



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## A STUDY ON INTERRELATIONSHIP OF LEADERSHIP STYLE OF TEAM LEADER, CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES OF TEAM MEMBERS AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

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### ABSTRACT

With organizations serving as mini worlds formed by different individuals coming and staying together and performing collectively, conflict becomes most evident. Leadership style plays an important role how these conflicts are handled especially in a team situation. Leadership style also determines the effectiveness of a team. The present study was conducted to map these interrelationships between leadership style of team leader, conflict resolution styles of team members and team effectiveness. A total of 15 teams consisting of 138 team members were taken for the study. The results reveal that Competing and Collaborating style of conflict resolution amongst the team members are significantly negatively affected due to Autocratic and Democratic Leadership Styles respectively. Avoiding conflict resolution style of team members is significantly influenced by Autocratic Leadership Styles while there is no significant effect of any Leadership styles on Compromising as well as Accommodating conflict resolution styles. Further it was observed that only Role Clarity and Shared Responsibility factors of Team Effectiveness is influenced by the Leadership styles while the remaining factors such as Participative leadership, Aligned Roles, Focus on task, Innovation, Problem Solving, Effective Communication, Responsiveness are independent of any Leadership styles present in the teams.

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### INTRODUCTION

"Successful and effective leadership means, fundamentally, influencing others by establishing a direction for collective effort and managing, shaping, and developing the collective activities in accordance with this direction." -Zaccaro, 2007

"Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional." - Max Lucade

The role of group leadership in intergroup conflict is an important element. The leader influences and directs individuals and groups, and requires many qualities and skills in order to effectively handle conflicts. A facilitative leader has the capacity to help the antagonistic groups work together towards their shared goals. There is a constant interplay between culture and leadership. The presence of personal and emotional tensions – conflicts – in the organization is unidimensional of organizational culture.

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How leaders react to problems, resolve crises, reward and punish followers is all relevant to an organization's culture. The ability to creatively manage internal conflict in the organization is becoming a standard requirement. Today, successful organizations need to develop the processes, cultures and behaviors capable of accommodating and resolving conflicts in ways that benefit the consumers and employees (Nadler & Tushman 1999). Furthermore, research has shown that it is not simply the presence of conflict that affects teams; rather, how team members approach and manage their conflicts has a major impact upon whether the conflict is constructive or destructive (Ayoko, Hartel, & Cullen, 2002; De Dreu & van de Vliert, 1997). The CEO is a central member of the top management group who has a disproportionate impact on team characteristics and outcomes (Finkelstein, 1992). Although some researchers have argued that team leaders and top management teams have little impact on organizational outcomes (Aldrich, 1979; Ashley & Van de Ven, 1983; Lieberman & O'Connor, 1972), another view from researches conducted in 90's suggests otherwise (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990; Flood et al., 1997; Hambrick & Mason,

1984; Romanelli & Tushman, 1986). According to Hambrick and Mason's (1984) "upper echelons" theory, higher level managers have an important impact on organizational outcomes because of the decisions they are empowered to make. Most researches analyzing conflict resolution have used ad hoc groups (usually students), whose teammates did not belong to the same actual work group, nor had they been in any long-term relationship with each other (Farmer & Roth, 1998; Sheppard, 1993). There upon, most studies of conflict within groups have focused on the immediate outcomes of the conflict episode, such as decision quality or commitment to the solution (e.g., Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). Conflict-management style will intermediate the relationship between the interactive effects of task interdependence within the team members and team identification as a whole on the performance of the team. There have been many studies on the effect of leadership styles on team effectiveness. Their conclusions can be drawn on the extent of literature. We would expect the authoritarian and laissez faire style of leadership to have a negative effect on team members' perceptions of team effectiveness. An authoritarian style is unlikely to be suitable to the fast-paced environment faced by the teams under consideration in this article who work in a high velocity environment. Team members are unlikely to accord better under an authoritarian leader. We can anticipate more positive effects for leaders displaying democratic (transactional or transformational) leadership styles. Also, numerous examinations were conducted on the effects of conflict resolution styles on performance of teams. Some have asserted that because high task interdependence implies the need for intensive interactions among members, it creates more opportunities for conflict (e.g., Jehn, 1995; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001; Xie, Song, & Stringfellow, 1998). When task interdependence is high, team members communicate more often, are physically nearer, support and influence each other on a regular basis. And thereupon, the effect of types of leadership on conflict resolution styles has also been studied in depth. This paper aims to identify the relationship between leadership styles of the leader, conflict resolution styles of team members and team effectiveness. Also, the effect of leadership styles of team leaders on the conflict resolution styles of team members as well as team effectiveness would be analyzed.

## Literature Review

Ayoko & Callan (2010) conducted a study on 97 teams to see the effect of transformational and emotional leadership on team's reaction to conflict and team performance. They found that emotional management by team leaders resulted in better team performance. Also higher level of inspiration and communication of vision by leaders was directly associated with lower level of bullying in organizations. Lather et al. (2009) conducted a study to check the relationship of the leadership styles with the conflict resolution modes in Delhi Jal Board (DJB). They collected responses from 70 employees working in different departments of DJB, i.e., Finance Administration and vigilance departments, and located at the head office in Delhi. The outcomes uncovered that the most predominant style of authority in DJB is Transactional Leadership and the most prevailing method of Conflict Resolution in DJB is accommodating. Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster, (2009) studied that how the input variable of task interdependence is identified with teams' conflict management style and to the teams' performance. 77 teams from high-

technology companies took part in the investigation. Results uncovered that team performance or effectiveness was largely affected by the corporate conflict resolution styles that were positively associated with the task interdependence. However, there was a negative relationship found in the competitive style of conflict resolution and the effectiveness of the team. Somech (2006) studied the impact of participative and directive leadership styles on the outcomes of teams. 136 heterogeneous teams participated in the study. The results indicated that directive leadership was helpful in promoting team effectiveness. Nurdan Özaralli (2003) investigated the role of transformational leadership on team effectiveness and empowerment of the underlying. 152 representatives from different businesses evaluated their bosses' transformational leadership practices. They additionally assessed their groups' effectiveness as far as innovativeness, correspondence and group execution. Researches propose that transformational leadership adds to the forecast of subordinates' self-reported empowerment and that the more a colleagues' experience group empowerment, the more effective the group will be.

Rahim et al. (2001) conducted study to identify the relationship of leader power, which they identified as coercive, reward, legitimate, referent and expert, conflict styles, which they identified as problem solving and bargaining, and job performance. They conducted this study in two phases. Initially, they took responses from 1116 employees on leader power and conflict resolution styles. Then they collected responses from 398 supervisors of these employees about their job performance. The results of their study revealed that there is significant positive effect of referent power on problem solving while it has a significant negative effect on bargaining. Also, problem solving style has a positive impact on job performance while bargaining style does not have any effect. Avolio & Jung (1999) researched on the impact of transactional and transformational leadership on individual and group performance. The results indicated that the transformational leader was able to influence the team members to generate more innovative ideas as compared to the transactional leader. The performance of the group was much better than the individuals working alone. Vigil-King (1999) examined how the team effectiveness is affected by the conflict resolution styles. 323 students were divided into 77 intact teams participated in this study.

The results showed a significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and team feasibility. Also, integrative conflict management strategies were found to play an important role in relationship conflict or task conflict. Finally, the compromising conflict management strategies were highly effective in team performance. Sosik (1997) studied in detail, the effects of leadership styles, both transformational and transactional, along with the anonymity levels of the leaders on the group effectiveness. 36 groups of undergraduate students were formed to conduct the experiment. Results showed that the transformational leadership was much more effective in enhancing the group effectiveness than the transactional leadership when influenced by anonymity. Pratt and Eitzen (1989) conducted a research to find out the effect of leadership styles on the organizational effectiveness. Six hundred high schools were randomly selected from a directory of public elementary and secondary school districts that were used as the units for the analysis. The result of their study revealed that for boy's teams, the coaches high in authoritarianism and rigor and having low tolerance for incompletion or disobedience are not

much effective than their more democratic peers. For girl's teams, more rigorous coaches are more effective.

### Objectives

- To understand the relationship between Leadership Styles of Team Leader and Conflict Resolution Styles of Team Members
- To understand the relationship between Leadership Style of Team Leader and factors of Team Effectiveness

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Sample:** A sample of 15 teams was taken having 138 members from various organizations in National Capital Region of India. The team member distribution is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Showing Teams and number of members in every Team**

Team	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15
Member	12	9	8	11	6	7	13	7	7	6	13	10	9	8	12

**Table 2. Showing Analysis of Variance of Conflict Resolution of Team Members and Team Effectiveness with respect to Leadership Styles**

Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Competing	37.962	2	18.981	4.086	.021
Shared Responsibility	3.451	2	1.725	4.052	.022

Note: Only Significant Results are shown

**Table 3. Showing Significant Mean Differences of Conflict Resolution of Team Members and Team Effectiveness with respect to Leadership Styles**

	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez Faire
Competing	5.05 <sub>a</sub>	6.04 <sub>ab</sub>	6.89 <sub>b</sub>
Shared Responsibility	3.67 <sub>b</sub>	4.12 <sub>a</sub>	3.57 <sub>b</sub>

Note: Means with differing subscripts within rows are significantly different at the  $p < .05$  based on Duncan Multiple Range post hoc paired comparisons.

**Table 4. Showing Effect of Leadership Style of Team Leader on Conflict Resolution of Team Members and Team Effectiveness**

	F (sig)	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
				B	Std. Error	Beta			
<b>Competing</b>									
Autocratic	10.48 (.000)	.119	.114	-.075	.033	-.269		-2.26	.027
<b>Collaborating</b>									
Democratic	22.62 (.000)	.099	.095	-.068	.024	-.341		-2.78	.007
<b>Avoiding</b>									
Autocratic	25.49 (.000)	.111	.106	.064	.031	.250		2.045	.045
<b>Role Clarity</b>									
Democratic	24.99 (.000)	.109	.104	.020	.008	.292		2.366	.021
<b>Shared Responsibility</b>									
Autocratic	32.81 (.000)	.138	.134	.035	.010	.416		3.612	.001

### Tools Used

- To measure Conflict Resolution Styles, The Thomas Killman Conflict Resolution mode Inventory was used
- To Measure Team Effectiveness, a questionnaire was constructed on five point likert scale with 50 items measuring Participative Management, Role Clarity, Aligned Roles, Focus on Task, Shared Responsibility,

Innovation, Problem Solving, Effective Communication, Responsiveness, Interpersonal Realties, and Collaborative Team Environment. The Cronbach Alpha value of the questionnaire was found to be .852.

- To assess Leadership Style, a questionnaire consisting of 18 items was developed on five point likert scale with the Cronbach alpha vale of .77. The leadership styles thus assessed buy this questionnaire are Autocratic, Democratic and Lazziez Faire

**Procedure:** The team members were asked to respond with respect to their conflict styles, leadership style of their leaders, and team effectives perceived by them. On the basis of self reportairre by team members on leadership styles, the teams were segregated for further analysis.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The teams were segregated first of all according to the Leadership Style of the Team Leader to see the significant difference in the conflict resolution and team effectiveness of teams having Autocratic, Democratic and Lazziez Faire leaders. Out of 15 Teams, 5 teams had Autocratic Leader, 7 teams had Democratic Leader and 3 teams had Lazziez Faire Leader. Analysis of Variance was applied to see the significant

differences as mentioned above. Table 2 shows the results of Analysis of Variance. The results indicate that team members differ significantly on Competing Conflict Resolution Style ( $F= 4.086, p= .021$ ) under the different type of leadership. Further the scrutiny of mean scores (Table 3) reveals that Competing style of conflict resolution is used significantly higher by the team members having Laissez Faire leader. There is no difference in the usage of this style when leader are Autocratic and Democratic. This can be attributed to the fact that under the leadership of Laissez Faire leader, the team members are left of their own to decide and work. There is no guidance from leader and therefore 'Law of Jungle' applies where the most powerful is the winner. Further the results show that there is a significant difference in the shared responsibility ( $F= 4.05, p= .022$ ) of teams having Democratic, Autocratic and Laissez Faire leadership style. Table 3 shows that the shared responsibility is significantly higher in teams having Autocratic leaders as compared to teams having Democratic and Laissez Faire leaders. This is again interesting to note that team members unite more closely thus showing collective behavior when the leader is Autocratic and pass the orders rather than seeking participation in decision making. The regression analysis was applied to see the effect of different leadership styles on conflict resolution styles of team members and team effectiveness. The results show Autocratic leadership style has a significant negative effect ( $R^2 = .119, t= -2.26, p= 0.027$ ) on Competing conflict resolution of team members (Table 4).

This means that when teams have Autocratic leaders, team members do not compete with each other rather they become a more cohesive group. Further it is interesting to note that Democratic style of leadership has significant negative effect ( $R^2 = .099, t= -2.78, p= 0.007$ ) on Collaborating style of conflict resolution. This means under the leadership of Democratic leader, team members feel the pressure in collaborating. This is probably because of the fact that Indian are generally accommodators and collaboration is not their averagely preferred style. The further scrutiny of Table 4 shows that Autocratic leadership has a significant positive effect ( $R^2 = .111, t= 2.05, p= .045$ ) on Avoiding style of conflict resolution amongst team members. This means under Autocratic leadership, team members prefer to avoid conflicts probably because of non approachable leadership. The results also depicts that Democratic style of leadership has significant positive effect on Role Clarity ( $R^2 = .109, t= 2.37, p= .021$ ). This means that team members feel more effective in presence of Democratic leader because of Role Clarity they can seek from their leader. The team members feels significantly higher Shared Responsibility ( $R^2 = .138, t= 3.612, p= .001$ ) in presence of Autocratic leaders. This may be due to the reason that it seems difficult to approach Autocratic leader and therefore, team member tries to resolve problems of each other rather taking it to the leader.

## Conclusion

The organizations continuously operate under the pressure of struggle for survival in the heat of competition. Leadership provided by managers can help in surviving the competition who have to therein drive others for achieving organizational goals and boost employee's performance. Thus Leadership stands the place of most researched topic in management literature so far yet there is much to explore more on the same. As is evident from the result of the present study Autocratic

leadership drives higher shared responsibility, less competition, and more avoidance, Democratic leadership style is able to generate more team effectiveness due to Role Clarity but has a negative effect on Collaborative conflict resolution of the team members. Further in Laissez Faire leadership, team members resorts maximum to Competing style of Conflict Resolution. The results of Democratic leadership leading to negative effect on collaboration are indicating to investigate further that- 'Is it that team members do not want to take responsibility when leader is taking it?', 'Do democratic style of leadership makes team members over comfortable and they loose self drive?', As a nation the most preferred style of Indians is Accommodating, so they may generally feel uncomfortable in Collaborating. Thus it is the responsibility of the leader to identify the different styles of conflict resolution of it members so as to effectively manage the team with the best leadership style.

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