

Leadership Styles and Influence Strategies: A Study



Human Resources

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ABSTRACT

The study used questionnaire survey data from a sample of 300 superiors and 300 subordinates representing three organizations i.e., Banks, Schools and Government Organizations. The present study examined the effect of the use of influence strategies used by the superiors on the subordinates' perception of their superior's leadership styles. The stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that nurturant-task leadership style significantly contributed to showing dependency strategy in banks, personalized help strategy in schools and assertion strategy in government organizations. Participative leadership style to the assertion strategy in schools, and expertise & reasons strategy in government organizations. Bureaucratic leadership style to the expertise & reasons, upward appeal, and assertion strategies in government organizations. Authoritarian leadership style to the assertion strategy in schools, and exchange & challenge, personalised help, and coalition & manipulation strategies in government organizations.

The "power – influence" approach (French & Raven, 1959) holds that the fundamental issues in leadership is power. That is, leadership effectiveness is a function of the bases of power available to the leader and the manner to which he or she exercises power over the subordinates (Yukul, 1981). A power basis is a source of influence in a social relationship. An influence strategy is the actual (behavioral) mechanism through which the leader exerts influence over the subordinates. Thus, it is more important to investigate the manner in which the leader exerts influence over the subordinates instead of focusing all attention on the basis of power used by the leader (Yukl, 1981). For effective functioning of any organization, it is important that the relationship between the superiors and subordinates should be cordial and the leader should get the work done by the subordinates and intern the subordinates will perceive the leader behavior based on that i.e., leadership styles. Some of the research findings relating to the influence strategies and leadership styles are described below:

Ansari's (1989) study revealed that, subjects in general tend to employ more of negative sanction and assertion and less of reward and exchange while dealing with poorly performing subordinates than with well performing subordinates, subordinates performance influenced significantly the two of the nine influence strategies – positive sanctions and withdrawal. The higher the subordinate performance perceived by the subjects the greater the likelihood of using these strategies (Ansari et.al., 1989). In a similar study by Rajasekhar & Vijayasree (2012) with 50 middle level managers (Superiors) and 50 their employees (subordinates) each, from commonweal, service and business organizations, revealed no differences between influence strategies and leadership styles of managers in commonweal organizations. In service organizations, significant relations found between influence strategies and leadership styles of managers, and the influence strategies vary significantly with respect to their leadership styles of managers in business organization.

Influence tactics in the context of leadership have been studies at both the levels: upward and downward. The tendency in all these works has been to take the subordinates as a homogeneous group and generalize the findings over the subordinates. They all seemed to have overlooked the uniqueness of influence operations at the dyadic level (Tandon et.al., 1989). A study results with 189 managers at 140 different organizations by Cable & Judge (2003) revealed that managers' upward influence tactic strategies depend on the leadership style of their target (their superiors). Managers were more likely to use consultation and inspirational appeal tactics when their supervisor was a transformational leader, but were more likely to use exchange, coalition, legitimization, and pressure tactics when their supervisor

displayed a laissez-faire leadership style.

Ansari & Kapoor (1987) studied with sixty nine engineering graduate students participated in role-playing situations and were assigned to superiors with particular leadership style as well as given influence attempt goals and the findings were (i) influence strategies used by subordinates varied as function of goal sought from superiors (ii) influence strategies used by subordinates were significantly affected by the superior's leadership styles and (iii) only one significant interaction between the leadership behavior and influence attempt goals i.e., on blocking strategy was noted.

Hall's (1987) study revealed that principals identified their dominant style of leadership as high task / high relationship. The superintendents and peer principals identified the dominant leadership style of the principals as high task / high relationship.

The studies mentioned above do not show the effect of influence strategies on subordinates' perception of their superior's leadership styles, using superiors and subordinates as sample of study and as comparing three different organizations. Hence in this study, it was aimed at studying the effect of superior's use of influence strategies on the subordinates' perception of their superior's leadership styles to fill the gap in the research area of organization behavior.

Leadership styles are crucial skills which must be learned and practiced to achieve organizational goals. They are the focus of activity for managers through which organizational objectives are accomplished as they constitute an important element of the managerial process. The leadership styles depend on the leader, his followers, the situation and the inter-personal relationships between them, etc. the leader uses different types of downward influence tactics to influence their subordinates to achieve organizational goals. Effective leaders should not only vary their styles, depending on the maturity level of their subordinates, but also vary the use of power in order to be effective. Based on these influence strategies of the superiors that he or she employs in dealing with his or her subordinates, the subordinates' perception of their superior's leadership style vary, in the light of the above, in this study, it was hypothesized that:

"Superiors' use of influence strategies vary significantly with respect to the subordinates' perception of their superior's behavior in three organizations, viz., Banks, Schools and Government Organizations"

Methodology:

300 superiors and 300 subordinates were drawn from three dif-

ferent organizations, viz., Banks, Schools and Government Organizations, drawn from different districts of Andhra Pradesh, India. 100 each superiors and subordinates from each organization were drawn. Most of the subjects were bachelor degree holders, few were master degree holders and some were professional degree holders. Table 1 shows the sample distribution of the present study.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Organization	JOB LEVEL		Total
	Superiors	Subordinates	
Banks	100	100	200
Schools	100	100	200
Government Offices	100	100	200
Total	300	300	600

Tools used:

Ansari's (1990) Downward Influence Strategy measure was used to obtain the information how the superior go about changing the mind or opinion of his subordinates, so that they agree with him. The scale has 28 items divided into seven types of strategies, i.e., exchange & challenge, expertise & reasons, personalized help, coalition & manipulation, showing dependency, upward appeal, and assertion, containing 5,6,3,4,4,3 and 3 items each respectively. The items were to be responded on a 5 - point scale (very often 5, often 4, sometimes 3, seldom 4 and rarely 1).

Ansari's (1990) Leadership Behavior measure was used to measure the leadership styles of the superiors as perceived by their subordinates. The scale consist of 26 items, divided into 4 types of leadership styles - Nurturant-task, Participative, Bureaucratic and Authoritarian, containing 9,8,3 and 6 items each respectively. The items were to be responded on 5-point scale (quite true 5, true 4, doubtful 3, false 2 and quite false 1).

Administration:

The subjects were met individually at their respective chairs and the Downward Influence Strategy measure was given to Superiors and Leadership Behavior measure was given to the Subordinates and requested them to give their responses that best suit to describe their superior / subordinate as the case may be. The completed questionnaires were collected personally back from them upon their convenience and some were received by post. The questionnaires were scores were tabulated and were analyzed using SPSS package.

Results:

The influence strategies used by the superiors to get the work done by the subordinates would affect the subordinates in perceiving their superior's behavior. Superiors use different types of strategies and they would vary from organization to organization and person to person, and the perception of the leader's behavior by the subordinates would also vary accordingly. So, in order to examine the above said hypothesis, the scores were subjected to stepwise multiple regression analysis (MRA) and the results are presented in the following tables (Tables 2 - 4).

Table 2: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Results – Leadership Styles (Predictors) and Downward Influence

Strategies (Criterion) – Banks.

		LEADERSHIP STYLES			
		Nurturant-task	Participative	Bureaucratic	Authoritarian
Exchange & Challenge	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Expertise & Reasons	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Personalised Help	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Coalition & Manipulation	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Showing Dependency	R ²	0.069			
	F	7.31**	-	-	-
	Order	1			
Upward Appeal	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Assertion	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
		** Significant at 0.01 level - Not Significant			

Only the nurturant-task leadership style has significant contributed 6.9% ($R^2 = 0.069$, $F = 7.31$, $p < 0.01$ level) to the showing dependency strategy among the bank employees. Other leadership styles participative, bureaucratic and authoritarian have not significantly contributed to any of the other strategies (Table 2).

Table 3: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Results – Leadership Styles (Predictors) and Downward Influence Strategies (Criterion) – Schools.

		LEADERSHIP STYLES			
		Nurturant-task	Participative	Bureaucratic	Authoritarian
Exchange & Challenge	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Expertise & Reasons	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Personalised Help	R ²	0.044			
	F	4.50*	-	-	-
	Order	1			
Coalition & Manipulation	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Showing Dependency	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Upward Appeal	R ²				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Assertion	R ²		0.106		0.062
	F	-	5.73*		6.49*
	Order		2		1
		* Significant at 0.05 level - Not Significant			

None of the leadership styles has contributed significantly to the exchange and challenge, showing dependency, and upward appeal strategies among the school employees. Only nurturant-task leadership style has contributed significantly with 4.4% ($R^2 = 0.44$, $F = 4.50$, $p < 0.05$ level) to the personalized help strategy and other styles – participative, bureaucratic and authoritarian leadership style has significantly. Authoritarian leadership style has significantly contributed with 6.2% ($R^2 = 0.062$, $F = 6.49$, $p < 0.05$ level) to the assertion strategy and nurturant-task and bureaucratic styles have not contributed significantly (Table 3).

Table 4: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Results – Leadership Styles (Predictors) and Downward Influence Strategies (Criterion) – Government Offices.

Downward Influence Strategies	LEADERSHIP STYLES				
	Nurturant-task	Participative	Bureaucratic	Authoritarian	
Exchange & Challenge	R^2				0.188
	F	-	-	-	22.69**
	Order				1
Expertise & Reasons	R^2		0.205	0.11	
	F	-	12.52**	12.18**	-
	Order		2	1	
Personalised Help	R^2				0.105
	F	-	-	-	11.44**
	Order				1
Coalition & Manipulation	R^2				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Showing Dependency	R^2				
	F	-	-	-	-
	Order				
Upward Appeal	R^2			0.075	
	F	-	-	7.89**	-
	Order			1	
Assertion	R^2	0.187		0.099	
	F	11.17**	-	10.80**	-
	Order	2		1	
	** Significant at 0.01 level				- Not Significant

Only the authoritarian leadership style has contributed significantly with 18.8% ($R^2 = 0.188$, $F = 22.69$, $p < 0.01$ level) to the exchange and challenge strategy and other styles, nurturant-task, participative and bureaucratic have not contributed significantly among government organization employees. Bureaucratic leadership style has significantly contributed with 11.1% ($R^2 = 0.11$, $F = 12.18$, $p < 0.01$ level) and participative leadership style with 9.4% ($R^2 = 0.205$, $F = 12.52$, $p < 0.01$ level) to the expertise and reasons strategy, and other styles, nurturant-task and authoritarian have not contributed significantly. Authoritarian leadership style alone has contributed significantly with 10.5% ($R^2 = 0.105$, $F = 11.44$, $p < 0.01$ level) to the personalized help strategy. The results are in line with the previous findings (Ansari, 1990, P.110). Other styles, nurturant-task, participative and bureaucratic styles have not contributed significantly to the personalized help and coalition and manipulation strategies (Table 4).

None of the leadership styles have contributed significantly to the showing dependency strategy. Only bureaucratic leadership style has contributed significantly with 7.5% ($R^2 = 0.075$, $F = 7.09$, $p < 0.01$ level) to the upward appeal strategy and other styles, nurturant-task, participative and authoritarian have not contributed significantly. Bureaucratic leadership style has contributed with 9.9% ($R^2 = 0.099$, $F = 10.80$, $p < 0.01$ level) and nurturant-task style with 8.8% ($R^2 = 0.187$, $F = 11.17$, $p < 0.01$ level) to the assertion strategy. Other styles, participative and authoritarian have

not contributed significantly (Table 4). The results of the present study are in line with findings of Ansari (1989) that the bureaucratic managers relied more often on assertion strategy (P.62)

In the light of the above results the hypothesis that “the superiors’ use of influence strategies vary significantly with respect to the subordinates’ perception of their supervisors’ behavior in the three organizations, viz., Banks, Schools, Government offices,” is partially accepted for its significant contribution of:

- Nurturant-task leadership style to the strategies, showing dependency in the banks, personalized help in the schools and assertion in the government offices;
- Participative leadership style to the strategies, assertion in the schools and expertise & reason in the government offices;
- Bureaucratic leadership style to the strategies, expertise & reasons, upward appeal, and assertion in the government offices; and
- Authoritarian leadership style to the strategies, assertion in the schools, and exchange & challenge, personalized help, and coalition & manipulation in the government offices.

The hypothesis is rejected where there is no significant contribution of:

- Nurturant-task leadership style to the strategies, exchange & challenge, expertise & reasons, coalition & manipulation, and upward appeal in the banks, schools and government offices;
- Personalized help in banks and government offices, showing dependency in schools and government offices, and assertion in banks and schools;
- Participative leadership style to all the strategies, excepting assertion in schools and expertise & reasons in government offices;
- Bureaucratic leadership style to all the strategies in banks and schools, and exchange & challenge, personalized help, coalition & manipulation, and showing dependency strategies in government offices; and
- Authoritarian leadership style to all the strategies in the banks, and also in schools (except assertion) and expertise & reasons, showing dependency, upward appeal and assertion in the government offices.

Discussion:

Nurturant-task leadership style significantly contributed to the showing dependency strategy of the superiors. No other leadership styles have contributed significantly to any of the strategies in the bank employees. This is largely owing to the fact that the style of functioning is somewhat different in the banks than in the schools and government offices. Unless the superior shows that he is dependent upon the subordinates and subordinates perceive his leader as nurturant-task oriented as nurturant-task oriented the functioning in the banking organization cannot be smooth and this would create problems to many sections like business, industry, trading and public in general. In view of this, the superior in the banks should be tactful in dealing with the subordinates. He cannot act authoritatively or he cannot behave like a bureaucrat. He should not show to his subordinates that he is nurturant-task oriented person and then only the subordinates appreciate the superior.

In the schools also nurturant-task leadership style has significantly contributed to the personalized help strategy, whereas the participative and authoritarian leadership styles have significantly contributed to the assertion strategy, further authoritarian leadership style has significantly contributed to the upward appeal strategy also. The environment in the schools is somewhat different from the government offices.

Leadership manipulations revealed that the subordinates perceived the nurturant-task leader, as compared to the participative one, more strict, less participative, more assertive, and more affectionate and helpful (Sinha & Sinha, 1977).

Each teacher is more or less independent and has very little supervision over his functioning. For every activity of the subordinate, the leader need not be contacted. Once the broad guidelines are given there is little consultancy between the superior and subordinate. In spite of the absence of frequent consultations the activities go on without much disruption. In the above given circumstances only this organization can function properly as the activities are somewhat different from the other two organizations. In view of this the leader's influence strategies and subordinates' perception of their leader behavior are in the expected order. Bureaucrats used assertiveness in an unfavorable climate and exchange and challenge in a favorable climate (Ansari, 1988).

The functioning in the government offices is somewhat different from the other two organizations, namely banks and schools. Here the functioning depends upon with the reference to the statue book. Every time a decision is taken they depend more on the rules, regulations, precedent, etc. In view of this the nurturant-task leadership style has significantly contributed to the assertion strategy, participative style to the expertise and reasons, whereas bureaucratic style to the expertise and reasons, upward appeal, and assertion strategies, and the authoritarian style to the exchange and challenge, personalized help, and coalition and manipulation strategies. Bureaucrats were found to use the non-rational tactics, i.e., upward appeal (Ansari, 1990, P 110).

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