



Paranoia to Paralysis: Monograph Examination of Leadership Behavior and its Effect on Organizational Performance

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Research Article

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Abstract

This research explores the phenomenon of leadership behavior and its impact on organizational performance. It was inspired by firsthand accounts of individuals discussing their bosses' behaviors during a lunch conversation. The study aims to shed light on the characteristics and behaviors of leaders, specifically focusing on how the paranoia of leaders affect their leadership characteristics and their impact on both employees and organizations. Narrative inquiry was employed as the methodology, utilizing storytelling and interviews as primary data collection methods. The research procedure involved hearing participants' stories, creating a relational space for sharing, organizing the stories into a meaningful format, co-constructing knowledge with participants, interpreting the stories' meaning, and testing revelations against existing literature. The participants in this study were eight individuals from three different companies who shared their experiences of leaders exhibiting peculiar behaviors. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, addressing ethical concerns. Unstructured research questions were used to further explore the stories shared by participants. The results showed that leadership of paranoia characteristics aligned with positive leadership traits yielded leadership effectiveness, and those that aligned with negative leadership traits yielded leadership ineffectiveness in the respective organizations. By examining the stories and experiences of individuals, this research seeks to inform reforms and contribute to policy development in the field of leadership.

Introduction

International Workers' Day, also known as Labour Day in some countries and often referred to as May Day in Ghana, is celebrated on May 1st with parades, speeches, and other festivities to recognize the contribution of workers in the development of the country. Labor unions use the occasion to call on governments and companies to provide fair pay and other employee welfare benefits. This day is usually declared a holiday in Ghana, and workers often participate in the parades or public lectures, which are broadcast live on national television for those unable to attend to watch. I am usually one of those who participates in the Labor Day celebration through the electronic media, but for the 2023

Labor Day celebration, a colleague of mine decided to spice up my boring life by inviting me to lunch this year.

While having lunch at this magnificent hotel in the capital city of Ghana, a news item caught my colleague's attention. She seemed more interested in the personality's chair than the news story itself. Her piercing, high-pitched, shrewd voice drew the attention of half of the patrons in the restaurant, including myself, to her and later to the direction of her index finger, which was pointing to the TV. Nothing very surprising or unusual was being shown on television, which confused us. When she sensed our perplexity, she cried, "So Akuffo Addo carried his seat here too!" The rhetorical question she often used to ask was, "Why do leaders do these

wired things?"

My colleague's expression of astonishment changed the atmosphere and sort of harmonized the topic for discussion at the restaurant. Like many others, I had heard that Nana Akufo Addo, the president of Ghana, carried his chair about with him or that he only used that chair, but I had never seen such a heated and in-depth discussion regarding his behavior until that day at the restaurant. It piqued my interest very much. A portion of the conversation focused on political leaders' paranoia, which drives them to seek spiritual or military protection to maintain their positions of power. These leaders believe that practically everyone is out to get them, discredit them, or remove them from office. As the various discussions on the feature on the television continued, I overheard the mention of "my boss", which prompted me to eavesdrop on the conversation of a group of eight women sitting on the table to my left. One of the eight ladies described the position of her employer as paranoia, while the other added that hers was paralysis, which provoked riotous laughter from everyone at the table. They appeared to be sitting at one of the two largest tables in the restaurant, so I politely requested if I could join their table, as I could not help but want to be a part of that conversation.

Purpose

While I initially had no intention of conducting research or seeking information for the purpose of writing an article, my interest was piqued when the topic of organizational leadership arose. The unfiltered and captivating firsthand accounts shared by individuals compelled me to explore this area further [1]. The narratives provided by the participants served as a guiding force for the research, as they shed light on their bosses' behaviors and the consequent effects on them and the organization. It became evident that directing the research towards examining leadership characteristics or behaviors and their influence on organizational performance would be both feasible and yield impactful results, thereby aiding institutions in transforming leader behavior and organizational cultures. The specific objectives as follows:

- To explore the characteristics and behaviors associated with paranoid leaders in the workplace.
- To understand how paranoid behavior influences leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes.
- To examine why some leaders' paranoid behavior leads to success, while others' behavior leads to chaos.
- To identify the factors that moderate the relationship between paranoid leadership behavior and organizational performance.
- To provide practical insights and recommendations for organizations to effectively manage and mitigate the negative effects of paranoid leadership behavior.

Expected Outcome and Impact

The expected benefits of this research project will accrue to employees, organizational leaders, firms, and the government through an improved understanding of organizational leadership, governance, and operation and their impact on performance. Areas of research emphasis are the impacts of leadership behaviors and their interrelationships with stakeholders that affect work performance and overall organizational achievement.

Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

After listening to the stories and obtaining feedback on further inquiries made with the participants, the challenge was to find an approach that could test the worldview or beliefs of participants based on shared stories in a scientific manner to create meaning and at the same time ensure reliability and validity of the measure. The stories pointed me in the direction of a narrative inquiry approach, but which type of narrative inquiry will be appropriate to deliver reliability and validity of measure considering the data collected left me in a state of quandary. After several days of reflecting on the stories of the participants, I realized that the common word running through the stories in response to my inquiry on what the participants thought was the problem with their bosses was "paranoid" or "paranoia", and the stories all of participants who came from three different organizations had similar narratives. I thought that could not be a coincidence, and it was therefore necessary to find a way of testing the participants' beliefs. This led me to stick to the narrative inquiry but use the deductive approach, which allowed for testing the narrative against existing theories to either verify or disprove them [2]. The realization of commonality between narratives and themes in the stories of participants led to the development of a theoretical framework connecting theories on paranoia to leadership behaviors or actions at the workplace for confirmation [2].

Paranoia

Richey & Walsh [3] defined paranoia, or being paranoid, as a perceived response to threats strongly influenced by worry or fear, frequently to the point of hallucination and irrationality. Rakowich [4] explains that as executives rise to power, the constant recognition of their own accomplishments makes them proud. This sense of accomplishment sometimes evolves into arrogance. They also, perhaps surprisingly, tend to become more fearful. Stories of leaders in their positions who have been disgraced and ousted out of office or brought down by their colleagues, employees, friends, relatives, or competitors become their new reality. They are constantly watching out for signs of company failure, competitor

takeover, or internal or external betrayal. Some leaders, in trying to put in preventive measures, set up spies on / within their employees or colleagues to listen. Employees or colleagues who are reported by spies or gossips to have said or acted against the leader get punished in one way or another. Such leaders become so paranoid that they encourage gossip at the workplace. Rakowich [4] detailed how consultant Roger Jones repeatedly saw the same five ingrained fears when he engaged dozens of CEOs and other top executives. They worried about appearing ineffective, incompetent, non-performing, ineffective, and dumb. They also dreaded the political backlash from their followers and colleagues. None of these pressing concerns related to the companies or organizations they oversaw. The leader's preoccupation with how they were perceived by others and their anxieties were found to be impeding their ability to lead [4].

Flaum [5] asserts that paranoia is inevitable in the practice of leadership and believes that some level of paranoia is needed for leadership effectiveness. According to Flaum [5], the fear of a paranoid leader that their clients may abandon them for their competitors keeps their thoughts going wild at night, leading to the development of strategies to meet or exceed client expectations. The story of the paranoia that informs the strategy formation of Jeff Rich, the CEO of ACS, was shared as an example of a common paranoia amongst leaders. According to Jeff Rich, CEO of ACS, a \$4 billion publicly traded company known for developing the EZ Pass and other service products, "Be it a human resource function, an accounting function, or a New York EZ Pass function—how to generate revenue, how to improve on revenue collection, how to improve on rate of revenue collection, how to get the bills out faster, how to get the money moving faster—keep them awake at night thinking about that kind of thing." [5], para. 3. Ulrich, chief product officer at Shutterstock, admits that being paranoid helps her develop strategies to stay on top of her game. She states that "I'm often thinking about whether the customer is going to find a better product out there. Maybe it makes me sound weird, but paranoia is one word that makes me stay on top." [6]. The vice chairman of the NASDAQ also believes that paranoia is good for leadership because it makes leaders think about their competitors, making them better. This means that leadership paranoia is not new and may not necessarily be a bad thing. It could lead to organizational success.

Characteristics of Leadership Paranoia that Leads to Success or Ineffectiveness of an Organization

Having reviewed the definitions and the varying perceptions of the effects of paranoia, one will ask, "What makes the paranoia of one leader lead to success and the

other lead to the ineffectiveness of the organization?" [7] and Rakowich's [4] provide a model for determining the outcome of leadership paranoia based on certain behavioral characteristics.

Paranoia Characteristics that Leads to Organizational Ineffectiveness

According to Bergeron [7], leadership paranoia that leads to organizational ineffectiveness occurs when leaders are hypersensitive to how people act and react. Conspiracy theory is developed from the actions and inactions of employees, colleagues, superiors, or the board. They are insecure about their ability to hold on to their positions, especially where the condition for their stay is based on performance, elections, or political appointment. Because they are deeply insecure in their own abilities, paranoid leaders are pathologically jealous of other gifted people, so they lead by dominating others rather than empowering them [7]. They refuse to let others lead out of fear that "they will be better than him or her. They easily create rigid structures and processes to "control" their organizations and/or churches and limit the autonomy of participants and emerging leaders [7]. They easily create rigid structures and processes to "control" their organizations and limit the autonomy of employees or emerging leaders within the organization. They harbor the fear that there could be a "potential" uprising or that "someone" could try to get them removed from their position [7]. Paranoid leaders tend to see their board as their adversary rather than an asset consisting of talented and knowledgeable leaders that should be assisting in leading the organization [7]. They are highly suspicious, hostile, abusive, and guarded in their relationships, whether with colleagues and/or family members. They have great difficulty developing and maintaining close relationships because they require genuineness or trustworthiness and a measure of self-disclosure to develop or maintain a relationship [7]. Their fear is that others will use personal information to undermine their authority and leadership, so they don't take the risk in relationships and usually keep a distance between themselves and others. Where they take the risk of developing a relationship, they demand "blind" loyalty and the responsibility of secretly obtaining information from people they are wary of [7].

Leadership Behaviors that Correspond to Paranoia Characteristics that Contribute to Leadership Ineffectiveness.

Norwood [8] has identified specific leadership practices that correspond to the paranoia that leads to ineffectiveness in organizations described in the preceding paragraph by Bergeron [7]. These behaviors, which are detrimental to leadership effectiveness, are as follows:

- **Unwillingness to Change:** Leaders who resist change hinder progress and inhibit growth within their teams and organizations.
- **Playing Loosely with Ethics:** Leaders who compromise ethical standards erode trust and damage their credibility, leading to negative consequences for the team and organization.
- **Jumping Wildly from One Strategy to Another:** Constantly shifting strategies without a clear rationale can create confusion and instability, making it difficult for the team to achieve goals effectively.
- **Forgetting the Importance of Tone:** Neglecting to communicate with an appropriate tone can create a hostile or demotivating environment, hindering team cohesion and productivity.
- **Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do:** Leaders who display a lack of accountability and demonstrate a double standard create resentment and diminish trust within the team.
- **Failure to Create a Healthy Corporate Culture:** Leaders who neglect to foster a positive and inclusive corporate culture can contribute to low morale, disengagement, and high turnover rates.
- **Failing to Grow:** Leaders who resist personal and professional growth limit their own potential and miss out on opportunities to develop their skills and expand their knowledge.
- **Constantly Working and Never Resting:** A leader who fails to find a healthy work-life balance risks burnout and can negatively impact their decision-making and overall effectiveness.
- **Rejecting Any Perspectives That Don't Align with Your Own (Confirmation Bias):** Leaders who exhibit confirmation bias limit their ability to consider alternative viewpoints and hinder innovation and creativity within the team.
- **Claiming Others' Ideas as Your Own:** Taking credit for others' ideas diminishes trust, stifles collaboration, and hampers team morale and engagement.
- **Failing to Listen to Critiques:** Leaders who dismiss or ignore constructive criticism miss out on valuable insights and may hinder their own growth and the development of the team.
- **Focusing on Self Rather Than Team:** A leader who prioritizes personal gain over the success and well-being of the team creates a toxic and unproductive work environment.
- **Failing to Encourage Team Members:** Neglecting to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members can lead to demotivation and decreased productivity.
- **Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control:** Leaders who micromanage disempower their team, stifle creativity, and hinder the growth and development of team members.
- **Focusing on Bottom-Line Revenue:** When leaders prioritize short-term financial gains over other important factors, such as employee well-being and customer satisfaction, the long-term success of the organization can be compromised.
- **Avoiding Conflict:** Leaders who shy away from addressing conflicts or difficult conversations within the team risk fostering a culture of unresolved issues and unaddressed tensions.
- **Refusing to Accept Blame:** Leaders who deflect blame and refuse to take responsibility for their mistakes undermine trust and accountability within the team.
- **Setting Unrealistic Expectations:** Leaders who set unattainable goals or expectations create undue stress and demotivation within the team, leading to decreased performance and morale.
- **Feeding Pride and Vainglory:** Leaders who excessively prioritize their own ego and self-promotion create an environment of self-centeredness that can hinder collaboration and teamwork.
- **Inability to Follow:** A leader who consistently fails to follow instructions or abide by organizational policies undermines their own credibility and sets a poor example for the team.

These behaviors can have detrimental effects on both the leader's effectiveness and the overall performance and well-being of the team. The presence of these negative leadership practices associated with ineffectiveness, rooted in paranoia, often creates challenges for individuals working with or under such leaders, leading to high employee turnover rates within the organization [9]. This phenomenon is consistent with John Maxwell's observation in his book "Leadership Gold" that employees often leave their jobs to escape toxic leaders or managers, rather than due to a dislike for the company itself [10]. It is crucial for leaders to be aware of these behaviors and strive to avoid them, fostering a positive and supportive environment that promotes growth and collaboration.

Paranoia Characteristics that Leads to Organizational Effectiveness or Success

In explaining the characteristics of leadership paranoia that lead to success, Rakowich [4] used the strategy Steve Jobs adopted in getting the buy-in of shareholders and employees into the acceptance of the Macintosh as a new product at Apple. In his 1984 presentation to Apple shareholders and employees to court their support for the new Macintosh computer, Jobs created a sense of paranoia to demonstrate a need for the direction he was taking [4]. The initial purpose

of his presentation was to generate excitement within the company about selling this new product, but he accomplished far more than that [4]. In his presentation, Jobs depicted IBM (a competitor) as a colorless, impersonal, totalitarian corporate behemoth determined to “dominate and control” the future of personal computers [4]. He asserted that the young Apple was the only “force” capable of ensuring customers’ “future freedom.” Jobs purposefully used terminology and images from the film Star Wars to compare Apple workers to the rebel coalition fighting the villainous Darth Vader [4]. He painted a picture of Apple not existing to just make and sell computers but rather protecting the liberty of the galaxy (customers worldwide)! By invoking such grand themes as life and death, Jobs knew he could conjure up a real sense of danger that would spur his people to passionate action. Rakowich’s [4] model of leadership paranoia indicates that paranoia that is invoked to awaken passion for collective action for success, awareness of competitor threats, or innovation for meeting customer expectations often leads to success.

Leadership Behaviors that Correspond to Paranoia Characteristics that Contribute to Leadership Success or Effectiveness

Scholars like Christian [11] and Varney [12] have identified certain good leadership characteristics that align with the paranoia that leads to the success or effectiveness of the leader and the well-being of the organization described in the preceding paragraph by Rakowich’s [4]. According to them, a great leader possesses a multitude of characteristics that inspire and guide their team towards success. These are:

- Vision: A leader has a clear vision of the future and the ability to communicate that vision to inspire others.
- Inspiration: They motivate and uplift their team, igniting passion and enthusiasm for shared goals.
- Continuous Improvement: A good leader promotes a culture of ongoing learning and growth, encouraging individuals and the team to constantly develop their skills and knowledge.
- Patience and Tenacity: Leaders understand that success takes time and perseverance. They remain patient during challenging times and demonstrate unwavering determination.
- Fairness and Respect: A leader values fairness and treats everyone with respect, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.
- Collaboration: They encourage collaboration and teamwork, recognizing the power of collective efforts in achieving objectives.
- Responsibility and Dependability: A leader takes ownership of their actions and inspires trust through their reliability and accountability.

- Bias for Diligence: They have a strong work ethic and encourage others to prioritize diligence and excellence in their work.
- Humility: Effective leaders remain humble, acknowledging their limitations and recognizing the contributions of others.
- Team Empowerment: They empower their team by delegating responsibilities and providing the necessary resources and support for individuals to excel.
- Open-Mindedness and Creativity: Leaders embrace diverse perspectives, encourage innovative thinking, and are open to new ideas and approaches.
- Authenticity and Self-Awareness: They are authentic and genuine, leading with integrity, and demonstrating self-awareness in their actions and decisions.
- Emotional and Cultural Intelligence: Leaders possess strong emotional intelligence, understanding and empathizing with their team members’ emotions. They are also culturally aware, promoting inclusivity and respecting diversity.
- Empowerment and Growth: They create an environment that fosters personal and professional growth, encouraging individuals to reach their full potential.
- Promoting Psychological Safeguarding: A good leader prioritizes the well-being and mental health of their team, ensuring a psychologically safe and supportive work environment.
- Trustworthiness: Leaders build trust through their honesty, reliability, and consistent demonstration of ethical behavior.
- Interpersonal Communication: They excel in effective communication, actively listening and conveying ideas with clarity, promoting understanding and collaboration.
- Strategic and Critical Thinking: Leaders think strategically, analyzing situations and making informed decisions based on critical thinking and long-term goals.
- Being a Role Model: They lead by example, setting high standards and acting as a role model for their team members to follow.

These traits collectively contribute to the success of a leader in inspiring and guiding their team towards achieving their shared goals.

Methodology

The primary goal of this research is to employ storytelling in the form of narrative inquiry within knowledge paradigms, methodology, quality criteria, and reflexivity to illuminate leadership behaviors at work to inform reforms or a prospective policy contribution [13]. Both primary and secondary data were used as study data. Secondary data were obtained from journals and articles through electronic searches, while primary data were obtained from orally told stories and interviews.

Research Procedure

The process adopted for this research followed a suggestion by Pino Gavidia and Adu [13], who posit that for a researcher to use stories in narrative inquiry to create an understanding of a phenomenon, it is important to follow some steps stated below that were adopted for this research:

- hearing them tell their stories.
- intentionally negotiating a relational space with participants to share participation across particular places and times [14].
- organize the stories into a meaningful, typically chronological format that represents the participant's experiences [15].
- co-construct the knowledge together with participants [13].
- interpretation and revelation of the meaning behind the stories through the identification of paranoia influencing leadership characteristics in the organization [13].
- Testing revelations or themes in stories against existing theories to confirm or disprove those theories [2].

From where I sat in the group, I could hear them, but I was straining to eavesdrop on their conversation, and I could not document the stories without the permission of the people telling them. The urge to document and analyze the stories I was hearing helped me overcome the feeling of shame in going over to join them, confess that I was eavesdropping on their conversation, and seek permission to document their stories. My encounter with the group actually went better than I thought. I thought they were going to tell me off, but my confession rather threw them into sporadic, frenzied laughter. When the laughter simmered, they inquired about my interest, what I was going to do with the stories, and whether I was going to publish them. They were concerned about my intention to publish because they felt publishing the stories could make them lose their jobs or expose them to victimization. My assurance of confidentiality and anonymity got them relaxed, and they beckoned on my colleague and me to take two of the three empty seats left around the table.

We spent five hours documenting their stories, which they permitted us to record and which I later transcribed for this paper. Permission was sought for the setting up of a WhatsApp group for purposes of validating data and results. The raw data, which was in the form of stories [1], required that narrative inquiry be used to make sense of the knowledge and experience in the stories [16] of the individuals and small groups in general [17]. The use of narrative inquiry as a methodology in this study entailed the view of certain leadership behaviors identified from the stories of a small group as a phenomenon. The adoption of the narrative inquiry methodology was appropriate for the reasons stated below:

- For the understanding of the experiences of everyone within the small group, which were obtained from their past interactions or association with leaders at their places of work [18]; and
- To identify commonality in experiences with the stories within the small group to make generalizations [19] to “challenge beliefs, values, and assumptions taken for granted” [13].

Participants

The experiences of eight people who were discussing issues of weird leaders at a restaurant were explored using interviews. Four of the ladies (Naa, Nhyira, Djormor, Adjoa and Adora) were staff of Aseda Mo Ltd.; two (Ama and Enam) were from Goshen Ltd.; and the last two (Sandra and Dromor) worked with Sepam Ltd. The names of the participants and their companies have been pseudonymized. This is in line with the agreement reached with participants prior to the interview or they sharing their stories. The pseudonymization was necessary because their stories needed to be shared as part of the data analysis, and since the companies they work for is a going concern, their identity had to be masked so they would not be victimized or face any legal action. This process had to be used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in line with ethics. According to Heaton [20], while performing studies on delicate subjects or with small populations, researchers are frequently forced to de-identify data to comply with ethical and regulatory constraints. Participants were allowed to choose their names and the names of the companies they worked for. This was done to make sure that the ethical concerns with pseudonyms that were raised in the journal article “A rose by any other name: participants choosing research pseudonyms,” authored by Allen & Wiles [21], were addressed.

Instruments

The research questions were unstructured and more about clarification or further inquiry to understand the stories they were sharing. The participants were already sharing stories of recurring irrational behaviors of their bosses that either negatively impacted their work or made them unhappy, which they considered comparable to the weird behavior of a president requiring a chair be carried from his office to every geographical area where work takes him because of fear of being harmed. The following questions were asked after each participant shared their story:

- Do you share the similar leader paranoia concerns being expressed here?
- What makes you think your boss is paranoid or can you tell me of a time when the actions of your leader made you think he or she was paranoid?
- What impact did or does your boss's behavior have on

you or the organization?

Data Collection

Delmas & Giles [15] assert that when a researcher wishes to investigate a phenomenon using the life experiences of a person or people, the narrative inquiry methodology is most appropriate. As with this, the life experiences of the focused group formed the basis of the investigation into the phenomenon, and therefore their stories, which for a narrative inquiry methodology are the raw data [1], were collected by the participant or focused group sharing stories about a certain aspect of their life [15]. Because this investigation was not planned, the questions were not structured. This aided in the collection of rich data because the unstructured nature of the questions made the interview conversational, which created a relaxing environment that aided in the natural flow of detailed information from the participants. As mentioned by Ivankova [22], one of the most important aspects of narrative inquiry methodology is openness to working without carefully planned scripts in the field to maintain the edge of inquiry and remove the creation of power relations that may distort the end results of the inquiry. The data collected through the posing of unstructured questions in a conversational manner was recorded on audio with their permission and later transcribed into text.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in deductive narrative inquiry entails the gathering of stories from various sources to gain insight into human experience for the purposes of creating meaning about a phenomenon [23]. The stories gathered from the participants were therefore valuable for the analysis of this research. Their stories formed the basis of the analysis of the data regarding participants' worldviews of their world of work, points of view, thoughts, and emotions concerning their interactions at work (the social world) [23]. The stories were arranged by the researcher in a manner that created understanding to uncover behaviors, emotions, and motives that may not be expressed explicitly in a social world (Nair, 2021) to test against existing paranoia theory to verify or disprove them. The test involved the use of Chat AI to determine the leadership characteristics in the stories as shared and the comparison of the identified characteristics stated in existing literature. The analysis focused on the subjective interpretation of the leadership behaviors and their impact on organization and the experiences of the participant as well as the researcher, using existing literature on leadership characteristics [23] and their impact on organizational performance and Chat AI [24]. The following process was adopted in the analysis:

- Stories of the participants were uploaded to Chat AI, and the prompt "identify the leadership characteristics

described in the story" was submitted.

- The identified characteristics were compared with leadership characteristics that promote effectiveness and those that lead to ineffectiveness, as described separately under the literature review. The specific question that represented the prompt was "identify leadership characteristics in the first passage that align with leadership characteristics in the second passage".
- Results were shared and analyzed as a way of validating existing literature in the study.

Trustworthiness

With trustworthiness being fundamental to the achievement of credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in this narrative qualitative research, the member checking or participant validation proposed by Birt et al. [25] as a method of ensuring credibility of data or results was adopted. According to Birt et al. [25], member checking, sometimes referred to as participant or respondent validation, is a method for examining the credibility of research outcomes in narrative inquiry. Participants are provided with data or outcomes to review for correctness and agreement with their experiences [25]. Member checking was done three (3) times during this study. The transcribed data was first sent to the WhatsApp group page created after the interview for each participant to validate, another validation was requested from the group after the chronological arrangement of responses which formed the stories then a final one was submitted, and responses received from the group after the final draft of the research article.

Stories Representing Responses to Unstructured Questions

Four of the ladies (Naa, Nhyira, Djormor, Adjoa and Adora) were staff of Aseda Mo Ltd.; two (Ama and Enam) were from Goshen Ltd.; and the last two (Sandra and Dromor) worked with Sepam Ltd.

Sepam Ltd (Sandra and Dromor)

Sandra's Story

"The leaders at my workplace are sane! Or maybe paranoid when it comes to customer satisfaction. Our MD and general manager are absolutely fixated on client satisfaction, leaving no stone unturned to ensure we deliver exceptional service. Our MD has earned the affectionate nickname 'What are the figures looking like?' because he is constantly discussing the company's performance. What sets our leaders apart is their commitment to transparency and carrying every employee along every step of the way. The vision is boldly written and shared at every meeting, and

they believe in sharing both the triumphs and challenges of our organization with every staff member. There is a deep sense of connection and belonging. Although the current pay might not be the best, it has never once crossed my mind to leave. Why? Because this office feels like a second home—a place where I truly belong”.

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders’ Paranoia at Sepam Ltd (Sandra)

The leadership characteristics identified in Sandra’s (Sepam Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Customer Focus: The leaders at the workplace are fixated on customer satisfaction and go above and beyond to ensure exceptional service.

Performance Orientation: The MD is actively engaged in discussing the company’s performance, demonstrating a commitment to achieving positive results.

Transparency: The leaders prioritize transparency by openly sharing information about the organization’s performance, both successes and challenges, with every staff member.

Inclusivity: Every employee is carried along and made to feel a sense of belonging. The leaders actively involve and engage all staff members in the organization’s journey.

Visionary Leadership: The vision of the organization is clearly defined and communicated at every meeting, allowing everyone to align their efforts towards shared goals.

Connection and Belonging: The leaders have fostered a deep sense of connection and belonging among the employees, making the workplace feel like a second home.

Employee Engagement: The commitment of the leaders to transparency and inclusivity contributes to high levels of employee engagement, as demonstrated by the fact that despite not having the best pay, employees have no desire to leave.

Dromor’s Story

“Well, I never thought of my leaders as being paranoid, but after listening to Sandra, I think they have some paranoia about client satisfaction. My General Manager prioritizes one thing above all: client satisfaction. It’s a recurring theme that echoes in every conversation with our General Manager, who often ends discussions with staff by saying, ‘I hope your customers are happy today.’ While performance and output reporting are important in our company, our leaders understand the value of giving their team space to work without constant surveillance. There’s a genuine sense of freedom to express our ideas and explore innovative solutions that promote sustainability and propel our company’s growth. When such innovations come to fruition, they are celebrated and embraced wholeheartedly. Last year,

our leaders went a step further to reward our hard work and dedication. They shared twenty percent (20%) of the profits with all staff, demonstrating their commitment to recognizing our contributions. Not only that, but individuals who performed exceptionally were rewarded with fifty percent (50%) of their basic salary. I was fortunate enough to receive both cash rewards because I exceeded my target last year.”

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders’ Paranoia at Sepam Ltd (Dormor)

The leadership characteristics identified in Dromor’s (Sepam Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Client Satisfaction Focus: The leaders exhibit a strong emphasis on client satisfaction, which is a recurring theme in conversations with the General Manager. This shows their commitment to meeting customer needs and expectations.

Space for Autonomy: The leaders understand the importance of giving their team space to work without constant surveillance, allowing for freedom and independence in carrying out their tasks.

Encouragement of Innovation: The leaders promote a culture of innovation by encouraging the team to express their ideas and explore innovative solutions that drive sustainability and company growth.

Celebration of Success: When innovative ideas and solutions are successful, they are celebrated and embraced by the leaders, fostering a positive and supportive work environment.

Recognition and Rewards: The leaders demonstrate their commitment to recognizing and rewarding contributions. Sharing a portion of profits with all staff and providing additional rewards for exceptional performance shows their appreciation for the team’s hard work and dedication.

Performance-based Rewards: The leaders go beyond recognizing overall performance by providing additional incentives, such as a percentage of basic salary, for individuals who perform exceptionally well.

Goal Alignment: The leaders set clear targets and expectations for the team, as evidenced by exceeding targets resulting in cash rewards for individuals.

Goshen Ltd (Ama and Enam)

Ama’s Story: “Well, my boss might not be as extreme as those who relocate an entire office across the country out of paranoia, but she does harbor a different kind of fear. It’s not about physical moves but rather an unwillingness to share the limelight, glory, or praise with anyone else. My leader’s level of paranoia revolves around her insecurities when it comes to recognition and accomplishments. Whenever our team develops a system or policy that garners attention or praise from the public, my leader quickly seizes the opportunity to present themselves as the sole creator of the

remarkable work. Staff members often struggle to obtain her approval to initiate or develop projects, yet once they become successful, she wastes no time in proclaiming how she single-handedly brought them to fruition. In the presence of other stakeholders, she condemns the entire staff and positions himself as the be-all and end-all of their achievements.

While it's demoralizing to hear my boss dismiss our contributions and take credit for things we've accomplished, some of us have resigned ourselves to accepting her for who she is. Others, unable to tolerate this behavior, either resign or confront her directly, which inevitably leads to their exclusion from the organization. Those who challenge him are either framed for wrongdoing or subjected to constant surveillance until they commit an offense and are subsequently pushed out. Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in a high staff turnover rate within the organization.

The perpetual recruitment cycle perpetuated by this toxic environment negatively impacts organizational performance. It takes time for new hires to familiarize themselves with the work process and become effective contributors. This constant frustration continues to linger, casting a shadow over our professional lives."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia at Goshen Ltd (Ama): The leadership characteristics identified in Ama's (Goshen Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Insecurity and Fear of Sharing Credit: The leader exhibits a fear of sharing the limelight, glory, or praise with anyone else. They feel insecure about recognition and accomplishments, leading them to claim credit for the work of others.

Lack of Team Collaboration: The leader does not foster a collaborative environment where team members can contribute and be acknowledged for their ideas and efforts. Instead, dismiss staff contributions and position themselves as the sole creator of successful projects.

Lack of Approval and Support: Staff members struggle to obtain the leader's approval and support to initiate or develop projects, which creates a demoralizing work environment.

Ego-Centric Behavior: The leader condemns the entire staff in the presence of other stakeholders, positioning themselves as the sole source of achievements. This ego-centric behavior diminishes the contributions of the team.

Negative Consequences for Challenging the Leader: Those who challenge the leader's behavior are either framed for wrongdoing or subjected to constant surveillance until they make a mistake and are pushed out of the organization.

High Staff Turnover: The toxic environment created by the leader's behavior leads to a high staff turnover rate. Employees either resign or confront the leader, resulting in their exclusion from the organization.

Negative Impact on Organizational Performance: The constant recruitment cycle due to high staff turnover

negatively affects the organization's performance, as it takes time for new hires to become familiar with the work processes and become effective contributors.

Enam's Story

"Well, it was always apparent that our leader had a penchant for claiming all the glory, but I never truly considered it paranoia until now. Ama's candid account of our boss's behavior, which paints an accurate picture of her true nature, made me realize the extent of her paranoia. While I had been privy to discussions about her actions in secret, I never fully grasped the extent of her self-absorption until hearing Ama's story.

During one particular incident, my passion for writing, although unrelated to my role as a financial assistant in the company, led me to occasionally publish articles in newspapers. On one occasion, my publications gained significant attention, and I received numerous congratulations from people. In the midst of this, the CEO summoned me. I presumed he wanted to congratulate or encourage me, but to my surprise, she interrogated me about seeking permission to publish. It puzzled me because I had not written in the company's name or used company time to write. I responded by explaining that I didn't believe I needed permission since it was not affiliated with the company. However, her response shocked me, though I managed to contain my reaction.

The CEO declared that, as long as I remained with the company, I required her permission for such endeavors. She went on to assert that I needed to submit my articles for her approval, and she insisted on being listed as a co-author, with her name always appearing first in the byline, as long as she held the CEO position. Since that conversation, I have continued to write, but I have never published any of my articles. I chose to wait until the CEO's tenure comes to an end, which is less than three years away. Hopefully, a more reasonable and considerate CEO will emerge, creating an environment where I can freely express and share my work without facing such unjust demands."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia at Goshen Ltd (Enam): The leadership characteristics identified in Ama's (Goshen Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Self-Absorption: The leader exhibits a strong tendency towards self-absorption, claiming all the glory and seeking recognition for achievements that are not directly related to their role.

Paranoia and Control: The leader displays paranoia by interrogating and questioning employees about their activities outside of work. They exert control by asserting the need for permission and approval for endeavors that are

unrelated to the company.

Lack of Trust and Autonomy: The leader's actions demonstrate a lack of trust in employees' judgment and abilities, as they demand approval and assert their presence as a co-author in unrelated work.

Unjust Demands: The leader's demand to be listed as a co-author and have one's name appear first in the byline, regardless of their actual contribution, reflects an unjust desire for recognition and control.

Suppression of Employee Expression: The leader's actions have created an environment where the employee feels restricted in expressing and sharing their work, leading them to withhold publishing until a more reasonable and considerate leader takes over.

Aseda Mo Ltd (Naa, Nhyira, Djormor, Adjoa and Adora)

Naa's Story

"I am not sure if I will describe the behavior of the CEO as just paranoid. I feel his behavior is something more than paranoid." It was during a period when the CEO was transitioning contract staff to permanent positions within the company. During this process, I was asked about my future aspirations. I expressed my genuine interest in working as an administrator and mentioned that I was in the process of applying for the Chartered Institute of Administrators and Management Consultants exams. However, my response seemed to infuriate the CEO. He immediately questioned why the HR Manager had hired me instead of someone with aspirations in HR. I was taken aback, as my background aligned with HR, and during the interview, I was informed about the company's plans to merge the admin and HR departments.

The CEO's anger escalated quickly, causing everyone present to shrink into silence. No one dared to utter a word. With a stern expression, he walked me out of his office, leaving me feeling perplexed and confused. As the HR manager regained her composure amidst the CEO's tirade, she quietly gestured for me to leave and promised to contact me later in the week.

The following day, the HR department reached out to me. They inquired if I would be willing to pursue a career in HR rather than administration. Despite my initial aspirations, I felt a desperate need to secure the job, so I reluctantly agreed to redirect my career path towards HR.

Once again, I was summoned to the CEO's office. The same question was posed, and this time I cautiously responded that I would indeed pursue a career in HR. I mentioned my intentions of pursuing a master's degree in HR or related fields. It was only after this response that my approval to be onboarded as a permanent staff member was granted.

This experience sheds light on the CEO's persistent imposition of his will on employees, and staff were expected to remain silent unless directly prompted to speak. Fear and intimidation permeated the workplace, stifling open communication. However, I resolved to make the best of the situation and adapt my career aspirations accordingly. Despite the challenges, I remained determined to find fulfillment and growth within the HR field, including pursuing advanced education to enhance my knowledge and skills."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia at Aseda Mo Ltd (Naa): The leadership characteristics identified in Naa's (Aseda Mo Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Imposition of Will: The CEO consistently imposes their own will and preferences on employees, disregarding their individual aspirations and qualifications.

Lack of Open Communication: The CEO's behavior creates an environment of fear and intimidation, where employees feel hesitant to express their thoughts or opinions unless directly prompted.

Lack of Empathy: The CEO's initial anger and subsequent questioning of the employee's career aspirations without considering their background or the company's plans demonstrate a lack of empathy towards employees' individual goals and aspirations.

Conditional Approval: The CEO's approval to onboard the employee as a permanent staff member was granted only after they redirected their career path to align with the CEO's preferences, which reflects a conditional approach to employee development and growth.

Nhyira's Story: "I will describe my boss's situation as a condition beyond paranoia. Maybe paralysis..... Staff policies aimed at providing educational opportunities are blocked, and there is a constant update of policies with fringe benefits that disadvantage employees. The CEO selectively references policies to enforce sanctions but conveniently ignores them when it comes to their own entitlements.

"It became increasingly apparent that the CEO prioritized his own interests over the growth and advancement of the staff. His selfish nature manifested itself in his unwillingness to promote employees and pursue policies that would facilitate staff development. Policies aimed at granting employees study leave and educational opportunities were consistently blocked, leaving us in a state of perpetual disadvantage.

I decided to apply for study leave, following the guidelines outlined in the approved staff handbook. However, when I approached the HR department, I was informed that the CEO had placed an embargo on study leave and demanded a revision of the policy. It seemed contradictory that the CEO would reference the same document to enforce sanctions

yet conveniently ignore it when it came to policies that benefited the staff. This created a sense of frustration and disillusionment among us.

Subsequently, we received notices stating that all our benefits, except for our basic salary, had been frozen until further notice. The CEO vaguely mentioned that new benefits would be communicated, leaving us in a state of uncertainty. In contrast, the CEO continued to enjoy all the entitlements outlined in the policy they claimed to be reviewing without any reduction or delay. This glaring disparity in treatment created tension within the office as it highlighted the CEO's self-serving approach to leadership.

The constant updates to staff policies, often resulting in unfavorable changes to fringe benefits, exacerbated the existing tension. It seemed as though these revisions were deliberately designed to put us at a disadvantage, while the CEO remained unaffected. This lack of transparency and fairness eroded our trust and confidence in the organization's leadership.

The atmosphere in the office is strained as employees grapple with the growing disparity between the CEO's privileges and our own deteriorating conditions. It is disheartening to witness the CEO's self-centered actions, which undermine our morale and hinder our opportunities for growth. It has become increasingly evident that a change in leadership and a reevaluation of the company's policies are necessary to restore a sense of fairness, trust, and employee well-being."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia at Aseda Mo Ltd (Nhyira)
The Leadership Characteristics Identified in Nhyira's (Aseda Mo Ltd.) Story Through the Aid Of Openai, (2023) are As Follows:

Selfishness: Such a leader is primarily concerned with their personal gain and disregards the well-being and interests of others. They prioritize their own needs, desires, and goals above those of the team or organization.

Lack of Empathy: They show little or no concern for the impact of their decisions on others. They fail to consider the perspectives, feelings, and needs of their team members or stakeholders.

Lack of Transparency: They make decisions without providing clear and honest explanations or justifications to others. They may conceal information or manipulate circumstances to ensure their personal benefit while keeping others in the dark.

Exploitative Behavior: They may use their position of power to exploit resources, opportunities, or relationships for personal gain. They take advantage of others' efforts, contributions, or ideas without proper recognition or reward.

Short-term Focus: They prioritize immediate personal gains over long-term organizational success or sustainability. They may make decisions that yield immediate benefits for themselves, even if it compromises the overall well-being or growth of the team or organization.

Lack of Accountability: They avoid taking responsibility for their actions or the consequences of their decisions. They may shift blame onto others or refuse to acknowledge any negative outcomes resulting from their self-serving choices.

Lack of Integrity: They exhibit a disregard for ethical principles and moral values. They may engage in dishonest or unethical practices to advance their personal agenda, compromising the trust and integrity of the leadership role.

Djormor's Story

"Hmmm. I agree with Naa and Nhyira; our boss is definitely beyond what one would describe as paranoid. Her level of paranoia has consumed many in the organization, and I may even be included.

A deeply troubling culture has taken root in our organization, fostered by a CEO who mistrusts everyone and has implemented a system of spies within the office. This culture thrives on snitching and gossiping, creating an environment of fear and distrust. Shockingly, the CEO rewards those who indulge in gossip or exhibit unwavering loyalty, even in the face of corruption or mistreatment of employees. Any dissenting voice or refusal to partake in this unhealthy behavior is met with disapproval and discontent from the CEO.

The CEO's obsession with obtaining information through gossip has led to a distortion of the truth and a detrimental impact on interpersonal relationships within the organization. Employees, eager to win favors or secure promotions, resort to lying about their colleagues to gain the CEO's approval. The workplace has become a breeding ground for deceit and manipulation.

One day, I was summoned to the CEO's office, only to be accused of speaking ill of him to other staff members. It was at that moment that I realized why I had been excluded from any beneficial opportunities within the organization. I was made to feel like an outcast, ostracized by a leader who refused to believe my denial. The toxic culture had tarnished my reputation, despite my dedication and commitment to the organization's goals.

This toxic environment, where rewards are bestowed upon those who engage in gossip, lies, and snitching, is deeply troubling. Hardworking individuals who prioritize honesty and integrity are overlooked and left unrewarded. Instead, they face punishment and isolation for refusing to

participate in the web of deceit.

The consequences of this corrosive culture extend far beyond the workplace itself. It undermines trust, damages relationships, and hampers the growth and well-being of employees. Productivity and morale suffer as employees are driven by the fear of being targeted or overlooked rather than focusing on their work.

It is disheartening to witness a workplace where merit and dedication take a backseat to gossip and deceit. It is my hope that this organization will recognize the damaging effects of its current culture and strive to create an environment that values transparency, fairness, collaboration, and genuine relationships built on trust and mutual respect."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia At Aseda Mo Ltd (Djormor):

The Leadership Characteristics Identified in Djormo's (Aseda Mo Ltd.) Story Through the Aid of Openai, (2023) are as Follows:

Paranoia: The CEO's behavior exhibits an extreme level of paranoia, mistrusting everyone within the organization. This paranoia creates an atmosphere of fear and distrust among employees.

Cultivation of a Toxic Culture: The CEO fosters a toxic culture based on snitching, gossiping, and rewards for unwavering loyalty. This culture encourages deceit, manipulation, and dishonesty among employees, contributing to a negative work environment.

Lack of Trust and Distrust: The CEO's mistrust of employees erodes trust within the organization. This lack of trust leads to the distortion of truth, damaged relationships, and the creation of an environment where employees are pitted against one another.

Favoritism and Rewarding Unhealthy Behavior: The CEO rewards employees who engage in gossip and exhibit unwavering loyalty, even when it involves corruption or mistreatment of others. This favoritism creates a culture where dishonesty and unhealthy behavior are incentivized, while those who prioritize honesty and integrity are overlooked or penalized.

Punishment for Dissent: Any dissenting voice or refusal to participate in the toxic culture is met with disapproval and discontent from the CEO. This discourages open communication, stifles diverse perspectives, and creates an atmosphere of fear, where employees are afraid to voice their opinions.

Lack of Recognition for Merit and Dedication: The CEO overlooks hardworking individuals who prioritize honesty, integrity, and dedication to the organization's goals. Instead, those who engage in gossip and deceit are rewarded, leading to a disregard for merit-based recognition and discouraging employees from performing at their best.

Negative Impact on Productivity and Morale: The toxic culture created by the CEO's leadership style hampers productivity and lowers employee morale. Instead of focusing on their work, employees are driven by fear, leading to decreased motivation and performance.

Adjoa's Story

"Hmmm, I don't even know what to say. They have said it all. But one of the things I think has been left out of the conversation is the CEO's perfected art of deception and her joy in making people feel unhappy. Another issue is his keen eye for manipulation and his penchant for sowing discord. This CEO thrives on a strategy of divide and rule. It seemed as though his true happiness lies in implementing policies and directives that brings frustration and despair to the hearts of his own staff.

Whispered throughout the organization was a solemn warning: "If you wish to preserve your joy, guard it secretly from the CEO, for he will surely destroy it." It had become common knowledge that any source of happiness or contentment would inevitably be undermined by the CEO's joy-killing web.

In an attempt to tighten his grip on power, the CEO devised a series of draconian policies that suffocated the spirit of the staff. These policies were intentionally designed to breed frustration and despair, leaving employees questioning their own sanity and well-being. The mental health of both the CEO and the staff had come into question due to years of enduring unhappiness within the workplace.

Despite the mounting evidence of their inhumane treatment, the staff's pleas for justice have fallen on deaf ears. The CEO's power seemed unassailable. Desperation has filled the hearts of the staff, leaving them with few options. Many dedicated employees seek opportunities elsewhere, their eyes constantly glued to various job boards, hoping to escape the clutches of their tormentor. The once-flourishing company was now being ground to a halt, its potential squandered under the weight of the CEO's destructive leadership."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia at Aseda Mo Ltd (Adjoa):

The leadership characteristics identified in Adjoa's (Aseda Mo Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Deception: The CEO is skilled in the art of deception, manipulating others and creating false perceptions. They use this skill to make people feel unhappy and undermine their sources of joy and contentment.

Joy-Killing and Manipulation: The CEO takes pleasure

in making people unhappy and sowing discord within the organization. They employ a strategy of divide and rule, intentionally implementing policies and directives that breed frustration and despair among the staff.

Authoritarianism and Draconian Policies: The CEO tightens their grip on power by devising draconian policies that suffocate the spirit of the staff. These policies are designed to stifle happiness, leaving employees questioning their own well-being and sanity.

Lack of Empathy and Inhumane Treatment: Despite the staff's pleas for justice and evidence of inhumane treatment, the CEO remains indifferent and unresponsive. They disregard the well-being of the employees, causing desperation and pushing dedicated individuals to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Destructive Leadership: The CEO's leadership style is destructive, grinding the once-flourishing company to a halt. Their actions and policies squander the company's potential and create a toxic work environment.

Adora's Story

"There is no doubt that my boss is paranoid, but the extent to which he is paranoid remains unknown but surely it is no good. Maybe Nhyira is right, his level of paranoia is in a state of paralysis! Beyond repair! I do not think I can do justice to actions that make me perceive him as paranoid, but I will try. He is consumed by paranoia and a desperate need for control. This leader believed that by micromanaging every aspect of their staff's work, they could assert their power and ensure that everyone knew they were in control. Their presence was seen as a necessity, as work would come to a halt in their absence. Approval from this leader was required for even the smallest decisions, causing delays and inefficiencies throughout the organization.

The staff, including management, felt excluded from decision-making processes and the core functions of the organization. Only a select few individuals, whom the leader perceived as loyal and who were often the most skilled gossips, were involved in making decisions. These decisions were then enforced on the rest of the staff, leaving them feeling voiceless and disempowered.

However, when these decisions backfired or the leader's directives went awry, it was the staff, who had been excluded from the decision-making process, that bore the blame. The implementers, who were merely carrying out the orders they had been given, were held accountable for the failures. Punishments were doled out, leaving the implementers feeling unjustly treated for their perceived disobedience. Working in such an organization was akin to living a nightmare. The constant surveillance and micromanagement created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among the

staff. Each day became a struggle to navigate the leader's ever-changing demands and avoid their wrath. The lack of inclusion, trust, and support eroded morale, resulting in a toxic work environment.

Sadly, many employees remained trapped in this oppressive environment due to a lack of available job opportunities elsewhere. The fear of unemployment kept them bound to this organization, enduring the daily torment of working under a paranoid leader.

As the story continues, the staff yearn for change and hope for a future where their skills and contributions are valued. They dream of an organization where decision-making is inclusive, where their voices are heard, and where collaboration and trust flourish. Until that day arrives, they persevere, hoping for a brighter and more fulfilling professional journey ahead."

Leadership Behavior or Characteristics Identified in the Story of Leaders' Paranoia At Aseda Mo Ltd (Adora):

The leadership characteristics identified in Adora's (Aseda Mo Ltd.) story through the aid of OpenAI, (2023) are as follows:

Paranoia: The leader in this story exhibits extreme levels of paranoia, being consumed by fear and a desperate need for control. They micromanage every aspect of their staff's work and require approval for even the smallest decisions, resulting in delays and inefficiencies.

Control-Seeking: The leader's primary objective is to assert control over their staff. They believe that by maintaining strict control and micromanaging, they can demonstrate their power and importance. They view their presence as necessary and fear that work will come to a halt without their constant involvement.

Exclusionary Decision-Making: The leader excludes the majority of the staff, including management, from the decision-making processes and core functions of the organization. Only a select few individuals, often perceived as loyal and skilled gossips, are involved in making decisions. This leaves the rest of the staff feeling voiceless and disempowered.

Blame-Shifting and Lack of Accountability: When decisions made by the leader or their directives backfire or fail, blame is placed on the staff members who were responsible for implementation. The leader holds the implementers accountable for failures, even though they were merely following orders. This lack of accountability and unjust treatment further erodes morale and trust.

Fear and Anxiety: The leader's constant surveillance, micromanagement, and unpredictable demands create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among the staff. The staff members struggle to navigate the leader's expectations and avoid their wrath, leading to a toxic work environment.

Lack of Inclusion, Trust, and Support: The staff feels excluded, with little involvement in decision-making and a lack of trust from the leader. There is a lack of support and collaboration, which further contributes to low morale and a negative work environment.

Results & Analysis

The present study aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the stories shared by participants and uncover the underlying meaning by identifying the influence of paranoia on leadership characteristics within their respective organizations. The interpretation and revelation of these stories allowed for a deeper understanding of the dynamics between leadership behaviors and organizational outcomes. This research sought to test the revelations or themes extracted from the stories against existing theories to confirm or disprove their validity, contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the field of leadership studies.

To conduct this analysis, the stories of the participants were uploaded to Chat AI, and a prompt requesting the

identification of leadership characteristics described in the narratives was submitted earlier as shown after each story. By employing this approach, the researchers aimed to leverage the capabilities of AI to extract and categorize key leadership traits embedded within the stories.

The identified leadership characteristics were then compared with the existing literature on leadership effectiveness and ineffectiveness, as discussed in the separate literature review section of this study with the aid of Chat AI. This comparative analysis facilitated the examination of congruence or disparity between the identified characteristics and the established theoretical frameworks.

The outcomes of this analysis were subsequently shared and thoroughly analyzed to validate or challenge the existing literature. By investigating the alignment between the extracted leadership characteristics and the established theories, this research aimed to contribute to the advancement and refinement of theoretical understanding in the field of leadership studies.

Comparison of Leadership Characteristics of Sepam Ltd. (Sandra and Dromor) with Existing Literature on Leadership Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness

Comparison of Sandra's overall leadership assessment against paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.	Comparison of Sandra's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Focus: This characteristic aligns with several negative behaviors, such as "Playing Loosely with Ethics". (By prioritizing customer satisfaction while maintaining ethical standards) and "Focusing on Bottom-Line Revenue" (by considering customer satisfaction alongside financial gains). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Focus aligns with Vision and Collaboration. A leader with a clear vision of the future will also prioritize customer satisfaction and align the team's efforts towards meeting customer needs. Collaboration is essential to ensure a
	customer-focused approach.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Orientation can be associated with Continuous Improvement and Bias for Diligence. A leader who promotes continuous improvement encourages individuals to strive for excellence, enhancing overall performance orientation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency aligns with Fairness and
	Respect, as transparency in decision-making and communication fosters an inclusive and supportive environment where everyone is treated fairly and respectfully.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusivity aligns with Fairness and Respect, Collaboration, and Emotional and Cultural Intelligence. Leaders who value inclusivity promote fairness and respect, encourage collaboration among diverse team members, and possess the emotional and cultural intelligence to understand and appreciate different perspectives.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Visionary Leadership corresponds to Vision and Inspiration. Visionary leaders have a clear vision of the future and effectively communicate that vision to inspire and motivate their team.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Connection and belonging can be associated with Team Empowerment, Authenticity and Self-Awareness, and Promoting Psychological Safeguarding. Leaders who empower their team, lead with authenticity, and prioritize psychological safeguarding create a sense of connection, belonging, and a supportive work environment.

Table 1: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Sandra’s story.

Comparison of Dromor’s overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.	Comparison of Dromor’s overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Client Satisfaction Focus aligns with the Vision characteristic, as a leader with a clear vision will prioritize client satisfaction as part of their overall goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Client Satisfaction Focus aligns with Focusing on Bottom-Line Revenue, as both involve considering the needs and satisfaction of external stakeholders (clients) or prioritizing short-term financial gains.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Space for Autonomy can be associated with Team Empowerment, as both emphasize providing individuals with autonomy and the necessary resources to excel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Performance-based Rewards align with Setting Unrealistic Expectations, as both involve linking rewards or goals to performance and outcomes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Celebration of Success corresponds to the Inspiration characteristic, as inspiring leaders motivate and uplift their team by celebrating their achievements and successes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Inability to follow instructions or abide by organizational policies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Performance-based Rewards align with the Bias for Diligence characteristic, as both emphasize encouraging excellence, a strong work ethic, and recognizing outstanding performance. 	

Table 2: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Dromor’s story.

Many of the leadership characteristics derived from Sandra and Dromor’s stories through AI align with the positive leadership characteristics identified by Christian [11] and Varney [12]. However, the leadership characteristic of customer focus was assessed as a double-edged sword that could make a leader effective and, at the same time, ineffective in driving organizational performance. Nevertheless, most of the leadership characteristics encompass attributes associated with good leadership traits, capable of fostering a positive and rewarding work environment. In such an environment, employees feel valued, motivated, and connected to the organization’s vision. This sentiment is exemplified in Sandra’s statement: “Although the current pay might not be the best, it has never once crossed my mind to leave. Why? Because this office feels like a second home—a place where I truly belong.” It is important to note that the leaders’ emphasis on

customer satisfaction, echoed by both Sandra and Dromor at Sepam Ltd, could potentially place undue pressure on the staff and result in inefficiencies, as indicated by the assessment results. Additionally, autonomy, innovation, celebration of success, and recognition/rewards may inadvertently cultivate a culture of competitiveness that can lead to a toxic working environment. The stories do not explicitly indicate their feelings about the leadership’s focus on customer service, but they appear to appreciate the concepts of celebrating success and recognition, which have both positive and negative effects. However, Dromor’s story depicts the leaders as being fully committed to both individual and team success, and their level of transparency and employee engagement described in both Sandra and Dromor’s stories indicate that the leaders have created a culture where individuals are motivated, able to flourish, and find a profound sense of purpose in their work.

Comparison of Leadership Characteristics of Goshen Ltd. (Ama And Naa) with Existing Literature on Leadership Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness.

Comparison of Ama's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.	Comparison of Ama's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insecurity and Fear of Sharing credit align with leaders who claim others' ideas as their own, diminish trust, and hamper team morale and engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Team Collaboration: Aligns with leaders who fail to encourage team members, neglect to foster a positive and inclusive corporate culture, and hinder collaboration and teamwork. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Approval and Support: Aligns with leaders who dismiss or ignore constructive criticism, fail to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members, and contribute to demotivation and decreased productivity. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ego-Centric Behavior: Aligns with leaders who prioritize personal gain over the success and well-being of the team, exhibit confirmation bias, and excessively prioritize their own ego and self-promotion. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative Consequences for Challenging the Leader: Aligns with leaders who shy away from addressing conflicts or difficult conversations within the team, fosters a culture of unresolved issues, and hinders innovation and creativity within the team. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Staff Turnover: Aligns with leaders who fail to create a healthy corporate culture, contributes to low morale and disengagement, and increases staff turnover rates. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative Impact on Organizational Performance: Aligns with leaders who prioritize short-term financial gains over other important factors, set unattainable goals or expectations, and undermine trust and accountability within the team. 	

Table 3: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Ama's story.

Comparison of Enam's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that makes Leaders ineffective.	Comparison of Enam's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Absorption: Aligns with "Focusing on Self Rather Than Team," as self-absorption indicates a lack of focus on the team's success and well-being, creating a toxic work environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paranoia and Control: This aligns with "Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control," as leaders exhibiting paranoia and control tend to micromanage their team, stifling creativity and hindering growth and development. 	

· Lack of Trust and Autonomy: Aligns with "Failure to Encourage Team Members" and "Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control," as a lack of trust and autonomy results in leaders failing to empower their team, diminishing motivation, and stifling collaboration.	
· Unjust Demands: Aligns with "Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do" and "Setting Unrealistic Expectations," as unjust demands and setting unattainable goals create resentment, stress, and demotivation within the team.	
· Suppression of Employee Expression: This aligns with "Forgetting the Importance of Tone" and "Failing to Listen to Critiques," as suppressing employee expression and failing to listen to their ideas stifles collaboration, hampers team morale, and inhibits innovation and growth.	

Table 4: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Enam's story.

All the leadership characteristics generated from Ama and Enam's stories through AI align with the negative paranoia leadership characteristics described by Norwood [8] and Bergeron [7]. Ama's story depicts a working environment where teamwork and collaboration are not promoted, while Enam's story highlights a leader who prioritizes their own recognition and control rather than creating an environment that fosters trust, autonomy, and employee expression.

The stories of Ama and Enam perfectly exemplify the assessment findings, which indicate that none of the paranoia characteristics described in their accounts align with leadership behaviors that promote effectiveness or success in the workplace, as described by Christian [11] and Varney [12]. Ama's expression of feeling in her story, where she states, "Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in a high staff turnover rate within the organization, the perpetual recruitment cycle perpetuated by this toxic environment negatively impacts organizational performance. It takes time for new hires to familiarize themselves with the work process and become effective contributors. This constant frustration continues to linger, casting a shadow over our professional lives," suggests that the leadership approach at Goshen Limited demoralizes employees, stifles creativity, hinders personal growth and fulfillment, and overall hampers the organization's growth and performance.

Comparison of Leadership Characteristics of Aseda Mo Ltd. (Naa, Nhyira, Djormor, Adjoa and Adora) with Existing Literature on Leadership Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness

All the leadership characteristics developed by AI from five employees at Aseda Mo Ltd (Naa, Nhyira, Djormor, Adjoa, and Adora) highlight negative paranoia leadership

characteristics that align with the paranoia characteristics proposed by Norwood [8] and Bergeron [7], which lead to ineffectiveness in the workplace. None of the characteristics generated from the five stories align with leadership characteristics that promote effectiveness or success at the workplace. Naa's description of her boss depicts a leader who creates an environment of fear and limited communication. Nhyira's description reflects leadership behavior lacking empathy, transparency, accountability, and integrity. Djormor's story describes a lack of trust, favoritism, punishment for dissent, and a lack of recognition for merit. Adjoa's description indicates manipulation, authoritarianism, and a lack of empathy, while Adora's narration highlights leadership characteristics that promote control-seeking, exclusionary decision-making, blame-shifting, lack of accountability, fear, and anxiety.

The overall paranoia leadership characteristics exhibited by the leadership at Aseda Mo Ltd were an extreme form of paranoia that did not promote organizational performance. The extremity of the paranoia reflects in Djormor's statement, "Hmmm. I agree with Naa and Nhyira; our boss is definitely beyond what one would describe as paranoid". The stories from the five employees did not reveal whether the experiences were from different leaders or just one leader. Adora's statement that "Working in such an organization was akin to living a nightmare. The constant surveillance and micromanagement created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among the staff. Each day became a struggle to navigate the leader's ever-changing demands and avoid their wrath. The lack of inclusion, trust, and support eroded morale, resulting in a toxic work environment" depicts an unhealthy working environment that hampers the growth and well-being of employees and the organization as a whole.

Comparison of Naa's overall leadership assessment against paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.	Comparison of Naa's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Imposition of Will: Aligns with "Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do" and "Focusing on Self Rather Than Team," as leaders who impose their will disregard others' perspectives, create a toxic work environment, and prioritize personal gain over the success and well-being of the team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of Open Communication: This aligns with "Forgetting the Importance of Tone" and "Failing to Listen to Critiques," as leaders who lack open communication neglect the tone of their messages, create a hostile environment, and hinder their own growth and the development of the team. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of Empathy: Aligns with "Failing to Encourage Team Members" and "Avoiding Conflict," as leaders lacking empathy fail to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members, leading to demotivation and decreased productivity. Additionally, they may avoid addressing conflicts or difficult conversations, fostering a culture of unresolved issues and tensions. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Conditional Approval: Aligns with "Claiming Others' Ideas as Your Own" and "Failing to Encourage Team Members," as leaders who provide conditional approval and take credit for others' ideas diminish trust, stifle collaboration, and hamper team morale and engagement. They also neglect to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members. 	

Table 5: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Naa's story.

Comparison of Nhyira's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.	Comparison of Nhyira's overall leadership assessment against Paranoid Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Selfishness: Aligns with "Focusing on Self Rather Than Team." as leaders who prioritize personal gain over the success and well-being of the team exhibit selfish behavior that creates a toxic work environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of Empathy: Aligns with "Forgetting the Importance of Tone." "Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do." And "Failing to Encourage Team Members." As leaders lacking empathy fail to communicate with empathy. show accountability, and recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members, resulting in a demotivating and unsupportive environment. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of Transparency: Aligns with "Playing Loosely with Ethics" and "Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control." as leaders who lack transparency compromise ethical standards and micromanage hindering trust collaboration, and growth within the team. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Exploitative Behavior: Aligns with "Playing Loosely with Ethics." as leaders who engage in exploitative behavior compromise ethical standards, eroding trust and damaging credibility. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term Focus: Aligns with "Jumping Wildly from One Strategy to Another" and "Focusing on Bottom-Line Revenue." As leaders with a short-term focus constantly shift strategies without rationale and prioritize short-term financial gains over other important factors. Undermining stability, employee well-being and long-term success. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Accountability: Aligns with "Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do," "Claiming Others' Ideas as Your Own," and "Refusing to Accept Blame." as leaders lacking accountability create resentment, diminish trust, stifle collaboration, and undermine team morale and growth. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Integrity: Aligns with "Playing Loosely with Ethics," "Claiming Others' Ideas as Your Own," and "Refusing to Accept Blame." As leaders lacking integrity compromise ethical standards, diminish trust, and undermine accountability within the team. 	

Table 6: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Nhyira's story.

Comparison of Djormor's overall leadership assessment against Paranoid Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.	Comparison of Djormor's overall leadership assessment against paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paranoia: Aligns with "Avoiding Conflict," as leaders who are paranoid tend to shy away from addressing conflicts or difficult conversations within the team, fostering a culture of unresolved issues and unaddressed tensions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation of a Toxic Culture: Aligns with "Failure to Create a Healthy Corporate Culture," as leaders who cultivate a toxic culture by neglecting to foster a positive and inclusive environment contribute to low morale, disengagement, and high turnover rates.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Trust and Distrust: Aligns with "Playing Loosely with Ethics" and "Focusing on Self Rather Than Team," as leaders who compromise ethical standards erode trust and prioritize personal gain over the success and well-being of the team, creating a toxic and unproductive work environment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favoritism and Rewarding Unhealthy Behavior: Aligns with "Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do" and "Failing to Encourage Team Members," as leaders who display favoritism and reward unhealthy behavior create resentment, diminish trust within the team, and neglect to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punishment for Dissent: Aligns with "Failing to Listen to Critiques," as leaders who dismiss or ignore constructive criticism and punish dissent hinder their own growth and the development of the team, missing out on valuable insights.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Recognition for Merit and Dedication: Aligns with "Failing to Encourage Team Members" and "Claiming Others' Ideas as Your Own," as leaders who neglect to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members and take credit for others' ideas diminish trust, stifle collaboration, and hamper team morale and engagement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Negative Impact on Productivity and Morale: Aligns with various traits such as "Forgetting the Importance of Tone," "Failing to Encourage Team Members," "Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control," "Setting Unrealistic Expectations," and "Avoiding Conflict." Leaders who neglect appropriate communication, fail to recognize and appreciate team members, disempower the team through micromanagement, set unrealistic expectations, and avoid addressing conflicts contribute to decreased productivity and morale within the team.
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Table 7: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Djormor's story.

Comparison of Adjoa's overall leadership assessment against Paranoid Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.	Comparison of Adjoa's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Deception: Aligns with "Playing Loosely with Ethics." as leaders who engage in deception compromise ethical standards and erode trust within the team and organization.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Joy-Killing and Manipulation: Aligns with "Failing to Encourage Team Members" and "Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control," as leaders who engage in joy-killing and manipulation neglect to recognize and appreciate team members' contributions, disempower the team through micromanagement, and hinder the growth and development of team members.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Authoritarianism and Draconian Policies: Aligns with "Failing to Encourage Team Members." "Avoiding Conflict," and "Inability to Follow," as leaders who exhibit authoritarianism and implement draconian policies create a hostile and unproductive work environment, foster unresolved conflicts and unaddressed tensions, and undermine their own credibility by not following organizational policies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of Empathy and Inhumane Treatment: Aligns with "Forgetting the Importance of Tone" and "Failing to Encourage Team Members." As leaders who lack empathy and engage in inhumane treatment neglect appropriate communication, creating a hostile or demotivating environment, and fail to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Destructive Leadership: Aligns with various traits such as "Failure to Create a Healthy Corporate Culture," "Failing to Encourage Team Members." "Focusing on Self Rather Than Team," and "Feeding Pride and Vainglory."
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Destructive leadership hinders the creation of a positive and inclusive corporate culture, neglects recognition and appreciation of team members, prioritizes personal gain over the team's success, and excessively prioritizes the leader's own ego. hindering collaboration and teamwork.

Table 8: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Adjoa's story.

Comparison of Adora's overall leadership assessment against Paranoid Characteristics that make Leaders effective or successful.	Comparison of Adora's overall leadership assessment against Paranoia Characteristics that make Leaders ineffective.
Aligned Characteristics:	Aligned Characteristics:
· None of the Characteristics of leadership behaviors in the story align directly with the paranoia characteristics that foster leadership effectiveness or success at the workplace.	· Paranoia: Aligns with "Unwillingness to Change" and "Failing to Listen to Critiques." Leaders who exhibit paranoia may be resistant to change and dismissive of constructive criticism, hindering progress and growth within the team.
	· Control-Seeking: Aligns with "Micromanaging and Failure to Relinquish Control" and "Inability to Follow." Leaders who seek excessive control may micromanage their team and fail to delegate effectively stifling creativity and hindering the development of team members. They may also set a poor example by not following instructions or organizational policies.
	· Exclusionary Decision-Making: Aligns with "Failing to Encourage Team Members" and "Avoiding Conflict." Leaders who engage in exclusionary decision-making may fail to recognize and appreciate the contributions of team members, leading to demotivation. They may also avoid addressing conflicts, allowing unresolved issues to fester within the team.
	· Blame-Shifting and Lack of Accountability: Aligns with "Refusing to Accept Blame" and "Expecting Others to Do Things They're Unwilling to Do." Leaders who shift blame and lack accountability undermine trust and create a double standard, diminishing trust and fostering resentment within the team.
	· Fear and Anxiety: Aligns with "Forgetting the Importance of Tone" and "Constantly Working and Never Resting." Leaders who experience fear and anxiety may neglect to communicate with an appropriate tone, creating a hostile or demotivating environment. They may also fail to find a healthy work-life balance, burnout and negatively impacting decision-making and overall effectiveness.
	· Lack of Inclusion, Trust, and Support: Aligns with "Failure to Create a Healthy Corporate Culture," "Focusing on Self Rather Than Team," and "Feeding Pride and Vainglory." Leaders who lack inclusion, trust, and support may neglect to foster a positive and inclusive corporate culture, prioritize personal gain over the team's success, and excessively prioritize their own ego, hindering collaboration and teamwork.

Table 9: Leadership behavioral characteristics of a leader identified in Adora's story.

Discussion

The results obtained from analyzing the leadership characteristics derived from the employees' stories provide valuable insights into the leadership practices within different organizations. The analysis revealed distinct patterns in the leadership behaviors exhibited by the leaders in the respective companies. The result of this study has sort of justified John Maxwell's assertion that employees resign from their jobs because they want to escape certain people often leaders or managers and not necessarily because they dislike company or their roles [10]. This is demonstrated in the last part of Sandra's story when she stated that "Although the current pay might not be the best, it has never once

crossed my mind to leave. Why? Because this office feels like a second home—a place where I truly belong". The results of the assessment of the stories is profound as it helps categorise the behavioural characteristics of the leader, match it with stated impact of such characteristics on organisations in existing literature which aligned with the impact and feelings of expressed by the participants in their stories.

In the case of Sandra and Dromor's stories, the majority of the leadership characteristics align with the positive leadership characteristics identified by Christian [11] and Varney [12]. These characteristics reflect the attributes associated with good leadership traits, creating a positive and fulfilling work environment. From the stories, it was

obvious that the overemphasis on customer service was a source of bother, and this showed in the results, with the leadership characteristic of customer focus being assessed as a double-edged sword appearing in characteristics for both effectiveness and ineffectiveness at Sepam Ltd. However, because the leaders demonstrated other positive traits, they were able to mitigate or overcome the negative behaviors and their consequences, leading to more effective leadership and improved organizational outcomes, as shown in the leadership assessment. Sandra's statement, "This office feels like a second home—a place where I truly belong," exemplifies the positive impact of effective leadership. The employee's expression of value, motivation, and a strong connection to the organization's vision aligned with Christian's [11] and Varney's [12] assertions of the impact of positive leadership characteristics on an organization. The leadership characteristics exhibited by Sepam Ltd., which showed their effectiveness in the assessment, align with the leadership characteristics of Steve Jobs in his work strategy at Apple [4].

On the other hand, the stories from employees of Goshen Limited and Aseda Mo Limited reflect paranoid leadership characteristics that did not yield effectiveness at the workplace. Although, from the stories shared, the situation at Aseda Mo Ltd. seems to be more severe than it is at Goshen Ltd. This is based on the statements of four of the five employees who shared their experiences.

"I'm not sure if I will describe the CEO's behavior as just paranoid," Naa said. "I believe his behavior is more than paranoid."

"I will describe my boss's situation as a condition beyond paranoia," Nhyira added. Perhaps paralysis....." Djormor then said, "Hmmm. I agree with Naa and Nhyira; our boss is much beyond the definition of paranoid. Her degree of paranoia has devoured many in the company, including myself."

"There is no doubt that my boss is paranoid," Adora remarked, "but the extent to which he is paranoid remains unknown, but it is certainly not good." Perhaps Nhyira is correct; his paranoia is debilitating! It's beyond repair! I don't think I can give credit to his acts that make me think he's paranoid, but I'll try."

The leadership practices at Goshen Ltd. and Aseda Mo Ltd. are consistent with the negative leadership qualities provided by Norwood [8] and Bergeron [7], which tend to impede organizational success and employee well-being. The extreme form of paranoia depicted in Djormor, Nhyira, and Adora's statements regarding their boss's paranoia being beyond repair or in a state of paralysis sheds light on

the toxic working environment created by the leaders. The lack of trust, inclusion, and support, as well as the constant surveillance and micromanagement, contribute to a culture of fear and anxiety, eroding employee morale and tending to create toxic work environments.

This research yielded two key findings:

- Leaders demonstrate paranoia, which in turn influences their leadership characteristics.
- Leadership characteristics have a substantial impact on organizational performance and employee well-being.

The study further revealed that positive leadership traits associated with productive paranoia contribute to a positive work environment, motivation, and a strong sense of purpose. Conversely, negative leadership traits stemming from destructive paranoia hinder effectiveness and foster toxic work environments. These findings underscore the critical importance of identifying and addressing toxic leadership behaviors while nurturing positive leadership practices that foster success, employee satisfaction, and organizational growth. Collins & Hansen [26] write in their book *Great by Choice* that paranoia is not bad, but for it to be productive, leaders must be deliberate in combining characteristics that will enable them to create an environment that promotes success, employee satisfaction, and organizational growth.

Implications of the Research

The research findings have several implications for understanding and improving leadership practices within organizations.

- Confirmation of John Maxwell's assertion: The results of this study support John Maxwell's assertion that employees often resign from jobs to escape certain individuals, particularly leaders or managers, rather than disliking the company or their roles. This is evident in Sandra's story, where she expresses a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the organization despite less-than-optimal pay. It emphasizes the significance of leadership behaviors and their impact on employee engagement and retention.
- Categorization of leadership characteristics: The assessment of the stories enabled the categorization of different behavioral characteristics exhibited by leaders. These characteristics were matched with existing literature on the impact of such behaviors on organizations, aligning with the expressed impact and feelings of the participants. This categorization provides a valuable framework for understanding the effects of leadership characteristics and their implications for organizational performance and employee well-being.
- Positive leadership characteristics: The findings from Sandra and Dromor's stories highlight the importance of

positive leadership characteristics in fostering a positive work environment. The alignment of the majority of the leadership characteristics with the positive traits identified by Christian [11] and Varney [12] underscores the significance of attributes such as transparency, trust, autonomy, and employee engagement. These characteristics contribute to employee motivation, organizational alignment, and a sense of purpose, ultimately leading to improved performance and employee satisfaction.

- Double-edged sword of customer focus: The assessment results also shed light on the potential drawbacks of an overemphasis on customer service. The leadership characteristic of customer focus was identified as a double-edged sword, capable of both effectiveness and ineffectiveness in driving organizational performance. This finding emphasizes the need for leaders to strike a balance between customer satisfaction and employee well-being, as excessive pressure on staff can lead to inefficiencies and potential negative outcomes.
- Negative paranoia leadership characteristics: The stories shared by employees of Goshen Limited and Aseda Mo Limited revealed the presence of paranoid leadership characteristics that hindered organizational success and employee well-being. The extreme form of paranoia described by Djormor, Nhyira, and Adora highlights the toxic working environments created by leaders who lack trust, inclusion, support, and engage in constant surveillance and micromanagement. These negative leadership qualities, as identified by Norwood [8] and Bergeron [7], erode employee morale, creativity, and impede personal and professional growth.
- Importance of addressing toxic leadership: The research underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing toxic leadership behaviors that contribute to a negative work environment. Organizations need to actively cultivate positive leadership practices that prioritize collaboration, transparency, and employee well-being. By doing so, they can create a supportive and empowering work environment that fosters employee satisfaction, organizational growth, and overall success.
- Future research in this area can further explore the effectiveness of specific leadership characteristics and their impact on various organizational outcomes. This will contribute to the development of evidence-based leadership strategies and interventions aimed at improving leadership practices and creating positive work environments.

Conclusion

The findings from these stories provide valuable insights into the impact of leadership characteristics on organizational performance and employee well-being.

Effective leadership traits such as transparency, trust, autonomy, and employee engagement contribute to a positive work environment, fostering motivation, growth, and a sense of purpose. Conversely, negative paranoia leadership characteristics hinder organizational success, stifling creativity, demoralizing employees, and impeding personal and professional growth. These results highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing leadership behaviors that contribute to a toxic work environment. Organizations need to cultivate positive leadership practices that prioritize collaboration, transparency, and employee well-being. By fostering an environment where employees feel valued, motivated, and connected to the organization's vision, organizations can enhance performance, satisfaction, and overall success. Future research can further explore the effectiveness of leadership characteristics and their impact on various organizational outcomes, contributing to the development of evidence-based leadership strategies.

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