

The Leadership of Phineas Taylor Barnum in the Greatest Showman Movie

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to analyze the leadership of Phineas Taylor Barnum that exists in the main character of The Greatest Showman movie. Leadership is an important part of an organization. Leadership is the process by which an individual influences a group of people to achieve a goal. This musical movie tells the story of a circus founder, Phineas Taylor Barnum with a leadership attitude. In this descriptive qualitative study, the writers collect the data from the scene and the conversation in the movie and material with a variety of resources such as books, journals, articles, and other references. After watching the movie repeatedly and collecting the data by paying attention to the conversation in the movie's scenes, the writers study the whole story before continuing to the next step, then analyzing what the story is all about. The types of leadership that were found in this movie are (1) Democratic Leadership, (2) Laissez-faire Leadership, and (3) Transformational Leadership. While there are three impacts of leadership that indeed to Phineas Taylor Barnum as the main character in The Greatest Showman, namely (1) Inspiring Confidence For Others, (2) Creating A Respectful Environment, and Raisings Loyalty and Trust. This movie shows many things to be a good leader who can bring a big impact on people. We are all leaders in our lives. So, this movie gives us so many things that we can learn to have a better life.

Key words: Leadership; The Greatest Showman; Movie

INTRODUCTION

In English, literature is a source used in learning such as movies, poems, novels, and comics. Literature is material that can be used for information sources and collections of writings containing a wide variety of knowledge. Literature refers to written works by works whose originating form and final point reference their

existence as written textuality. However, many individual texts may be performed, produced, or reproduced in non-written form (hence plays but not film scripts, performance poetry, and poetry set to music but not song lyrics). There is an area of human activity and production in which people choose deliberately to use written language in ways distinguishable from other forms of written communication and most of the genres of poetry, prose fiction, and drama.

Movies are a type of visual communication that uses images and sounds to tell stories or inform someone. Most people watch movies as a kind of entertainment. A movie is a marriage of technique and meaning. Whenever filmmakers lay out a set, direct actors to act in a certain way, place the camera in particular positions, and assemble the resulting mass of shots into a coherent linear narrative, they not only tell a story but also make meaning. The story is in a film package in such a way that the message carried can convey to the audience. The messages and values contained in the film can affect the audience both cognitively, affectively, and conatively.

One of the interesting movies to see is *The Greatest Showman*. The movie was produced in 2017 by Laurence Mark, Peter Chernin, and Jenno Topping in 20th Century Fox based on the true story of the American circus founder Phineas Taylor Barnum. *The Greatest Showman* movie is a drama musical directed by Michael Gracey and written by Jenny Bicks and Bill Condon. Hugh Jackman, Zac Efron, Zendaya, Rebecca Ferguson, and Michelle Williams are the stars in the movie. *The Greatest Showman* movie is taken from the true story of one of the histories of the founder of the circus in America, Phineas Taylor Barnum. Barnum was the one who survived on the road and then built a circus that he started from scratch by gathering unique people so that they would not underestimate him. Much of the movie tells the story of what Barnum has done as a leader to achieve his dreams.

The Greatest Showman movie mostly tells the story of the main character's struggle to achieve his goals, a lot of meaning that can be taken as material for the research of this movie. This movie is an inspiring work that can inspire how to be a responsible leader in guiding its members. Nowadays, leaders often change their plans in the middle of executions resulting in results, not in line with expectations. Besides, many leaders are wrong in assessing the priority of interests and do not place members according to their abilities. Therefore, the writer chooses *The Greatest Showman* because the public can make this movie a learning medium in taking the message side of the leadership delivered by the main character.

The writer examines the leadership represented in *The Greatest Showman* movie because the main character, Barnum, is a role model for people who do not know how to lead. He shows us how to lead people his family, and the circus venue well. This research also can give experiencing a crisis in leadership such as lack of confidence in leading, inability to handle problems, not being open in accepting criticism and suggestions, and failure to motivate their members. For example,

when a leader communicates a crisis to its members. When experiencing a crisis, it will certainly have an impact on the widening of the panic. Communication built to deal with a crisis that hits is an important role for a leader. Leadership is about overcoming change, setting direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring people to move in the right direction even in crises. The writer hopes that the public can make this movie as a learning medium in taking sides with the leadership message played by Barnum, to motivate and inspire the people who watch this movie.

Leadership is built on various inseparable foundations. These foundations include how individuals interact effectively with the contexts outside of themselves, build cooperation to achieve organizational goals, understand and be understood by others, and provide mutual input for the progress in various tasks and functions of an organization (Krisharyuli, 2020). The statement tells leadership is a social process or pattern of relationships. Different people can perform various leadership functions that influence the behavior of the team, how it is done, and the relationships between team members. Both formally elected leaders and informal leaders can demonstrate leadership.

Astari (2020) said, "Leadership is one of the processes affecting a group of people to achieve common goals". It is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.

Based on the statements above, it can conclude that leadership is one of the processes affecting a group of people to achieve common goals. It is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.

The Types of Leadership

According to Skye Schooley, 2019 in businessnewsdaily.com mentioned that there are nine types of leadership. The writers try explaining as follows:

1) Autocratic Leadership

This is one of the strictest types. Autocratic leaders tend to have complete control over the decision-making process. This leadership style can be effective when decision-making is urgent or workmanship is routine.

2) Bureaucratic Leadership

Although not as strict as autocratic leaders, bureaucratic leaders also tend to strictly enforce regulations and statuses in the hierarchy. This leadership style can be effective in healthcare and safety environments.

3) Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leaders have an infectious presence that motivates their team to follow their lead. Their likability helps them and their teams achieve business success. This leadership style can be effective in high-energy work environments that need a lot of positive morale.

4) Democratic leadership

Unlike autocratic or bureaucratic leaders, a democratic leader often welcomes subordinate participation in decision-making. This leadership style is often admired and can be effective in creative work environments that do not require quick decisions.

5) Laissez-faire leadership

Laissez-faire leaders have a hands-off approach and let their employees assume responsibility in the decision-making process, although they must still set employee expectations and monitor performance. This leadership style can be effective when working with highly experienced and confident employees.

6) Servant Leadership

Servant leaders share power and decision-making with their subordinates and often direct the organization based on the interests of the team. This leadership style can be effective for humanitarian organizations, nonprofits, and teams that need to create diversity, inclusion, and morale.

7) Situational Leadership

Situational leaders can implement a range of leadership types and modify their style based on the needs of their employees and the environment. Because of its versatility, this type of leadership can be effective in most organizations.

8) Transactional Leadership

A transactional leader uses a reward/consequence system to motivate employees to achieve success and discourage them from failure. This leadership style can be effective for teams that are motivated by rewards.

9) Transformational Leadership

Similar to charismatic leaders, transformational leaders use their inspiring energy and personality to create an infectious workplace. This type is often more effective than charismatic leadership, as it also motivates teams to build confidence and accountability. It can be effective in organizations that have intellectual team members who thrive in interactive environments.

The Impact of Leadership

Attitude has a profound impact on people's lives. A leader cannot ignore people's attitudes and still expect to succeed. Those that lead from the head and the ego are not effective leaders. It is when one leads from the heart and soul that effectiveness is attained. To lead from the heart requires the right attitude and a person's attitude

impacts their relationships with others. According to (Wiley, 2010) the impact of leadership is as follows:

1) Inspiring Confidence for Others.

A leader who minimizes uncertainty and supports the belief that there is a future in what they are doing will be able to drive higher levels of engagement and affects other around him to be confident as well.

2) Creating a Respectful Environment.

A leader who recognizes their employee is key to creating a respectful environment. People like to be appreciated, acknowledged, and respected. Thus, giving the impact in raising their morale.

3) Raising Loyalty and Trust.

A leader who demonstrates genuine concern towards their partner will impact in the raise of their loyalty toward the cause and the leader and also raise their trust towards the cause and their leader. This will also raise the engagement level and thus, raise the overall quality of the human resource, and productivity.

Character

The movie usually portrays a real-life situation and the theme of a movie is usually close to things that human beings face in daily life, such as love, war, and family. "Characters in literary works convey many aspects such as the physical appearance of the character, the quality of the character, and the social life" (Mulyawan, 2015).

Character as a person represented in a dramatic or narrative work, and is interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it in the dialogue and from what they do in the action (Annisa & Kuncara, 2019). A character is a personality involved in an event depicted in a story. The characters in a story have different roles. A character who has an important role in a story is called the main character.

"Character is some people who presented on stage but still involved in the plot. It is one of the important elements in drama or movies" (Gumilang Afandi Putri & Setyorini, 2015). In general, characters arise from five main sources is like the story, the unconscious, inspiration from art, music, or nature, real people, and composite characters. Each source has its unique advantages and disadvantages, and limitations in one approach can be mitigated by combining them with others. Characters are more likely to fill a role than act as independent agents with needs and fears and affections and concerns outside the story.

The conclusion is based on the explanation above, the characters of the characters in the film are the movers of the story. The character's appearance and style can

be shaped according to the themes presented in a film story.

Movie

A movie can be entertainment to human beings, but it also can use to get useful information about other cultures and historical information contained in it.

As (Manesah et al., 2018) said "Movies are aesthetic works and information tools that can entertain and serve as educational tools for the audience". Movies are considered a powerful medium of communication against the masses it targets, due to their audio-visual nature, namely vivid images and sounds. With pictures and sound, movies can tell a lot in a short period. When watching a movie the audience seems to be able to penetrate the space and time that can tell the life and can even affect the audience. Although the approaches vary, all movies can be said to have one goal to draw people's attention to the content of the problem. In addition, movies can be designed to serve both the limited public and the wider public.

Besides having the function to provide knowledge and information in movies, movies always record the realities that grow and develop in society. One of the messages contained in the movie is a moral message. There are many kinds of moral messages conveyed using communication. One of them is through movie media which is comprehensive for the community. Movies are aesthetic works and information tools that can entertain and serve as educational tools for the audience (Ridho, 2020) A movie also can be a medium to illustrate social issues by the director or the scriptwriter related to the issues in the present time or from different times".

Movie messages on mass communication can take any form depending on the mission of the film. However, generally, a film can include a variety of messages, be it educational, entertainment, or information messages. The message in the movie is to use the symbolic mechanism that exists in the human mind in the form of message content, speech, conversation, sound, and so on. In a drawn conclusion, the movie is a display of moving images and scenes that are arranged to present a story to the audience. By watching movies, people can get inspiration, ideas, and knowledge, earn something new from the movies, and many others things.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This research uses the descriptive qualitative method which is content analysis as the research design. The sample is The Greatest Showman movie.

Instrument and Procedure

In collecting and analyzing data, the writer chooses *The Greatest Showman* movie as an object of research and conducts a literature study. The writer collects the data from the scene and the conversation in the movie and material with a variety of resources such as books, journals, articles, and other references. The procedure of the analysis has some steps. First, the writers choose the topic of the movie. Second, the writers watch the movie and collect several scenes, dialogues, and moral messages. After watching the movie repeatedly and collecting the data by paying attention to the conversation in the movie's scenes, the writers study the whole story before continuing to the next step. Third, the writer completes the conclusions on the issues to discuss. The last, the writers write down and edit the data collected into a complete paper.

Data Analysis

The writers classify the data which has correlated with the topic of the research. The classification is done by watching, identifying, and finding some important details that support the topic of the research that is connected to the representation of leadership of the main character in the movie. Then the writers analyze the data based on the theory that is used to find the answer. The last, the writers write down and edit the data collected into complete research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Types of Leadership

Three types of leadership are found in *The Greatest Showman* movie. They are authoritarian, *Laissez-faire*, and transformational leadership.

Democratic Leadership

A democratic leadership gives redistribution of power and authority between employees and managers to provide employee involvement in decision-making. It is proved in scenes From 23:10:59 – 24:10:13 when Barnum wants his employees, Anne and W.D. Wheeler to be trapeze artists in his circus performance. And he knows that these siblings have a trapeze talent. So, he made a conversation with Anne and Wheller to get their opinions before getting a fixed decision. Barnum says, "Okay. Anne and W.D. Wheeler. Brother and sister?", Anne replies, " Yes, sir". Barnum says, "Trapeze? Okay?." Wheller gives his opinion by saying, "You know, people are not gonna like if you put us on the trapeze stage." And Barnum responds to wheller opinion, "Oh, I'm counting on it." In this scene, it stated clearly Barnum lets all offer space for his employees to share their ideas, interests, and opinions. When Barnum asks and responds to Anne and Wheeler, he seeks feedback and input from his workers to show his democratic leadership.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

Leaders with this leadership style will allow others to make decisions. The leader hands the decision entirely in the hands of the group or a person. But this does not mean that leader does not interfere in the discussion process. In the process of discussion, the leader is more like a supervisor. The leader will describe the positive and negative impact of every decision taken. So even though leaders leave decisions entirely into the hands of the group or a person, leaders do not let them make decisions without direction. The type of this leadership is proved in scenes from 01:00:13 – 01:01:13 when Barnum involves a conversation with Philip. Philip says, "Barnum, your attention has been divided long enough. Our gate is down, we have more protesters every day." Barnum replies, "You just need to get people to come back. If you haven't been to the Barnum Museum lately, you haven't been at the Barnum Museum". Philip responds, "They come to see you. Your crazy ideas, your new acts, the unusual." Barnum says, "Then how about you show them a smile? That'd be unusual. Keep rehearsing. Just make it very clear. I expect them to afford you all the deference you deserve and that they should be nice to you anyway." In this scene, when Barnum said "Keep rehearsing. Just make it very clear". He suggests Phillip do something and also explains the positive result of his actions of Philip did it.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a situation where followers of a transformational leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for that leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected. The type of leadership is proved by the main character, Barnum, in two scenes. The first scene is at 23:45:10 – 23:45:58, It is started when Barnum recruited 'weird people for his circus performance. One of the weird people is a lady named Lettie. Lettie is a lady who has a body that looks like a man's with big muscle, a thick beard, and a mustache. Even though Lettie is called a bearded lady, she can sing beautifully. Lettie's first performance was not as same as Lettie's imagination. Some audience laughed and mocked Lettie's appearance. It makes Lettie inferior and she does not want to sing anymore. Because of this Barnum try convincing her by making conversation. Barnum says, "You are so talented and blessed. Extraordinary unique. I would even say beautiful." Lettie responds hopelessly, "Sir. Please leave me alone." Barnum says optimistically, "They don't understand, but they will." The second scene is from 26:11:46 – 26:11:54, In this scene, Barnum tries convincing Lettie again after her second performance. Lettie still thinks that she does not have any chances to perform because of her body. Barnum tries to make Lettie trust him that her performance is good even though Lettie feels uncomfortable with her body which looks like a man's. Barnum says, "Lettie! They're waiting!" Lettie responds, "For what?" Barnum answers optimistically, "For You". Lettie yells, "NO!" Then Barnum replies softly, "They don't know it yet. But they are gonna love you. Trust me." In this scene, it shows how Barnum spread trust, respect, and admiration to Lettie to be confident with her singing

ability to entertain people in the circus.

The Impact of Leadership

There are three impacts found in Barnum Leadership in *The Greatest Showman* movie. They are inspiring confidence in others, create a respectful environment, and raising loyalty and trust.

Inspiring Confidence for Others

Leadership has a lot to do with inspiring, aligning, and then activating. A key to effective leadership is the ability to define outcomes, and then help individuals put their talents to use to get there. The best leaders know their people and are more aware of those people's strengths than they are of their weaknesses. They are not blind to their own or others' weaknesses; they just know their competitive edge lies within their strengths. This impact can be proved in the scene from 23:45:10 – 23:45:58 and 26:11:46 – 26:11:54 when Barnum gives his great efforts to motivate and develop Lettie's confidence to show her wonderful singing ability.

Creating a Respectful Environment

The concept of "leadership" cannot exist apart from a group of people who need to be led. Simply put, leaders can't lead unless someone follows, which means that building strong relationships is key. One of aspect to build strong relationships is creating a respectful environment. People need to connect respectfully, share trust, and have relationships to thrive. It is important to recognize the value of people, seek to know them for who they are, and build lasting connections. This impact can be seen in the scene from 01:00:13 – 01:01:13 when Barnum asked Phillip's opinion about his journey to another city. Barnum listened to Phillip to build a respectful situation. Another scene that is proved this impact is in scene 23:10:59 – 24:10:13 when Barnum asked Anne and W.D. Wheeler if they want to be trapeze artists. Barnum asked them first before making a fixed decision. And Barnum did create a respectful environment between the leader and the workers.

Raising Loyalty and Trust

Raising trust is foundation for leading Honesty, clarity, and behavioral predictability all makeup trust. Leaders must adopt the trait of trustworthiness and prioritize it as one of their most important skills. Raising trust means raising loyalty too. Raising loyalty and trust have been done by Barnum in some previous scenes have been mentioned before, such as in scenes from 23:45:10 – 23:45:58 and 26:11:46 – 26:11:54, how Barnum made Lettie trust him that she is wonderful and can do a great performance in the circus. Barnum showed Lettie that to be a good performance not only because of her body shape but because her skill is more than that. And Lettie trusts him. Another scene that raises trust that is going to result from loyalty is in scenes from 23:10:59 – 24:10:13 when Barnum showed

his good behavior to Anne and W.D. Wheeler by deciding to be trapeze artists in the circus. He did not only decide on his own but he ask their opinion as well. The result of raising loyalty and trust is proved in scenes from 55:56:54 – 56:57:15 when Barnum was sitting and thinking alone in his room. he lost his spirit because the circus did not run to his expectation. And the circus performers knew this. Then they came to Barnum and said "The circus is our home. Yes, the world is ashamed of us. But you proudly put us under the light of the stage. You've given us a true family." From this scene, it can be seen clearly that Barnum has raised trust in all the workers by serving and supporting them with honesty, clarity, and great behavior that made up for their loyalty.

The Moral Message

The stories in the movie can be taken from the true story of everyday life. Because human life cannot be separated from moral values. The moral is all human deeds in terms of good and bad that relate to the purpose of human life itself. The story in the movie is depicted with a specific purpose, the story is inseparable from one's behavior. It is this moral element that is often considered in the making of the movie itself. Barnum's leadership means that leaders have a responsibility to deliver visions that others can see clearly. They lay the groundwork, they build on it with a story, and they bring their team into sight. Leaders are inclined to accept obligation for their actions. He must know that every action has consequences for both himself and others. Therefore, as a leader, he must accept responsibility, not hide, or avoid the problems he has faced. For Barnum failure is a lesson. Most people want to avoid failure and believe that failure is a sign of defeat. But a leader will know that failure does not mean the end of everything. Failure means time to try something new. Great leaders see their team's weaknesses and strengths. They do not hesitate to ask counselors for help or find relationships that can take their team to a higher level.

Summary of The Greatest Showman movie

One day, P.T. Barnum was fired from his company for losses. He was then able to rise by pretending to have ships and certificates from the ships as collateral for loans to the Bank which were then used to buy a museum containing exotic dolls about ancient history and American history. The museum business has not developed, and the number of visitors who come is very small.

New business ideas instead emerged from her two daughters, they suggested making a fantastic show, not just featuring dolls. Then, from that idea, Barnum started recruiting 'weird' people, There was little Tom Thumb, a bearded woman, a dog-like hairy man, a man with a very tall body, a super fat person, an expert in acrobatics, a trapeze artist and other 'weird' people. After all, Barnum managed to create a circus show that amazed the audience. Barnum eventually managed to make a circus and fulfill a dream he had promised his wife as a child. He was able to buy a stately home for his family and one of his daughters who wanted a ballet

course was also fulfilled.

Barnum's Circus's successful echoes were heard in mainland England. Queen Victoria invited them to come to England. A royal party made Barnum acquainted with a famous Swedish singer, Jenny Lind. Barnum was fascinated by Jenny Lind's aura of artistry which led her to bring Jenny Lind to America to perform there. Jenny Lind accepted the offer and it turned out that Jenny Lind's concerts in several American cities were a huge success, accompanying the success of Barnum's Circus which continued under Barnum's leadership. This is where the music concert business started where people willingly spend their money to enjoy the performance of a singer performing on stage live.

However, great success does not mean being free from various trials. When a group of people who were haters destroyed the assets of Barnum's Circus it made him lose his spirit. However, the circus performers felt that Barnum had elevated their lives to be better. Working as performers in Barnum's Circus brought about a family bond between them, making them unite to rise from the slump.

CONCLUSION

In *The Greatest Showman* movie, the leadership of Phineas Taylor Barnum as the main character is represented by portraying Barnum's character as self-leadership and leader in the circus. There are several scenes that the writer considers representative of Barnum's leadership shown through the dialogues, images, behavior, and social. After finding and analyzing this movie, the writers found three types and three impacts of the leadership of Phineas Taylor Barnum in *The Greatest Showman* movie. The types of leadership are democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and transformational leadership. The impact of leadership is inspiring confidence in others, creating a respectful environment, and raising loyalty and trust. The types and the impacts of Barnum's leadership show that he does not scatter his power as a leader directly, but he builds and focuses to inspire how to be a responsible leader in guiding his members. He becomes a role model for people who do not know how to lead.

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