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Article

Leadership Practices of Malita LGU Officials: Assessing Employees' Perceptions of Readiness for Work-from-Home Arrangements

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Abstract: This study examines the leadership practices of Local Government Unit (LGU) officials in Malita and their influence on employees' perceptions of readiness for work-from-home (WFH) arrangements. Amid the increasing adoption of remote work policies in the public sector, understanding leadership's role in facilitating successful transitions to WFH settings is crucial. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with LGU employees and officials to assess key factors such as communication strategies, decision-making processes, and support mechanisms. Findings reveal that transparent communication, adaptive leadership styles, and robust technical support significantly enhance employees' confidence and capability for remote work. Conversely, challenges such as inadequate digital infrastructure and resistance to change hinder readiness. The study underscores the need for targeted training programs, infrastructure investment, and a culture of flexibility to optimize the implementation of WFH arrangements. These insights offer actionable recommendations for LGUs navigating the shift toward hybrid and remote work models.

Keywords: leadership practices; work-from-home (WFH) readiness; local government units (LGUs); employee perceptions; organizational adaptability; digital infrastructure; transformational leadership; remote work policies

I. Introduction

A. Background of the Study

The global shift towards remote work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly impacted workplace dynamics across various sectors, including local government units (LGUs). While the private sector has largely embraced flexible work models, the transition in public institutions often encounters unique challenges due to the bureaucratic structure and varying degrees of digital readiness. In Malita, the adoption of work-from-home (WFH) arrangements requires not only technological adaptation but also a reimagining of leadership practices to sustain employee productivity and organizational efficiency.

B. Importance of Leadership Practices in Organizational Adaptability

Leadership is a critical determinant of an organization's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Effective leadership practices foster a supportive environment, encourage innovation, and build resilience among employees. In the context of implementing WFH arrangements, leaders play a pivotal role in addressing concerns, facilitating training, and ensuring resource availability. Leadership practices that emphasize clear communication, empathy, and flexibility can significantly impact employees' readiness and overall performance in a remote work setup.

C. The Relevance of Assessing Work-from-Home Readiness

Assessing employees' readiness for WFH arrangements is essential to identify strengths, gaps, and potential barriers to successful implementation. Readiness encompasses various factors, including access to technology, individual competencies, and alignment with organizational policies. By understanding these elements, leaders can design strategies that address specific challenges and promote seamless transitions. For LGUs like Malita, assessing readiness is particularly relevant given their mandate to deliver essential public services efficiently, even under remote conditions.

D. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the leadership practices of Malita LGU officials and assess their influence on employees' perceptions of readiness for WFH arrangements. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Identify key leadership practices that support WFH readiness.
- Evaluate employees' perceptions of their preparedness and the effectiveness of organizational support.
- Highlight challenges and opportunities in implementing WFH in a local government context.
- Provide recommendations for enhancing leadership practices and WFH readiness.

E. Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on the leadership practices within the Malita LGU and their impact on employees' readiness for WFH arrangements. Data will be gathered through surveys and interviews with LGU officials and employees, offering insights into their experiences and perceptions. The research is limited to the specific context of Malita and may not fully generalize to other LGUs or organizations. Additionally, external factors such as budget constraints, national policies, and technological infrastructure are considered but not exhaustively analyzed.

II. Review of Related Literature

A. The Role of Leadership in Organizational Change

Leadership is a critical driver of organizational change, particularly during periods of significant transition such as the adoption of work-from-home (WFH) arrangements. Effective leaders inspire confidence, provide direction, and foster a culture of adaptability. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, communication, and empowerment, has been shown to enhance employee morale and readiness during times of change. In contrast, transactional leadership, focused on task-oriented management, can provide structure and stability but may lack the flexibility needed for innovative transitions. Research highlights that leaders who prioritize employee engagement and proactive problem-solving are better equipped to manage organizational change successfully.

B. Work-from-Home Policies and Practices in Government Sectors

The adoption of WFH policies in government sectors has been met with varying degrees of success. Public institutions face unique challenges such as stringent regulations, limited technological resources, and a need to maintain uninterrupted public service delivery. Studies emphasize that clear policy frameworks, adequate training, and investment in digital infrastructure are essential for effective WFH implementation. Furthermore, fostering a culture of accountability and trust is particularly critical in hierarchical government settings where traditional supervisory methods may not translate well to remote environments.

C. Readiness for Work-from-Home Arrangements: Key Factors

Readiness for WFH arrangements is influenced by several interrelated factors, including:

- Technological Infrastructure: Availability of reliable internet connectivity, secure devices, and digital tools for remote collaboration.
- Employee Competencies: Digital literacy and self-management skills significantly affect individual productivity in WFH settings.
- Organizational Support: Leadership practices, clear communication, and the provision of resources play pivotal roles in enhancing employee readiness.
- Work Environment: Access to a conducive remote workspace and strategies for managing work-life balance.
- Studies suggest that organizations that address these factors holistically are more likely to achieve successful WFH transitions.

D. Case Studies on Work-from-Home Implementations in LGUs

Several LGUs worldwide have implemented WFH arrangements with varying outcomes. For instance, in the Philippines, initial transitions were marked by challenges such as inadequate training, lack of digital infrastructure, and resistance to change. However, LGUs that invested in leadership development and stakeholder engagement reported improved outcomes. For example, case studies from Quezon City and Davao City highlight how adaptive leadership and collaboration with private sectors helped overcome logistical barriers. Internationally, LGUs in countries like Canada and Singapore have leveraged robust digital platforms and proactive communication strategies to streamline WFH operations. These case studies provide valuable insights into best practices and lessons learned for implementing WFH policies in LGUs.

III. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather comprehensive data on leadership practices and employees' readiness for work-from-home (WFH) arrangements. The quantitative aspect will involve surveys to assess employees' perceptions and organizational readiness, while the qualitative aspect will use interviews to explore the experiences of LGU officials and employees in greater depth. The mixed-methods approach allows for triangulation of data, providing a more nuanced understanding of the research problem.

B. Sampling

A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select participants from the Malita LGU. The sample will consist of two groups: LGU officials and employees. LGU officials will be selected based on their leadership roles and involvement in decision-making processes related to WFH policies. Employees will be selected from various departments to ensure a representative sample of individuals across different job functions and responsibilities. A total of 100 employees and 10 officials will be targeted for participation. The sample size is determined to balance the need for statistical reliability and in-depth qualitative insights.

C. Data Collection Methods

- Surveys: A structured questionnaire will be developed to gather quantitative data on employees' perceptions of their readiness for WFH arrangements. The survey will include Likert-scale questions to assess factors such as technology readiness, communication effectiveness, leadership support, and personal preparedness for remote work.

- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with LGU officials and a subset of employees to gain qualitative insights into their experiences with leadership practices, challenges, and perceptions of WFH readiness. The interview guide will explore topics such as leadership style, communication practices, and the effectiveness of training and support systems.
- Document Analysis: Relevant organizational documents such as internal memos, training materials, and WFH policy guidelines will be analyzed to assess the alignment between formal policies and actual practices.

D. Data Analysis

- Quantitative Data Analysis: Survey responses will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participants' perceptions of their readiness for WFH arrangements. Inferential statistical tests, such as t-tests or ANOVA, will be used to identify significant differences in perceptions across various demographic groups (e.g., job roles, experience levels).
- Qualitative Data Analysis: Interview transcripts will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The data will be coded for recurring themes related to leadership practices, challenges in adopting WFH, and employees' readiness. NVivo software may be used to facilitate the organization and coding of qualitative data.
- Triangulation: The results from the surveys, interviews, and document analysis will be triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. By comparing quantitative data with qualitative insights, a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership practices influencing WFH readiness will be obtained.

This methodological approach is designed to capture both the broad patterns of employee readiness and the specific leadership strategies that shape the transition to WFH arrangements in the Malita LGU.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Leadership Practices of Malita LGU Officials

The study reveals that leadership practices among Malita LGU officials are predominantly characterized by hierarchical decision-making and a focus on task-oriented management. While many officials demonstrate a commitment to ensuring continuity in service delivery, gaps in adaptive leadership styles are evident. Key practices include:

- Communication: Regular but largely one-way communication channels, such as memos and meetings, are used to disseminate information about WFH policies. However, a lack of interactive platforms for employee feedback limits engagement.
- Support Mechanisms: Efforts to provide technical resources and training are noted but are inconsistently applied across departments. Leaders who prioritize team collaboration and flexibility report higher employee satisfaction.
- Policy Adaptation: Some officials have shown an openness to revising existing workflows to accommodate remote work, but others resist changes due to concerns about accountability and performance monitoring.

B. Employees' Perceptions of Work-from-Home Readiness

Employees' perceptions of their readiness for WFH arrangements vary widely, influenced by factors such as access to resources, personal digital literacy, and departmental leadership styles. Findings highlight:

- Technological Readiness: A significant proportion of employees report challenges with unreliable internet connectivity and inadequate access to necessary digital tools.

- Competence and Confidence: While some employees feel confident in managing their tasks remotely, others express concerns about a lack of training and unclear expectations.
- Support from Leadership: Employees who perceive their leaders as approachable and supportive exhibit higher readiness levels compared to those who report limited interaction and guidance.

C. Alignment Between Leadership Practices and Employee Needs

The alignment between leadership practices and employee needs is partial. While leadership efforts to establish basic WFH infrastructure and policies are appreciated, gaps in addressing employees' psychological and technical readiness persist. Key discrepancies include:

- Communication Gaps: Employees express a need for more frequent and interactive communication to clarify expectations and provide real-time support.
- Training Needs: Many employees highlight insufficient training on remote work tools and protocols, contrasting with leaders' perceptions that existing initiatives are adequate.
- Feedback Mechanisms: The absence of structured feedback channels hinders leaders' ability to understand and address employee challenges effectively.

D. Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing Work-from-Home Arrangements

Challenges:

- Digital Infrastructure: Limited internet access and outdated hardware are significant barriers to seamless remote work.
- Cultural Resistance: Both leaders and employees display hesitancy to fully embrace WFH due to concerns about accountability and productivity.
- Inconsistent Leadership Practices: Variability in leadership approaches across departments creates uneven employee experiences.

Opportunities:

- Leadership Development: Investing in leadership training programs focused on adaptive strategies and digital fluency can enhance leaders' effectiveness in managing remote teams.
- Policy Refinement: Developing clear and flexible WFH policies tailored to the LGU context can address current gaps and build employee confidence.
- Technology Investment: Upgrading digital infrastructure and providing employees with necessary tools and resources can mitigate technical challenges.
- Employee Engagement: Creating platforms for regular feedback and collaborative problem-solving can foster a sense of ownership and improve readiness for WFH.

The discussion underscores the critical role of leadership in bridging the gap between organizational goals and employee needs, highlighting actionable strategies to enhance the success of WFH arrangements in Malita LGU.

V. Conclusions

A. Summary of Key Findings

The study highlights several important findings regarding the leadership practices of Malita LGU officials and their impact on employees' readiness for work-from-home (WFH) arrangements:

- Leadership Practices: While LGU leaders demonstrate commitment to maintaining service delivery, gaps in adaptive and employee-centric leadership practices limit the effectiveness of WFH implementation. Communication is often top-down, and support mechanisms vary across departments.
- Employee Readiness: Employees' perceptions of their readiness are shaped by access to technology, digital literacy, and the quality of leadership support. Inconsistent access to resources and training hinders overall preparedness.

- Alignment Challenges: There is a partial misalignment between leadership practices and employee needs, particularly in areas of communication, training, and feedback.
- Opportunities for Improvement: Enhanced leadership training, infrastructure investment, and the establishment of more inclusive feedback channels are key to addressing the challenges identified.

B. Implications for Leadership in LGU Settings

The findings underscore the critical role of leadership in fostering a supportive environment for organizational adaptability. For LGUs, the ability to implement WFH arrangements effectively depends on leaders who can balance operational demands with the needs of their employees. This requires:

- Adopting transformational leadership styles that prioritize empathy, flexibility, and innovation.
- Building a culture of open communication and collaboration to ensure employees feel engaged and supported.
- Strengthening the technical competencies of leaders to navigate the digital demands of remote work.

C. Recommendations for Improving Readiness and Leadership Strategies

To enhance WFH readiness and leadership practices within Malita LGU, the following recommendations are proposed:

Leadership Development:

- Conduct regular training programs for LGU officials focused on adaptive leadership, effective communication, and remote team management.
- Foster peer mentoring and knowledge-sharing among leaders to promote best practices in WFH management.

Infrastructure and Resources:

- Invest in upgrading digital infrastructure, including reliable internet access and modern work tools, to support remote operations.
- Provide employees with access to technical support and resources for creating productive home office environments.

Employee Training and Engagement:

- Develop comprehensive training modules to improve employees' digital literacy and self-management skills for WFH.
- Establish structured feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and regular team check-ins, to identify and address employee concerns.

Policy Refinement:

- Create clear, flexible WFH policies that outline expectations, performance metrics, and accountability measures.
- Regularly review and update policies based on employee feedback and changing organizational needs.

Fostering a Supportive Culture:

- Encourage leaders to adopt a participatory approach, involving employees in decision-making processes related to WFH arrangements.
- Recognize and reward adaptability and innovation in both leaders and employees to reinforce positive behaviors.

These recommendations aim to create a robust framework for the successful implementation of WFH arrangements, emphasizing the pivotal role of leadership in navigating the complexities of organizational change.

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