Relationship between military leadership style & performance of Soldiers in post war Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper seeks to find the relationship between military leadership style and performance of soldiers in post war Sri Lanka. Having available different styles and definitions of leadership researcher selected Blake and Mouton's leadership grid, to proceed with the research (Bennis & Nanus, 2003). It discusses five leadership styles and they were analyzed through a questionnaire with the sample consisted of 50 officers and 120 soldiers from different Security Forces HQs engaged in nation building projects. It has found that in achieving results, leaders have to depend less on formal authority but more on influencing others (Hersey & Blanchard, 1996). This study will helpful for military in order to generate an interest among officers and soldiers in the Army to rethink about their leadership styles that are practicing during post war activities. This also shed light in to the existing leadership model and finding the most desirable place for a leader to be, considered as the prime importance of human resource managing aspects of the future military.

Background

War fighting has two important dimensions; winning the war and winning the peace. The Sri Lankan Army excels in the first. But without an equal commitment to stability and reconstruction, combat victories can be lost. In that approach nation building is an implied non-military task where military always will have the main responsibility for establishing and maintaining security, public order and emergency service in the country. War specialists identified the military members as strong human resources of the world because they can be used for various non-military activities more effectively than other human resources in diverse range of fields such as disaster situations, emergency situations, post conflict recovering process and country development (Defence Services Command and Staff College - Sri Lanka, 2002). In this manner military leadership and the job performances of soldiers are real challenges in post conflict or peace. Nation development projects and public utility infrastructure enhancements are timely needed and require optimum use of finances. When dealing with time and finance limitations government often look forward to military resources and skills. Human resource management skills by the military in past three decades of war against terrorists have proved it is always result oriented and attainable in timely manner. Now the mind sets of the troops and military commanders are getting absorbed by the modern trends of post conflict scenarios locally and globally. Therefore human resource aspects of the military are facing dire need of selection of

appropriate leadership style. Therefore scientific inquiry should lead to find out new methods of HRM skills to strike the balance between military style and other management skills to embed in to local public administration.

Now the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) is in the midst of transformation of being the key element of national power. Many thought that the Army role would be diminished after eliminating the terrorist movement, whereas the Army has been more active in post conflict and support government efforts to achieve sustainable peace. Hence, the postmodern soldier is not only a warrior but also considered as an important social employee.

Research Problem

In the Army, leaders are known to practice different leadership styles to accomplish missions. Their leadership was a vital factor for winning the war against a separatist movement (LTTE). However, at present the SL Army (SLA) needs to adopt and play different leadership roles in the civil affairs or nation building while retaining its primary role. Military participation in civil affairs or nation building process is capable with strength, resources and the ability of the military members (School of Advanced Military Studies - USA, 2011). But their leadership styles, commanding process and legal atmosphere are different than public administration process. Furthermore, the military personnel ought to follow their own methods to keep their military performances and psychological atmosphere of members as military men. By considering the above facts, the research question can be formulated as to whether; there be any relationship between leadership styles and job performance of soldiers in post conflict context?

Objectives of the research

Thus objectives of the study are, to identify whether there is any need of changing military leadership styles those were practiced during the period of war, to find the impact of military leadership styles practicing in post conflict context and its influence on to the job performances of the soldiers and to explore appropriate military leadership styles in various levels of leaders that affected the performance of the soldiers in post conflict context.

Research Methodology

Survey research method was used to conduct this research. Both primary and secondary data have been used for this purpose in this study. Since this is a vast subject the researcher has attempted to find out the relationship between five leadership styles within people concern and task concern axis which affects the performances of soldiers.

The researcher has found Blake and Mouton Grid as a model to identify the relationship of performance between leadership (Blake& McCane, 1991). The sample consisted of 50 officers and 120 ORs from different Security Forces HQs engaged in nation building projects. Data was collected through a questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of semi structured questions and background data. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of five point likert scale statements to measure the leadership and the soldier's performance in post conflict context. Researcher has used mixed method including qualitative and quantitative both. Since the researcher is going to use the quantitative analytical model, qualitative factors translated in the likert scale are found in the statistics.

Key Findings

After analyzing the factors it was found that officers and Soldiers believed that military leaders follow different levels of leadership styles which will enhance the performance in present context. This finding was presented in five main conclusions as indicated below.

Table 1 : Level of Performance with leadership Style.

Ser	Leadership Styles	Performance Level
1.	Country club	High mean value
2.	Perish or produce	High mean value
3.	Impoverished	Low mean value
4.	Middle of the road	Average mean value
5.	Team	High mean value

Source   :Survey Data, 2015.

According to the correlation results, each leadership has indicated positive relationships with job performance, but team leadership has shown strong relationship with job performance of soldiers in post conflict context. Therefore it can be concluded with existing findings that most desirable place for a leader to be along the two axes that is one on task and one on people (team leader). However, do not entirely dismiss the other because certain situations might call for one of the other four to be used at times. They have to adopt styles of collaborative team leadership. This means that in achieving results, leaders have to depend less on formal authority but more on influencing others.

Conclusion

Military being result oriented organization always needs to have schedules in order to achieve its corporate goals. Therefore, it is a prime requirement of working out a long term and short term strategic plan ultimately support by all levels of leaders. Furthermore, military effort needs to ensure

that the policy, programme and resources are properly aligned with objectives. Military leadership always focuses on effectiveness (Robbins, 2003). But after the conflict when soldiers are engaged in nation development activities we have to focus on efficiency also. Therefore in post conflict military leadership should develop the concept of leader and manager which is the practice of the team leadership.

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