A study of Leadership Styles of Civil Services Aspirants in India: An Empirical Research

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Abstract

Effective leaders are special individuals who energize the work climate by effortlessly weaving illimitable enthusiasm and infectious commitment amongst fellow team members. They thus set the pace for enhancement in productivity of their organizations by investing intelligently in the human capital i.e. the employees . This approach paves the way for maximizing the profits while keeping the employees happily engaged for the ultimate benefit of the organization. It is a known fact that the concept of leadership and leadership training is multidirectional and non-coercive. One must remember that the people involved in this relationship relish measurable changes. Effective leadership involves creating change, not maintaining the present status quo. The change which is sought, is not really dictated, but comes from within and has some specific purpose. In such a scenario, success of the outcome depends a lot upon the leadership style of the person who is in the position of authority and takes crucial decisions. Bureaucrats, who are the future leaders in their own right and the civil services aspirants in India also espouse certain personality traits and leadership styles which also get impacted with their socio economic status and demographic profiles The present study was chosen to be undertaken to study about these variables in depth and to know more about the future civil services aspirants who are going to be the future leaders of the country. It is indubitable that their personality and leadership styles are definitely going to affect the direction of progress the country envisages..The results are interesting and discussed at length in the paper.

Keywords : Leadership; Participative; Autocratic; Democratic; Employee performance

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a process whereby a leader guides, directs and influences the behavior of others for the accomplishment of goal in a specific situation. An effective manager coaxes his subordinates to work with enthusiasm, confidence and zeal. Good leaders not only develop the vision for the future but also motivate their team members to achieve those visions and enhance their personal performances too.

. According to Adair (2002) , "Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and to improve their performance and to direct them towards goals"

Jim Collins (1995) published an article in the Harvard Business Review about leadership Good to Great. In that article, titled leadership, "the most powerfully transforming executives possess a paradoxical mixture of personal humility and professional will…they are timid and ferocious. They are focus on empowerment rather than control for the development of employees' performance "

Thus, it is observed that Leadership studies, is a comparatively new, evolving and emerging discipline which has immense possibilities in shaping the future of a country as more and more studies are being conducted in the discipline to understand about the various components of a good leadership including Leadership styles.
In the recent years , the traditional concept of personnel administration has been replaced gradually by the term human resource management. The organizations who are interested in maximizing their productivity and profits focus on strategic integration of new leadership styles into effective employee engagement. In this context, Kenneth and Heresy (1988) have asserted that; "The effective leader must be a good diagnostician and adopt style to meet the demands of the situation in which they operates.

Indian Administrative Service: Historical Background

The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) is a legacy from colonial days of yore, seen as prestigious which every young person of today wants to enter into as it spells power, prestige and adds dimensions to one's career in interesting and exciting ways.

Its precursor, termed as the Indian Civil Services has been referred to as the Steel Frame or the structure with which Britishers ruled India by proxy and dominated its very being through this power corridor. Even after India attained independence in 1947, the Indian Civil Service was still seen as a premiere, prestigious institute required to maintain National Unity during the turbulent times of partition and also for facilitating the administration of such a vast populace divided by region, religion and language. Adding to the chaos was the fragmented pattern in which various princely states had to be integrated with the idea of India as a unified nation.

The then, Deputy Prime Minister, the Iron Man of India, Sardar Patel (1875-1950), had already visualised the significance of developing a uniform pattern of administrative structure which he wished to develop at the national level. While the central government had a comprehensive control over it, so as to counter balance the ill effects and developments of those forces which may have led to the pathetic disintegration and demoralisation of Indian Union, the very thought of which was utterly unthinkable.

But, these visualisations and proposals were vehemently opposed by the various chief ministers of the different states who did not want any interference with their supreme authority under any circumstances. They felt that state civil services were better than the All India Service, which they felt was contrary to the federal principle and did not suit their narrow perspectives then. But the ethos or the pathos of the traumatic partition between India and Pakistan necessitated the presence of an authoritative center at all costs.

The effectiveness of the IAS is no doubt very important and it's a reflection of the national cohesiveness too. IAS officers also tend to reflect upon themselves as a superior race by a strong *esprit de corps* and horizontal solidarity, although how far can this claim be upheld in daily practice is something interesting which remains to be seen and as such is a debatable issue.

The civil service competitive examination as it happens presently, takes place in three stages comprising the whole year.

The preliminary test was basically introduced to screen out non-serious candidates among the 500,000 candidates who generally sit for it every year. Thus, practically, only about 10% of them are selected for the main exam which consist of written papers from different branches / subjects which the candidates are at a liberty to choose from. There is one English paper as well, one paper in any Indian language and also they have to write an essay.

After this second level, again approximately only 10% of the people are called for the interview and general discussion. This part is the toughest of all as in this a candidate's general level of mental agility, his level of interest, presence of mind and knowledge in various fields is judged by an expert panel of Board members who judge his leadership acumen apart from the intellectual capabilities and aptitude for the task involved.

This final round is the toughest and once again approximately only half of the candidates are declared successful. Thus, it so happens that less than 0.5% of the candidates get selected and even amongst them too, only the ones who score high actually get the privilege to opt for the Indian Administrative Service, leaving the lesser prestigious services to the balanced lot of candidates.

During the discussions in the face to face interview with the candidates, they are given a choice to answer in their mother tongue instead of in English. Yes, this choice has been authorised by the Govt. since the 1970s for the regional languages, to give them their due importance and also is recognised in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The purpose is to give equal chance to candidates coming from remote areas and to those who have had no access to the modern educational facilities like city bred candidates. But otherwise, these candidates are no less competent to compete with the other candidates.

Sometimes, it may be taken as a matter of weakness for those candidates who do not know English and may feel inferior although this posit may not have an actual base. But such candidates from rural background may feel that the board may interpret it as their weakness. Such feelings are natural and bound to be present in this scenario. Hence, it may be perceived as discrimination by a segment of society although it is factually not so.

The candidates know that once they are recruited, they would belong to the socially elite and among the creamy layer of the society even if they belong to lower castes. Many of the candidates are post graduates in various subjects and some of them have a PhD degree as well. The present trend is that many doctors, engineers, architects are also trying their luck in bureaucracy and there is a new breed of candidates/ recruits which is coming up i.e. technocrats among bureaucrats.

Since, one can appear many times till the prescribed age limit of 28 years, hence many candidates make multiple attempts if they have not been successful earlier. Such is the charm of joining the administrative services. Such candidates continue with their education and either keep on increasing their levels of education or pick up some job which is available, till the time they do get selected into the services. The charm and glamour of the service is quite challenging and intriguing at the same time.

In fact, many young professionals are known to have quit their job to join the IAS. As was stated by one of such persons:

'I am quite sure that even if I become *the CEO of my company, yet the public is not going to recognise me. I would still be a nobody in the eyes of the public, I would have no social recognition at such a large scale. I would be anonymous whenever i would go out. No one will recognise me. But as an IAS whenever I visit even a remote village the entire population welcomes me wholeheartedly with open arms.*

The charm of the service is still very strong amongst today's youth. They claim that they are just doing professional degrees so that they could have something to fall back upon in case they are not fortunate enough to get selected in the civil services. So they continue to pursue their studies as well while still preparing for the exams.

In India, too many studies on leadership has been conducted in business and industry, but of the most important group, that matters in all public decisions and domains of t in government has not been studied much in detail i.e. the civil servants. And among them too, the leadership styles of aspirants of civil services would still make a more interesting study.

Hence the present study – A study of leadership styles among civil service aspirants: An Empirical Research, was chosen to be undertaken.

Literature Review

Daniel Goleman(2002) suggested that Leadership characterized different styles from
autocratic through democratic to participative to show the degree of authority and decision makes power of leaders and employees .

Leadership, and the study of it, has roots in the beginning of civilization and yet there is no common understanding of leadership everyone agrees on. Perhaps this is because leadership definition is continuously changing and evolving. It is a complex entity, with many applications, and the results that it creates depend highly on the situation in which it is being observed. From the year 1900 onwards till 1994, there have been more than seven thousand books and articles published on the subject of leadership (Hogan et al, 1994). From 1994 till 2004, fifteen thousand journal articles have been written on leadership (Bono and Judge, 2004) indicating increasing focus on leadership. Bass (Bass &Stogdill's Handbook, 1990) points to research studies where leadership is often regarded as the single most crucial factor in the success or failure of businesses, schools, religious groups, non-profits and the military.

performance was average.

Tom Bourner, (1996) observed that when there are more changes happening in organisations then there is all the more requirement for managers who are more self-aware and need to update themselves on what is happening in terms of economy and technology if they have to lead the modern organisations. Robert Hogan and Rodney Warrenfeltz, 2003 also echoed similar sentiments in their work.

This is where leadership styles make a difference in terms of work productivity, output and motivation of the employees / followers and benefit the organisations immensely.

Some of the leadership styles which have been discussed in the present study are as follows:

Participative

This kind of leadership encourages employees from the organisations to take part in important decisions and give their perspectives as and when asked for or even otherwise. The employees are given due regard and requisite information regarding the various pertinent issues of the organization from time to time. They are made to feel that they are personally responsible for the company, their presence is very important for the company and their views are taken in a very receptive mode and will help to change or modify the policies of the company.

Nurturant task:

This kind of leadership style is a kind of parenting pattern / model in which the employees feel free to work in their own styles, explore the environment and do things in a flexible manner. The leader acts like a parent, protects the employees from making serious mistakes and nurtures his style of work and behaviour pattern. The employee feels confident that the leader will look after his needs in a safe and secure manner, guide him without being authoritative as and when facing significant challenges and in effect, will nurture him at every step.

Authoritarian:

In this kind of leadership, the leader is in direct control of the employees behaviour, dictates them at every step, decides what is to be done and when without taking into consideration whether his employees are comfortable in the task assigned to them. In such a case there is very low autonomy within the team. The leader's vision is known only to him and the team is just there to follow instructions at almost every step.

There is no scope for discussion and the defiant behaviour would always be punished while the compliant behaviour may not always be rewarded. Such leaders are also termed as autocratic leaders due to their approach to work and relationships. They may or may not provide clear directions of what needs to be done, when and how. The team members may not always relish being pushed aside while making important decisions. It does not matter to the

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employees that the leader has a vision in mind and must be able to effectively motivate their group to finish the task. This happens as the employees are not able to relate with the leader most of the time because of his approach.

The leader is given unlimited authority to closely supervise the group's task. That is why sometimes they are also named as autocratic leaders. They may not clearly define the task but expect the task to be completed at all costs else they will reward or punish accordingly. Such leaders are very independent and do not take into consideration the feelings of their employees and are concerned with only their work. Employees are looked upon mechanical beings who are just there for the completion of the work. Authoritarian leaders maintain a stringent distance between them and their employees with feelings playing no part what so ever in the interaction. This type of leadership was more prevalent in the earlier times of tribes and kings.

Task-Oriented:

This kind of leadership emphasises on finishing the task well in time. They are not concerned with who is doing the task; the focus is on task completion. This style works on planning, regulating, structuring and scheduling the tasks. Various components of a task oriented leadership includes:

- Developing detailed plans and structures
- Goal prioritization
- Setting schedules
- Constant and periodic review

This kind of leadership style is more management oriented and is suitable in business schools where the ability to manage people's work increases and becomes more efficient if one is task oriented.

Bureaucratic:

This kind of leadership emphasizes on the hierarchy of authority and happens in management of employees where not much creativity or innovation is required. Decision making is done at the higher levels and such style of leadership works well in regulation of rules, policies and decision making.

Lets take the example of a company ABC where all administrative accountability, responsibility is broken down into components or divisions such as production, research and development, distribution, marketing etc. All these positions are arranged in a hierarchy where each one is responsible for their own tasks but is accountable to a senior above them. For example, employees in the marketing team would be supervised by their team leader who are managed and controlled by departmental heads. These heads are in turn accountable to the vice president who takes his commands from the vision of the board of directors.

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The present study was done on civil service aspirants because it would be interesting to know more about the personality patterns and leadership style of tomorrow's leaders

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was- A study of leadership styles among civil service aspirants: An Empirical Research

Objective of the study

The main objectives were outlined for the present study -

1. To understand the Leadership style of the Civil Service aspirants.

2. To find out gender differences in the leadership style of civil service aspirants.

Methodology . For the present study, 204 civil service aspirants' leadership style was for understanding more about their leadership style orientation. Aspirants from both gender were studied to find out about gender differences if any, in terms of their leadership style.

Leadership style:

Developed by J.P.B Sinha (1980) this measure consists of 60 items divided under 6 dimensions namely, Authoritarian, Bureaucratic, Nurturant, Nurturant task, task oriented and participative based on point rating, ranging from Never to Always.

The questions are fairly simple to answer and easy scoring and interpretation follows.

Procedure

After having built a good rapport with the subjects, the questionnaires were distributed individually to the subjects. They were made comfortable and great care was taken to remove any misconceptions or anxiety regarding the answering of questions.

The subjects were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and were requested to extend their co-operation. For making questionnaires much easier to understand and fill, the instructions were explained in detail to the subjects. Each respondent on an average took thirty to forty minutes to fill up the questionnaires.

Finally, the questionnaires were collected from all the respondent, scoring and further analysis was carried on.

Analysis of data

The data comprised of variables that were both categorical (discrete) and continuous in nature. The individual variables were coded for computer analysis and using the statistical packages for the social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations were used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive statistics characteristics of personality traits & Leadership Style Questionnaire for the overall Sample

Variables	N	Means	SD
Participative	204	36.49	5.49
Naurturant Task	204	36.87	6.88
Authoritarian	204	34.44	5.85
Nurturant	204	36.02	6.52
Task Oriented	204	37	6.41
Bureaucratic	204	34.94	5.31

Leadership styles comprised of the dimensions of Participative, Nurturant Task, Authoritarian, Nurturant, Task Oriented and Bureaucratic. The mean values range from 36.44 – 37 across these dimensions, the highest being in the dimension of Nurturant task.

Table 2 Mean comparison of gender on overall sample for Leadership Styles

Leadership Styles	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-values	Sig
Participative	Males	96	35.95	5.67	1.31	ns
	Females	108	36.97	5.3		
Nurturant Task	Males	96	36.4	7.31	0.921	ns
	Females	108	37.29	6.48		
Authoritarian	Males	96	34.85	6.35	0.949	ns
	Females	108	34.07	5.38		
Nurturant	Males	96	35.62	6.7	0.823	ns
	Females	108	36.67	6.38		
Task oriented	Males	96	36.75	6.16	0.534	ns
	Females	108	37.23	6.65		
Bureaucratic	Males	96	34.82	5.45	0.299	ns
	Females	108	35.04	5.21		

The values in Table 2 evinces no significant difference on various leadership styles between male and female civil service aspirants.

The results have highlighted Nurturant Task, Nurturant and Task oriented style of leadership which is the most favoured one among the civil service aspirants of today. And they are the ones who will hold the leadership reins of the country in the years to come. Therefore, it's imperative that with increased understanding of the importance for holding such important posts, they should inculcate the right kind of leadership styles at the right time.

Its also shown in the results that there are no gender differences among civil service aspirants as far as leadership styles are concerned. Its in the fitness of things that the results also convey the same thought that there should not be any gender difference as far as leadership styles are concerned.

Dawson (2002) in their study investigated one dimension i.e. the extent of participation a leader encourages his subordinates in decision making. They opined that if the subordinates are encouraged in decision making then the output, enthusiasm, zeal and devotion of the team members also get positively impacted.

Carter et al (2008) in their investigation also tried to study how psychosocial factors and leadership styles affect musculoskeletal pain among staff members in four different public sectors from the perspective of epidemiology. The results indicated that subordinates' variations in the appraisal of their immediate manager were present only in small numbers. But definitely there were more variations in the associations between musculoskeletal pain and leadership styles which varied according to different sectors.

Collins (1995), in his investigation, aimed at providing empirical evidence in support of the Nurturant task (NT) style of leadership which is hypothesized to be conducive to Indian organization One hundred eighty nine male executive in middle positions representing about 15 organizations in northern India participated in the study. The result disclosed that the NT – Nurturant task style was seen as quite different from other styles and had positive impact on facets of job satisfaction, commitment and overall happiness, among civil service aspirants.

To conclude

Leadership of a country plays a very significant role in its development. India, as still a developing nation has to pace up faster, stronger and consistently if it has to match up with the developments which are happening in the world today and if it wants to be an International Leader in years to come.

Although the vision seems a distant dream, yet it's not impossible. For this, the government has to begin from the beginning only. This means that leadership has to be assessed early even before they join the service. The desired leadership traits which actually make a difference to the organizations need to be inculcated in the youth during their student years itself.

This is what is being reflected in the present study as well.

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