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PERSONALITY PREDISPOSITION
AND SATISFACTION WITH
SUPERVISORY STYLE

by

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To

Chairman (Research)
IIMA

Technical Report

Personality

Title of the report ... ~~Personal~~ predisposition and satisfaction with
supervisory style.

Name of the Author Prof Mirza S. Saiyadain

Under which area do you like to be classified? ... O.B.

ABSTRACT (within 250 words)

76 employees reporting to only one organizationally defined supervisor
answered on items purported to measure their level of interpersonal
competence, perception of supervisory style, and finally their
satisfaction with supervisory practices. It was found that in general,
high as compared to low interpersonal competence and democratic as
against authoritarian supervisory style generated greater satisfaction
with supervisory practices. A partial interaction effect was also
significant. Under authoritarian style high on interpersonal compe-
tence were found to be more satisfied with their supervisors than
low on interpersonal competence.

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None

Date *Nov. 29, 1973*

Signature of the Author

M. S. Saiyadain

PERSONALITY PREDISPOSITION AND SATISFACTION WITH SUPERVISORY STYLE

Since its publication in 1939, now almost a classic study by Lewin, Lippitt, and White has generated a great deal of research in the area of supervisory behaviour. Their study was concerned with the social climate created by the introduction of one of the three styles of leadership, democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire. They found that authoritarian leadership generated dissatisfaction and high quantity but low quality work. Under Laissez-faire leadership there was considerable dissatisfaction and intermediate productivity. Democratic leadership produced low dependency on the leader, high degree of satisfaction and intermediate quantity but of high quality work.

Later investigations, have, in the main, confirmed the findings. These studies include experimental studies comparing participatory and supervisory leaders (Selvin, 1960) as well as studies in such settings as class rooms (Adams, 1945) and a variety of work situations (Katz & Kahn, 1952). Most of the more recent and better known behavioural and empirical studies have also supported the findings (e.g., Fleishman, 1953; Katz, McCoby, & Morse, 1950; Likert, 1959).

As far as the nature and effects of participative style are concerned what has emerged from all these studies is a supervisory attitude marked with easy, open, understanding style; supervisory behaviour which is flexible, responsive and considerate of the needs and opinions of subordinates. Consideration of subordinates has been found to be correlated with high level of satisfaction which, in turn, is reflected in relatively low turnover, grievances, and absenteeism. To some extent, converse may apply to authoritative style of supervision.

In all such studies the behaviour of the supervisor has been assumed to determine the subsequent satisfaction

of the subordinates. Though the assumption is viable there is some evidence, meagre though it may be, to suggest that the satisfaction of the subordinate and the supervisory style is a not a matter of one to one relationship (Haythorn 1958). In other words, satisfaction based on the supervisory practices is not randomly accepted by subordinates but is rather mediated through their personality predispositions. Lawler and Hall (1970) have suggested that people differ as a function of their background. The degree to which they get involved in their jobs is a function of this difference, other things remaining constant. In a recent study Runyon (1973) has found that employees who were characterized by internal locus of control preferred participative management while those who had external locus of control experienced greater satisfaction with directive supervisor. In other words, it is suggested that a given supervisory style may induce satisfaction among some but not all subordinates. Hence the burden of this paper lies on the personality dynamics of the subordinates.

Although one can manipulate any of the several personality predispositions, we have concerned ourselves with interpersonal competence of the subordinates. Interpersonal competence is represented by one's feelings, attitudes and overall willingness to relate to others and has been found to suggest a positive correlation with satisfaction with the participative supervisory style (Argyris, 1964; Kuriloff, 1963). We have chosen satisfaction with supervisor rather than with work because: (a) the index of satisfaction with supervisor represents concern for establishing interpersonal relationship with him and (b) the acceptance of supervisory relationships are necessary for adjustment of subordinates to their work roles. The general hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- (1) The supervisory practices that are characterized by participative style are more satisfying to employees than those characterized by directive style
- (2) High interpersonal competence leads to greater satisfaction with supervisor than low competence.

- (3) Employees high and low on interpersonal competence will experience varying degrees of satisfaction with supervisory styles characterised by democratic-authoritarian dimensions.

METHOD

1. Sample

The sample consisted of 76 class III employees randomly selected from a teaching and research organization in the city of Ahmedabad. An essential consideration in selecting the sample was that respondents reported to organizationally defined supervisors. No person in the sample had more than one supervisor to whom he reported. The age range of the sample was 21 to 53 years with an average age of 28.8 years. There were 83% male and 17% female; 58% married, rest bachelors; 60% run their own houses and in 40% of the cases the heads of the family were others than self. The sample had an average of 4.4 siblings.

2. Test Instruments

The sample was tested in small groups ranging in size from 5 to 15. It took them approximately 45 minutes to fill the self administered questionnaires. Three different questionnaires were used. They covered the following areas:

Supervisory Style: The questionnaire consisted of items selected for the revised form of the Supervisory Behaviour Description (Fleishman, 1953). The items were rated on a five point scale of "always" to "never" with anchor points changing weightage according to the wordings of the items. The split-half reliability coefficient was found to be .78 with the estimated correlation of uncurtailed sample as .86 ($p < .01$).

Interpersonal competence: This measure was inversely indexed in terms of five personality factors: feeling of inadequacy, social inhibition, hyperaggressiveness, argumentativeness, and suspiciousness (Jainis & Field, 1959). Items were all structured allowing respondents to check one answer for each item. The items have five alternative answers ranging on a scale of "very often" to "practically never" or "very" to "not at all." Split-half reliability estimates of these five factors are shown in Table 1.

(Table 1 here)

For factors with items less than 10, all possible ways for splitting the halves were used, total possible correlations were obtained, transformed into Frisher's Z's and then averaged to obtain a single estimate of the split-half reliability. All the reliability estimates were found to be significant beyond .01 level of significance.

Table 2 presents correlation matrix of the 5 factors.

(Table 2 here)

All factors, except social inhibition, correlate with each other beyond conventional levels of significance. For purposes of analysis we have dropped social inhibition. The other four have been added to get an index of interpersonal competence.

Satisfaction with Supervisor: Satisfaction with supervisor was used as a dependent variable. Response were measured by an independent scale designed to judge the level of satisfaction with supervisor. There could, of course, be several ways of measuring satisfaction with the supervisor. In this study, however, response to the following six items was taken as an index of satisfaction.

- (a) How satisfied are you with your supervisor in the job?

- (b) How satisfied are you with his decisions in technical matters pertaining to your work?
- (c) How satisfied are you with his decisions concerning yourself as an employee?
- (d) How helpful is he on technical matters on your work?
- (e) How helpful is he about matters concerning your own growth and development?
- (f) If you had a choice would you choose him as your supervisor? (never - always).

These items have been rated on a six-point scale of low to high unless otherwise specified. There were originally seven items. One item that showed no relationship with others was dropped. The inter-item association of the six items is given in Table 3.

(Table 3 here)

It should be noted that the number of items in Table 3 follow the same sequence as that of items listed above. In all their possible combinations and permutations these items are significantly related to each other at acceptable levels of significance. The association between items (b) and (c) is positive but the value fails to reach level of significance. That the items are internally consistent is sufficient evidence to assume that they all come from the same universe and, therefore, their cumulative score has been taken as an index of the level of satisfaction with the supervisor.

3. Procedures

Employees first filled out the interpersonal competence scale and depending upon their score were assigned to low or high group (median was used as a cut-off point). These then filled out questionnaires dealing with the supervisory style and satisfaction with supervisor. They were assigned to subsequent subcategories depending on their evaluation of

the style of their supervisors. Once again the criterion used was scores falling above and below the median. This led to fourfold classification of the sample. Seven (8.43%) employees were eliminated to have equal number in each cell.

RESULTS

Table 4 presents the means and standard deviation estimates of the four groups.

(Table 4 here)

In order to test the main and interaction effects a 2×2 analysis of variance was calculated and is reported in Table 5.

(Table 5 here)

The results confirm the first two hypotheses. They suggest that democratic supervisory style induces greater satisfaction among subordinates compared to authoritarian supervisory style ($F = 106.95$, $df = 1/72$, $p < .01$). Further subordinates characterized by high interpersonal competence were more satisfied with their supervisors than those of low interpersonal competence ($F = 4.93$, $df = 1/72$, $p < .05$).

As far as the third hypothesis that there will be an interaction between supervisory style and employee's interpersonal competence is concerned, it was not supported. The supervisory style by interpersonal competence interaction is not significant ($F = 3.47$, $df = 1/72$). Individual comparisons using Neuman-Keuls test revealed that the high competence employees ($\bar{X} = 23.21$) as compared to low competence employees ($\bar{X} = 19.00$) were more satisfied with supervisors characterized by authoritarian style ($Q = 4.78$, $df = 1/72$, $p < .05$). No significant difference in the satisfaction of high and low competence employees under democratic style emerged ($Q = .048$, $df = 1/72$).

DISCUSSION

The results further support the existing literature on the supervisory style and satisfaction of the employees. A style characterized by flexible, responsive and considerate of the needs of subordinates induces greater satisfaction compared to the one which is production oriented, rigid, and inconsiderate of the feelings of employees.

We selected four personality factors to test their cumulative effect on the satisfaction with supervisor. We found, as predicted, an inverse relationship. That is, an employee predisposed to be argumentative, hyperaggressive, suspicious, and socially inadequate experienced difficulty in establishing meaningful relationship with the supervisor. The presence of any one of these (any one, because they are internally consistent) probably blocks the capacity to reason and to see pros and cons of the situation. As a result one tends to become rigid in one's interaction and outlook. Suggestions and comments from the supervisor may be seen as threats ~~un~~abling him to see the advantages of such suggestions. Although we cannot lay down from this data that the absence of these personality factors would help create better understanding and meaningful relationship, we can venture to speculate that their presence in greater degree blocks satisfactory relationship with supervisor.

The most exciting finding has to do with the partial interaction effect between supervisory style and competence. The results show that though it does not matter whether one is low or high in competence as long as the supervisory style remains democratic, it does make a difference under authoritarian supervision. Employees high in interpersonal competence feel more satisfied with their autocratic supervisors than those low in interpersonal competence ($p < .05$). Even though autocratic supervisory style is less rewarding than democratic it still can be more satisfying to those who are predisposed to establish meaningful relationships. This suggests that satisfaction based on supervisory style is not randomly accepted by employees but is mediated through their personality predispositions. The evidence warrants the speculation that personality variables of subordinates

as against supervisory style probably are, if not more may be equally, crucial for the overall effectiveness of the organizations. For example, a recent study by Runyon (1973) has demonstrated the importance of I-E personality dimension in determining the differential responsiveness to varying managerial styles.

The area of potential contribution of personality predispositions in organizations is relatively unexplored, in fact neglected, though it has wide and varied implications. An understanding of the relationship between the personality of the subordinate and the supervisory style will be a positive input in organizational functioning both in terms of making effective work teams and increasing morale and satisfaction among employees. In this respect, it has meanings for such personnel function as selection, placement and training. For example, training of the supervisor, a going concern, is an expensive affair. On the other hand, not much is known about the effectiveness of such training programmes. It is not the purpose to suggest that such programmes should be discontinued, rather efforts should be made to include personality measures in the selection process itself. In terms of economy of scale the return will pay many times over the cost of using personality measures in the selection process.

Table 1: Split-half Reliability Estimates
(Personality Factors)

Factors	No. of items	Split-half Reliability Estimates	Reliability Estimates base on Spearman-Brown Formula
Feeling of Inadequacy	23	.769	.816
Social Inhibition	11	.761	.277
Hyperaggressiveness	10	.644	.783
Argumentativeness	6	.597	.748
Suspiciousness	4	.548	.708

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Personality Factors

Factors	Social Inadequacy (A)	Social Inhibition (B)	Hyper-aggressiveness (C)	Argumentativeness (D)	Suspiciousness (E)
A	-	.221*	.306**	.337**	.341**
B		-	.068	.144	.015
C			-	.372**	.336**
D				-	.218*
E					-

* P < .05

** P < .01

Table 3: Inter-item Association
(Satisfaction Data)

	a	b	c	d	e	f
a	-	.587*	.615**	.452**	.662**	.566**
b		-	.535**	.588**	.512**	.414**
c			-	.137	.665**	.361**
d				-	.622**	.298*
e					-	.420**
f						-

* P < .05

** P < .01

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviation
Estimates
(Satisfaction Data)

		Supervisory Style		
		Democratic	Autocratic	
Interpersonal Competence	High	\bar{X}	31.95	23.21
		S.D.	1.82	5.35
	Low	\bar{X}	31.58	19.00
		S.D.	1.87	3.43

Table 5: Analysis of Variance
(Satisfaction Data)

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Supervisory Style	2158.31	1	2158.31	106.95**
Competence	99.59	1	99.59	4.93*
Interaction	70.01	1	70.01	3.47
Error	1452.74	72	20.18	
Total	3780.65			

** P < .01

* P < .05

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