

## Leadership and its styles preferred in multiple industries concerning Covid-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT:

**Background:** Leadership is a process in which an individual encourages or prompts a certain group of people to work towards achieving a common goal in an organization. Leaders are accountable for influencing the values, behavior and work ethics of their team members to achieve their goals and visions. This study explores the basics of leadership; characteristics; its importance and the leadership style that was followed in multiple companies belonging to various industries during the Covid-19 Pandemic. A multi-factor leadership questionnaire was used to conduct a survey, based on which an assessment has been detailed out in the following research paper. Firstly, this study would aim to identify what exactly 'leadership' is to the employees who are there in the companies at the managerial or supervisory level. Secondly, it would aim at identifying the pointers, which could improve the relationship between the leader and the team. Lastly, this study would also throw light on some strong and tough decisions that were taken by a majority of leaders in various companies to sustain during the challenging times. In addition, this research would help gain insight on how does a leader and their actions affect one's life through various illustrations.

**Materials and Methods:** The current study is based on a sample frame of 62 respondents consisting of employees working at managerial or supervisory positions in several companies belonging to various industries. The data was collected using a multifactor questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions and was distributed among the target population through social networking sites like WhatsApp and emails. The questionnaire comprised of 19 questions that were based on different styles of leadership preferred by majority of employees and the various characteristics the leader must possess. Each question has two or four options and based on the responses received (in percent) from the target population, the findings of the research are detailed out.

**Results:** This section of the research has discussed the major findings that have been obtained from the primary research. The results in the table show that 75.8% of the employees at managerial or supervisory levels in various companies follow democratic leadership style. In addition, maximum number of employees voted for a leader who is easy to approach and empathetic, supports the team during tough times and has clarity in vision. In short, a leader who is an 'all-rounder' has the highest probability of becoming a role model and a good leader.

**Conclusion:** This study has focused on the type of most preferable leadership style, its importance and the impacts of leadership on one's life concerning COVID-19. Through this study, it was observed that every firm requires a leader who is influential, supportive, focused and passionate towards work because leaders are accountable for developing values and a sense of responsibility in their team to achieve organizational goals since the success of any company largely depends on the people who run it.

**Keywords:** Leadership; Covid-19; styles; influence; decisions; impact.

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### I. Introduction

The word 'leadership' comprises of two parts, 'Leader' and 'Ship', which means that a leader is someone who directs the whole group of individuals to walk towards their final aim or goals, which results in the successful completion of a task and brings job satisfaction in an organization. It is seen that an influence of a good leader could change the vision of team members in a positive way which would prompt them towards the development and achievement of their visions. In the business sector, an efficient leader is always required by the organization to meet the needs of the company and to function smoothly. As there are two sides to every coin, similarly, a leader can be bad or good. A bad leader is someone who has little or no vision for the future of the organization. They focus on the ideas that back up their perspectives. They disagree to consider the inputs of subordinates which can become the main reasons for a company's downfall as any progress is unlikely to happen. However, a good leader is the one who has a future vision; brings positive vibes at the workplace; provides guidance to the team without any pressure, and also enhances the performance of the team which

results in the increase of the company's bottom line and simultaneously also provides the satisfaction to its customers and clients. A leader should not be biased against anyone in the team and must be equally approachable by everyone. Failing to do so can attract discrepancy among the team members, which further can hamper the productivity of the team. Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic has hit our lives, it brought a lot of challenges for the business sectors as well. During such a tough time, when the jobs of a maximum number of people across the world were at stake, a person who provided moral support to his/her team members while making them feel secured about their jobs and tried to bring out the maximum team productivity through mutual understanding and facilitating maximum guidance from time to time could be termed as a 'LEADER'.

In the following research paper, we will discuss and identify the various leadership styles that are usually preferred by the employees at managerial or supervisory levels in various organizations that will further help us in understanding what are the qualities a person must have to become a successful leader and how to carry out an improvisation on the leader-team relationship.

## **II. Review Of Literature**

Strong leadership is the most indispensable part of any organization to function effectively. (Cabeza-Erikson, Edwards, and Van Brabant, 2008) acknowledged the fact that a leader with skills and appropriate expertise are the key requirements of all the organizations to sustain their business during difficult times as they are focused on directing their team members during the climate of uncertainty. They also concentrate on providing moral support to the team; encouraging team productivity and maintaining positivity. An individual who pushes his/her team members towards achieving a common organizational goal while simultaneously providing full assistance to the team is termed as a 'good leader'. This increases the ability of a leader to manage relationships with the team quite effectively. Another approach, as a holistic view, presents a quality leadership style as the employees' role model (Grint, 2007). According to him, an individual with a strong personality and decision-making capacity can be a good example of a role model to other employees because a person who is capable of achieving goals, becomes an inspiration for the rest of the people and that could further prompt the other people to develop a positive thought process; values; attitude and behavior to work in the sincerest form for the organization which will enhance the team productivity. Motivating the employees in a firm to work in a team and to establish effective communication among themselves is equally important for a leader (Maxwell, 2009) as this could help them to produce successful results for the organization. To achieve this kind of teamwork and understanding at the workplace, leaders should create positive vibes and a healthy work environment in the organization where everybody is free to exchange their ideas and are allowed to work in their way without much interference from anybody (Malloch and Melnyk, 2013).

## **III. Conceptual Framework And Research Objectives**

**Conceptual framework:** Leadership is a process where a person plans, guides and improves the work-behavior of the team to achieve a common organizational goal. It is a way of getting work done by others. Leaders are required in every organization for the development and achievement of their visions. However, the idea of Leadership must not be mixed with that of Management. According to Peter Drucker's theory, management is doing things in the right way whereas; leadership involves doing accurate things in any given situation. Management involves a person or a manager who deals with the official authority to control a group of people for achieving the organizational goal by dictating his/her expectations while leadership involves a person who can lead a group of people in any given situation and get the things done efficiently and productively.

There are majorly four types of leadership styles:

**Human Relation Leader:** In this leadership style, the leader is way too much inclined towards managing people based on humanitarian grounds because of his/her caring nature. A leader as such is mostly reluctant to force people for producing results at an organizational level. Due to this reason, people start taking advantage of the leader because of his/her lenient behavior, which becomes the reason for zero or negligible productivity of the team. However, this kind of leadership style creates a better human relationship.

**Democratic Leader:** In a democratic leadership style, the leader invites or involves the participation of each and everyone in the team for putting forward their views/suggestions/feedback as a part of the decision-making process in the organization. A leader as such also understands when to tighten and loosen the team members based on situation-to-situation. This type of leadership style has a blend of both: team productivity and human relations.

**Autocratic Leader:** In this kind of leadership style, the leader has a very dominating nature and believes in dictating orders, policies, and procedures that are required to achieve goals at an organizational level without the participation of the team. Such kind of leaders have a narrow thought process and make decisions on their own

without considering anybody else's suggestions or feedbacks. However, this leadership style creates maximum productivity while putting the human-relations at stake.

**Laissez-Faire:** In this style of leadership, the leader lacks the clarity of his/her role within the team due to which the followers get no clear picture of what they should do. This kind of leadership style is usually very weak as the leader becomes incapable of managing both: team productivity as well as human relations.

#### IV. Research Objectives

Leadership calls for having a comprehensive knowledge of the work along with a certain set of skills that helps evoke positive effects on the work that needs to be finished on time. However, considering the inputs of the subordinates in regards to the decision-making process at the workplace is very crucial and must be taken care of by leaders at any cost. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To know the qualities a leader must-have.
- b) To understand the most preferable leadership style.
- c) To understand the negative impact of COVID-19 on an organizational level.
- d) To understand the consequences of lockdown on the lifestyle of various employees.
- e) To understand few factors that could improve the leader-team relationship.

#### V. Research Methodology

This study explores various leadership styles preferred by the majority of employees at the managerial or supervisory level in multiple organizations. To understand the research objective, quantitative study was carried out from January 2021 to February 2021 on employees from Mumbai suburban working at managerial or supervisory levels in several companies belonging to various industries. The questionnaire contained 'close-ended' questions and was dispensed to 62 (inclusive of males and females) Mid-level to Top-level Management position holders in several companies of various industries.

**Target population-** The target population of this study was 'Mid-level' to 'Top-level' Management position holders, which included both male and female employees in several companies belonging to various industries around Mumbai suburban.

**Sample location-** Convenience sampling has been applied in this study, because the target population was easily available to the researchers. Therefore, in this research, the authors selected Mumbai suburbs, where questionnaires were distributed to the target population.

**Sample duration-** The quantitative study was conducted from January 2021 to February 2021.

**Measurement instrument-** The measuring instrument in this research was a questionnaire composed of close-ended questions that were distributed among target population through google forms. It was used as a method for conducting the survey that carried 19 questions in the form of multiple-choice questions.

#### VI. Data Analysis

A sample size of 62 respondents who are working in managerial or supervisory positions in multiple organizations was taken into consideration for the study of research objectives. The designations of the respondents were categorized into two groups: (a) Top-Level Management and (b) Mid-Level Management positions. Top-level positions include- Manager; Assistant Manager; Warehouse Manager; Product Manager; Deputy Manager; Assistant General Manager; Vice President; Director and CEO of various firms whereas Mid-Level positions include- Group Leader; Team Leader and Junior HR Executive. Below is the table of the questionnaire and options that were given to the respondents to choose from along with the approximate responses that were received by the researchers (in percent). The final interpretation would be given at the end of the research paper based on the below findings.

Sr. No.	Questions:	Options	Responses (In %)
1.	What is your Designation?	a. Top-level management b. Mid-level Management	33.4% 66.6%
2.	What according to you are the qualities a leader should possess?	a. Easy to approach and Influential. b. Problem-solving skills. c. Team player & Empathetic. d. All of the above	6.6% 1.6% 4.9% 86.9%
3.	What kind of Leadership style do you prefer?	a. Autocratic leader. b. Democratic leader.	0%

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		c. Human-Relationship leader. d. Laissez-faire leader.	75.8% 6.5%
			17.7%
4.	According to you, should leaders supervise their employees closely, or they show reluctance towards their work?	a. Agree b. Disagree	74.1% 25.9%
5.	A leader should let his/her team members sort out the problems between them on their own.	a. Agree b. Disagree	64.5% 35.5%
6.	Is it fair to say that most employees in the general population are lazy?	a. Agree b. Disagree	72.6% 27.4%
7.	Providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader.	a. Agree b. Disagree	90.3% 9.7%
8.	Leaders should interfere in the way his/her team members do their work.	a. Agree b. Disagree	69.4% 30.6%
9.	Leaders must give rewards or retributions to the team members to motivate them to achieve organizational objectives	a. Agree b. Disagree	98.4% 1.6%
10.	Leaders must be easily approachable and should make their team members feel secured about their work and provide guidance at the workplace.	a. Agree b. Disagree	100% 0%
11.	Should leaders try to make the team members accept their responsibility for completing the work?	a. Agree b. Disagree	95.2% 4.8%
12.	Should a leader help the team members to find their "Passion"?	a. Agree b. Disagree	90.3% 9.7%
13.	Do you think an effective leader should brief his/her team members from time to time and should have a strong clarity about organizational procedures?	a. Agree b. Disagree	96.7% 3.3%
14.	Which gender do you prefer to work with?	a. Male b. Female c. Both	8.1% 1.6% 90.3%
15.	On a scale from 0-10, how would you rate this statement: - A leader should not be biased against anyone in the team?	a. 1-5 b. 5-10	1.6% 98.4%
16.	The impact of Covid-19 crisis on your organization was _____.	a. Severe b. Very severe c. Moderate d. No change	27.9% 4.9% 55.7% 11.5%
17.	What are your views on the new way of working- "Work from Home"?	a. Comfortable b. Challenging c. Pathetic d. No change	30.6% 51.6% 6.5% 11.3%
18.	Were there any salary deductions in your organization during the lockdown?	a. Yes b. No c. Maybe	29.5% 63.9% 6.6%
19.	Did anyone lose his or her job in your organization during Covid-19?	a. Yes b. No c. Maybe	39.3% 54.1% 6.6%

**Table 5.1 – Research data obtained from 62 respondents ranging from Mid-level to Top-level positions.**

### VII. Data Interpretation

For every organization to make progress and function smoothly, it is requisite to understand few factors that influence the employee psyche and organizational behavior. This study was majorly concerned with some of the characteristics that a leader must possess to become a role model for other employees. The organizations belonging to various industries were also chosen accordingly. Based on the outcomes of the study, the researcher developed the following interpretations:

1. The outcomes of the study indicated that the democratic leadership style is preferred by the majority of leaders as it involves the equal inputs of both the leader and the employees, which enhances the work quality and team productivity.
2. An efficient leader is one who is easy to approach; influential; provides directions; guides the team and becomes their backbone in challenging times as people find themselves comfortable to be working under such individuals.
3. The impact of Covid-19 was mild in few companies while severe in some. In few organizations, people were asked to leave as companies found themselves unable to pay salaries to their employees. Few industries like Aviation Industry; Automobile Industry; Hospitality Industry; etc. witnessed the maximum number of job losses and salary deductions. However, few organizations belonging to essential service sectors did not see any change. Industries like Fast Moving Consumer Goods Industry; Pharmaceutical Industry; Health and Hospital Industry; etc. were least affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Work from home (WFH) has never been more appropriate. It was the new way of working that developed during lockdown by the majority of organizations to keep their work going. However, the outcomes of this research indicated that work from home was the most challenging task for more than 50% of the employees due to lack of team coordination and improper guidance probably because of the new platform of work that was being introduced to the employees.
5. Based on the findings of the researchers it can be said that few things should be taken care of by the leader to improve the leader-team relationship. A leader must not interfere too much in the way his/her team members work in an organization, as it is not welcomed by the majority of the employees. A leader should not be biased against any one person in the team; rather he/she should give equal opportunities to each of the team members. In addition, a leader should navigate and provide moral support to the team during unfavorable times because that helps them to stand strong and feel confident about their work throughout their tenure.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

This study has concentrated on the basics of leadership; characteristics; its importance and the leadership style that is preferred by the majority of firms belonging to various industries during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Through this research, it can be observed that a large number of leaders tend to follow the 'Democratic' style of leadership. They believe that it enhances team coordination and eventually increases the productivity of the team. A leader who has clarity in vision and strong decision-making capacity is probably liked by everyone in the organization. In addition, the one who becomes the backbone of the team and stands tough during exceptional time is welcomed and appreciated by all. To conclude this study, it can be summarized that every organization requires a leader who is an 'all-rounder' because the success of any company not only depends on the one who establishes it but also largely depends on the people who run it.

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