance Targets (EPT) are obtained from accumulating monthly performance reports and compared with work plans. The MoRA used EPT and employees’ attendance to assess employees’ quality of work.
This practice falls into the commonly used approaches of employee performance appraisal and evaluation [9].

3.2. Leadership Strategies and Employee Loyalty and Performance

Leadership strategies strongly determine the direction of organizational progress, especially in increasing employee loyalty and performance. The study’s results showed that leadership strategies in improving employee loyalty and performance included providing motivation and fostering work relations, communication, and supervision through coordination meetings.

In motivating employees, the leaders gave awards through praise and emotional support to meet targets and provided good examples in implementing policies and handling problems. Psychologists generally define two sources of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic factors [29]. Both sources are fundamental forces for individuals to act in pursuit of their objectives. Even though some people are motivated internally, leaders should create conditions under which employees can encourage themselves. Leaders need to give employees reasons to believe in their organization and themselves. Leadership strategy for motivating employees may include actions such as (1) giving power, including providing a good example, clear communication, and giving challenges; (2) encouraging through empowerment, support, and recognition; and (3) urging employees by creating experiences based on sacrifice and inspiration [10], [18].

The leaders seek to build familiarity with their employees through greetings and supporting activities that create closeness between employees. Furthermore, building employee working relationships was through cooperation without leaving their respective primary duties to establish familial relations. Working relationships need to be fostered so that employees can help each other and work together to achieve organizational goals. The employment relationship can be formal, such as in doing a common task, and non-formal such as an interpersonal relationship.

This mode of employment relationship can create a harmonious work environment so employees can feel like one family. A good working relationship between superiors and subordinates will help the leader obtain timely and easy reporting information from below, improve organizational loyalty, and gauge the understanding of organizational goals [10], [16].

In addition to motivating and building working relationships, leaders also used communication strategies. Communication is part of the organization’s functioning and helps employees achieve individual and shared goals, respond and implement changes, coordinate activities, and play a role in all organizational actions [30]. Our study showed that the subdivision leaders used electronic and non-electronic media to communicate with their employees. Upward and downward flows of communication were also applied. The leaders used downward communication to give work instructions, procedures, manuals, policies, and employee performance information.

In comparison, they used upward communication to encourage open communication about employee complaints, foster appreciation, and loyalty, and help employees overcome work problems. Leaders should communicate with their employees effectively by selecting a suitable communication model [31]. Furthermore, effective communication by leaders can enhance organizational productivity and may strengthen employees’ commitment and performance [30].

The leaders also applied a supervisory strategy. Supervision is an effort to control the organization to ensure certain activities can be completed [24]. Less intensive and continuous supervision can lead to the slow achievement of goals. Every organization/institution wants to achieve its set plans optimally. Efforts to achieve goals through programs and activities do not always run smoothly. Many inhibiting factors can cause the implemented actions to be less or below the planned targets. Therefore, supervision of work implementation needs to be conducted so that activities continue to run as planned. Supervision can enhance work performance and commitment [24], [32].

3.3. Outcomes of Implemented Strategies

The finding indicates that employed leadership strategies were associated with four areas of work outcomes. First, the leadership strategy creates a family atmosphere at work. Work success starts from the values possessed and work behavior that become habits. Culture relates to social and behavioral norms, morals, abilities, and priorities of members of the organization. A positive work culture can increase productivity and change traditional communication to modern management and specific values to achieve organizational goals [33].

Second, good cooperation is built by fostering working relationships and effective communication. Effective communication can occur if the recipient understands the message without any misperceptions. Mutual respect, openness, empathy, humility, and compassion are principles in building effective communication [30].
Upward, downward, and horizontal communication strategies can build employee trust and organizational involvement [34], [35]. Building cooperation, effective communication, and fostering working relationships are closely related to leadership. Leadership is the ability of an individual to direct and influence a person or group to be willing to achieve a particular goal. A good leader determines members to work well and complete tasks on target. Leaders influence employees’ behavior, attitudes, values, and actions in the interaction process. Influencing tactics need to be used to change employee behavior patterns. Leaders may use the hard or gentle tactic of influencing employees. Using harsh tactics, leaders influence subordinates by forcing and encouraging employees to obey the leadership’s orders. In contrast, leaders influence associates with thoughtful and constructive behavior when using soft tactics. This notch includes consultation, inspirational requests, and rational persuasion [13], [16].

Third is the achievement of work targets. Targets or goals can be interpreted as a more specific description of the steps to achieve organizational goals. The accomplishment of work targets is greatly influenced by the supervision carried out by the leadership. The reason is that with control, the leader can determine whether the implementation follows the plan, make improvements if deviations are found from the established program, and measure the results of activities carried out in a certain period [24].

Fourth, reciprocal relationship patterns occur. For employees, feedback functions as instruction and motivation. Instructional feedback is used to clarify roles or teach new behaviors. This type of feedback is usually in the form of leadership reprimands to employees who do not meet work targets, providing instructions on improving performance, and coaching employees. Meanwhile, motivating feedback is used as a tool to reward [9].

4. Conclusion

The loyalty and performance of employees in the MoRA East Java are shown by the ability of employees to work and complete targeted tasks, cooperate, and provide good service. Factors related to these employees’ attitudes include salary, job demands, the role of individuals in the organization, suitability of abilities with work, learning and education, capabilities, expertise, creativity, and innovation of employees, and perceptions of the organization. WPA, EPT, monthly performance reports, and employee attendance measure employee loyalty and performance.

The leadership strategy of the head division in increasing employee loyalty and performance is carried out by motivating employees, building effective communication with employees, and fostering good working relationships. The head division also supervises employees through weekly coordination meetings to achieve work targets. The impact of implementing the leadership strategy on employee loyalty and performance can be seen in the achievement of work targets, the establishment of good cooperation between employees, the creation of a family atmosphere at work, and the occurrence of a pattern of reciprocal relationships between employees and subordinates.

Employee loyalty and work performance are essential for organizational effectiveness, which calls for leadership roles and strategy. The findings of this study contribute to the existing knowledge about the importance of leaders in developing strategies for maintaining work commitment and performance. Leaders can devise an improvement strategy applicable to the specific situation. Practically, this study offers a direct lesson for leaders in the government office in increasing employee loyalty and performance.

References:


