

BEHAVIOURAL STYLES OF LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVENESS IN GROUP SITUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of some of the environmental aspects of the group (i.e., size, structure, composition, and conflict) on some of the leadership styles that would be effective in a given situation, a given group environment or a given group setting in which a leader is required to function on specific terms (i.e. directive vs. nondirective; delegative vs. non-delegative; employee oriented vs. task oriented styles). It delves on various theories that discuss the group variables such as size, structure, cohesiveness, composition and conflict and their impact on the behavioural styles of leadership, viewed from three different styles of Leadership.

It also discusses the relationship between the environmental variables of the group (i.e., size, structure, cohesiveness, composition, conflict) and the behavioural styles of leadership (i.e., the directive vs. nondirective styles; punitive vs. non punitive styles and employee-oriented vs. task-oriented styles) in the Indian context.

KEYWORDS: *Leadership, Behavioural styles, Effectiveness, Employee, Environment*

INTRODUCTION

The history of leadership research during the twentieth century has undergone a great variety of fitful experiences. Like any other field of research and perhaps more than any other field of research, leadership research has shifted a lot in relation to its focus, methodology and the level of abstraction. The initial stages of the study during the century started with a primary focus on the personal characteristics of the "social climate" created by certain styles of leadership, specifically "the authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire styles of leadership" (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939) and in 1940's the level of abstraction in leadership studies increased by adoption of a new technique or methodology called "Sociometric Analysis".

APPROACHES

The situational approach (Goldner, 1950) and the contingency approach (Feidler, 1964, 65, 67) opened up a new dimension in leadership research during 1950's and 60's. Some of the different aspects that attracted the researchers during this period are the leadership process i.e., power and authority relationship (Emerson, 1965; Janda, 1960; Blau, 1964 and Raven, 1965) and the inter-relationship between the contextual factors of leadership i.e., the inter-relationship between the leader and the situation (Hollander, 1964; Steiner, 1964; Jollander and Jullian, 1968).

Since then studies on situational approach and leadership effectiveness have been continuing to acquire greater significance and in fact have achieved a shining spot in the field of leadership research. It can be recalled that the early

studies on trait approach have already proved that the relationship between trait and leadership are very weak. Murphy argued that leadership traits are fluid in that the individual characteristics may change with a situation. For instance, a person who is usually dominant may become reserved if placed in an unfamiliar or new situation. "A trait that is positively related to leadership in one situation may be unrelated or even negatively related in another" (Kreitner & Kinicki 1992: 522).

This fact has led many researchers to conclude that leadership traits and indeed leadership behaviours are relative to the situation. The fact that situational factors influence both the emergence of leadership and their behaviour in groups has been variedly evidenced by many researchers in the past. Morris and Hackman (1969) have observed in their study that persons, who are perceived to be leaders of a group participate more than non-leaders. Michener and Tausig (1971) have found that a formal leader who usurped control was endorsed for leadership by group members to a lesser extent than a formal leader who did not usurp control. Murtensen's study (1966) indicated that emergent leaders who are given recognition and support show more attempted leadership than who are not reinforced by group members.

These are some of the findings which clearly assert that situational factors affect the perception of leadership and the behaviour of the leaders in group interaction. Some of the effects of situational factors are also revealed by the investigation of leadership styles. The kind of leadership behaviour that is most effective depends on the situation in which the leader finds himself, Fiedler's (1964) study on leadership showed that directive leadership is more effective when the task situation is either very favourable or very unfavourable to the leader, whereas non-directive style is more effective when the situation is moderately favourable. The most favourable situation according to him is one in which leader member relations are good, task is highly structured and the leader's positional power is strong. Shaw and Blum (1966) supported the findings of Fiedler by saying that directive leader is more effective than non-directive leader only when the group task is favourable to the leader and not otherwise. Preston and Heintz (1949) in their study proved that participatory leadership is more effective in changing attitude than in supervisory leadership. In 1955, M.E. Shaw showed that authoritative groups make fewer errors, require fewer messages for problem solution and require less time than do the non-authoritative groups.

Morse and Reimer (1956) in their study have shown that satisfaction increases in autonomy groups but decreases in hierarchically controlled groups. Productivity increases in both groups but this increase is more prominent in hierarchically controlled group than in autonomy group. M.E. Shaw in his work (1955) has also proved that both the most and least effective groups have democratic leaders. However, there is a little variance among autocratic groups. The most recent development in the field of situational approach is the "one-minute manager" approach which explains how different strokes can be given to different employees in the same organisation to achieve organizational effectiveness. It also traces the importance of situation exactly in the same manner as the previous approaches used to do.

Thus, it can be clearly stated that there are no absolute leaders and the successful leaders must always take into account the specific requirements imposed by the nature and behaviour of the group which has to be led. It is worth to note that the nature and requirements of the groups are diverse and do vary to a great extent depending on the environmental setting, task structure, personal characteristics of the members, their relationship with the leader and the social climate within which the groups function.

Most of the studies cited in this article deal with either the characteristics of the members, their relationship with the leader or the nature of the task in assessing the effectiveness of the leaders. The structural characteristics of the groups (otherwise called the personal and social environment of the group) are rarely taken as the determinants of leadership style in measuring the effectiveness of the leaders. It can also be observed that these structural characteristics of the group do play a catalytic role in determining the interaction process as well as the performance in groups and organizations. Research findings in this aspect show that the level of participation, emergence of leadership, conformity behaviour, and performance are highly related to the size of the group and the chronological age of the members (Indik, 1945; Bass and Norton, 1951; Cleland, 1955, Slater, 1958, Rosenberg 1961, Gerald et al. 1962, Frank and Anderson, 1971, Costanzo and Shaw, 1966).

The impact of group composition (i.e. sex homogeneity, age homogeneity, racial homogeneity) and cohesiveness on various group processes such as the satisfaction, performance, communication and interpersonal tension, has been adequately evidenced by researchers in the past (Torman and Miles, 1963 Uesugi and Vinake, 1963, McGuire, 1973; Raitan and Shaw, 1964; Ruhe, 1952; Dobbin and Jaccaro, 1986).

FACTORS AFFECTING LEADERSHIP DIMENSION

The dependence of managerial roles (interpersonal and liaison) and need satisfaction on the group structure (Bureaucratic, non-bureaucratic) has also been pointed by Rostogi and Pandey in 1987 and Hanry and Mintz in 1979. Thus it can be reiterated beyond any doubt that these few aspects of the group (also called the personal and social structural environment of the group) do influence and more than that determine in many ways the complexities of the interaction pattern, socio-psychological disposition and performance of the members of the group. But how far these aspects do influence the style of leadership and contribute to the effectiveness of the leadership style is rarely evidenced. All the variants of leadership dimension have been drawn upon the theoretical concepts of leadership developed by some of the pioneers in the field of leadership research e.g. Kurt Lewin, Katz and Kahn, Stogdil and Coon. These dimensions are classified into three orthogonal factors such as the behavioural tendencies, closeness of supervision and employee orientation.

Behavioural Tendencies (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939; Lewin and Lippitt, 1943)

Lewin presumed that the behavioural tendencies reflect the individual characteristics of a person which may be manifested in the form of an autocratic or democratic or laissez faire style in a leader. According to him, autocratic style is identified with leaders who gave orders, demanded obedience, made all decisions without regard to the opinion of others. Democratic style is associated with leaders who are considerate, request co-operation of others, ask their opinion before making decisions and laissez faire style is associated with leaders who are non-participating in group activities i.e., groups are given complete freedom and information are supplied when asked for. These three styles can be suitably fitted into the directive (Autocratic) and non-directive (democratic and Laissez faire) models of Fiedler and the supervisory role differentiation criteria of Katz and Kahn.

Closeness of Supervision (Katz and Kahn, 1951)

Closeness of supervision is the second dimension of leadership in Katz and Kahn scheme of leadership concepts. According to them, behaviour that delegates authority checks on sub-ordinate less frequently, provides more general and less frequent instructions about the work; and makes greater allowance for individuals to perform in their own way and at

their own pace. The two extremes of this dimension would be highly delegative style and non-style and non-delegative style. According to Tannenbaum and Schmidt' the two extremes of this dimension are close supervision (non-delegative) and general supervision (highly delegative and supportive style). This is also similar to "modified employees goal" concept of Kahn (1958)

Employee Orientation (Katz and Kahn, 1951)

This is the third dimension of leadership in Katz and Kahn's framework of leadership styles. It includes behaviours that give major emphasis to a supportive personal relationship and reflects a personal interest in subordinates, being more undertaking, less punitive and helping employees for advancement. This suitably fits into Henry and Andrew's scheme of motivational styles the two extremes of which are positive and negative styles of leadership. According to this scheme, if a leader emphasizes rewards-economic or otherwise for the followers, he uses a positive style of leadership. If he emphasizes on penalties, the leader is applying negative leadership style. The stronger the penalty is the more negative the style is. The name is applicable to reward also. This classification also fits into the directive vs. non-directive styles of Lewin's model and orientational style of Stogdil and Coon's model (1957) and punitive vs. non-punitive styles of Argyle, Gardner and Cioffi's model (1957).

CONCLUSION

Thus an effective leader would always attempt to assess the various social, personal and structural environments of the group that determine its structure in many ways, of course, within the constraints of time, objectivity and various external and instantaneous factors and try to adopt a behavioural style involving certain behavioural tendencies (i.e. Autocratic or democratic), levels of supervision (i.e. close and non delegative vs. general and delegative) and incentives for motivation (i.e. punitive and negative vs. non-punitive and positive) to achieve greater success. At some levels, training and development programmes may be initiated to improve and inculcate certain skills and behavioural styles that we presumed to be most effective under the existing personal, social and structural environment of the group.

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