

₹ 200

ISSN - 2249-555X

Volume : 1

Issue : 11

Aug 2012



Journal for All Subjects

www.ijar.in

Listed in International ISSN Directory, Paris.



ISSN - 2249-555X

Indian Journal of Applied Research

Journal for All Subjects

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Leadership Styles in Organizations an Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is the key dynamic force that motivates and coordinates an organization to accomplish its objectives. A leader creates a vision for the others and then directs them towards achieving that vision. Leaders' behavior is one of the keys to organizations success, because it strongly influences subordinates motivation and performance and also plays a critical role in driving change. Today, more than ever leadership behaviour is the critical to fostering a healthy culture and retaining the best people. Leaders achieve successful change by constantly balancing the two dimensions: concern for the task; and the concern for the people. The purpose of this paper is to explore leadership style in the organizations. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to 50 leaders in various organisations. The research was limited to leaders in an organization. The aim of the study is to understand the leadership style adopted by the leaders to achieve the organizational objectives. The results show that the leaders had an autocratic style of leadership. For leaders to be effective, they would need to adapt their leadership style to the situation.

Keywords : Leadership, Leadership styles, Subordinate, Organisation

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the ability to help others to meet their goals. Good leadership is required for the effective and efficient outcome. Leadership remains one of the most relevant aspects of the organizational context. Leadership has different meanings to different authors (John P.Kotter 2001). Leadership is defined as influence, that is, the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement of group goals (Warren Bennis and James O'Toole 2000). Leadership has been described as the "process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task". (Chemers, M. M., 2002).

As leadership always entails a relationship between leaders and followers, it is important to focus on the leader as a moral manager. 'Leadership is an essential feature of the ethical culture of an organization (Treviño, Weaver, Gibson, & Toffler, 1999), and it is the leader who is able to place ethics on the organizational agenda (Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003; Treviño et al., 2000). Followers learn what to do and what not to do by observing their leaders' behavior and are likely to imitate their leaders, whether the example set by the leader is good or bad (Kaptein, 2002; Kaptein & Wempe, 2002; Lasthuizen, 2008; Soutar, McNeil & Molster, 1994).

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership style refers to a leader's behaviour. It is the result of the philosophy, personality and experience of the leader. There are several theories on leadership behaviour and styles. Kurt Lewin and colleagues identified different styles of leadership: Dictator, Autocratic, Participative, and Laissez Faire (Lewin, K et al, 1939). Leadership styles have been classified based on how leaders use their authority. Leaders are seen as applying three basic styles. The autocratic leader commands and expects compliance, is dogmatic and positive, and leads by the ability to withhold or give rewards and punishment. The democratic, or participative, leader consults with subordinates on proposed actions and decisions and encourages participation from them. The free-rein leader uses his or her power very little, if at all, giving subordinates a high degree of independence in their operations.

A well-known approach to defining leadership styles is the

managerial grid, developed decades ago by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (Robert R.Blake and Jane Mouton 1954) As Blake and Mouton emphasize, their use of the phrase concern for is meant to convey how managers are concerned about production or how they are concerned about people. Concern for production includes the attitude of a supervisor toward a wide variety of things, such as the quality of policy decisions, procedures and processes, creativeness of research, quality of service, work efficiency, and volume of output. Concern for people is likewise interpreted in a broad way. It includes such elements as the degree of personal commitment toward goal achievement, maintenance of the self-esteem of workers, placement of responsibility on the basis of trust rather than obedience, provision of good working conditions, and maintenance of satisfying interpersonal relations.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Success of an organization depends upon how effectively and efficiently a leader manages and influences the subordinates to achieve the organizational objective which in turn depends upon the role/behaviour/style a leader applied in an organisation. Studying the leadership style in organization is essential to know the way leaders influence and manages their subordinates in their day-to-day activities. Thus, this study titled "Leadership Styles in Organisations" is of significance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This paper is aimed to evaluate leaders in terms of the leadership of task orientation and people orientation. The objectives of study are to:

- 1) The way leaders influence followers/subordinates.
- 2) What leaders/managers do in their day-to-day jobs?
- 3) How leaders can be effective?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted among a convenient sample of fifty leaders in various organizations situated in Andhra Pradesh. Primary data collection was based on questionnaires. A questionnaire was administered to the leaders to know their behaviour and style. The dependent variable (Leadership Style) in the research was based on three styles such as task oriented (Autocratic) leadership, shared leadership and people oriented (Laissez-faire) leadership style.

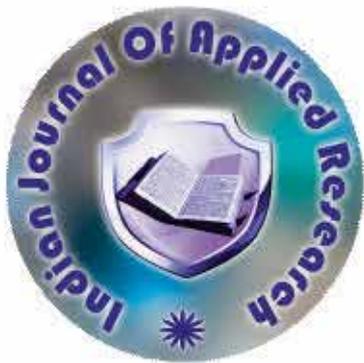
Appendix-1: Responses towards the leadership style statement

STATEMENT	A	F	O	S	N
I would most likely act as spokesperson of the group.	17	18	14	1	-
I would encourage overtime work.	6	4	29	4	7
I would allow members complete freedom in their work.	25	14	3	5	3
I would encourage the use of uniform procedures.	21	12	6	4	7
I would permit the members to use their own judgment in solving problems.	8	23	11	8	-
I would stress being ahead of competing groups.	19	21	5	1	4
I would speak as a representative of the group.	22	18	7	3	-
I would needle members for greater effort.	13	16	12	5	4
I would try out my ideas in the group.	17	20	10	1	2
I would let the members do their work in the way they think best.	24	7	12	4	3
I would be working hard for a promotion.	20	9	4	4	13
I would tolerate postponement and uncertainty.	5	8	8	10	19
I would speak for the group if there were visitors present.	18	24	6	1	1
I would keep the work moving at a rapid pace.	20	18	7	3	2
I would turn the members loose on a job and let them go to it.	2	7	18	6	17
I would settle conflicts when they occur in the group.	18	15	8	9	-
I would get swamped by details.	4	9	23	11	3
I would represent the group at outside meetings.	10	12	12	10	6
I would be reluctant to allow the members any freedom of action.	6	5	24	8	7
I would decide what should be done and how it should be done.	15	17	14	3	1
I would push for increased production.	19	14	15	1	1
I would let some members have authority which I could keep.	13	14	22	1	-
Things would usually turn out as I had predicted.	6	20	20	4	-
I would allow the group a high degree of initiative.	32	12	4	2	-
I would assign group members to particular tasks.	8	32	6	4	-
I would be willing to make changes.	12	10	24	3	1
I would ask the members to work harder.	19	14	12	5	-
I would trust the group members to exercise good judgment.	21	20	8	1	-
I would schedule the work to be done.	30	7	6	7	-
I would refuse to explain my actions.	3	6	15	6	20
I would persuade others that my ideas are to their advantage.	2	16	14	12	6
I would permit the group to set its own pace	18	5	12	5	10
I would urge the group to beat its previous record.	12	12	11	12	3
I would act without consulting the group.	6	6	16	2	20
I would ask the group members follow to standard rules & regulations.	16	16	10	4	4

(A=Always, F=Frequently, O=Often, S= Seldom, N=Never)

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