CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES : RELATIONSHIP WITH LEADERSHIP STYLES AND MODERATING EFFECT OF ESTEEM FOR COWORKER

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The paper attempts to examine conflict handling strategies, leadership behaviour and leadership styles (relationship and task-motivated styles) in a common framework. It was found that conflict management strategies represented two main conflict management styles, viz., Reciprocal Problem Solving Style and Authoritative System Supported Style, which tended to relate selectively with five leadership dimensions. Reciprocal Conflict Management Style significantly related with Participative, Nurturant and Task-Oriented leadership behaviour, while Authoritative Conflict Management Style had significant relationships with Authoritarian and Bureaucratic leadership behaviour. The low esteem for coworker (task-motivated leadership style) had a strong relationship with the application of force as a conflict management strategy, besides revealing some moderating influences of esteem for coworker between leadership behaviour and conflict management strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Sinha (1980) proposed a model of leadership effectiveness which he believed could positively work for the Indian executives. He claimed that Nurturant Task (NT) leadership style will evidently work if the leader recognizes the developmental needs of subordinates and correspondingly changes his style of functioning to be more participative over a period of time.

Sinha's model of leadership style has its origin in the work of researchers who proposed that leadership can be conceptualized as a dynamic expression of leaders' task-oriented or relationship-oriented behaviours. As we see it today,

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the last four decades have witnessed steady progress in the realm of leadership researches. In the initial phase, where the concern was to develop a measurable leadership construct, Fleishman (1953) used a well-defined conceptual base and followed a rigorous psychometric procedure in defining the constructs of leadership and subsequently tested them through factor analytic techniques. While using a direct measurement technique which can be meaningfully contrasted with Fielder's (1967) indirect assessment of leadership style, Fleishman (1953a, b) first identified a set of *à priori* leadership behaviour criteria, which was finally reduced to orthogonally independent styles of leadership, viz., Initiating Structure and Consideration.

In essence, the above framework used divergent behavioural processes elicited by the leader as a base for exploring a range of behaviours that can be subsumed under task or relationship orientation separately. As mentioned before, the hypothesized leadership behaviour statements ask the leader or his subordinates to view the leader's behaviour in the context of managing a group and getting things done through them. It is also possible to obtain similar behavioural ratings of the leader from someone who observes him in action (Bales, 1970). On the contrary, Fielder (1970) explored the same problem in an indirect way using the theoretical framework of person perception. The leader identifies a Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) with whom he has great difficulty in getting things done and then evaluates him on 18 bipolar scales describing personality traits of the least preferred coworker. Drawing on the data of high or low esteem for least preferred coworker, an inference is drawn whether leadership style is relationship-motivated or task-motivated. Although the constructs of task and relationship orientation have survived the rigid empirical tests of researchers, yet many other constructs and situational variables which are now well-known have also been conceptualized and tested (Blake and Mouton, 1964; Reddin, 1970, Hersey and Blanchard, 1971) besides giving rise to two recent leadership concepts, namely Charismatic Leadership (Conger and Kanungo, 1987) and Transformational Leadership (Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987).

Sinha's work (1980, 1983) in this direction strongly advocating efficacy of Nurturant-Task and Participative Styles seems to be indicative of adopting leadership theory under the Indian situation with a major thrust into the analysis of Indian psyche, and the dynamisms involved in superior-subordinate relationships (Kakar, 1974). Hence, his framework is evidently very close to a line of thinking that laid emphasis on multiple leadership styles and superior-subordinate interaction, the psychological frame in which both operate, the work values professed and practised by both and the underlying group climate that evolved over a period of time.

Theoretically, the foregoing standpoints seem to hint upon a course of action to be followed by leaders: that the leader must care for subordinates' needs along

with the changes in the ethos of the work group. The leader should, therefore be able to evoke need for participation among all members of his work group This assumes that there is a basic understanding on the part of the leader and that he would evolve an appropriate leadership style to match with the demand of the situation. Contrasting with the above, Fielder (1984) made a point that the leadership style is a relatively stable personality orientation and the match between style and situation should necessarily result in the situational change rather than an equal and simultaneous change in both the dimensions.

On the contrary, Sinha emphasized a dynamic process of interaction between the leadership styles and the situation, which will be continually changing as a result of the leader's effort, organizational development strategies, etc. Matching closely with the above thinking, Singh and Bhandarkar (1988) laid stress on the transformational role of the leader, which can be contrasted with transactional leadership approach. Although the findings from Singh's study are entirely based on action research paradigm, emphasis has remained on reshaping of subordinate behaviour and organizational situation in such a manner that it leads to a value-based organizational culture.

Recently, a series of studies have been reported while using leadership styles with one or more dependent variables. Varma (1986) explored a basic question of overlap between personality and the leadership and reported that none of the leadership styles had any significant correlation, either positive or negative, with any personality variable. But the relationship between composite leadership score and personality variables, viz., machiavellianism, locus of control and interpersonal trust broadly suggested that in general leadership is a function of personality disposition, although personality orientation does not seem to give rise to a specific style of leadership (Habibullah and Sinha, 1980).

In an interpersonal context, managing conflict with subordinate is regarded as one of the managerial functions (Mintzberg, 1973) and, therefore, researchers studied this phenomenon in a broader managerial and leadership framework. Blake, Shepard and Mouton (1964) showed that team-oriented style having both the components of task and team-oriented styles of leadership have reportedly used confrontation frequently as a Conflict Management Strategy, whereas task-oriented managers (indicating only task-motivated leadership) often used force as a strategy. Blake, Shepard and Mouton further argued that effective interpersonal relationships could be regarded as a key for using confrontation as a conflict handling strategy. Hence, it can be said that leadership/managerial styles give rise to a style of interpersonal orientation in which the choice of effective strategies is easy. If the leadership style is highly task-oriented, interpersonal orientation of the leader and his subordinates would reflect it and in accordance with it the choice of conflict handling strategy will be sought for.

Habibullah and Sinha (1980) seem to have generally supported the above contention in the relationships obtained between NT and participative styles of leadership and affiliative climate. In an indirect manner, the above inference suggests that greater consideration on the part of leader may help in building an affiliative climate in which certain conflict management strategies, viz., confrontation, accommodating, toning down are more likely to be opted by the managers for overcoming the interpersonal conflict.

On the contrary, Sayeed and Mathur (1980) showed a positive relationship between support (i.e., relationship-oriented style) and conflict management strategy of forcing. Accommodating had a negative relationship with goal emphasis (task-oriented style) and a positive relationship with work facilitation. Although these findings are at variance with those of Blake *et al.*, yet they are obviously valid in a different cultural ethos in which force used by leaders and accepted by subordinates is considered quite normal even with relationship-oriented leaders.

Bose and Pareek (1986) witnessed a relationship between dysfunctional managerial style comprising patronizing, prescriptive, task-obsessive, boehemenian, aggressive and functional conflict management approaches (viz., controntation, arbitration, compromise and negotiation). The other relationships between the overall functional style and approach and avoidance conflict management were non-significant. Although the findings do not seem to support Blake *et al.'s* viewpoint, they support Habibullah and Sinha's contention that leadership style is more likely to generate affiliative orientation in the organization, which may lead to compatible Conflict Management Strategies.

THE STUDY

In view of the inadequate evidence concerning the role of leadership in preferring certain conflict management strategies a systematic study was desired which should re-examine the complexity of the problem from two perspectives. In the first place, there is a need to establish the dominant preferences of Indian leaders in the area of leadership and conflict management styles on the basis of Leadership Styles Scale (Sinha, 1980) and Conflict Management Strategies Scale (Sayeed, 1981), basides relating the two. In the second place, there is a need to examine the moderating effect of esteem for coworkers on the relationship between the leadership styles and the preferences for conflict management styles.

METHOD

Sample : Data were collected from 79 middle level managers who were undergoing various training programmes conducted at NITIE, Bombay. The group of

respondents as a whole represented diverse industrial set-ups, which included public and private industries, chemical and pharmaceutical firms and engineering and textile concerns. The sample also represented staff and line function, even though several respondents have come from engineering background.

The respondents' ages ranged from 25 to 54 years with median age falling within the age bracket of 40 to 44. With respect to their educational background, 4 per cent were matriculates, 68 per cent were graduates and 28 per cent were post-graduates in various streams of education. As against 77 per cent who did not acquire professional qualifications, 23 per cent had acquired such qualification either in engineering and/or management areas. A predominant number of managers belonged to middle management level (72 per cent) and have been drawing a median salary higher than Rs. 3000, besides the managerial perks relevant to the position.

The data were collected in class-room settings applying the group administration technique. The response rate was found to be almost 100 per cent. Regardless of their technical and non-technical background, respondents belonged to middle and lower middle management cadres. Hence, the present research well represented the behavioural profile of middle management group.

Instruments : The instruments used in the present study included Leadership Behaviour Scale (Sinha, 1980), LPC Scale (Fielder, 1984) and Conflict Management Strategies Scale (Sayeed, 1981). The details of the instruments are presented in Appendix I.

RESULTS

Test statistics and factor loadings of Leadership Behaviour Scale and Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) Scale are given in Table 1. From the table, two sets of information can be obtained: (i) the relatively strong characteristic of leadership managers tended to project and (ii) the internal psychometric strength of leadership dimensions in terms of item-total correlation and alpha reliabilities. The managers perceived themselves to be predominantly task-and nurturant-oriented which were followed by participative ($\bar{X}$ = 3.77), bureaucratic ($\bar{X}$ = 3.24) and authoritarian orientation ($\bar{X}$ = 3.07) in that order. On the corresponding scale of LPC, they were found to be neither dominantly task-oriented nor overly relationship-oriented ($\bar{X}$ = 65.58). The relevant test statistics, such as median item total correlations for leadership style and LPC scales calculated separately ranged from 0.41 to 0.86, which were quite satisfactory. Although the Alpha reliability for LPC scale was extremely high (a = 0.86), it was not so high for Leadership Behaviour dimensions: the alpha reliability ranged from 0.57 for bureaucratic style to 0.67 for nurturant style.

The Powered Vector Factor Analysis (Overall and Klette, 1971) carried out on leadership behaviour dimension and LPC scale together resulted in a factor pattern that had a high degree of overlap among participative, nurturant, task and bureaucratic styles, but there was no meaningful sharing with authoritarianism or authoritarian style. The factor pattern also revealed that LPC was not related to any of the above dimensions. This broadly indicated independence of authoritarian dimension of leadership behaviour scale.

The means, relative ranks and standard deviations of Conflict Management Strategies are presented in Table 2. It can be seen from the table that managers saw "confrontation" as one of the most applicable strategies, followed by toning down, compromising and accommodating. The least preferred strategies were avoidance, following rules, forcing and consulting.

Multiple regression results between leadership behaviour dimensions and LPC and each of the 8 Conflict Management Strategies preferred by the managers in an interpersonal situation are presented in Table 3. The reported statistics included zero order correlations, significant regression coefficients (in parentheses and percentages of variance explained by the independent variables.

The participative style had a negative significant relationship with forcing and a positive relationship with toning down and accommodating. On the contrary, authoritarian style had a positive relationship with forcing. Managers with nurturant style showed a tendency to apply toning down and accommodating as conflict handling strategies. Surprisingly, task-oriented style had a positive relationship with toning down and accommodating as well. This might be due to the fact that internally task, nurturant and participative styles shared a high degree of commonality among themselves, which was not true in the case of authoritarian style (factor loading = 0.19). The bureaucratic style had a positive significant relationship with 'forcing' on the one hand and was negatively related to 'confronting' strategy on the other. With regard to the relationship between LPC and Conflict Management Strategies, negligible association was noted across several strategies. However, a marginally significant relationship was noted in the case of accommodating (r = 0.18). The leadership behaviour dimensions and LPC taken together explained 23.8 and 21.3 per cent of variance in case of toning down and forcing respectively, significant well beyond 0.05 level. The remaining multiple correlations failed to indicate statistically significant results.

Percentages of variance (R^2 in percentage form) derived from multiple regression analysis between leadership behaviour dimensions items reflecting task, participative, nurturant, bureaucratic and authoritarian styles and conflict management strategies are presented in Table 4. Several significant relationships with conflict handling strategies, such as toning down and accommodating are

seen from the table. The authoritarian style items had significant relationships with forcing explaining 27.4% of variance as equally noted for the dimension analysis of authoritarian style, where composite scores of authoritarian items were used. Bureaucratic style items showed significant variance with following rules, besides having significant relationship with accommodating. Participative style had a significant relationship with toning down differences explaining 36.8% of variance, while nurturant style had a significant relationship with accommodating and toning down. Apart from individual significant relationships, the analysis of overall percentage of variance in terms of averages obtained for each conflict management strategy revealed that toning down received high percentage of variance (22.4%) followed by forcing (18.1%), confronting (16.8%), accommodating (16.6%), compromising (15.1%), consulting (14.8%), following rules (14.1%) and avoiding (9.0%).

Regression coefficients and R^2 in percentage form derived from multiple regression analysis between job/organizational demographics and each of the leadership and conflict management variables of the study are presented in Table 5. The analysis shows that managers' age and education had some relationship with leadership behaviour, but not with the conflict management strategies, while level of management, salary and length of service in the organization had some relationship with LPC and participative style. Professional education attained by the managers indicated relationship with participative style only. Similarly, level of management and task-oriented style were found to be related. Length of service showed a positive relationship with confronting strategy, while salary level had a negative relationship with compromising strategy. With respect to participative style, only one R^2 was found to be significant, wherein professional education attained and age factor contributed substantially.

Cluster analysis results of Conflict Management Strategies consisting of following rules, compromising, forcing, consulting, confronting, avoiding, toning down differences and accommodating are given in Table 6. The cluster analysis procedure developed by Overall and Klette (1971) was used to group the Conflict Management Strategies. The procedure first assesses inter-variable D square distances and then builds the clusters on the basis of small distances among the variables. It was observed that there were two distinct clusters of Conflict Management Strategies that were formed in the analysis. Cluster I had compromising, confronting, toning down and accommodating strategies as a subset of conflict management strategies. Cluster II had following rules, forcing, consulting and avoiding as a second subset. On the basis of the commonality shared by the conflict management variables, suitable labels were assigned to each group. Cluster I had those variables which emphasized power sharing, reciprocating and interacting with subordinates; it was named as Reciprocal Problem Solving Style. Cluster II was formed with those conflict handling strategies that did not call for

interaction between superior and subordinates, but took advantage of the organizational system in an authority-oriented manner; it was named as Authoritative System Supported Style. As part of the analysis, the cluster scores were generated for each of the clusters for further analysis. An overall analysis of Conflict Management Styles of Indian managers revealed scores for Reciprocal Problem Solving Style to be higher than those for the Authoritative System Supported Style.

The relationship between Sinha's leadership behaviour scale and Fielder's LPC scale with an overall sample (N = 79) and three subsamples of the study split at low LPC (task orientation), moderate LPC (mixed orientation) and high LPC (relationship orientation) is shown Table 7. The basic idea behind this analysis was to examine convergence of two different approaches of leadership, one specifically describing the leadership styles consisting of 5 modes of leadership behaviour, such as Participative, Nurturant, Authoritarian, Task-oriented and Bureaucratic and the other being Fielder's leadership style of task and relationship orientation measured on the basis of perception of negatively construed model of coworker.

A close examination of the analyses reveals that an almost negligible relationship was obtained between LPC and Sinha's leadership dimensions when the total sample was used. However, in view of theoretical-conceptual meaning of LPC, subgroup analysis was necessitated that resulted into establishing the closeness of leadership behaviour dimensions and the meaning of LPC. The participative style showed a moderate but positive relationship with high and medium LPC scores, while low LPC scores had a small and negative relationship with the same dimension. On the same lines, Authoritarian and Bureaucratic styles had a small positive relationship with low LPC (task-orientation) and a small negative relationship with high LPC (relationship-orientation). Similarly, Nurturant style had a small positive relationship with high LPC. Although these relationships do not provide conclusive evidence, yet the direction of relationships favours conceptual proximity between the leadership behaviour dimensions referred to above and the leadership styles conceptualized through least preferred coworker scale, validating the concept of LPC as a measure of leadership styles.

Correlations between Fielder's leadership styles (LPC) and 8 conflict management strategies are shown in Table 8. Besides this, the leadership behaviour dimensions have been related with conflict management strategies after the scores (N = 79) have been split into Low LPC, Moderate LPC and High LPC categories. The LPC score classified into three ranges had the Low LPC range from 41 to 64; the Medium LPC from 65 to 87 and the High LPC from 88 to 137. It is seen that Fielder's construct of task-oriented style related positively to forcing and

negatively to confronting. This shows that leaders who have low esteem for coworkers often look forward to preferring forcing as a conflict management strategy and, hence, concurrently showed low preference for confrontation. The other part of the continuum of Fielder's leadership construct failed to show a significant relationship with conflict management strategies, although a positive, but marginally significant, relationship was noted for toning down (p<0.07).

It was expected that the classification of scores under three LPC conditions, i.e., low, medium and high LPC groups would show a differential relationship with Conflict Management Strategies. For example, under mixed and high LPC groups, Participative, Nurturant dimensions would show a more significant relationship with conflict management strategies which are close to role-making behaviour of the managers, and hence emphasizing interpersonal compatibility and problem-solving behaviour reflected in the conflict handling strategies of compromising, consulting, confronting and toning down, etc. Akin to this analogy, it was also expected that authoritarian task-oriented and bureaucratic leadership behaviours would show a more significant relationship with role-making behaviour de-emphasizing interpersonal compatibility and problem-solving oriented behaviour reflected in the conflict management strategies of following rules, forcing and avoiding under low LPC condition than under high LPC condition.

It was noted that the above supposition was true in the case of participative style where many significant relationships were noted for mixed and high group, but showed mixed pattern of relationship with respect to the leadership style dimensions. For example, under medium LPC group, participative style tended to relate significantly with compromising, consulting and toning down. Under high LPC group also, participative style related positively with toning down. Under mixed and high LPC group, Nurturant Style had a positive relationship with toning down. Authoritarian style had a positive relationship with forcing under high group, but no significant relationship was noted under low group, which was quite surprising. Task-oriented leadership dimension under low LPC condition related positively with toning down, whereas mixed and high LPC condition showed a relationship with following rules, compromising and toning down. Bureaucratic style under low LPC group related with toning down, while under high and moderate LPC group, relationship was noted with respect to forcing, consulting and confronting.

Correlations between leadership dimensions and conflict management styles scores, being weighted composite scores of conflict management strategies, obtained using a cluster analysis procedure, are shown in Table 9. It is observed that participative nurturant and task-oriented leader behaviour are significantly related with Reciprocal Problem Solving Style of conflict management, while

authoritative and bureaucratic leadership dimensions are significantly related to Authoritative System supported style of conflict management.

DISCUSSION

Conflict handling strategies have been conceptualized by several researchers after considering nature, type and processes of organization and groups. In the interacting groups, the option of conflict handling strategies is greatly influenced by the. interpersonal processes. However, in a formally structured situation, many factors, such as past experience, organization structure, leader's capability to share powers with subordinates, etc. influence the options of conflict handling strategies. Pareek's (1982) conceptualization of conflict management subsumed those of the above variables under a broad rubric of in-group integration, largely applicable to the inter-group conflict resolution. With respect to handling intra-group conflicts, the concept of in-group integration should be redesignated so as to view it along a continuum emphasizing interpersonal compatibility, leader's willingness to share power, group maturity and sense of reciprocity among the members. Since the leader has got a dominant role to play in the group of his subordinates, the leadership processes can be regarded as distinguishing features in having preferences for certain kinds of conflict handling strategies. The findings of the present study substantially support the afore-mentioned linkages and offer ground for assessing Conflict Management Styles of leaders based on various conflict handling strategies.

Conflict Management Style Dimensions

It was established that the conflict handling strategies do not seem to operate in isolation and have something in common within a cluster of strategies, besides confirming the predominant importance of confrontation, toning down, compromising and accommodating as one style of conflict management distinguishable from another style consisting of relatively less preferred strategies of avoidance, following rules, forcing and consulting. The present data strongly substantiate the above arguments in view of emergence of two discernible conflict management styles, one of which is more oriented towards reciprocal interaction-based problem solving. The other style is more oriented towards authoritarianism, system support, power retaining and/or "indifference to power sharing" style. The afore-mentioned conflict management preferences have been strongly supported by the two styles, of which Reciprocal-Problem Solving Style had higher preference ($\bar{X}$ = 5.04) as compared to the relatively low preference for the other conflict management style ($\bar{X}$ = 3.09). Further, it was also expected that consulting as a strategy would form part of Reciprocal-Problem Solving Style. The results failed to support the above expectation, although apparently, it appears to be closer to reciprocal problem solving style. It is possible that its relatively lower preference

among 8 strategies might have contributed to the above results. Besides, the actual influence of authority prevalent within a group of superior and subordinates might have contributed to its separation from Reciprocal Problem Solving Style and inclusion into Authoritative system supported style. In a formal structured situation, leaders' way of consulting is more of asking for opinions and making their own decisions, without giving feedback to the group regarding a preferred course of action. In this sense, consulting does not seem to be a reciprocal problem solving style in which two parties are actively engaged in consensus seeking, but it is more of a process in which the superior influences subordinates and seeks opinion without commitment to subordinates. Hence, the placement of consulting strategy within the frame of authoritative system supported style is justified.

Following the line of research adopted by Fleishman (1953a, b), who identified leadership behaviour dimensions first and defined leadership styles next, Sinha (1980) also suggested five leadership dimensions, viz., nurturant, task-oriented, authoritarian, bureaucratic and participative, which can be reduced to three leadership styles, namely, participative, authoritative (nurturant task-oriented) and authoritarian. Neither the leadership behaviour patterns (five dimensions) nor leade ship styles (three specific styles) had sufficient factorial evidence in the present study. Nevertheless, a close examination of items under five leadership patterns tended to reflect pertinent leadership behaviour of the type mentioned by the author.

Apart from any conceptual-methodological difficulties of the above nature, which may come in the way of defining and establishing the above leadership constructs, it was found that Indian manager's leadership style relied heavily on task-orientation followed by nurturant, participative and burecratic orientations. Theoretically at least, authoritarian orientation was regarded as least preferred. While the above discussion refers to certain moot points requiring further conceptual work in the direction suggested above, the relationship between leadership scale and LPC has thrown additional light on the underlying conceptual linkages between the two sets of variables, purported to be commonly measuring leadership behaviour. Sinha's scale failed to relate with the overall LPC score. However, there was a meaningful relationship between Sinha's scale and LPC for lower and higher subsets of LPC score distribution, which clearly substantiated Fielder's logic that lower and upper distributions of scores have entirely different meanings. As expected, the lower and upper tail of LPC score showed relationships with participative, nurturant, authoritarian and bureaucratic orientations in such a way that directional interpretation supporting Fielder's logic was possible. The high LPC indicating relationship orientation on the part of leaders tended to relate with participative, nurturant behaviour, while the same constructs related negatively to low LPC or task orientation. In view of the above, which emphasized commonality of certain constructs, bureaucratic behaviour was found to be

closer to task-oriented leader behaviour (low LPC) than the relationship-oriented leader behaviour (high LPC).

In essence these findings largely suggest a common frame of conceptualization, the former being a direct measure of leadership and the latter reflecting an indirect approach to leadership measurement. In any case, Sinha's (1980) conceptualization is supported to a great extent in view of the underlying relationships between the LPC measures and his own.

Leader Behaviour and Conflict Management Styles

With regard to Conflict Management Style, it was expected that participative, task and nurturant oriented leaders would show more preference for Reciprocal-Problem Solving Conflict Management Style, whereas authoritarian and bureaucratic leaders would strongly favour Authoritative System-supported Conflict Management Style. The findings strongly substantiated the above proposition in that the participative, nurturant and task-oriented leaders showed greater proclivity for sharing and reciprocating in an interpersonal conflict arising situation.

On the contrary, authoritarian and bureaucratic leaders relied more frequently on the system which provided mechanism for solving interpersonal conflicts. The afore-mentioned results are based on the cluster scores of conflict management strategies that suggested two broad styles of managing conflicts, the relationship between dimensions of leader behaviour (Sinha, 1980) and the original conflict management strategies closely advocated the above results and confirmed them. For instance, bureaucratic and authoritarian leader behaviour was strongly related to forcing being one of the conflict management strategies, while the same was related negatively to confronting strategy. Participative and nurturant leader behaviour substantially contributed to toning down and accommodating. However, what is most surprising is the positive relationship between task-oriented leader behaviour and conflict management strategies of toning down and accommodating. Probably in the Indian context, task-oriented behaviour is seen to be very relevant and the leader does not seem to have any reservation for adopting accommodating and toning down as meaningful strategies as well. Since a task-oriented leader is regarded as a problem solver and a disturbance handler in the managerial sense (Mintzberg, 1973), he can increase his acceptability in the group by way of engaging himself in some such activities that keep the group close and cohesive. Hence, no wonder if such leaders often opt for toning down and accommodating strategies. While the above was regarded quite meaningful, the authoritarian leader behaviour, as expected, failed to relate with toning down and accommodating. On the contrary, authoritarian leader behaviour showed relationship with forcing as a strategy, which in a way obviously substantiated the findings between leader behaviour and conflict management styles. Since the authoritarian leaders use their

position power in a lopsided manner, the relationship with forcing is seemingly warranted in view of the fact that such leaders have self-sustained biases and the only way appropriate for such individuals is to opt for the self-justified approach of forcing their alternatives down the line of authority on their own subordinates. Apparently, authoritarian and task-oriented leader behaviour seemed to share a common ground, yet the afore-mentioned findings suggested a significant gap between the two.

What has been discussed above received further support when leadership behaviour items were used in a similar analysis. Methodologically, the items of a given dimension and leader behaviour (namely, participative style) could reflect a tendency to moderate the relationship with a certain dependent variable, viz., conflict management strategy, even though an overall score analysis may indicate high or low relationship. This was quite evident in the analysis when a group of items were related to conflict management strategies. In the case of task-oriented leader hebaviour, the relationship with conflict management strategies of toning down and accommodating turned out to be non-significant, whereas the same leadership style related significantly with compromising. This is suggestive of the possibility that task-oriented leader behaviour items were not uni-dimensional. The most consistent, uni-dimensional factors were found to be authoritarian and nurturant leader behaviour. The participative and bureaucratic leader behaviour also showed findings that were consistent with the earlier findings where composite scores of the dimensions were used. However, the question of bi-dimensionality was found to be a significant factor in the present study. For instance, on the one hand bureaucratic leader behaviour showed a strong relationship with following rule strategy, but at the same time it indicated a relationship of equal magnitude with accommodating as well, which suggested bi-dimensionality in the item pools, requiring systematic testing of items through factor analytically-oriented techniques.

Esteem for Coworkers and Conflict Management

Another important point that requires discussion here is the kind of relationship between high, moderate and low LPC scores and conflict management strategies. Although it has been seen that there is not much relationship between overall LPC and conflict management strategies, the possibility of such a relationship does exist in view of significantly different interpretations attached to low and high LPC scores (Fielder, 1964). The relationships obtained in the present study lent strong support to Fielder's contention that high and low LPC leaders would tend to engage themselves in different leadership behaviour patterns. This leads to another question of relevance : whether a leader can combine multiple leadership factors in his leadership behaviour repertoir so as to evolve a team management style. Although this has been answered in the affirmative (Blake and Mouton,

1964), LPC does not seem to provide a direct clue as to who could be the team manager. Could it probably be a middle LPC group ? A satisfactory answer is yet to be discovered.

Apart from the interpretation of LPC as task or relationship motivated, an additional interpretation of LPC is that it reflects positive or negative person perception. Hence, the moderating effect of person perception in the actual meaning of the theory can be examined across three LPC categories, i.e., low, moderate and high LPC. The relationships between leader behaviour dimensions and conflict management strategies under low, moderate and high person perception categories would reflect whether internal processes of the managers, especially with reference to person perception, have any impact on the conflict management strategies. Insofar as participative leader behaviour is concerned, there was a definite moderating effect of person perception on conflict management strategies. If the leaders develop moderate or high esteem for coworkers, they tend to opt for more behaviourally oriented strategies, such as compromising and consulting. The leaders who have a participative style with low esteem for coworkers strongly avoid forcing as a strategy. In fact, participative leader behaviour individually showed a non-significant relationship with forcing, but in the regression model along with other leadership dimensions the relationship was found to be significant ($p<0.05$). In fact, this point failed to emerge in the simple correlational analysis between participative leader behaviour and conflict management strategies.

Bureaucratic and task-oriented leader behaviour seem to have different patterns of relationship for moderate and high esteem coworkers. In the case of task-oriented behaviour, moderate esteem for coworker had a relationship with following rules and compromising, which was not true when compared with direct relationship with following rules and compromising, suggesting a clear possibility of moderating effect of esteem for coworker. In the case of nurturant leader behaviour, the relationship with toning down had a more or less similar relationship, but its relationship with accommodating failed to show a significant pattern. These differing patterns of relationships suggest the strong possibility that esteem for coworker might have strongly influenced the leader's effectiveness to choose certain power sharing strategies or conflict management options, even though his leadership behaviour is participative and nurturant.

Finally, the relationships between job demographics of the leader and the leadership orientation suggested a strong influence of professional education and age as significant factors to make the leader more participative, besides the fact that age also tended to relate with LPC. The relationship of level of management to task-oriented leader behaviour suggested that higher management level forced themselves to be more task-oriented in view of the demands of the organization and the situation. The job demographics failed to show a relationship to conflict

management strategies with the exception of the variable of length of service that carried a significant relationship with confronting. This alone suggested the possibility that the longer the service one has rendered in the organization, the greater are the chances of positively developing a power sharing style of confronting and problem solving.

IMPLICATIONS

The study has some implications for managers themselves and for the organization to initiate appropriate action for development. Insofar as managers are concerned, the study strongly emphasizes that they can evolve a Reciprocal Problem Solving Style enabling them to have the right kind of leadership trust in the organization. Since the study has laid emphasis on mutual relationship between leadership dimensions and conflict management styles, the individual manager can benefit himself by enhancing either or both of the dimensions noted above. On the other hand, organizations would benefit enormously if they design their leadership role for effective leadership styles and structure superior-subordinate relationship on the basis of reciprocal conflict management style.

Appendix I

The Leadership Behaviour Scale consisted of 50 descriptive items reflecting managerial leadership behaviour on the job. The statements are to be rated on a 5 point Likert type scale. The pool of items was properly randomized before administration, and the scale purportedly measured 5 leadership dimensions, such as bureaucratic, nurturant, task-oriented, authoritarian and participative styles. The LPC Scale consisted of 18 bipolar semantic differential scales on which the leader is asked to describe the characteristic profile of a least preferred coworker with whom he had great difficulty in getting things done. The higher scores on LPC scale indicated relationship orientation and the lower scores characterized leadership styles to be task-oriented. The Conflict Management Strategies Scale (Sayeed, 1981) is intended to measure individual manager's preferences across 8 conflict handling strategies in a semi-projective situation. A caselet is portrayed with a conflicting problem to which manager who is responding to the situation of the case projects himself as a superior in the situation and opts for a strategy out of 8 conflict handling strategies, such as following rules, compromising, forcing, consulting, confronting, avoiding, toning down and accommodating, The ratings for preferring conflict handling strategies as mentioned above are obtained on a 7 point scale for each of the 8 possible strategies. Higher score indicated higher preference for the conflict handling strategy which can be applied to the situation described in the case. The lower score signifies that the given conflict handling strategy is least applicable in the situation. Besides the above scales, the battery

of instruments also contained a personal data blank which asked for information about job and organizational demographics of the respondents.

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Table 1 : Item Total Correlations, Alpha Reliabilities and Factor Loadings of LPC and Leadership Styles Scale (N = 79)

Dimension	Item	Mean	Item Total correlation		Alpha reliability	Factor loadings*
			Range	Median r		
Participative	13	3.77 (3)	0.30 — 0.59	0.41	0.63	0.73
Nurturant	8	4.09 (2)	0.48 — 0.68	0.54	0.76	0.73
Authoritarian	11	3.07 (5)	0.22 — 0.58	0.50	0.61	0.19
Task-oriented	9	4.10 (1)	0.35 — 0.60	0.52	0.60	0.79
Bureaucratic	9	3.24 (4)	0.39 — 0.68	0.43	0.57	0.39
LPC	18	65.58	0.71 — 0.91	0.86	0.98	0.05

*Factor analysis is based on Overall and Klette (1971) powered vector factor analysis.

Conflict Management Styles

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics of Conflict Management Strategies

Sl. No.	Conflict Management Strategies	Rank	S.D.
		$\bar{X}$	
1	Following rules	3.51 (7)	1.67
2	Compromising	4.83 (3)	1.66
3	Forcing	3.61 (6)	1.79
4	Consulting	4.01 (5)	1.76
5	Confronating	5.82 (1)	1.50
6	Avoidance	1.24 (8)	0.78
7	Toning down	5.39 (2)	1.40
8	Accommodating	4.11 (4)	1.66

Table 3 : Multiple Regression Analysis between Leadership Dimensions and Conflict Management Strategies

Leadership Styles		Conflict Management Strategies							
	Following rules	Compro-mising	Forcing	Consul-ting	Confron-ting	Avoid-ing	Toning down	Accommo-dating
Participative	0.03	0.10	0.19 (-0.11)*	0.10	0.03	-0.00	0.32*	0.33*
Nurturant	0.05	0.13	-0.07	0.02	0.07	-0.09	0.46 (3.28**)	0.24*
Authoritarian	0.13	0.20	0.30*	0.09	-0.16	0.02	-0.02	-0.06
Task-oriented	0.16	0.19	-0.03	-0.01	0.13	-0.11	0.28*	0.27*
Bureaucratic	0.19	0.15	0.29* (0.23*)	0.16	-0.24*	0.16	0.05	0.15
LPC	0.11	-0.13	0.12	-0.00	0.04	-0.05	0.13	0.18
R^2 (%)	5.98	6.33	21.28**	4.43	11.77	7.97	23.76**	14.14

** $p < 0.01$
* $p < 0.05$.
NOTE : Significant regression coefficients are reported in parentheses.

Table 4 : Percentages of Variance Explained by Leadership Style Items and Conflict Management Strategies

Leadership Styles	Following rules	Compro- mising	Forcing	Consul- ting	Confron- ting	Avoid- ing	Toning down	Accommo- dating
Participative	22.28	16.79	20.27	13.56	19.23	13.54	36.76**	19.12
Nurturant	6.81	8.38	16.68	13.71	13.55	9.19	34.10**	19.80*
Authoritarian	9.44	20.46	27.43**	15.82	17.83	3.92	8.45	7.81
Task-oriented	10.83	23.89*	9.83	10.90	17.41	9.11	19.01	14.53
Bureaucratic	21.10*	5.83	16.41	20.13	15.94	9.21	13.45	21.97*

(Columns grouped under: Conflict Management Strategies)

**$p < 0.05$
* $p < 0.01$.

Table 5 : Multiple Regression Analysis between Job/Organizational Demographics and Leadership Styles/Conflict Management Strategies

Leadership styles/ conflict management dimensions	Age	Education		Level of Mgmt.	Salary level	Length of service	R² (%)
		Formal	Professional				
LPC	7.17*	5.76	-3.32	3.95	-7.40	3.07	14.29
Participative	1.65*	1.19	4.42**	0.21	-1.35	-0.83	21.25*
Nurturant	-0.38	1.07	1.84	0.85	0.67	0.16	11.71
Authoritarian	0.33	0.79	-0.06	0.62	-1.13	0.13	3.37
Task-oriented	0.45	0.76	1.75	1.56*	-0.66	-0.34	14.02
Bureaucratic	0.55	-0.27	0.69	0.67	-0.56	-0.27	3.30
Following rules	0.22	-0.18	-0.32	0.18	-0.11	-0.14	2.44
Compromising	0.38	-0.19	0.14	0.23	-0.60*	0.35	8.60
Forcing	0.01	-0.26	-0.75	0.12	-0.02	0.13	3.12
Consulting	0.31	0.36	0.74	-0.47	0.03	-0.06	7.70
Confronting	-0.36	0.20	-0.35	0.02	0.46	0.38*	9.34
Avoiding	0.11	0.03	-0.11	0.02	0.03	-0.10	2.03
Toning down	-0.03	-0.02	0.65	-0.05	0.40	-0.04	8.99
Accommodating	0.08	-0.13	0.32	-0.09	-0.42	0.16	6.83

** $p < 0.01$
* $p < 0.05$.

Table 6 : Intervariable D-square Distances for Conflict Management Strategies and Their Clustering

Sl. No.	C M S*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Cluster I Reciprocal problem solving style	Cluster II Authoritative system supported style
1	Following rules	0.00	625.0	328.0	556.0	835.0	629.0	697.0	500.00	0	1
2	Compromising		0.0	559.0	439.0	500.0	1284.0	394.0	419.0	1	0
3	Forcing			0.0	536.0	943.0	711.0	717.0	514.0	0	1
4	Consulting				0.0	669.0	871.0	527.0	328.0	0	1
5	Confronting					0.0	1908.0	268.0	573.0	1	0
6	Avoiding						0.0	1616.0	943.0		1
7	Toning down differences							0.0	403.0	1	0
8	Accommodating								0.0	1	0
									Mean	5.04	3.09

*CMS = Conflict Management Strategies

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Table 7 : Correlation between LPC Scale and Sinha's Leadership Dimension

Leadership dimension (Sinha, 1980)	LPC (N=79)	Leadership Styles (Fielder, 1967)		
		Low LPC (N=17)	Moderate LPC (N=37)	High LPC (N=25)
Participative	−0.12	−0.32	0.37	0.37
Nurturant	−0.08	−0.06	0.04	0.24
Authoritarian	0.03	0.22	0.13	−0.18
Task-oriented	0.05	−0.12	0.20	0.19
Bureaucratic	0.09	0.25	0.24	−0.10

** $p < 0.01$
* $p < 0.05$

Table 8 : Correlations between Leadership Styles and Conflict Management Strategies under Low, Moderate and High LPC Conditions

Sl. No	Conflict Management Strategies	LPC			Participative			Nurturant			Authoritarian			Task-oriented			Bureaucratic		
		L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H
1	Following rules	0.29	0.09	0.00	0.15	0.08	-0.02	-0.01	0.10	0.05	-0.04	0.21	0.18	0.00	0.33*	0.02	0.35	0.29	-0.09
2	Compromising	-0.05	0.03	-0.17	-0.17	0.34*	0.03	-0.17	0.29	0.18	0.42	0.08	0.08	-0.16	0.40*	0.19	0.16	0.29	-0.15
3	Forcing	0.67**	0.21	0.11	-0.56*	-0.06	-0.10	-0.04	-0.07	-0.06	0.27	0.21	0.51**	0.06	0.03	-0.18	0.33	0.46**	-0.09
4	Consulting	-0.13	0.13	-0.15	-0.10	0.33*	-0.18	0.05	0.09	-0.14	0.11	0.01	0.19	-0.07	0.14	0.14	0.01	0.10	0.39**
5	Confronting	-0.55	-0.13	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.13	0.13	0.09	0.11	-0.21	-0.05	-0.31	0.29	-0.01	0.31	-0.24	-0.21	-0.39*
6	Avoiding	0.16	-0.13	0.10	0.31	0.11	-0.26	-0.16	-0.05	-0.11	-0.07	0.10	-0.09	-0.22	-0.01	-0.30	0.17	0.23	0.07
7	Toning down	-0.22	0.19	0.36	0.19	0.36*	0.38*	0.47a	0.40*	0.61**	0.11	0.02	-0.18	0.53**	0.15	0.38*	0.48	-0.05	-0.11
8	Accommodating	-0.00	0.10	-0.12	0.46	0.30	0.25	0.26	0.17	0.30	-0.07	0.07	-0.18	0.14	0.24	0.32	0.37	0.16	-0.00

NOTE : L = Low LPC; N = 17
M = Medium LPC; N = 37
H = High LPC; N = 25

**p < 0.01
*p < 0.05

a = approaching significance

Table 9 : Correlations between Leadership Dimensions (Sinha, 1980) and Conflict Management Styles (N = 79)

Leadership dimension	Conflict Management Style	
	Reciprocal Problem Solving Style	Authoritative System Supported Style
Participative	0.34**	0.03
Nurturant	0.38**	-0.02
Authoritarian	−0.01	0.28*
Task-oriented	0.38**	0.04
Bureaucratic	0.06	0.37**

**p < 0.01
* p < 0.05