

Leadership Styles in Student: A Study Among Management Students

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Abstract

The paper tries to study the leadership styles of students in management institutes. Here leadership styles were taken for the study- Participative, instrumental or Supportive. Perception towards Pre and post event leadership styles are studied. Hypothesis testing was conducted to find out if any relationship exists between pre and post event leadership styles. The results indicate that there is no correlation between the perception towards pre and post event leadership styles.

Keywords – Leadership styles, Participative, Instrumental, Supportive. Pre event and post event perceptions.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The concept of leadership is a very broad term having different meanings and possible outcomes. Leadership can be viewed in different perspectives at different ages and in different environment. The purpose of this study is to understand the qualities required to become a leader and the qualities that the team members would like to see in a prospective team leader.

This study was done on student teams in a management institute, understanding the leadership styles in these teams.

Effective leadership plays an important role in the success of teams, (Hirokawa&Keyton 1995; Kolb 1996; Larson &LaFasto 1989). Individuals whom others in the group come to view as leaders exert significant influence over the other members (Schneier&Goktepe 1983). Leaders emerge when group members reach a common consensus, when one individual could serve the group more usefully in attaining group goals than the other members (Bass,1981). Student project teams often have no appointed leader, what are the qualities that make one in a team a leader, is the primary objective of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

There was a time when leaders were thought to be born, but with the passing of time and observing and experiencing life it has been felt that a leader is the one who is developed, it is not necessary that a leader must have a title or a position.

There may have been many instances when one may have influenced or mentored others, or solved a problem by taking a decision where maybe two or three people were involved without realizing that he/she had been a leader.

Leadership is not a topic that is new but has been of interest for many hundreds of years from the early Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates to the plethora of management and Leadership gurus. Leadership has long been an area of great interest for researchers and practioners alike. Organizations devote time and money to leadership training and development (Zom&Leichty, 1991).

Who are Leaders? A leader is someone whom people follow, or as somebody who guides or directs others. (en.wikipedia.org). Leaders are someone who can influence others and have managerial authority. As Matthew Caiozzo says "Leaders help others to see the mountain of gold within and help mine it out to the surface."

An effective leader then could be someone who helps to pave a path and ensures that a project or situation leads to a positive and constructive direction, to achieve this he/she works towards building the morale and guiding those who work under him/her.

Leaders have specific characteristics and principles to be able to inspire followers to achieve goals in high standards, (Valenti; 2010); besides the legitimate power leaders must have knowledge and the ability of maintaining morale and motivating followers. (Dessler,2012). As Jago (1982), says, "Good leaders are made not born. If you have the desire and will power, you can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training and experience.

Who becomes a leader or how do leaders emerge?

Leaders are the ones who are different, who encourage and are ready to take risks, they are bold and brave and are ready to step out of that comfort zone. We live in a world where everyone thinks he/she is a leader, we grow up wanting to be great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr, and the list is never ending, (Namara,2013), but can everyone be a leader? No, what makes this one person different in the group that people follow him. That, someone is he who can influence others and who has managerial authority. It is not a matter of whether leaders are born or made. They are born and made, (Conger,2004).

Then what is leadership?

Leadership is what leaders do, (Robins&Coullar, 2009). There remains a certain mystery as to what leadership is or how to define it. There is a wide range of definitions of leadership. Stogdill (1974), said that, "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who may have attempted to define the concept. Yukl (2006); (Kietner&Kinicki 2010). There are never ending definitions proposed on leadership:

Hemphill and Coons (1957), defined leadership as," The behaviour of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group towards a shared goal".

Tannenbaum et al. (1964) considered leadership, influence of human relations. Fiedler (1967), believed that leadership is a process to apply power and influence to make people work together and accomplish common goals. Rauch and Behling (1984), Robbins (1993), and Hsieh (1993), regarded leadership as the process of influencing a group to the goal achievement. Jacob and Jaques (1990), defined leadership as, "a process of giving purpose or meaningful direction to collective effort and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose." House et al. (1999), believed leadership as an ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success."

Leadership is not a position, title or privilege, rather a process which is observable; it influences other persons and inspires them to work for the organizational objectives. (Malik; 2012). Leaders set a direction for the rest of us; they help us see what lies ahead, they help us visualize what we might achieve, they encourage and inspire us. A Leader helps us to point in the same direction and harness our efforts jointly. Leaders energize people towards a goal. Leaders set a direction for the rest of the team and help see what lies ahead, they also visualise what could be achieved, they encourage and inspire the team to move in the same direction towards the goal.

According to Singh (2011), effective leadership gets the others to behave as the managers intend them to and at the same time satisfies their needs. Voegtlin et. al(2012), proposed that a successful leader is more effective in building good and robust relations. There have been a kaleidoscopic range of thoughts and theories on leadership, as Biggerstaff (2012) says, style can be defined as the perceived behaviour patterns that a person exhibits when attempting to influence the activities of others.

There are different kinds of leadership that have been spoken about. The research of Kurt Lewin (1939), and his group on leadership styles had resulted in the establishment of three leadership styles; the autocratic, laissez-faire and democratic.

Autocratic or authoritarian: this style is used when leaders tell their employees what they want to be done and how they want it accomplished, without taking advice of their followers.

Participative or democratic: this leadership style involves people in decision making process while the execution of the decision may be from the leader after facilitating consensus in the group.

Laissez-Faire: In this style the leader allows the employees to make the decisions. However, the leader is still responsible for the decisions that are made.

Two theories in leadership became evident in the late 20th century, transactional & transformational.

Transactional: leader depends upon reward & punishment so that his followers are following him, and he is ready to satisfy his followers needs so that they are able to achieve the goals. (Al-Hussain&Elbeltagi,2012).

Alongside the kinds of leadership there have been many theories which have been propounded:

Trait theory: was described by Kelly (1974), it was an attempt to classify what personal characteristic such as physical, mental and relating to personality, are associated with the success of leadership.

Behaviour Theories: these theories attempted to uncover and verify leadership behaviours that were universally effective. The theory focuses on actual behaviour and actions of leaders instead their personal qualities. These studies through experiments proved that different leadership styles produce different & complex reactions from same group. Stogdill (1963), Likert (1967), & Kotter (1988), also offered behavioural theories of leadership.

Contingency Theory: this model was developed by Paul Hersey & Ken Blanchard, (Fiedler;1964; & Garcia; 1987). This is a leader match theory (Feidler&Chemers, 1974), which means it tries to match leaders to appropriate situations. It is called contingency because it suggests that a leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context. These theories believe that effectiveness of a leader traits or behaviour is dependent upon situation (Barling et al.,2011).

Modern Approaches to Leadership: Burns (1978), introduced the concept of transforming leadership stating," transformational leadership occurs when people engage with one another in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher level of motivation and morality, (Malik,2012). Weber (1974), & House (1977) introduced concept of charismatic leadership which became popular in 1980; s&90's. There is no agreement as to which theory or model is more effective, since no single theory explains leadership in the full perspective.

Path-Goal Theory was developed by Martin Evans & refined by Robert House. When do subordinates accept a leader's behaviour, this can happen only the results are beneficial. Thus, a leader's main function is to pave a path for the realization of subordinate's goals. When working with a team, path goal leadership is a great way to get everyone back on agreeable terms. People have been interested in leadership since they started coming together in groups to accomplish goals. (Akif& Sahar,2013). House & Mitchell (1974), said that leader behaviour is acceptable and satisfying to the to the extent that the subordinates see such behaviour either an immediate source of satisfaction or instrumental to future satisfaction. (Malik, 2012). House & Mitchell (1974), spoke about four categories of leadership behaviour:

Directive leader: The leader lets followers know what is expected of them and tells them how to perform their tasks. Supportive is friendly and approachable, the leader shows concern for the followers, making the team members more comfortable to pursue their own goals. Participative leaders involve leaders consulting with followers and asking for their suggestions before deciding, and the Achievement oriented leadership style where the leader sets challenging goals for the team, and expects them to perform to their highest level and shows confidence to their ability to succeed. (Malik,2012).

Considering the purpose and context of research, the path goal leadership theory is an appropriate model for this study. In academic institutions leaders, may be required to have different skills for leading a team effectively. Involvement in the college experience both in and out of the classroom is consistently identified as significantly contributing to a variety of college student outcomes (Astin,1984, 1997; Pascarella& Terenzini,2005), and one such outcome is leadership. In academic institutions leaders, may be required to have different skills for leading a team effectively. This is partly due to the fact colleges and universities have unique purposes in society. (Kalargyrou et al., 2012), and leadership development is important. Although academics love to debate whether leaders are born or made, the evidence is quite clear," They are born and made." (Benjamin &Reilly, 2011). The university years play a very important role in shaping an individual's personality and building his leadership capabilities. Universities are the right place to form future generation of qualified leaders. (Osiemo,2012).

The main objective of this study is looking at leadership styles in student teams. Involvement in the college experience both in and out of the classroom is consistently identified as significantly contributing to a variety of college student outcomes (Astin, 1984, 1997; Pascarella&Terenzini, 2005). One such outcome is leadership (Haber, Allen et

al., 2012). The university years present the culmination of the formative years in the life of a student (Osiemo, 2012). This is the time that the seed of leadership is inculcated and nurtured in them.

Leadership takes place through communication of ideas (Glynn & Jamers, 2006). This can only happen when people share a common vision about where they, together would like to be at the end of a given task or venture. When students are assigned collaborative group projects issues of leadership do arise and generally one from the group takes the lead, he/she may be chosen or could be self-acclaimed. Very less research is done on the nature and role of leadership in student teams. What are teams? Many definitions have been given on this; A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals & approach for which they are mutually accountable. (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993) They are composed of people who are of relatively equal in status (Robert Heckman 2005). Another definition says "A team is a group of people working together towards a common goal," (Team Technology, 1995-2006), Student project teams often have no appointed leader, these groups then appoint a leader or many times a leader gradually emerges. Many scholars agree that leadership is an important determinant of team success (Heckman 2005). Jarvenpaa (1998) suggested that effective team leadership emerges with the development of trust.

A team is formed with different individuals having varied personalities and skills and they together form a complete picture of a jigsaw puzzle, everyone plays his part to perfection in achieving a common goal. E.g., A sports team is an ideal example of an effective team, all the players work together directed towards a win. Everyone in the team plays a different role per their strengths, and this collective effort takes them towards a common goal, in this case leading to a win. Teams are presumed to make better decisions than individuals (Hollenbeck et al., 1995). A team is not just a better group teams evolve and eventually the whole picture is greater than its parts. But there must something that drives the team, some magic ingredient that helps the team develop: Teams need coaches to be successful. There are too many interactions, too many details to track, too many individual skill sets to coordinate when true teamwork is required – someone needs to see the big picture, (Walker, McKee et al.), who is able to see this big picture dawns the role of a leader. Since team members come together to share their expertise and knowledge for completing projects or for any other reason the team leader's role is to function primarily as a coordinator, and not a decision maker. A team leader plays an important role in guiding the team members and motivating them to stay focused. A team leader sets a goal and objectives for the team and remains a driving force for the team. Teams always have a sense of purpose and this is what makes them united.

A typical MBA student enters this program hoping to improve her/his capacity to lead because that is the role they see for themselves in the future that is as leaders, they try to move towards that goal while in the program, graduating to face the challenge ahead to becoming prospective leaders. Working with teams is particularly relevant for students to aspire to become managers in organizations (Freeman, 1996, p. 266). Students working in teams learn teamwork, problem solving, communication, leadership and other key skills, (Alexander & Stone, 1997; Ashraf, 2004; Bolton, 1999; Kunkel & Shafer, 1997). Hernandez (2002) describes team learning as the creation of cooperative structures that promote active and higher-level learning or thinking. When students are assigned group projects a leader does take the lead. Though little research on the nature and role of leadership in distributed student teams has been conducted. (Heckman & Misiolek, 2005). The leadership journey is a never ending one. Change is a constant. Where the journey and the constant come together true leaders flourish, (IWM Syndicate Group, Nov 2001).

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

While many studies have considered leadership styles, very less work is done related to leadership in student teams. The purpose of the study was to study leadership styles related to student teams among management students.

Three leadership styles have been spoken about, (Kurt Lewin, 1939), the autocratic, laissezfaire & democratic. Alongside many theories have also been propounded, Trait theory, Behaviour theory & contingency theories. Then there were the modern approaches to leadership. Despite so many theories, there is no common consensus as to which model or theory explains leadership as a whole. Path Goal theory was developed by Martin Evans and later refined by Robert House. Looking at the purpose of research Path Goal leadership theory is an appropriate model for this study.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the leadership styles that are mostly seen amongst management students?

Which of the leadership style, instrumental, supportive or participative, based on the Path Goal theory which relates to this study, has more impact on student leaders.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study has been conducted in a management institute. A random sample of 125 students was selected from various streams i.e., marketing, finance, HR & retail. Depending on the literature and previous studies, a questionnaire was developed to collect the required data. The questionnaire was based on the path goal theory of leadership (House 1971; House & Dessler 1974). The questionnaire is of two parts A & B. Part A focuses on perceptions of team members for the person who tends to take leadership occasions. Part B, of the questionnaire focuses on team's perceptions on the qualities they would like to see in a leader. Each part was further divided into three sections, 1) instrumental leadership, 2) supportive leadership & 3) participative leadership. The behaviour scale is a three-factor scale comprising of three aspects of perceived leadership described above. Across factors, items have been scored on a 5-point scale with, 5= completely agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree & 1 = completely disagree. The scale has been taken from, Handbook of Marketing Scales (3rd Ed), edited by William O. Bearden, Richard G. Netemeyer & Kelly L. Haws. We are using this scale to study what kinds of leadership styles B School students possess.

6. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this research is to study leadership styles among management students.

This study aims to find perception and expectation of various leadership styles among management students. The research also aims to find which leadership style – instrumental, supportive or participative are perceived to have more impact among students. We have also tried to explore which leadership style is expected or perceived from team leaders and in which order of importance. We have also tried to explore which leadership style is expected from team leaders and in which order of importance. The study has also tried to find the relationship in perception and expectations of leadership styles and gender, (male/ female), the region they belong to, (north, south, east west) and stream of basic qualification, (arts, commerce, science, engineering & others).

7. HYPOTHESIS:

1. There is no significant relationship in pre and post event leadership styles (Supportive, Participative and Instrumental)
2. There is no significant difference in gender in pre and post event leadership styles (Supportive, Participative and Instrumental)

Data Analysis

Hypothesis Testing 1: There is no significant relationship in pre and post event leadership styles (*Supportive, Participative and Instrumental*)

Table 1 Instrumental Style of Leadership- pre and post event. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Expected of them - Expected of them	-.17518	.94634	.08085	-.33507	-.01529	-2.167	136	.032
Pair 2	Shall be done - Shall be done	-.18519	1.15374	.09930	-.38158	.01121	-1.865	134	.064
Pair 3	Group is Understood - Group is Understood	-.26667	1.14083	.09819	-.46086	-.07247	-2.716	134	.007
Pair 4	Work to be done - Work to be done	-.13740	1.35739	.11860	-.37203	.09722	-1.159	130	.249
Pair 5	Standards of Performance - Standards of Performance	-.14844	1.17111	.10351	-.35327	.05639	-1.434	127	.154
Pair 6	Rules & regulations - Rules & regulations	-.08271	1.20633	.10460	-.28962	.12421	-.791	132	.431
Pair 7	Carried out - Carried out	-.11940	1.13750	.09827	-.31377	.07496	-1.215	133	.226

Table 2

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Expected of them & Expected of them	137	.467	.000
Pair 2	Shall be done & Shall be done	135	.337	.000
Pair 3	Group is Understood & Group is Understood	135	.144	.096
Pair 4	Work to be done & Work to be done	131	.123	.162
Pair 5	Standards of Performance & Standards of Performance	128	.250	.004
Pair 6	Rules & regulations & Rules & regulations	133	.172	.048
Pair 7	Carried out & Carried out	134	.283	.001

Observations

In order to test the hypothesis, the following test were conducted. To find out the relationship in perception and expectations of leadership styles, the following test was conducted. Both pre event perceptions and post event expectations were studied of the different leadership styles.

When looking at the perceived and the expected responses towards styles of leadership, it is observed that on comparing the pre-and post-event instrumental leadership style, only three variables, expected of them, group is understood & shall be done, show significant correlation. this shows the team members do perceive and expect the leader to explain the task extremely well to them.

Table 3 Supportive Style of Leadership- pre and post event. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Friendly and Polite - Friendly and Polite	-.10526	1.00199	.08688	-.27713	.06660	-1.212	132	.228
Pair 2	Member of the Group - Member of the Group	-.12308	1.10682	.09707	-.31514	.06899	-1.268	129	.207
Pair 3	Group into operations - Group into operations	.06015	1.11979	.09710	-.13192	.25222	.619	132	.537
Pair 4	His/Her equals - His/Her equals	-.24615	1.14161	.10013	-.44426	-.04805	-2.458	129	.015
Pair 5	Notice of Changes - Notice of Changes	-.12593	1.21206	.10432	-.33225	.08040	-1.207	134	.230
Pair 6	Keeps of himself - Keeps of himself	.00000	1.21064	.10537	-.20845	.20845	.000	131	1.000
Pair 7	Group Members - Group Members	-.15038	1.19021	.10320	-.35452	.05377	-1.457	132	.147
Pair 8	Make Changes - Make Changes	-.28030	.98317	.08557	-.44959	-.11102	-3.276	131	.001
Pair 9	Out my Task - Out my Task	-.22794	1.06783	.09157	-.40903	-.04685	-2.489	135	.014
Pair 10	More Pleasant - More Pleasant	-.23704	1.09413	.09417	-.42328	-.05079	-2.517	134	.013

Table 4 Supportive Style of Leadership- pre and post event. correlation

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Group Mates - Group Mates	-.08333	1.13945	.09918	-.27953	.11286	-.840	131	.402
Pair 2	Mates have to say - Mates have to say	-.06618	1.14311	.09802	-.26003	.12768	-.675	135	.501
Pair 3	Carry out Assignments - Carry out Assignments	-.15789	1.07902	.09356	-.34297	.02718	-1.688	132	.094
Pair 4	His/Her Group Mates - His/Her Group Mates	-.19853	1.10098	.09441	-.38524	-.01182	-2.103	135	.037
Pair 5	Should be made - Should be made	-.18978	1.06089	.09064	-.36902	-.01054	-2.094	136	.038

Table 5 Participative Style of Leadership- pre and post event. Paired Sample T-test.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Group Mates - Group Mates	-.08333	1.13945	.09918	-.27953	.11286	-.840	131	.402
Pair 2	Mates have to say - Mates have to say	-.06618	1.14311	.09802	-.26003	.12768	-.675	135	.501
Pair 3	Carry out Assignments - Carry out Assignments	-.15789	1.07902	.09356	-.34297	.02718	-1.688	132	.094
Pair 4	His/Her Group Mates - His/Her Group Mates	-.19853	1.10098	.09441	-.38524	-.01182	-2.103	135	.037
Pair 5	Should be made - Should be made	-.18978	1.06089	.09064	-.36902	-.01054	-2.094	136	.038

From the table above it is clearly visible that there is significant relationship in the pre and post event. The variables that have shown a significant relationship are, the leader should consult group mates and leader should ask group mates for suggestions on what assignments should be made.

Table 6 Participative Style of Leadership- pre and post event. Correlation

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Group Mates & Group Mates	132	.204	.019
Pair 2	Mates have to say & Mates have to say	136	.209	.014
Pair 3	Carry out Assignments & Carry out Assignments	133	.324	.000
Pair 4	His/Her Group Mates & His/Her Group Mates	136	.301	.000
Pair 5	Should be made & Should be made	137	.296	.000

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in gender in pre and post event leadership styles (Supportive, Participative and Instrumental)

Table 7 Gender- t-test

It was also studied to find out if there exists any leadership style difference among male and female students.

									Lower	Upper
instrumental	Equal variances assumed	.180	.672	-1.179	116	.241	-	.79886	-	.64007
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.222	93.808	.225	-	.77097	-	.58864
supportive	Equal variances assumed	.375	.542	-.383	110	.703	-	1.19547	-	1.91183
	Equal variances not assumed			-.405	79.468	.687	-	1.13040	-	1.79248
participative	Equal variances assumed	.291	.590	-.819	122	.414	-	.61369	-	.71214
	Equal variances not assumed			-.830	89.020	.409	-	.60558	-	.70055
instrumentalB	Equal variances assumed	.013	.909	.268	113	.789	.21350	.79540	-	1.78933
	Equal variances not assumed			.271	75.965	.787	.21350	.78665	-	1.78026
supportiveB	Equal variances assumed	3.189	.077	.990	114	.324	.91964	.92898	-.92067	2.75995
	Equal variances not assumed			.914	65.646	.364	.91964	1.00608	-	2.92856
participativeB	Equal variances assumed	.418	.519	-.079	121	.937	-	.51634	-	.98135
	Equal variances not assumed			-.082	94.324	.935	-	.49989	-	.95163

Table 8 Gender- Paired sample T- test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
instrumental	Male	76	22.5714	4.32477	.49609
	Female	42	23.5136	3.82469	.59016
supportive	Male	76	33.7566	6.17868	.70874
	Female	36	34.2139	5.28368	.88061
participative	Male	81	15.9531	3.29974	.36664
	Female	43	16.4558	3.16057	.48198
instrumentalB	Male	77	23.9165	4.05390	.46199
	Female	38	23.7030	3.92489	.63670
supportiveB	Male	75	35.7587	4.26425	.49239
	Female	41	34.8390	5.61782	.87736
participativeB	Male	80	16.8475	2.82686	.31605
	Female	43	16.8884	2.53970	.38730

To understand if there was any significant difference in males and females in the style of leadership, a T test was run, and the table above shows that gender does not influence any style of leadership. So whether you are male or female, your leadership style remains the same.

7.CONCLUSION

In today's times, there are many situations when there is no appointed leader. These situations give immense opportunity to individuals to emerge as successful leaders. The findings of this research will come useful in such situations.

Participative leadership style has emerged to be the most important leadership style both in the perception and the expectation parameters. Hence students who aspire to be successful leaders should concentrate on being a participative leader followed by supportive leadership style and instrumental style.

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