

Leadership Styles & Conflict Management Styles of Executives

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The present study examines the relationship between leadership styles and the conflict management styles of the executives of the large and middle scale industries in Nashik. Two scales were used, one each for leadership styles and conflict management styles. The results indicated that leadership styles and conflict management styles of the executives are related. The study further revealed that the missionary leadership was most preferred among executives. Deserter leadership style was rejected by the executives. Appeasement conflict management style was the most preferred by the executives and the resignation was the most rejected conflict management style.

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Introduction

Leadership has been defined as interpersonal influence exerted in a situation and directed using communication system towards the attainment of specific goals. It is basically the ability to form and mould attitudes and behavior of other individuals. It is the process of influencing others to mobilize and direct their efforts towards specific goals and attain these goals through them. It should be noted that a formal head of a department may not necessarily be an effective leader and that there would be an informal leader who may exert more influence on the workers than the formal leader. Despite the differences, the task of managerial leader is to get things done through people by motivating them. This can be achieved effectively by using human relations, techniques involving understanding of human factors, communication processes, interpersonal and intergroup behavior and organizational dynamics.

Leadership Styles

In the present study the leadership styles undertaken for the research are

the ones proposed by Reddin (1970) who developed a manager behavior model consisting of eight styles, which are:

Deserter leadership style is uninvolved and passive.

Missionary style of leader is primarily interested in harmony.

Autocrat leadership style shows no confidence in others, feels unpleasant, and is interested only in the immediate job at hand. These leaders direct orders to their associates and usually keep decisions and controls to themselves because they have assumed full responsibility for decision making.

Compromiser style leader is a poor decision maker who is over influenced by the pressures of work, who minimizes immediate pressures and problems.

Bureaucrat is primarily interested in rules and procedures for their own sake. They want to maintain and control situations by their conscientious enforcements.

Developer leadership style trusts people, and is concerned with developing them as individuals. This style assumes that individual members of a group who take part personally in the decision-making process will have greater commitment to the objectives and goals of the organization.

Benevolent Autocrat knows what he wants from the people, situations and how to get things completed in his way without causing resentment.

Executive is a good motivator who sets high standards, treats everyone differently, and prefers team management.

Conflict Management Styles

Avoidance styles of conflict management aims at preventing or postponing conflicts in a variety of ways. There are four main avoidance styles studied here:

- i) *Resignation* is an extreme avoidance style adopted in helpless situations.
- ii) *Wedrawal* style is used to get away from the conflict situation.
- iii) *Defusion* style buys time for dealing with the conflict.
- iv) *Appeasement* style buys temporary peace and agrees some of the demands of the out-group, not because it is convinced about them but because it wants to postpone the conflict.

Approach Styles of Conflict Management

Approach modes or styles may take more aggressive or understanding forms by taking positive steps to confront conflict and find solution. There are four approach modes or styles:

- i) *Confrontation* is applied to fight out an issue to get a solution in one's favor, and is often adopted by management or trade union. The confrontation may involve coercion and is likely to fail in reaching a solution.
- ii) *Compromise* is the process of sharing the gain without resolving the con-

flict. This may be done by bargaining.

- iii) In *Arbitration* a third party is sought to assess the situation and provide a solution acceptable to both the parties.
- iv) *Negotiation* style is used for jointly confronting the problem and exploring its solutions.

Review of Leadership

McGregor (1957) gave two types of leadership styles, Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X assumes that most of the people dislike work and will try to avoid it if possible. Theory Y assumes that people are not inherently lazy. Theory Z by Ouchi (1981), proposes that long-term employment is the basis of effective organizations.

A managerial grid model leadership style of managers was given by Blake and Mouton (1964). Fiedler (1967) even suggested that as the situation varies, leadership requirement also varies. Reddin (1970) have considered the task and relationship orientation of the managerial grid and brought forth styles: (a) less effective style (deserter, missionary, autocrat and compromiser), (b) more effective styles (bureaucrat, developer, benevolent autocrat and executive). Vroom and Yetton (1973) indicated that the supervisory approach is expected to be most effective in a particular situation. Leader-member exchange theory of Dansereau (1975) proposed that supervisor treated individual subordinates differently and that over time the relation-

ships between supervisor and subordinates evolve.

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Taylor (1911) suggested that employees are maneuvered by the leader, therefore, the leader has to focus all his attention to the needs of the organization rather than on the needs of the individual. Mayo (1927) emphasized that the leader was expected to facilitate the attainment of organization goals and simultaneously ensuring the atmosphere for personal growth and development of the employees. Fleishman and Harris (1962) revealed that supervisors with low scores on consideration and high scores on initiating structure had high turnover rates.

Dwivedi (1967) revealed the importance of management skills such as ability to make rapid decisions, high intelligence, readiness to accept new ideas, technical ability, ability to understand people, verbal ability, willingness to ask other people for their opinion, willingness to admit own mistakes, available for discussions with workers and willingness to pass on information to others. Mant (1983) gave two basic styles of leadership: binary & ternary. In binary mode the individual controls, dominates or seduces the others in the interest of personal survival. In ternary mode the interpersonal power is regulated by an in-

stitution, motivated by a purpose or enthralled by an idea.

Hay and McBer (2000) in his study of 4000 executives identified six different leadership styles; coercive, authoritative, pace-setting, democratic, affiliative and coaching. The study revealed that more the styles the leader uses, the better. On the contrary Adair (2003) proposed that qualities of the leader play an important role in different situations. High-high leadership hypothesis proposed that the most effective leaders exhibit high levels of both types of behavior. Hence the study was called High-high leadership hypothesis.

Binney and Williams (2005) stated ways to reconceptualize change and see organizations as adaptive, self organizing, interdependent with their environment. Ghosh and Shejwal (2006) suggested that the perceived organizational values and leadership styles are related. Ayo and Oluseyi (2009) in their study conducted in Nigeria revealed that leadership effectiveness contributes mostly to workplace performance and followed by work motivation. A global research on a sample of 1541 chief executive officers by the Global Chief Executive Officer Study (2010) concluded that leaders have to embody leadership, reinvent customer's relationship and build operating dexterity. Bisht and Yadav (2010) revealed that psychological and active involvement of employees was equally important to encourage and flourish the real and genuine participation. This can be achieved through the focus on delegation of work, transparent communi-

cation, empowerment and proper feedback.

Review of Conflict Management

Jongtae, Jong and Dong (2006) study on managers of multinational companies revealed that the active participation of managers would increase the conflict with headquarters whereas it decreases the conflicts with local end users. A study of Malaysian companies by Lee (2008), revealed that integrating style, compromising style and, to some extent obliging style, is associated with each other. Raj (2008) found that soft skills are an essential component of enhanced competency levels, which the emerging businesses are extensively seeking out.

Women excelled men on using avoiding, obliging and dominating styles, whereas men stand out on integrating and compromising style of conflict management.

Furumo (2008) revealed that the members who perceive that there is a lot of relationship conflict in a team use avoidance conflict management style. On the other hand, active team members are more likely to use an integrating conflict management style. Chaudhry, Shami, and Ahmed (2008) findings revealed that integration style was the most preferred one by men and women in handling interpersonal conflict with their immediate superior. They also revealed that women excelled men on using avoiding, obliging and dominating styles, whereas men stand out on inte-

grating and compromising style of conflict management.

Vokic and Sontor (2009) revealed that gender, marital status and parenthood were significantly related with the usage of accommodating conflict handling styles. Sauna (2009) revealed that the managers used many styles instead of any one. It was important to note that there is no single style that fits all the situations. Iqbal (2009) revealed that the top management exercised initiating structure style. While the literature has highlighted consideration style of leadership as most favorable and influential style. Ahmed, Nawaz, Shaukat & Usman (2010) revealed that the future managers had extraversion personality traits and used both avoiding and compromising of conflict handling style.

Objectives

- 1) To investigate the most preferred and rejected leadership styles by the executives.
- 2) To explore the most applied conflict management style by the executives.
- 3) To explore the relationship between the leadership styles and the conflict management styles.

Hypothesis

- 1) Missionary is the most preferred leadership style
- 2) Confrontation is the most preferred conflict management style of the executives.

- 3) Leadership styles are positively related to conflict management styles.

Sample

The sample included a survey of 150 executives from large and medium scale industries located in and around Nasik. These executives were from the middle level to top-level management.

Data Collection & Analysis

1. *The Management Style Diagnosis Test* (Reddin, 1988) is designed solely for the use of managers. It is directly related to the eight styles based on 3-D theory of managerial effectiveness and it has been widely used in business, government and universities in various countries. It has a total of 56 pair of statements and respondents have to choose between 'A' or 'B' based upon its applicability for their context. Later the responses were taken on individual score sheet which helps in obtaining preferred managerial style; supporting style and an over rejected style. The reliability of the test was found to be .69 and validity .76.
2. *Opinion Survey of Organizational Conflict* (Pareek, 1997; 2002) Survey of Organizational Conflict has been designed to help manager examine their style of conflict management so as to improve their effectiveness in managing conflict. It contains 24 statements and studies eight styles of conflict management. Out of these 4 are avoidance styles and the remaining 4 are approach styles.

The responses are to be indicated on a 5-point scale. The reliability of OSOC was found to be .89 by using test-retest method. The validity scores range between .54 and .69.

Pearson correlation coefficient & mean were used for statistical analysis:

Results

Missionary leadership is the most preferred leadership style followed by the developer leader style.

Table 1 shows the mean scores of leadership styles and conflict management styles of executives. The table indicates that missionary leadership (Mean = 8.79) is the most preferred leadership style followed by the developer leader

style (Mean = 7.82). The table also indicates that appeasement is the most preferred conflict management style (Mean = 12.52) followed by arbitration style (Mean = 10.67).

Table 2 shows the correlation of leadership styles and conflict management styles. The table indicates that missionary leadership style has positive and definite correlation ($r = 0.30$) with resignation conflict management style. This indicates the fact that executives believe in managing conflict but in harmony. The table also shows that missionary leadership style has positive and definite correlation ($r = 0.28$) with confrontation conflict management style. This indicates the fact that executives believe in managing conflict but in their own favor itself.

Table 1 Mean Scores of Leadership Styles & Conflict Management Styles

Leadership Styles	Mean Scores	Conflict Management Styles	Mean Scores
Deserter	4.94	Resignation	7.63
Missionary	8.79	Wedrawal	9.2
Autocratic	5.01	Defusion	8.69
Compromise	6.4	Appeasement	12.52
Bureaucrat	7.66	Confrontation	10.32
Developer	7.82	Arbitration	10.67
Benevolent	7.76	Compromise	9.38
Executive	7.64	Negotiation	8.6

Further Table 2 shows that the autocrat leadership style has negative correlation ($r = -0.35$) with appeasement conflict management style. This indicates that executives using autocrat leadership style do not agree to any demands of the other party as they are more used to give orders and direct their associates. This

contradicts with the appeasement conflict management style.

Table 2 also shows that the bureaucrat leadership style is negatively correlated ($r = -0.22$) with appeasement conflict management style. This shows that executives using bureaucrat leadership

style believe in rules and procedures and do not make any changes in their approach. This completely contradicts with the appeasement conflict management style which believes in accepting and changing approach for conflict management. The table also shows that the developer leadership style is positively correlated ($r = 0.27$) with appeasement conflict management style. This indicates the fact that both the styles have a positive approach of solving problem either by consensus or by agreeing some demands of the other party. The table further shows that the executive leadership style

is positively correlated ($r = 0.32$) with appeasement conflict management style. This indicates the fact that executive leaders treat everyone differently and is ready to accept some demand of the other party in order for conflict management. The table also shows that the executive leadership style is negatively correlated ($r = -0.33$) with wedrawal conflict management style. This indicates that executive leaders have a positive approach towards conflict management which the wedrawal conflict management style does not, hence having a negative correlation.

Table 2 Coefficient of Correlation between Leadership Styles & Conflict Management Styles

Leadership Styles	Conflict Management Styles							
	Resg	Wed	App	Def	Conft	Arbt	Comp	Negt
Deserter	0.00	0.14	-0.16	0.07	0.01	0.08	-0.14	-0.10
Missionary	0.30*	0.25*	-0.07	0.31*	0.28*	0.14	0.16	0.15
Autocrat	0.11	0.23*	-0.35*	0.29*	0.04	-0.05	-0.17	0.00
Compromise	0.15	0.13	-0.08	-0.06	-0.18	0.01	-0.01	0.21*
Bureaucrat	0.06	-0.01	-0.22*	-0.02	0.01	-0.03	-0.14	-0.00
Developer	-0.25*	-0.13	0.27*	-0.22*	-0.12	0.05	0.14	-0.20
Benevolent Autocrat	-0.10	-0.12	0.20	-0.06	-0.04	-0.16	0.11	0.04
Executive	-0.17	-0.33*	0.32*	-0.29*	0.00	-0.13	0.12	-0.02

* indicates low but definite correlation $r > \pm 0.21$ to ± 0.40

Resg- resignation, Wed- wedrawal, App- appeasement, Def- defusion, Conft- confrontation, Compr- compromise, Negt- negotiation

Conclusions

The following are the findings of the present study:

- i) Missionary leadership was the most preferred and deserter leadership style was the most rejected style by the executives.
- ii) Appeasement conflict management style was the most preferred and resignation conflict management style was the most rejected conflict management style of the executives.
- iii) Missionary leadership style is positively correlated with resignation, wedrawal, defusion and confrontation conflict management styles.
- iv) Developer leadership style is negatively correlated with resignation, wedrawal,

defusion, confrontation and negotiation conflict management styles.

- v) Executive leadership style is positively correlated with appeasement conflict management style.

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