Leadership

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The movie *We Were Soldiers* is a war film directed in the year 2002 by Randall Wallace. The movie exhibits the leadership and supervisory characteristics of the protagonist Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore in his unit. It captures the first part of the battle of 1965 concerning Vietnam and the United States Army. The main character of the movie is the leader/supervisor Lieutenant Colonel Moore, who is the commander of the first Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. A small plot of the movie also captures the emotional scenes of Moor’s family and friend communicating the news of soldiers’ death (Wallace, 2002). Lieutenant Colonel Moore is the born leader having excellent supervisory skills. He achieves the impossible mission and rejects to surrender despite the fact that his enemies outnumbered him. Employing his exceptionally well supervisory and leadership skills he made the Vietnamese troops to evacuate their camps.

Various supervisory skills were adopted by Lt. Col. Moore that led to the triumph of his unit. He started to unveil his supervisory even before he entered the battlefield with his troops. The first technique was leading by examples. He set the examples for others to follow which includes practicing what one preaches. He delivered a speech at the party held a night before they left for the battlefield. Moore declared that he cannot assure the safety of life of everyone but he will be the first one to step on the field and last one to step off it (Wallace, 2002) He also vowed that he will never leave anyone behind, whether dead or alive. It is witnessed from the movie that he kept his promised and assured everyone is removed from the filed before they step off. At many other points on the battlefield, he leads by examples and refuses to give up.

Lt. Col. Moore was the kind of leader who treated everyone with respect and dignity and this is the second skills witnessed during the movie (Wallace, 2002). He acknowledged that everyone in the troops is equal and important to him without any discrimination of color, caste and creed. His words guaranteed equal dignity and reverence to every man of color and from different caste. His words were a source of confidence, self-respect and high esteem for everyone. By doing this he also made sure the group cohesiveness and the respect for each other go a long way. He also taught his supervisors to treat their people with respect, "take care of your men and teach them to take care of each other because, in war, each other is all we have". The movie demonstrates Moore’s relentless commitment to triumph at various points of time, in and outside the battlefield (Wallace, 2002). His inexorable commitment is another supervisory technique of him which made him achieve his vision. He assures that he trust his troops and respect them for their determination and courage. Moore’s strong belief in himself and his troops that they will prove themselves triumphant remained one of the determining factors of their victory. He was not bothered by the fact that enemies were huge in number. He also discarded the advice he received to stay out of the mountains. He put up a defensive battle with the help of second Battalion, 7th Cavalry and won the battle.

These supervisory skills of Moore assisted the troops, kept their confidence and trust of his troops. All of these techniques were helpful for Moore in winning the hearts of his soldiers. The first skills of setting an example for others, Moore was able to win the trust and respect of soldiers. It was the most determining factor of the success of their team. He also kept this promise on the battlefield as he was the first one to step in the battlefield and the last one to step off. This reflects that he was ready to put his life in danger that encouraged the soldiers to do so. This skills of setting an example made them able to defeat their enemies. In addition, treating everyone equally with veneration and teaching the same to his supervisors, proved very effective in the battlefield. This method developed group cohesiveness in his team and soldiers fought on the battlefield considering that they are a family. This technique was also acute in providing in the success as members worked and fought as a team and strived together for it.

However, the third technique adopted by Moore as part of his role as a commander went terribly wrong initially. Though they were able to win the battle in the end his he led his team to an extremely dangerous situation owing to his maniacal commitment of victory. This also led to the loss of many lives, they reached a point where the enemies outnumbered them suddenly and the situation got irrepressible. Overall due to his supervisory skills, the trust of his troops in him and their effort made them secure the triumph.

The movie contains many scenes that demand Moore to demonstrate his supervisory skills and to take decision critically. One of such scenes is when it is recommended to him to stay out of mountains for the safety of soldiers. It was also anticipated and confirmed that enemies will outnumber but he was not ready to step back. He delivers the message of hope to the armies and the next three days were extremely critical for the team. In that situation, I would have advised the team to wait for the reinforcement from another regiment. I would have waited for the team to increase, for me it is important to take care of the lives of others who put all their trust in me and follow my directions without question. I would have never led my team into a situation where they would fight for their survival. This not only reduced the chances of their survival but also the likelihood of victory.

Supervisory skills are highly influenced by the circumstances and the surrounding environment. When it comes to a high-stress environment such as an emergency room or war, the supervisory skills of a leader are highly impacted. In such situations, the leader is in the state of high fear and faced by the dangers. The human mind and its thought processing are affected in the scenarios of dangers which eventually impacts the decision making. Sometimes these impacts can be negative or positive. This is due to the fact that a highly stressful environment poses a lot more challenging situation. One may be under high stress and take wrong decision because a stressful situation demands quick results. Sometimes the perceived level of challenge is higher than that of the supervisor’s ability to deal with the situation and stress. The outcome of such a situation is poor performance arising from low confidence. In addition, emergency situations are marked with incomplete information for analysis causing added stress. A supervisor having the responsibility of others’ lives may feel overburdened with stress. Therefore some supervisors may end up performing at the worst and may end up taking wrong decisions in the situations of high stress. Whereas there is also a likelihood that the increased motivation and energy to achieve the objectives make the supervisor think clearly and select the best-suited option. Some people respond better in the situation of high stress and emergency (Kowalski-Trakofler, Vaught, & Scharf, 2003).

One of the supervisory/leadership traits with which I can relate is the transformational leadership. This skill is mostly demonstrated by Moore as he leads by example, made his troop understand him and is willing to take risks (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). Some parts of the movie also show him reading a book and devising methods. I believe a leader/supervisor has to be determined and compassionate and try to do their best despite the obstacles and challenges. Once I worked in an organization where the supervisor used to break rules such as smoking in no smoking zone. This led to the employees imitating his behavior and violating the rules where possible. It impacted the morale of other employees. Through this, I learnt that a supervisor has to lead by example in order to influence his followers.

Sometimes supervisors take help and training from the textbook techniques. Often, they also have to stay prepared in cases of certain situations. However, the textbook supervisory skills may not be effective in all the cases especially in the environment of high stress. Supervisors are often faced with high emergency situations while the textbook skills do not allow for any modification in such unpredictable scenarios. The stress full situations may give rise to some factors that are not predictable in the case of book techniques. Because the book techniques do not cover unpredictable factors. In the movie when the unpredictable situation occurred and the enemies outnumbered the team, a book technique may not have been available or may not be noticed by the supervisor in a highly stressful situation. A leader may also fail to lead by example because of perceived dangers.

# References

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