

Ideal Leader Behaviour in the Workplace

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Article Info

Keyword:

Digital products
Gojek
Teknovidia
Tokopedia
Bukalapak
Digital technology
Aggregator

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurs in Indonesia believe that digital products and services may enable a more efficient and effective way of living. The key to achieving success in the era of digital transformation is to disrupt the market by providing consumers with exceptional value. In order to execute this correctly, businesses must be both effective and effective in achieving this expectation. Today Indonesian large businesses are digitalized and prepared to create disruptive, consumer-focused innovation as a result of this effort. In addition, as of 2022, Indonesia had the highest number of digital start-up enterprises among Southeast Asian nations, with 2,345 registered. Leadership is a factor in the success of digital firms, and digital businesses that must develop for the benefit of other companies are no exception. We believe that significant effort needs to be done in order to grasp the leadership behavior of the executives in payment aggregator firms. This research was conducted at Tangerang Indonesia-based software and consulting business. Since 2014, the company's main focus has been billing aggregation, and it currently has over 150 partners. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian, which would subsequently be translated into English for the purpose of this research. The outcomes showed that corporate leaders of a billing aggregator company have three types of behaviors that are considered desirable for their staff. Relationship-related, performance-related, and conflict-related behaviors are all interconnected. Ideal leaders establish clear boundaries not only between jobs but also between their relationships with employees.

Kata Kunci:

Produk Digital,
Gojek,
Teknovidia,
Tokopedia,
Bukalapak,
Teknologi Digital,
Aggregator.

Abstrak

Pengusaha di Indonesia percaya bahwa produk dan layanan digital dapat memungkinkan cara hidup yang lebih efisien dan efektif. Kunci untuk mencapai kesuksesan di era transformasi digital adalah mendisrupsi pasar dengan memberikan nilai yang luar biasa kepada konsumen. Untuk melaksanakan ini dengan benar, bisnis harus efektif dan efektif dalam mencapai harapan ini. Saat ini bisnis besar di Indonesia sedang mengalami digitalisasi dan bersiap untuk menciptakan inovasi yang mengganggu dan berfokus pada konsumen sebagai hasil dari upaya ini. Selain itu, pada tahun 2022, Indonesia memiliki jumlah perusahaan rintisan digital tertinggi di antara negara-negara Asia Tenggara, dengan 2.345 terdaftar. Kepemimpinan adalah faktor keberhasilan perusahaan digital, dan bisnis digital yang harus berkembang untuk kepentingan perusahaan lain tidak terkecuali. Kami percaya bahwa upaya yang signifikan perlu dilakukan untuk memahami perilaku kepemimpinan para eksekutif di perusahaan agregator pembayaran. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada bisnis software dan konsultan yang berbasis di Tangerang Indonesia. Sejak 2014, fokus utama perusahaan adalah agregasi penagihan, dan saat ini memiliki lebih dari 150 mitra. Wawancara dilakukan dalam bahasa Indonesia yang selanjutnya akan diterjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Inggris untuk kepentingan penelitian ini. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa pemimpin perusahaan dari perusahaan agregator penagihan memiliki tiga jenis perilaku yang dianggap diinginkan oleh staf mereka. Perilaku terkait hubungan, terkait kinerja, dan terkait konflik semuanya saling berhubungan. Pemimpin yang ideal menetapkan batasan yang jelas tidak hanya antara pekerjaan tetapi juga antara hubungan mereka dengan karyawan.

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INTRODUCTION

The success of various digital products and services in Indonesia has inevitably led to various opportunities of other digital products and services to appear as an answer towards a more efficient and more effective way of living. By the time the technology start-up Gojek started making its rounds in Indonesia by the year of 2015 with the launch of its app (Teknovidia, 2022) and local e-commerce applications such as Tokopedia and Bukalapak garnering an exponentially increasing number users throughout the years, entrepreneurs who have piqued an interest in creating a sustainable digital business of their own learned that the key towards success in the digital transformation era is to disrupt the market through offering value to their consumers like no one has ever done before and fulfilling the expectations of their consumers that are becoming higher as time goes by (Savey, Daradkeh, & Gouveia, 2020). In order to execute this properly, companies that offer digital products and services realise that it is a requisite for them to be both efficient and effective in terms of fulfilling the said expectation.

This thus require managerial practices that are oriented towards innovation and the adaptation of digital technology that enables this innovation (Wolf, Semm, & Erfurth, 2018). As more business practitioners discover this, highlighting on the importance of digitalisation, all of Indonesia's massive-scaled companies of today are digitalised and are ready to create disruptive, consumer-oriented innovation through this effort (Pramudita, 2020). In addition to that, Indonesia of today also possessed the most digital start-up companies among Southeast Asian countries, with 2,345 start-ups registered as of 2022, as well as having the fifth highest number of start-ups in the world (Mahdi, 2022).

Myriad of studies have highlighted the importance of digitalisation in companies of today, citing it along with the importance of the mentality, competence, and behaviour of the people working in it as well as the ecosystem surrounding the company (Satalkina & Steiner, 2020). However, most of the research available focuses on these factors in companies that are offering value to their consumers and not companies that offer digitalisation leverages towards other digital businesses. Knowing that start-ups and digital companies alike for today are seeking ways to operate efficiently and effectively within the disruption of the digital era, some digital businesses opt to offer solutions to the companies who are in need of a more efficient way to operate towards their goals. These businesses operate on the basis of requests by their clients, which are most of the time digitalised businesses as well, that wish to tackle the problem of inefficiency in their business operations. One of the ways these businesses can utilise their resources to help other businesses are through offering a solution to their billing aggregator problems. Working with payment aggregator companies allows digital companies to lessen the hassle of having to open various bank accounts to accept payments from their consumers with differing bank accounts (Zahir, 2022). While it is true that businesses could opt for QRIS (Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard), a payment gateway solution offered by Bank Indonesia, there is no denying that its simplicity—the reason behind its popularity of usage among small and medium enterprises (Anggela, 2022)—is the bane of huge digital enterprises, as it does not provide analytical, in-depth reports on the payments being made which would likely tamper with the possibility of analysing their client base and tailoring their business to fit the needs of their consumers better.

With the scarcity of studies talking about the determinants of success in payment aggregator companies, the behaviour of leaders in payment aggregator companies focusing on large businesses are also less well studied. As shown by (Wolf, Semm, & Erfurth, 2018), studies have shown that leadership is a success factor of digital businesses, and digital companies who are required to innovate for the sake of other companies are no exception to this. Therefore, we

believe that robust effort needs to be done in order to comprehend the leadership behaviour of the leaders in payment aggregator companies that needs to constantly create new innovations towards an efficient work in order to accelerate other businesses' innovation, which would also benefit them in the long run.

Company Profile

PT. Fortuna Mediatama Indonesia is an IT (Information Technology) Billing Aggregator company. This company is here to serve every bill payment that can be made online. PT. Fortuna Mediatama was founded in 2008, then in 2014 started the Billing Aggregator business as an online bill payment service provider. In 2019, PT. Fortuna Mediatama has worked with more than 100 partners/companies and continues to experience improvement. Since 2020 PT. Fortuna Mediatama has implemented ISO 27001:2013 & ISO 20000-1:2018 quality standards. In 2021 our partners have spread throughout Indonesia. Partners who work with PT. Fortuna Mediatama has 2 parts, namely partners as CA (Collecting Agent) and Billers. Partner PT. Fortuna Mediatama as CA (Collecting Agent) as well as E-Commerce, PPOB (Payment Point Online Banking) and Banks that have virtual accounts. If the biller who works with PT. Fortuna Mediatama namely PDAM (Regional Water Supply Company), IPL (Environmental Management Fee), PBB (Earth and Building Tax), and BPJS payments.

PT Fortuna Mediatama also operates as a Billing Provider. Billing Providers are people, agents, businesses, companies, or other entities that receive payments from customers or service users, and they have an advanced information system (web server). Examples of Billing Providers are PDAM, PLN, Schools, Universities, Samsat, and others. Along with advances in technology and the internet, most Indonesian people are currently using electronic payment methods to make payment transactions. However, this shift in preference to payment methods from conventional to digital poses a challenge for companies that provide digital payment services to their customers when they have to work with multiple banks one by one and other payment transaction channels. Especially in its operational process, companies must reconcile data and funds to each Collecting Agent (including banking channels, payment points, and modern channels such as minimarkets).

As a form of support in the payment process, PT Fortuna Mediatama has a FSwitch product, a switching payment gateway application that has been tested and refers to the ISO 8583 standard. This product has also been implemented in several agencies and is capable of handling high transaction loads.

PT Fortuna Mediatama has the following features:

1. Scalability
2. Audit Trails
3. Parameterize
4. Configuration and Monitoring Web Rich Application
5. Auto Generate Reconciliation
6. SMS & Email Notification Options

Literature Review

Task behaviour leadership

Task behaviour leaders enable goal achievement. support group members to reach their goals including such acts as organising work, providing structure to the job context, describing role responsibilities, and scheduling job activities (Northouse, 2016). This style concentrates on finishing jobs with attendants so that their tasks can be the solution to their demands and desires. In this style, connections with associates are not the priority by the time employees must perform hard, be effective, and be on time (Verawati & Hartono, 2020). According to Ryan & Tipu in (Zakeer Ahmed, Allah, & Irfanullah, 2016), task behaviour pertains to executing a task the willingness level (commitment and competence) of the followers. However, the task behaviour axis is the first dimension, with high levels of task and lower levels of relationship and high tiers of task and high levels of the relationship as leadership styles (Zaiedy Nor, Mokhtar, & Hazuan, 2021).

Relationship behaviour

Relationship behaviours allow subordinates to feel all the more relaxed with themselves, with each other, and with the context they observe themselves to be included in (Northouse, 2016). Relationship behaviour concentrates on the behaviour of the leader toward his/her followers and how the leader interacts and causes them to feel more comfortable in their existence (Purohit, 2020). Moreover, relationship-oriented behaviour encourages employees by consistently delivering better attention to all complaints, consulting the job to be accomplished, empowering the commitment to decision-making, and persisting to strive (Hakim et al., 2021). According to (Verawati & Hartono, 2020), leadership styles that prioritises good connections with subordinates gives the opportunity for leaders to inspire their employees rather than monitoring closely. According to Ryan & Tipu (Zakeer Ahmed et al., 2016), relationship behaviour demanded by the followers' roles and objectives. According to (Henkel, Marion, & Bourdeau, 2019), relationship-related leaders focus themselves on developing trust and respect, listening to the necessities and needs of their subordinates, and are comfortable with creating an activity plan when they have the followers' input.

Ohio State Studies

Researchers from Ohio acknowledged that the outcomes of examining leadership as a personality trait appeared unproductive and chose to study how individuals operated when they were directing a group or an organization by having their participants complete questionnaires dubbed as the LBDQ (the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire) (Northouse, 2016). Ohio State analyses have discovered that leadership behaviour is based on employee-oriented and task-oriented (Sivaruban, 2021). A leader can picture a high degree of both consideration and creating structure, a low degree of both types, high consideration, and low initiating structure, or low consideration and high initiating structure behaviour (Henkel et al., 2019). According to (Northouse, 2016) researchers clustered around two general types of leader behaviours:

1. Initiating structure behaviours are basically task behaviours, including such acts as organising work, providing structure to the job context, determining role obligations, and scheduling job activities.
2. Consideration behaviours are essentially relationship behaviours and include building connection, respect, belief, and admiration between leaders and followers.

Leaders who adopt consideration behaviour to a high level develop high job fulfilment and decrease the preference to leave (Ozgun Demirtas, 2020).

Michigan Studies

The Michigan studies have discovered that the two aspects, such as employee-centred and job-centred are identical to the Ohio State leadership studies; nevertheless, the only dissimilarity is that the leadership can be used in one leadership style at a time (Sivaruban, 2021). According to Northouse, (2016) Employee orientation is the behaviour of leaders who approach followers with a powerful human connection's intensity, while job-centred leadership is a leader utilizing job-centred leadership behaviour to deliver close attention to subordinates' work, explain work practices, and are keenly inquisitive in performance. These leaders believe their workplace as a social system and concentrate more on their followers and their individual achievements (Ozgun Demirtas, 2020). Katz et al in (Henkel et al., 2019) specified two prior leadership types: job-centred (the degree to which the leader instantly oversees the achievement of tasks) and employee-centred (the degree to which the leader concentrates on employees and their requirements). In the Michigan State leadership studies, it was found that productivity was high in organizations where job-oriented leadership was adopted (Ozgun Demirtas, 2020).

Blake and Mouton's Leadership Grid

The managerial grid has figured that the most influential leadership is team management as it is more concerned for people and outcomes at the highest (Sivaruban, 2021). The Leadership Grid displays five main leadership styles: authority-compliance (9,1), country-club management (1,9), impoverished management (1,1), middle-of-the-road management (5,5), and team management (9,9) (Northouse, 2016). According to (Islam, Sheikh, Rahman, Islam, & Bhattachar, 2019):

1. Country Club Management (1,9) is apprehensive about the sensations and requirements of the member or subordinates of his/her team. In this environment, 'consideration for people' is high (9) and 'consideration for production' is low (1)
2. Task Management authority-compliance style (9,1) concern for production as the only purpose. The manager is task-oriented, and he/she has a low concern for people in this style.
3. Impoverished Management (1,1) or Leadership is a lazy approach where a manager shows low concern for both people and production.
4. Middle of the Road (5,5) is a type of realistic medium by balanced and compromised style without ambition. Managers are trying to counterbalance the requirements of workers and contending goals or objectives in that condition. There is also attention to both people and production.
5. Team Leadership or Team Management (9,9) leaders or managers deliver high attention to both people and production. Participation and teamwork in the organization satisfies a basic need in employees to be involved and committed to their work.

Blake and Mouton believed that both situations are important elements of effective management, and each is conceptualized as a nine-point scale, thus producing eighty-one possible combinations of managerial behavior (Aalateeg, 2017).

METHODS

This study was conducted at a software and consultation company based in Tangerang, Indonesia. Being a medium-sized enterprise, this company possesses no more than 200 employees under it. Ever since 2014, the company has been focusing on billing aggregation and it has more than 150 partners to date, including but not limited to Tokopedia, Alfamart, Indomaret, and other governmental institutions such as PDAM and BPJS. In order to comprehend the nature of leadership in payment aggregator companies, we employed thematic analysis in order to identify codes and analyse themes from the interviews (n = 5).

We conducted a structured interview with employees who are under the leadership of others in the company, regardless their age or their department. Each interview lasted for 20 to 30 minutes, and interviews took place on October 2022. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian, which would then be translated into English for the purpose of this research. Participants of the study did not receive any incentives from their participation in the study. Our questions were based on the trait and behavioural theories of leadership, including studies done in Ohio State and Michigan. We then used NVIVO 12 to identify the codes and aid us in classifying them together into themes.

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis done in our research allowed us to identify the themes of leadership approaches based on the behaviour shown by the leaders of the payment aggregator company. We generated three main themes of behaviours shown in the leaders of the company: 1) performance-related behaviours, 2) relationship-related behaviours, and 3) conflict-related behaviours (Table 1).

Main theme	Description
Performance-related behaviour	The ability of a leader to give directions to their subordinates based on their scope of job
Relationship-related behaviour	The ability of a leader to maintain interpersonal relationships with their subordinates
Conflict-related behaviour	The ability of a leader to solve problems arising within the company, be it with their customers or their employees

Table 1. Themes identified from thematic analysis

Theme 1: Performance-related behaviour

Interviewees noted that their leaders showcased behaviours that leverage and tamper with the flow of work in the company. This is in line with the findings of (Lee & Ding, 2020) that shows how a leadership style that is empowering the people in it—through supervisory and coaching—would support employee development. On the supervisory side, all interviewees participating in this study mentioned that their performance is monitored through daily and weekly reporting, which uses both an asynchronous approach (with online forms) and a

synchronous, direct approach (through asking directly what the employee is going to do for the day). As noted by various speakers:

“[My leader] ensure that our work is done for the day. They would ask what I would like to do for the day and would ask again of the progress I’m making at the end of the day.”

“[My work] usually has its time limit for the day. My tasks need to be done before I submit it to [an online form system] on a weekly basis.”

The leaders of the company were cited to not only monitor, but also guide their employees in getting their job done properly and within the standards. A participant showed an expectation for their leader’s effort in helping them to accomplish their goals.

“We expect superiors who can back up their subordinates regardless of whether their subordinates are in the wrong or not. We still need backups from superiors, guidance, and teaching about new [business] insights. So, suppose we have confusion to achieve the target for example, we expect the superiors to guide us and not leave us subordinates behind.”

Interestingly enough, however, an interviewee stated how there is a lack of key performance indicators (KPI) that they need to fulfil. This was said along with the concerns on clarity of hierarchy and the tendency to transfer responsibilities from the leaders to their subordinates without consideration.

“KPI still needs to be implemented... It could be my personal reference to work harder according to the target and within my capabilities as a staff.”

“There is a list of partners that I have from all over Indonesia in various categories can develop the company's business. But until now, I personally still take care of most of the previous existing partners because there are some flows that are not appropriate within the company.”

“[I wish that] the structure of the organisation can be finalised. I think it will influence how we’d be cooperating internally.”

This discrepancy between the constant monitoring procedures and the lack of hierarchy as well as performance indicators showed that, while it is true that leaders need to support their subordinates and monitor their work, the subordinates require their leaders to give them a set of indicators they need to fulfil to 1) distinguish their job with others’, 2) provide clear directions on what an employee needs to do, and 3) provide an ease of collaboration between employees, in a way that an employee knows with whom they need to collaborate with in order to accomplish their work.

Theme 2: Relationship-related behaviour

Communication between leaders and their subordinates is among the most frequently mentioned topics in the interview. An interviewee stated how the leaders within the company communicate casually within the Indonesian standards of courtesy. Another one cited that there are two means of communication within the company. After the COVID-19 pandemic became less rampant and more people are going back to their office building to work together, there seems to be a preference towards onsite communication from the synchronous technology employees may use during the height of the pandemic.

“Usually there are 2 types of communication: communication via WA or other channels and direct communication. Regarding communication through WA, we have a business group. But in my opinion, direct communication is more effective.”

Therefore, a leader that can communicate directly with their employees is preferable. This “direct” approach can also be interpreted as a demand to decrease pettiness between leaders which would tamper the performance of employees. A concerned interviewee shared their thoughts on how they feel towards the lack of transparency within the communication of their leaders:

“I feel like a ticking time bomb right now. Mr. A talks about Mr. B [in a negative manner] and vice versa and I try my best not to let them know. If this gets revealed, of course there will be conflict. I think they should be more transparent, communicate better, and not talk behind their backs. [It’d be good to] not talk about their [personal vitriol towards each other] with subordinates, as it might confuse us subordinates.”

Openness also becomes a recurring theme in what the interviewees stated to us. Almost all employees stated that they feel that their leaders are open to suggestions and questions from their subordinates. However, not all leaders within the company exercised the same degree of openness, especially towards changes. As told by an interviewee:

“For example, yeah, I have an idea that I would propose to my boss. The idea would immediately be declined, even though it is within the best practices of HR. In the end, we’d be the ones getting [negative responses]. So I tend to just obey what my bosses say nowadays.”

It can be said that, for a company that focuses on innovation, there is a lack of openness towards changes within the leaders. This is concerning, as per the research conducted by (Koroglu & Caliskan, 2022), openness towards organisational change would have a positive direct effect on performance.

Not only are the employees within the company demand their leaders to be open towards change, but they also want their leaders to maintain good interpersonal relationship with them. Some of the employees stated that they are only close to their leaders as an employee and nothing more than that, inevitably perceiving a gap between them and their leaders. This is highlighted by an interviewee, one who is working on the human resources department:

“I want them to change at least to be more familiar with their employees [on a personal level]. Someone of a higher position than me should be more familiar with all employees, but instead they would build their own wall... Employees are afraid of these leaders.”

That being said, an open communication in the company seems to not only be interpreted as a way of communicating with others but also as a catalyst of change.

Theme 3: Conflict-related behaviour

Leaders within this payment aggregator company has their ways of solving problems. Some of the leaders would approach to tackle their problems right away and some would choose to suggest their employees a solution to grant them the freedom to handle their own conflicts. It was stated by various interviewees as follows:

“If there were any complaints or obstacles I face [at work], the flow would refer to my leaders.”

“[My leaders would help me] handle my job when I’m faced with difficulties. I would be suggested a solution or to solve the problems with them together.”

However, some interviewees also expressed concern on how some of their leaders make hasty decisions and without communicating between one leader to another, resulting in confusion and lack of direction perceived by the employees.

“At times, they like to make decisions on their own. [I remember] at that time, one boss and another take decisions on their own and when they’re united together, somehow their perspectives do not fit one another. It could have been discussed, but even after discussion there was no resolution to the problem. They contradict one another.”

This lack of cohesion amongst the leaders undoubtedly created confusion in how one needs to approach their problems. Keeping peace while conflicts are still going seems to be what employees in the company need to do in order to avoid further conflicts. This may include sweeping problems under the rug to feign how everything is okay, while the leaders above them are in a battle of wits that might influence their satisfaction towards the work that they have. Not to mention that most interviewees cited that there is a little to not rewards or transparency provided to their employees in regards to their job security. These, combined with facts that their leaders are arguing with one another and that their leaders are not open to suggestions of change, are more than enough for employees to be discouraged in demanding the resolve of internal conflicts and choosing to keep peace while not tackling the solution.

DISCUSSION

Behaviours exerted by leaders are important in determining the direction to which a company is going to go to. Our interviewees showed that they acknowledged three types of behaviour categorisations that exist in the leaders of payment aggregator companies: performance-related, relationship-related, and conflict-related. While these behaviours are shown to be separate from one another, they actually help create and set the atmosphere within the business environment and therefore are interconnected to one another.

For example, our thematic analysis found that conflicts are interconnected with the personal relationships cultivated between employees and their leaders in a way that conflicts between leaders would tamper the relationship of leaders and their subordinates. In addition, they are also both connected with their performance—the lack of clarity of job roles and relationships between one another in terms of job roles are somehow implied by the employees to be due to the lack of relationship between one another.

Our findings in this research are in line with the results of the task-behaviour leadership by (Verawati & Hartono, 2020), in which a leadership places great emphasis on the tasks and jobs that are given to the hands of the people working under it and not on the interpersonal relationship with one another. Albeit so, even the task behaviour is arguably weakened due to the confusions on the workspace’s hierarchy that leads to jobs intermingling with one another regardless of the job title and descriptions a job may have. While this may be good in other cases, our informants have expressed concerns in this regard.

According to the Ohio studies spectrum, it can be seen how the company's leadership falls into the medium initiating structure behaviour and with low consideration towards employee as well. This is less than ideal, as this will decrease the likelihood of an employee to stay in their position and will increase their tendency to quit (Ozgur Demirtas, 2020), which in turn will increase the turnover rate of the company. Our concern is that, if this keeps on going, the leadership will only bring further alienation for the employees, resulting in them quitting their jobs even before being able to grow with the company.

We also found that, by following the leadership grid of Blake and Mouton, we can identify the leadership of the company as a 7,1 task management-authority compliance style, in which task management is being held in a higher regard than the wellbeing of the people inside the leadership, to the point of exposing one another's dirty laundry for the sake of nothing but spite. This creates a leadership environment that impacts the personnel involved in a negative manner—without an adequate amount of care and chances to innovate given towards their employees, employees would not dare to ask for what they need or to grow according to the best practices they learned in their workplaces beforehand, as seen in the case of this company.

This study has its limitations. One, as the themes in this study were generated from the deductive analysis of the interviews we conducted, there is a possibility that the findings may not be generalisable to all payment aggregator companies. Additionally, the interviewees know very well that they were being recorded and may refrain from speaking candidly with the fear of revealing too much of their company's problems. At the same time, the interviews were conducted to the employees and did not take into account the perspective of the leaders in the company—whether they would perceive themselves as an ideal leader for their company as well as the reason behind their decisions are therefore not included in this study. We also did not take into account the timely context of this research while interviewing. As the interviews, too, were conducted in Indonesian, there might be missing nuances that remain less expressed in English.

CONCLUSION

Our study suggests that there are three types of behaviours exerted by leaders of billing aggregator company that are considered ideal for their employees: 1) performance-related, 2) relationship-related, and 3) conflict-related. These behaviours are interconnected to one another. Within the context of this payment aggregator company, it is clear that the leaders orientate themselves towards a task-oriented leadership while, at the same time, not imposing much of their energy towards creating a rigid and clear job description and differentiation. On the other hand, the ideal leader for the employees emphasis on not only imposing a clear boundary between one job with another but also the relationships between the employees and the leaders as well as the ways in which leaders handle conflict.

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