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Leadership Knowingly Behaving Badly

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Abstract:

Organizations continue to struggle and seek outside consultation to coach and teach senior executives how to lead the workforce effectively. Significant research publications categories different leadership styles. Investigation revealed that an effective style is based on organization type and specific level within the organization. Leadership that imposes fear within the workforce initially generates trivial gains. Employee fright develops a toxic culture of non-transparency among management and employees. Dissection of personnel experience and survey of industry professionals confirms reason management at times neglects appropriate leadership behaviors. Personal fears dilute vision and justify inappropriate activities.

Keywords: Leadership, fear, personality traits, employee empowerment, procurement, effective management

1. Introduction

Social media, magazines, and various other publications articulate what great leadership looks like. They highlight the characters and personality traits of great leaders from corporate to sports sectors. Each and everyone typically have the same traits with some uniqueness based on an individual's personality. Publications continue to expose through research consistently behaviors and methods that support workforce embracement of leaders. These specific behaviors and methods are similar for leadership within any type of organization and apply to a global audience. The same expectation of great leadership is essential in all global cultures and environments. Why does most leadership not accept this and change their ways to support teams to excel?

Many organizational leaders are also coached and trained these traits within their organizations. After any specialized training on leadership, almost all agree that these methods are most effective and plan to change their future behaviors. Less than a week after training, they resort back to original ways. The toxic behaviors they realized during training are back as everyday operating practice. They continue to address these unacceptable behaviors during staff meetings or other forums as ineffective and intolerable leadership skills. A question arises why do they still act this way?

2. Literature Appraisal

The feeling of perceived threat(s) triggers the human emotion of fear. Fear generates defensive strategies for the human body and mind to respond either fight or flight. It impacts both the mental and physical states of individuals. Management of its mental and physical impact is individual learned behavior (Suárez, 1993).

Fear of consequences directly impacts a person's behaviors and actions. Its significant effectiveness in modifying behaviors has embraced research publications focusing on fear appeals (FA). FA are recommendations use to convince individuals to change behaviors and/or actions to prevent undesired consequences if they abide (Tannenbaum et al., 2015). All critical marketing campaigns incorporate certain levels of FA to persuade the audience.

The psychological emotion of fear is a significant factor that contributes to leaders and followers. Several research studies were conducted within the workplace on how fear impacts an employee's performance. Fear has been an effective leadership technique to escalate performance levels in employees. This mindset is viewed as "Old School" and has been dissected within research to be ineffective and toxic to workplace culture. (Applebaum et al., 1998) characterized how destructive to employee's performance fear of failure generates. Fear dilutes transparency between supervision and employees, driving latent decisions resulting in significant financial impacts. Fear stalls the innovativeness of ideas because employees are constraint by fear of failure and minimize suggestions or insight into ideas (Lebel, 2016).

A leader's technique for managing employees is defined as a Leadership style. In 1939 Kurt Lewin and several other psychologists categorized leadership styles as authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-fair leaders (Cherry, 2006). Since then, several offsprings centrally scoped have been defined within publications. In addition, unique leadership style effectiveness within specific environments shows no significant advantage. (Lindholm et al., 2000) (Egri& Herman, 2000) Not one leadership style has an advantage for promotional consideration. Research confirms leadership styles varied within organizations (Kovač & Jesenko, 2010). The key input of critical leadership style for promotion success are

characterized by industry type and position level type (Boykins et al., 2013). Analysis of gender and race also confirms leadership style is not significant based on an individual's heritage (Vinkenburg et al., 2011).

In summary, no particular leadership style existed prominently within industries. The type of leadership style is dedicated to the majority of the time by industry type and position level. The physiological fear within the workplace creates minimal gains initially and migrates into a toxic culture. Toxic cultures include non-transparency driving significant disadvantages to resolve obstacles.

3. Investigation of Hypothesis

Researchers of this publication have accumulated over 50 years of combined experience within healthcare, service and manufacturing industries. Reflections of insights are based on observations and encounters of leaders ranging from immediate supervision to director level. Timeline for observations encompasses leaders of both genders and multiple age of generations. This sample set of multitude and diverse leaders provides a comprehensive assessment of critical traits required for effective leadership.

Based on 20 plus years in the manufacturing environment, we have come to realize the reasoning for these destructive behaviors. Fear rationales all actions with disregard of right or wrong. The reason for unacceptable behaviors is categorized into three bins job, leapfrog, or weakness. Leadership tends to fear the loss of position. This mindset supports keeping control and making all decisions. This limits team growth and discourages others from thinking independently. Most of the strategic leadership skills require the transfer of control to a level below you. Mainstream leadership's primary concern is the justification for position. Controlling and making decisions is viewed as a requirement for the position.

Another concern is that team members will "leapfrog" past them. Leadership is afraid that if individuals are supported and giving power, eventually, someone discovers their ability. This drives potential for promotion above them. The fear of losing an opportunity drives a narrow view and eliminates focus on leadership traits. Many leaders are afraid to show weakness. They are afraid their power is compromised if the team senses they do not know. The majority of leaders view weakness as a sign of non-capability. This view drives them to make toxic decisions to "falsely" retain elite status. The above behaviors support a culture and activities that prevent the existence of true leadership. Fear drives individuals to act in a manner even though they know it is wrong. If you strongly believe something, it is challenging to be acceptant of right/wrong. Our vision of a great leader is a genuine one. Genuineness is a trait that encompasses all key behaviors. It provides inclusiveness and integrity. Research has proven leadership supporting openness and genuineness toward employees encourages transparency of concerns (Lebel, 2016).

Leaders misbehave due to one feeling of fear. Fear drives undesired behaviors, even within great people. Think of a time when driving to someplace and you are running late. Knowing that possibly you will be late, you tend to drive a bit faster than the speed limit. Break a particular law that generally you are a law-abiding citizen. Human behaviors change considerably during a sense of fear. Typical activities of genuineness are bypassed to survive.

Leadership fear composes of three key mindsets: job loss, leapfrog position, and loss of control. Every leader has these same concerns and how they manage to handle them defines how effective leadership is. These concerns are normal behaviors to have and should not be viewed as immoral. Actions on how to leverage them should be viewed and potentially considered to change them.

4. Survey for Validation of Hypothesis

To confirm the hypothesis and have a clear characterization of why leaders in various organizations act inappropriately, a random sampling survey was conducted (Figure 1). Survey construction involved a bi-categorization approach. The first portion of the survey categorized participant type (gender, age, industry type, and leadership experience). The remaining questionnaire centered on unique behavior activities framed around leadership actions. The survey explored questions specific to the psychological emotion of fear. Participants were asked specific questions about their behaviors or actions deemed inappropriate (Fink, 2002). Posed questions for the participants' survey involved choosing based on a scale rate from 1 to 5 (1: Never - 5: Always). Employing a Z-Score to Percentile Rank (ZPR) methodology to analyze the participant submissions supports statistical comparison. ZPR concept involves converting raw individual submissions (scores) into normal score (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Leveraging 80% of the submission rankings provides ideal meta-analysis (Nielsen, 1994).

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| Survey |
| Survey |
| Gender - (Male, Female) |
| Age - (30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69) |
| Industry - (Academia, Finance, Human Resource, Manufacturing, Medical, Service) |
| Years in Leadership Role - (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16, 20, 21-25) |
| As a leader have you ever feared your job because someone on your team was more knowledgeable than you? - (1-5) |
| Have you ever blamed others for a failed project, missed deadline or a poor decision you made so you don't look bad? - (1-5) |
| Have you ever taken credit for someone else's successful work or project? - (1-5) |
| Do you review all of your employees work and make them rework their communication or presentation because it is not the way you would have completed it? (1-5) |
| Has anyone ever told they quit because of the way you lead the team? - (1-5) |
| Please share any other unacceptable leadership behaviors you have experiences as a leader or employee |

Figure 1: Survey Questionnaire

4.1. Survey Construction - Participant Type

Reports (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019) in 2019 men represent 53% of the total labor force. Figure 2 displays a survey of participants by gender type. Survey for gender distribution data is similar to actual labor statistics. The percentage delta between gender survey results is less than 10 percent.

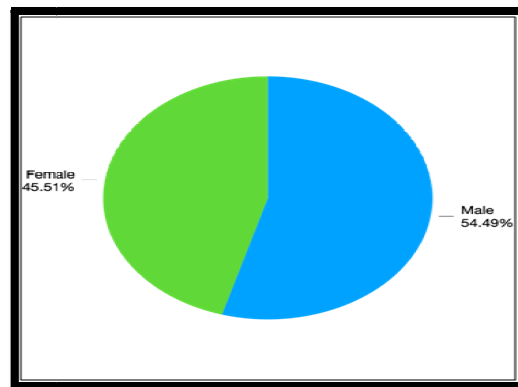


Figure 2: Survey Results for Gender

Canvassing survey participants for age group supports investigation of the historical journey of leaders in the workplace. Behavioral acceptance varies within different time eras. This categorization provides a critical comparison of inappropriate behaviors by time frames (Figure 3). The age group ranges from 40-49 to 60-69 with the nominal difference between the genders. Over 60 percent of survey participants fall in the age group 40-49.

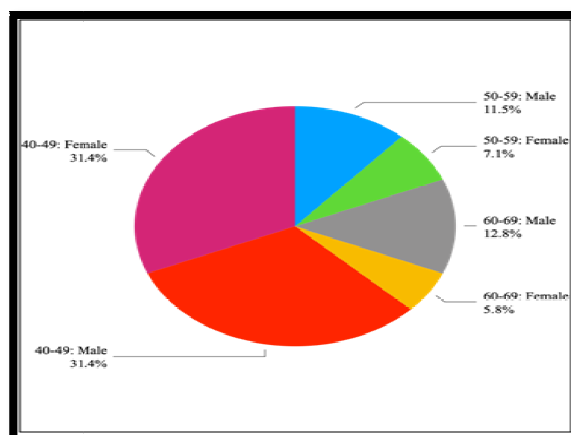


Figure 3: Survey Results for Gender and Age Group

The capture of industry type provides insight among various industries of inappropriate leadership behaviors (Figure 4). Comparison between industries supports research if biases exist within particular sectors. The survey captures a complement of industries. Data collection composes of seven different industry sectors. Industry type also reveals similar percent distribution between genders except for manufacturing and medical.

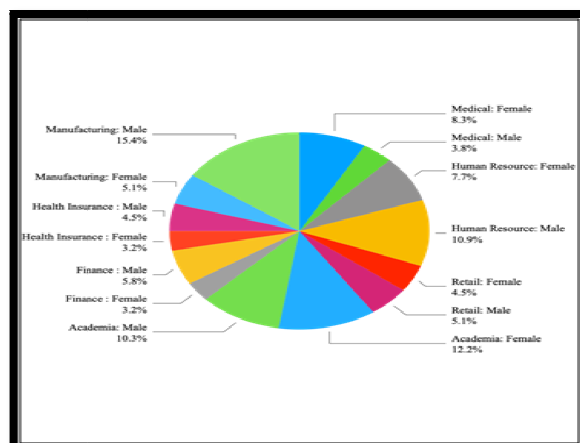


Figure 4: Survey Results for Gender and Industry Type

The author's addition of Leadership tenure provides an additional layer of analysis based on time within roles. Survey results reveal nominal differences between gender of tenure groups (Figure 5). The majority of the respondents compose a leadership time frame of 21-25 years. This is consistent with the age group of 40-49 years.

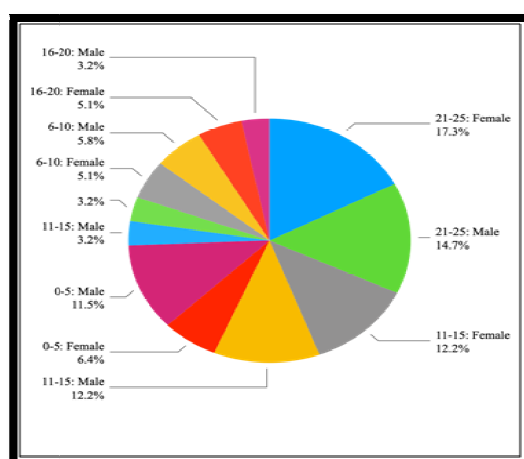


Figure 5: Survey Results for Gender and Leadership Tenure

Performing a statistical analysis supports an unbiased assessment of the survey results. Table 1 shows a statistical comparison of genders between two proportions at a significant level of 5%. Gender and Industry Types (Medical and Manufacturing) of the categorized comparison indicate a statistical difference at 95% confidence. Survey analysis requires a gender-specific comparison to remove unequal weighing.

| Type | % Female | % Male | Z Score | P Value | Result |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Gender | 45.51 | 54.49 | 1.5852 | 0.05592 | Borderline |
| Age Group (40-49) | 43.9 | 56.1 | 0 | 0.5 | Not Significant |
| Age Group (50-59) | 48.3 | 51.7 | 0.2626 | 0.39743 | Not Significant |
| Age Group (60-69) | 48.3 | 51.7 | 0.2626 | 0.39743 | Not Significant |
| Industry Type - Medical | 31.6 | 68.4 | 2.2711 | 0.0116 | Significant |
| Industry Type - Manufacturing | 25.0 | 75.0 | -4 | 0.00003 | Significant |
| Industry Type - Human Resource | 58.6 | 41.4 | -1.3131 | 0.0951 | Not Significant |
| Industry Type - Academia | 45.7 | 54.3 | 0.7171 | 0.23576 | Not Significant |
| Industry Type - Retail | 53.3 | 46.7 | -0.3651 | 0.35569 | Not Significant |
| Industry Type - Service | 58.3 | 41.7 | 0.8165 | 0.20611 | Not Significant |
| Industry Type - Finance | 64.3 | 35.7 | -1.5119 | 0.06552 | Not Significant |
| Leadership Tenure (0-5) | 50.0 | 50.0 | 0 | 0.5 | Not Significant |
| Leadership Tenure (6-10) | 50.0 | 50.0 | 0 | 0.5 | Not Significant |
| Leadership Tenure (11-15) | 42.2 | 57.8 | -1.4757 | 0.06944 | Not Significant |
| Leadership Tenure (16-20) | 46.0 | 54.0 | -0.8 | 0.21186 | Not Significant |
| Leadership Tenure (21-25) | 38.5 | 61.5 | -1.1767 | 0.119 | Not Significant |

Table 1: Statistical Comparison of Percentage Proportion between Genders

4.2. Survey Construction - Competency

A Leader's competency in-front of employees is a critical qualification. View of competency is defined by the leader and employees. Employees associate a competent leader based on trust and empathy. Leaders define competency as servicing the needs of the employees. Toxic leaders associate competency with knowledge of every detail in employee responsibility. Challenging a toxic leader's knowledge by employees drives bullying behavior (Stouten et al., 2010).

The first question of the survey asks the question if leaders felt threatened for position from others. This question strategically challenges participants to reflect on incidents causing the feeling of not having all the answers. A review of participant submissions reveals a wide distribution range (1 - 3). Figure 6 displays conversions of submission ratings into percentiles.

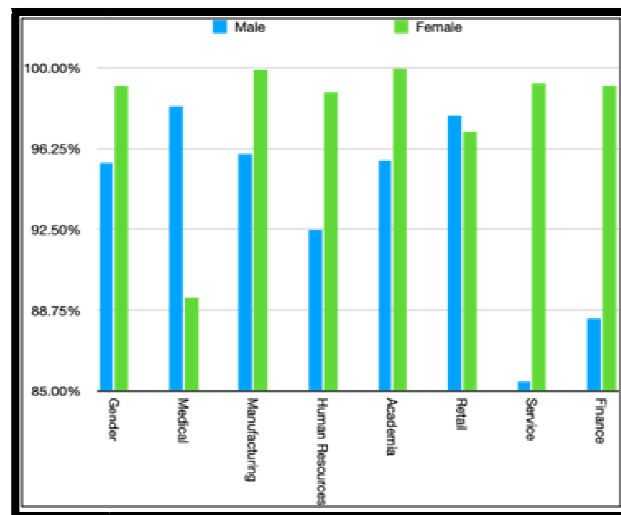


Figure 6: Question 1 Percentile Data

Percentile data indicates over 85% of participants have not felt threatened by colleagues having higher knowledge. Females are less likely than males to have concerns about job capability across all industries. Medical and retail sectors indicate that males are less likely than females to feel insecure. Manufacturing, Human Resource, Academia, Service and Finance indicate females are more tolerant of a knowledge gap. Every industry shows a slight difference between genders except for the Service sector. Service shows over a 10% difference in acceptance between females and males.

4.3. Survey Construction – Blame

The tactic of blame is used frequently to justify failure. Identification of others for the undesired outcome is a defense mechanism to satisfy our self-capability. Everyone feels their abilities are superior to others. Finding blame relieves our feelings of inferiority. Sometimes actions taken by leaders to blame others are unconscious and not realized (Farrell, 2013).

The second question of the survey asks a question about taking ownership of actions (Figure 7). This question asks participants if they blamed others for undesired results. A review of participant submissions reveals a narrow distribution range (1 - 2). Percentiles confirm minimal variations with a consistent of 100% for genders and each industry. Data indicates the sample set of participants all rarely blame others for undesired outcomes.

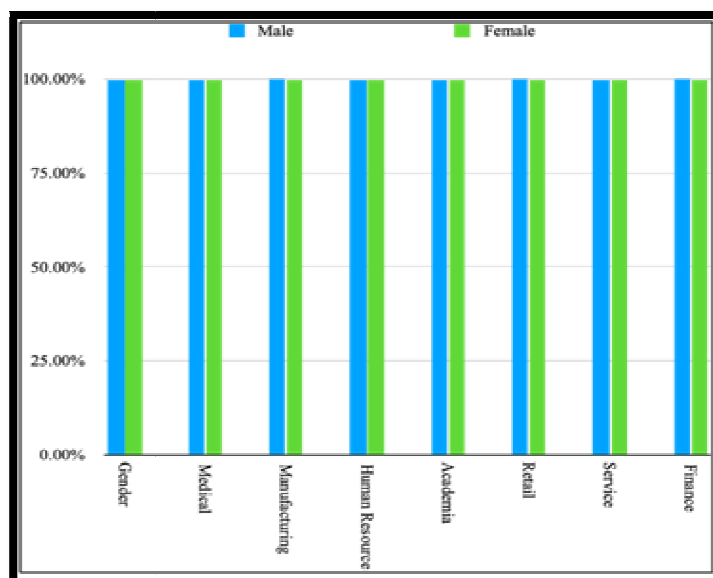


Figure 7: Question 2 Percentile Data

4.4. Survey Construction – Recognition

Acknowledge of performance is a desire deep within everyone's psyche. Seeking out recognition drives an increase in focus and attention to the task at hand. This strong euphoric need drives individuals to bypass ethics and claim successful ideas or work as their own. In conversation or a typical setting, all individuals understand this as unethical behavior. This inappropriate behavior is understood at an early age and multi-cultural (Izraeli, 1988).

Survey question 3 focuses on assuming authorship from someone else works. Figure 8 shows responses well over 99.40%. Minimal variation in responses indicates that survey leaders value the transparency of subordinate's works.

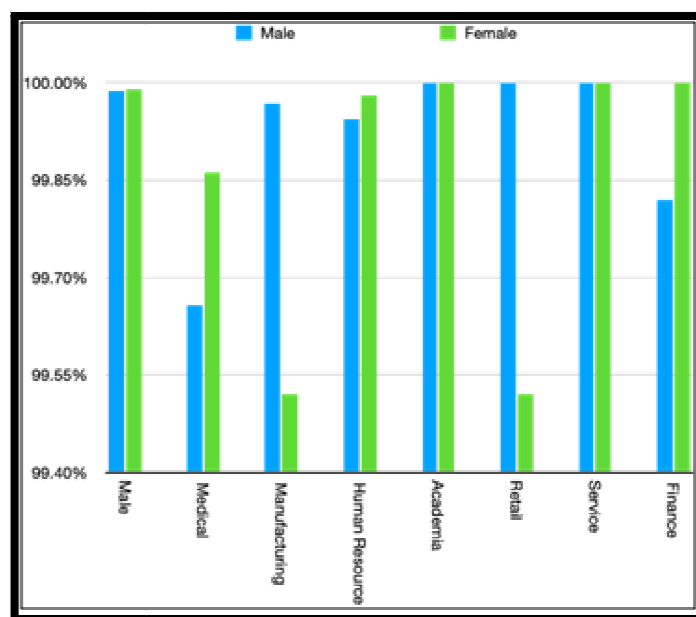


Figure 8: Question 3 Percentile Data

4.5. Survey Construction – Micromanager

Justification of one's position in the workplace is a continuous worry of unqualified leaders. Leaders advancing without proper skillset develop an inferior complex. They resort to activities causing micromanagement of employee's work. Micromanagement of employees is a critical enemy of workforce morale (Shuford, 2019). The first step in the transformation of any leadership style for effectiveness is to address micromanagers (Gardanova et al., 2019)

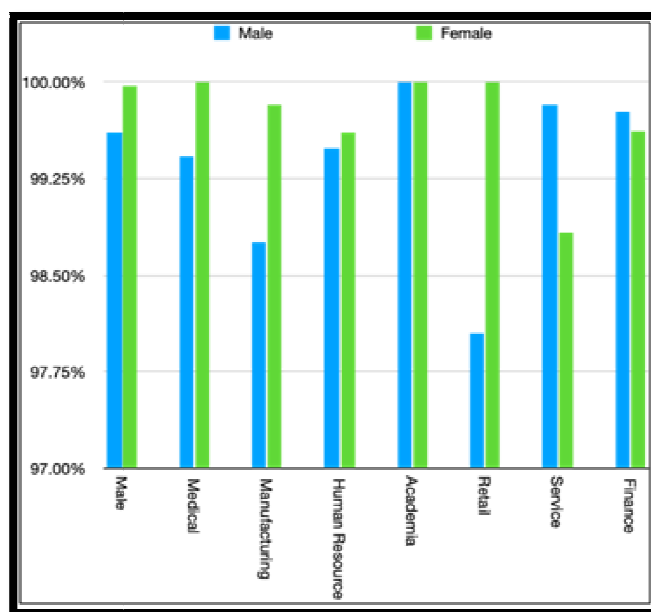


Figure 9: Question 4 Percentile Data

Question 4 focuses on leaders' ability to release control (Figure 9). Allowing the team to make decisions and contribute in their unique way breeds effective execution and innovation. Survey results indicate that females are more accepting of an individual's unique contributions. Retail sectors reveal the most significant gap between genders.

4.6. Survey Construction – Validation

Survey data collection requires the assumption that participant submission is honest. Deployment of clear and concise questions resulting in inconsistent interpretation by all parties supports accurate assessment (Fink, 2002). Anonymous feedback enhances the degree of accuracy (Parry, 1950). Incorporation of unfavorable personal character assessment questions provides a simple validation of information collected.

Results from question 5 support a degree of validation (Figure 10). Questions with only two outcomes remove bias. The data indicates a degree of leadership sampled encountered employees quitting due to their ineffective leadership. Drill down into gender and industry type does not show any significant difference.

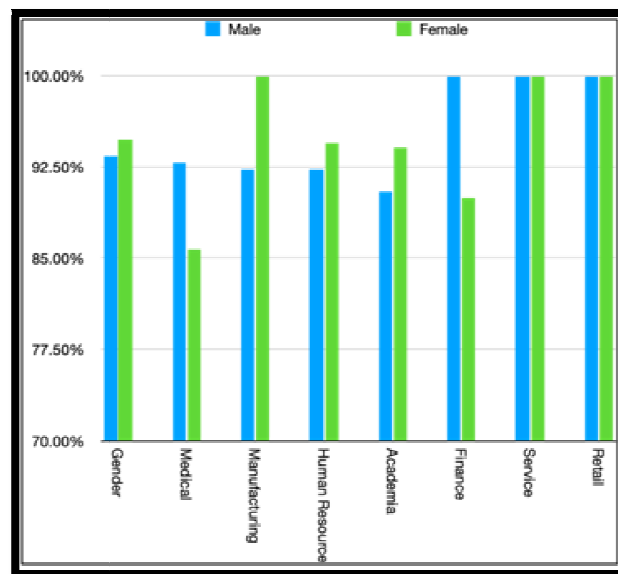


Figure 10: Question 5 Yes/No

4.7. Survey Construction – Additional Information

Every survey should include some verbal feedback from participants. A provision allows participants to supply additional information not realized by the survey publisher. This information could provide critical insight and possibly support future survey questionnaires.

Categorizing the additional comments allows for ease of interpretation. Summary of each comment into one word supports grouping multi similar statements. Figure 11 reveals nepotism and micro-management as significant concerns impacting surveyed participants. Both of these concerns are uniquely addressed by individual survey questions. This confirms survey construction as a comprehensive assessment.

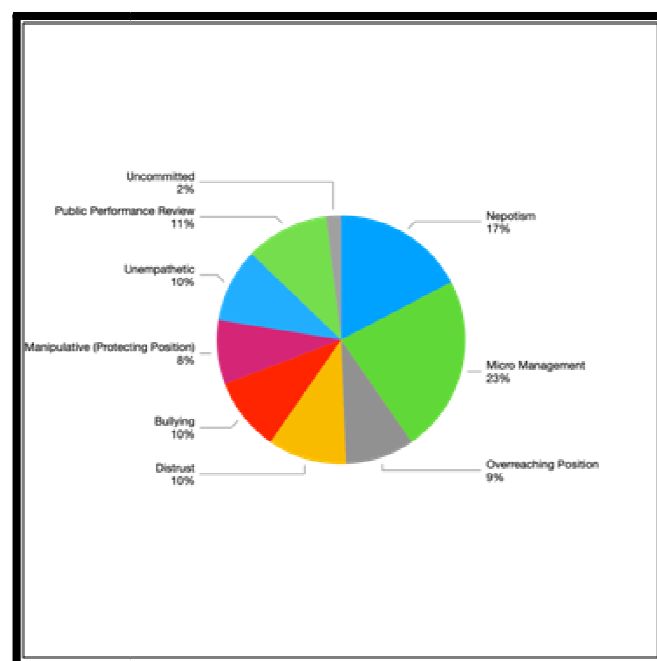


Figure 11: Survey Comments

5. Conclusion

This publication explores the question "Why Do Leaders Knowingly Behave Badly." Literature search concluded that no specific leadership type contributes to the success of an individual within the workplace. Leadership type success is characterized based on industry and position level. The emotional trait of fear contributes to and modifies an individual's reasoning. Fear is a significant contributor to dedicating leadership's actions toward employees.

Real-life knowledge and observation indicate that fear generates three mindset views with all leaders. Leapfrog, promotion, and capable frame the three aspects that drive fear within leaders. Every individual possesses, at some point, one of these emotions. How they are managed internally, and actions leaders take encompasses right or wrong behaviors. Leaders with a genuineness approach tend to rationalize appropriate and inappropriate actions

Survey results examined the hypothesis for inappropriate behavior. Data collected confirms the majority of real-life insights. Participant feedback collected in the survey validates the hypothesis of unacceptable behavior.

Future research requires examination of younger generations. The current survey sample consisted only of participants from the age group 40 to 69. This age group is within the range of both authors. Some of the inappropriate behaviors outline by authors in the past were widely acceptable by management. Comparison between generations could reveal differences of insights.

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