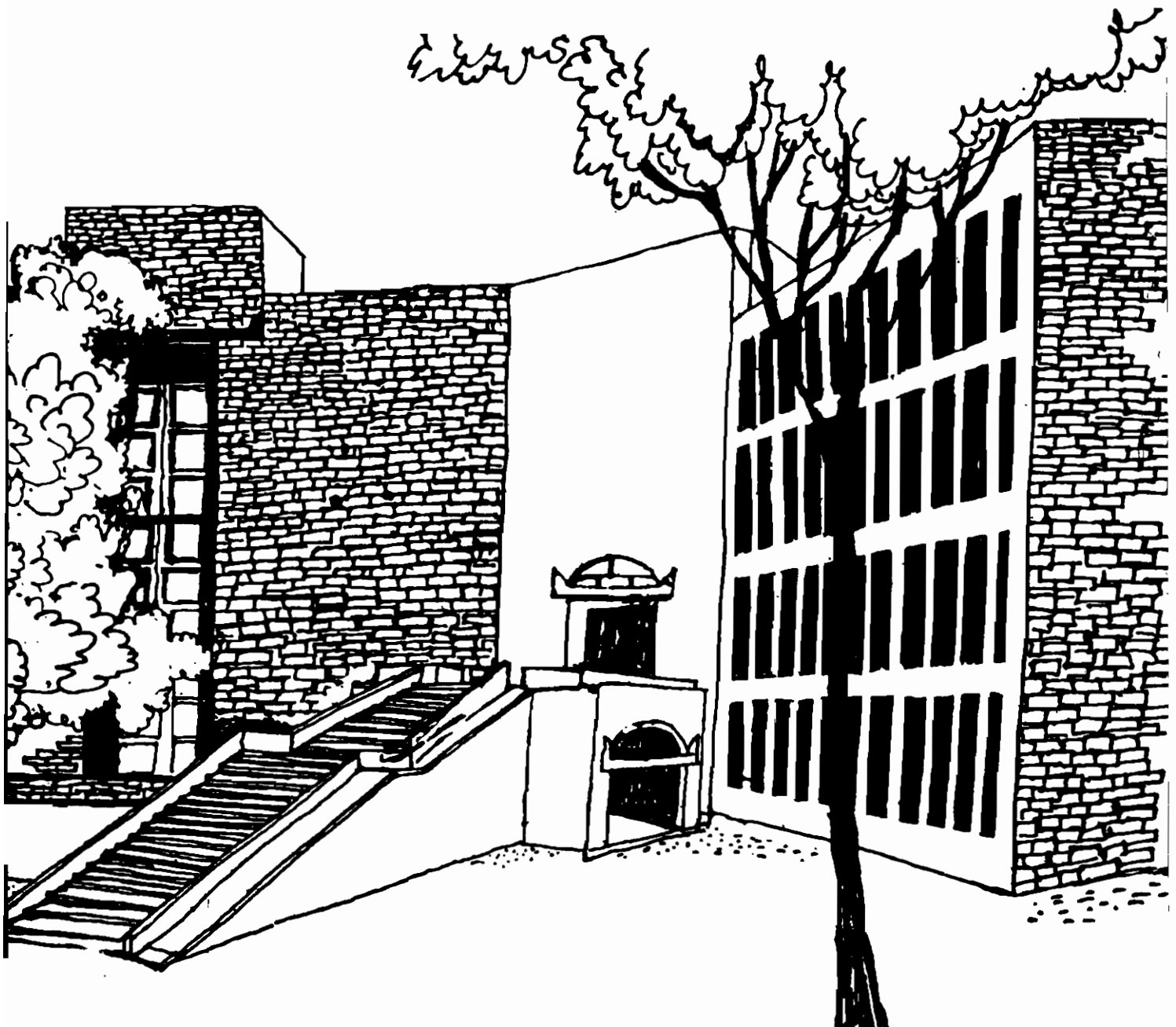




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LEADERSHIP STYLES AND INFLUENCE TACTICS

By

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Leadership Styles and Influence Tactics

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Abstract

Two hundred nine MBA (Masters in Business Administration) students of a management institute rated their leadership styles and influence tactics as a part of their classroom exercise. The findings indicated that they preferred to adopt nurturant-task (NT) and participative styles more frequently than transformational style. Authoritarian style of leadership was least likely to be adopted by them. The first three styles were positively correlated suggesting the possibility of leaders moving back and forth between the styles. Rational persuasion and empowerment were most likely to be used as influence tactics, followed by personal appeal and consultation, reward for performance, use of authority, and so on. Although leadership styles were meaningfully related to influence tactics, there were enough overlaps to suggest that leaders flexibly use styles and influence tactics.

Introduction

Overview

As a part of an international cross-cultural research team, 84 scholars from 56 countries deliberated and defined organizational leadership as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organization of which they are members” (Simonton, 1994, p. 411). “Others” include leaders, subordinates, their colleagues, as well as their superiors. Long back, it was shown that leaders’ influence over their subordinates depend partly on their influence over their superiors (Pelz, 1952). Now that most of the leaders work in cross-functional teams, it is natural to contend that their impact on the subordinates will vary as a function of the extent to which they can get things done in the teams. However, the primary responsibility of the leaders in an organization is to influence, motivate, and enable their subordinates to realize the goals of the organizations.

Leaders discharge this responsibility by (a) taking into consideration the needs, expectations, skills, and experience of their subordinates, (b) selecting styles which meet subordinates’ needs, expectations, skills, and experience, and (c) evoking appropriate influence tactics to mobilize them to perform their tasks. Above all, leaders, by drawing on the mission and vision of the organization, shift styles to redefine and restructure systems, reinterpret subordinates needs and expectations, create new norms and standards, float myths, legends, and stories to put the leaders- subordinates relationships on a higher pedestal. In other words, effective leaders neither get fixated in one style nor do they

consider subordinates' needs, expectations, etc. fixed for all times. The leadership process changes with changes in subordinates' and organizational requirements.

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles are the consistent ways in which leaders interact with their subordinates across situations. Styles are developed partly as a function of leaders' personality and past experiences and partly as a function of their response to organizational culture. Leaders create organizational culture and are simultaneously influenced by the culture to assume certain styles (Schein, 1987). A variety of leadership styles have been reported in the literature (Sinha, 1995). Of them, the most frequently referred are authoritarian, nurturant-task, participative, and transformational styles.

Authoritarian leaders are self-centered and power oriented. They are concerned about their image that they tend to maintain by keeping tight control over subordinates, mistrusting them and their skills and competencies, keeping important information to themselves, and making all decisions without consulting their subordinates. They are insensitive to their subordinates' needs and expectations, try to appease their superiors, and tend to manipulate others for their own self-interests. They may show results for a while, but are generally found to be ineffective in the long run.

The nurturant-task (NT) oriented leaders care for their subordinates, help them grow and learn, take interest in their career growth, allow them to depend on them, encourage, and inspire them. However, all these acts of nurturance are contingent on subordinates' task orientation. In order to inculcate task orientations, leaders define their subordinates' roles, guide and direct them, make them realize the importance of acquiring new skills, pinpoint responsibilities, and provide a role model by themselves working hard

and sincerely. NT leaders are found to be effective for those subordinates who prefer to have personalized and dependency relationships with their leaders, accept leaders' superiority, and are willing to obey them.

Participative leaders consult their subordinates, encourage them to express their views frankly and take decisions jointly, mix freely with their subordinates, treat them as their friends, prefer to work in teams, and promote mutual trust and supportive relationships. They consider their subordinates as equal and trust their competence. The evidence suggests that such leaders are effective for those subordinates who have skills and experience to work on their own, emotional maturity to assume responsibility for the task, and a sense of respect for the other members of the group.

Transformational leaders are oriented to change the way their group works. They are looking for better ways of performing tasks. In order to do so, they are willing to take personal risk, make sacrifices, and arouse their subordinates emotionally to give the best to the organization. They are impressive speakers who can make subordinates to rise their personal interests and contribute to the organization. Such leaders in top positions are often associated with the growth and effectiveness of the organization (Singh & Bhandarker, 1990).

Role of Culture on Leadership Styles

The culture of a society plays a crucial role in inculcating preference for certain styles of leadership. The basic ingredients of leadership consist of how people relate with their juniors and younger persons, how do they react to the persons in authority, and so on. Learning these patterns of transactions regarding superiors-subordinates, seniors-juniors, and older-younger persons during early socialization in the family and the school lead to

develop certain preferred modes which are strengthened, modified, or changed later on through adult life experiences including those at the work place. The traditional culture, because of its strong status and control orientation, is reported to lead to, in some cases, a preference for autocratic superiors (Ganguli, 1964) and even authoritarian leaders (Kalra, 1988). Indian culture is also found to foster nurturance-dependency mode of relationships with the ethos of sneh (affection) for subordinates who are expected to have shradha (deference) for the superior (Kakar, 1971; Sinha, 1980). The nurturant father-image of the superiors (i.e., karta role), combined with their relationship orientation and cultural concerns for power, are likely to result into a preference for transformational leaders (Singh & Bhandarker, 1990). Western influences, particularly in management institutions and at the work place, seem to lead Indians to acquire preferences for achievement, advancement, ability utilization, personal development, and so on (Kumar, 1996; Sinha, 1990). All these are likely to result into a preference for participative leadership.

One of the purposes of this study was to examine how these counteracting forces shape one's preferred styles of leadership. Persons in leadership positions are often constrained by organizational imperatives to behave in certain ways. Hence, their preferences play a limited role in the manifestation of their styles. On the other hand, MBA students have either direct or vicarious work experience providing exposure to leadership processes. Yet, they are relatively much less constrained by organizational imperatives as they are either out of their organizations temporarily or have yet to join one.

Influence Tactics

As leadership is conceptualized as an influence process, it is logical to postulate that the styles are related to influence tactics which mean the consistent ways of

influencing, motivating, and enabling one's subordinates. A variety of influence tactics are reported in the literature (Ansari, 1990; Sinha, 1995; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Ansari reported that the relationships between leadership styles and the influence tactics were moderated by favourable and unfavourable organizational climates. The present study attempted to reduce the impact of organizational climate by sampling MBA students either having no or randomized organizational experience. Yukl and Van Fleet reviewed the literature to identify 10 influence tactics which were the following: Use of authority, rational persuasion, empowerment, consultation, reward, pressure, ingratiation, personal appeal, coalition formation, and upward appeal. The present study aims to explore the patterns of relationships between styles of leadership and influence tactics.

In sum, there were three purposes of the study. They were the following:

1. To assess the relative preferences for the styles of leadership and influence tactics.
2. To understand the patterns of relationships among the styles of leadership.
3. To relate leadership styles with influence tactics.

Method

Sample

First year MBA students (N = 209) doing a two year post-graduate management programme at a management institute participated in the study as a part of their classroom exercise. They completed the Leadership Styles Scale and rated the Influence Tactics. They were asked not to disclose their names or any other identification.

Leadership Styles Scale (LSS)

The LSS consisted of 40 items, 10 measuring each of four dimensions of leadership styles. The items operationalized the styles as described earlier. The styles with one item each follow:

1. Authoritarian: I would decide what my subordinates must do.
2. Nurturant-Task: I would go out of my way to help those subordinates who will maintain high standards of performance.
3. Participative: I would encourage my subordinates to freely share their views with me.
4. Transformational: I would adopt unconventional methods in order to realize organizational goals.

Influence Tactics

Each of the 10 tactics was measured by a single item. The tactics and the items are given below:

1. Use of Authority: I would use my authority to get work done.
2. Rational Persuasion: I would persuade my subordinates to do their job diligently.
3. Empowerment: I would empower my subordinates to do an excellent job.
4. Consultation: I would regularly seek suggestions from my subordinates.
5. Reward: I would promise to reward my subordinates if they will exceed the target.
6. Pressure: I would put pressure on my subordinates to do what is required to be done.

7. Ingratiation: I would use nice words to please my subordinates so that they will do what I want them to do.
8. Personal Appeal: I would personally appeal to my subordinates to do their best.
9. Coalition Formation: I would seek the help from my loyal subordinates to persuade the rest of them to do what I shall want them to do.
10. Upward Appeal: I would approach my superior to support me in handling difficult subordinates.

Forty items of the Leadership Styles Scale and 10 items of the Influence Tactics were presented to the students in a randomized form. The students were asked to assume the role of a leader and judge the extent to which they agree to the statements by selecting one of the numbers from a 5-point scale having the anchor points of Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Usually (4), and Always (5). They took about 30 minutes to respond to the items. Thereafter, their responses were discussed with them. The feedback from the discussion seemed to indicate that the responses represented their preferred styles and influence tactics.

Results

The mean scores indicating the likelihood of using the leadership styles, the significance of the mean differences, and the coefficients of correlation are given in Table 1. Table 1 shows that authoritarian style of leadership was least likely to be used by the MBA students. Nurturant-task (NT) style was most likely to be employed, followed closely by participative style. The mean score of authoritarian style was significantly lower than other styles ($p < .001$). NT and participative styles did not differ significantly

($p > .05$). Transformational style was significantly less likely to be adopted by the MBA students than either nurturant-task or participative styles ($p < .001$).

Table 1 About Here

The pattern of relationships among the styles was meaningful. Authoritarian style was unrelated to NT and transformational styles, and inversely related to participative style ($p < .001$). NT, participative, and transformational styles were positively interrelated. However, it was NT style, which was very highly correlated with the remaining two ($p < .001$).

Table 2 presents the mean scores of the influence tactics and their correlation with the leadership styles. The mean scores indicated that rational persuasion and empowerment were likely to be employed more often than any other tactics. Next in order were personal appeal and consultation. Ingratiation and use of authority were next in the frequency of being used. Ingratiation and upward appeal were least likely to be used.

Table 2 About Here

The coefficients of correlation suggested an interesting pattern. Each of the leadership styles was significantly associated with a number of influence tactics and each of the tactics was also significantly associated with a number of leadership styles. That is, leaders reported to be flexible in the use of influence tactics. Furthermore, there were two tactics, empowerment and consultation, which were likely to be adopted by NT, participative, as well as transformational leaders. Authoritarian leaders were averse to them; particularly they were opposed to consultation. Transformational and NT leaders were also likely to use rational persuasion, reward for performance, and personal appeal.

However, personal appeal was the most likely tactics of influence by transformational leaders. Surprisingly, there was a mild chance that they would use pressure also. NT leaders also opted for coalition formation and an occasional use of ingratiation (coefficient was significant at $p < .05$). Authoritarian leaders presented a different picture. They were most likely to use their authority, form cliques of loyal subordinates to press others to perform, ingratiate, and reward performance. Surprisingly, participative leaders chose a narrow range of influence tactics. They tended to consult their subordinates and empower them to perform well.

Discussion

The MBA students seem to have integrated both the Indian cultural and Western influences in their choice of leadership styles. In fact, the cultural impact seems to be a shade deeper, although statistically insignificant in the evidence that NT style was endorsed slightly more strongly than participative style. Transformational leadership style came out as the third in their preference. It may be due to the fact that they probably visualized themselves to occupy lower rungs of organizations during the initial years. Hence, their preferred styles had a low priority of transformational behaviour. And yet, the finding that the three styles were highly correlated suggest that the students had in their repertoire a capability to move from one to another style, particularly between NT and participative style as they were rather equal in their preference. The findings, thus, supports Sinha (1995) that effective leaders move back and forth between NT and participative styles depending on the preparedness of the subordinates to assume responsibility for the task.

Flexibility of persons in leadership position to shift the styles match well in their flexibility to choose influence tactics. A person having one preferred style of leadership

is likely to choose a range of influence tactics. Similarly, leaders having different styles may choose the same influence tactics. This supports the conceptualization that effective leaders flexibly match, balance, and prioritize their styles, their subordinates' needs and expectations, and systematic demands of their organization (Sinha, 2000). Of course, there are influence tactics that are preferred over others by the leaders having different styles. The tactics aimed to control seemed to be of lower order than the ones that motivate and empower. For example, rational persuasion and empowerment are preferred over consultation and personal appeal that are preferred over the use of authority and pressure. Forming cliques of loyal subordinates to pressurize others and ingratiation are the least preferred influence tactics. Those who adopted authoritarian style reported to opt these two. Surprisingly, NT leaders were also susceptible to clique formation as well as ingratiation. They seem to opt for not only empowerment and consultation, but also reward for performance, rational persuasion, and personal appeal, apart from coalition formation and ingratiation. In fact, it was transformational leadership, which was most strongly associated with personal appeal.

In sum, MBA students' preferences for leadership styles and influence tactics seem to suggest the instrumentality of a flexible approach employing a number of styles and influence tactics.

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Table 1. Coefficients of Correlation among Leadership Styles, their Mean Scores, Standard Deviations (SDs), and Tests of Significance

<u>Styles of Leadership</u>	Authoritarian	Nurturant-Task Oriented	Participative	Transformational
	<u>Coefficients of Correlation</u>			
Authoritarian	-	.04	-.21***	.00
Nurturant-Task		-	.28***	.46***
Participative			-	.18**
Transformational				-
<u>X Score</u>	2.76	3.89	3.84	3.65
<u>SD</u>	.52	.40	.45	.46
	<u>Paired T-tests</u>			
Authoritarian	-	25.21***	20.67***	18.43***
Nurturant-Task		-	1.25	7.54***
Participative			-	4.75***
Transformational				-

Note. *** $p < .0001$; ** $p < .01$; $N = 209$.

Table 2. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations (SDs) of Tactics of Influence and their Coefficients of Correlation with Leadership Styles

	Styles of Leadership				X (SD)
	A	NT	P	T	
Use of Authority	.32***	.04	-.11	.09	3.60 (.88)
Rational Persuasion	.11	.22***	.10	.31***	4.21 (.77)
Empowerment	-.16*	.30***	.31***	.31***	4.21 (.70)
Consultation	-.23***	.25***	.36***	.29***	3.84 (.71)
Reward	.26***	.33***	.05	.35***	3.63 (.89)
Pressure	.28***	.11	-.04	.19**	3.24 (.83)
Ingratiation	.29***	.14*	-.03	.04	2.75 (.90)
Personal Appeal	.14*	.28***	.03	.47***	3.85 (.85)
Coalition Formation	.33***	.21***	.01	.02	3.23 (.97)
Upward Appeal	.00	.09	.10	.00	2.93 (.92)

Note. *** p <.0001; ** p <.01; * p <.05. A = Authoritarian; P = Participative; NT = Nurturant-Task Oriented; T = Transformational.

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