

Role of Leadership in Building an Organizational Culture and Effectiveness

Rakesh Rayiramkandath*

Research Fellow, National School of Leadership, Pune, India

Abstract

This research paper looks into how leadership skills have brought prosperity to many countries, including India over the years. In India, leadership skills in leading the country is popular, and has been honed by generations of Indians living in the country from ancient to modern days. In the earlier stage, leadership research focused in bringing out 'authority' in leaders, and look towards those who possess assertive voice and clear vision to lead the people. Now, the core value of organizations and organizational performance begins with the leaders and their different leadership styles discussed above. By analysing many leadership styles associated with the Indian leaders such as the great man behavioural, situational, contingency, transformational, transactional, and complexity leadership styles, the paper looks into how such leadership qualities have become a necessity in bringing development and performance changes in modern organizational work operations. The analysis brought out that these leadership styles remains as the main determinant of organizational success, since they offer good context in increasing commitment from workers towards organizational performance.

Keywords: Historical Dynasties, Leadership, Skills, Leadership Styles, Organisational Leadership



1. Background of the Study

1.1 Overview of the Concept of Leadership and its Significance in an Organization

Leadership inspires other people to pursue their vision to the extent that it later becomes a shared vision between the leaders and the subordinates that contributes towards the success of organization. Over the past 60 years, many analysis have come up to explain the concept of leadership, but one of the most influential analysis of the concept of leadership has been given by Bass^{4,20}. Bass' 'Theory of Leadership' states that there are three ways through which the concept of leaders can be explained⁴. These include: Some of the inherent personality traits makes people to naturally become a leader (trait theory); some rise to the occasion of becoming a leader caused by crisis or event (great events theory); and some people choose to become leaders by cultivating and learning the leadership skills (process leadership theory)⁴. Out of these, the trait theory which emphasize on the positive attributes of human being like intelligence, creativity, self-confident, decisive,

dependable, and persistent personalities are considered as being influential in modern day understanding of the concept of leadership. Many other styles of leadership such as great man's theory, behavioural, situational, contingency, transformational, transactional, and complexity brings out as to what constitute leadership styles, and how they work in its application to improve organizational performance is available^{3,6,8,9,16,22,32,35}.

Despite many of these styles put forward to explain what leadership constitutes, some elements can be associated with in conceptualizing leadership such as leadership being a process, leadership influencing others, leadership influencing groups of people, leadership involving common goals, and so on. Based on these understanding, 'leadership' can finally be understood as the "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal"²⁰. Various functions of a leader are carried out through the leadership process¹¹, that influences the individual employees to perform through the influence of the leader. Leadership styles are the main determinant of organizational success in modern day organizational set up.

* Author for correspondence

1.2 Historicity of Indian Leadership and its Influence in Shaping Today's Practice

Leadership skills have brought prosperity to many countries. In country like India, leadership skills in leading the country are popular, and have been honed by generations of Indians living in the country. Even outside the country, Indian leaders have been looked up as being a global leader. For the Indians, whether it is about politics, military, or career prospect, leadership has always attracted the masses, and this can be historically contextualized from ancient history to contemporary India²⁴.

To start with the Mauryan dynasty in ancient India, there was the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta Maurya (321 – 297 BCE), who was the greatest leader that help in uniting many isolated Indian states. He also ruled in consent with the people and also in support from the people²⁵. Good leadership was also evident among the Marathas in the medieval age²⁸. *Six Glorious Epoch of Indian History*, the Mauryan and the Maratha empires has been cited as two important dynastic empires that portrays strong leadership in India. The Marathas by the late medieval and early modernity had great leaders like Shivaji, who established a strong Maratha Empire in modern day Maharashtra region. His leadership can be assigned as portraying strong participative and democratic style¹. Leadership skills of the Indians can also be harnessed from the Rajputs in the early medieval times, who comprised an integral part in studying leadership history in India. Rajput leaders like Prithviraj Chauhan and Maharana Pratap were known for being the ambitious and successful warriors³⁰. Medieval era also saw Akbar, the great Mughal Emperor as the leader who was not only pragmatic, but was also the far-sighted leader that understood the complexities of Indian society. He was able to realize the sensitivity of the Indian society towards religion, customs, and beliefs long before modern secularism sets in, thus establishing his dynamic and charismatic leadership²⁶.

Leadership traits which can be inherent or developed are emphasized by many organizations, and modern Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi have the inherent trait of a leader, where he practices what he advocated at all levels¹⁸. In complex and composite nation like India, Gandhian leadership is well accepted since his leadership traits shows that he is able to lead the people with positive qualities. Gandhian advocating non-violence policies in the struggle against British imperialism garnered him the

trademark of being a strong contemporary leader². One of the simplest style of leadership that can be applied in the Indian form of leadership is the ‘Great Man’s Leadership Style’, which asserts that leadership depends on those leaders who are exceptional- born with innate qualities and are destined to lead the subordinates⁵. However, such applications have become narrow, and broader application of the many theories stated above can be applied in modern day organizations (India and beyond).

Further this study will focus on following objectives:

- To understand the degree of learning from historical Indian leaders and dynasties, thereby shaping the present role of leadership.
- To review the role of leadership and its impact on people and organization in setting overall behavior pattern.
- To explore the impact of leadership on the effectiveness of performance delivery.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Shaping of Present Leadership Skills and Role in Organizational Context, from Historical Personalities and Dynasty Heads

One of the most explainable style of leadership contextualizing history is the Great Man Style of leadership with its exceptional innate qualities that are destined to lead the followers⁵. Later the trait leadership theory came up to fill the inherent gap, narrowing down as to what elements actually make a good leader. The trait approach gives emphasis on intelligence, creativity, self-confidence, being decisive, dependable, and being persistent of a leader. The approach was mainly applied and used in military sector and later applied in other industries as well. The issue with this approach is that many diverse traits are continuously identified without being consistent on the trait or traits identified to make a good leader⁵. Such qualities are applicable in modern day maintenance of organizations.

By employing many styles and approaches, leadership is no longer seen as a great man’s style or trait style of leading people, but a strategic approach through which organization’s members take the leadership functions to apply it for management growth. Strategic leadership or the strategic role of a leader is required in understanding the historical context of leadership concept and applying

it in the present and future organizational operations. For a start, the behaviourist theory help modern practicing managers to harvest positive behaviour in leading the organization^{3,16,23}. Situational theory, which makes leaders to deal with different situations in different time while working for organizational development can be asserted to have made Akbar to deal with the complex situation in India. It brings out that leaders should be dynamic and are able to deal with different environment and employees present^{3,32}. Contingency theory in the meantime helps leadership building in maintaining relationship, managing task-structure, and position power helps the organization to develop such as the developing leader-member relations, ability to maintain position power, being consultative and democratic, and ability to get task done^{9,10}. This theory is seen as inherent in the leadership qualities of the Marathas, the Mauryas, and the Mughals. Leadership through transformational theory also stimulates and elevates the leaders towards better platform and higher levels of motivation that necessitate the growth of organizational performance⁶. Mahatma Gandhi's need to strive against British imperialism through non-violence comes under such two styles of leadership. The modern theory of complexity style of leadership, where leaders need to possess unique character of adaptability and dynamism³⁵, can be accounted to Akbar's understanding of India at that time, much so, in modern complex organizational behaviour.

2.2 Identify the Issues that are Still Prevalent and in Usage Within Organizational Leadership Skills

How to deal with organizational challenges through leadership skills has been prevalent in many organizations and companies. In the fast growing organizations and companies, leaders need to cope with swift changing impacts that technology and globalization has to offer. This requires continuous skill development on global leadership, learn work ethic, and also continue learning on their work related matter³³. This is because in modern days, the role of the performance of the leaders influences all aspects such as strategic planning, organizational structure, and niche management¹³. With good strategic leadership plan, or in this case by applying the various leadership styles discussed, the following leadership skills are still pursued by many organizations, with issues, challenges, and positive application at the same time.

The inherent fact in the great man theory is that leaders have ingrained leadership quality. Although such facts cannot be denied, in the complex modern organizational set-up, leaders-managers are often those people that are willing to get motivated, follow, and learn from others, and thus, finding 'great mentors' are still pursued to bring development in organizational performance⁵. Clarifying visions and goals to enhance effective leadership allow the leaders to see and work on the areas that require improvement among themselves and for the organization eventually⁵. Leaders who are able to take their tasks stringently are also the ones that most of the time becomes an effective leader. For any leaders that aspire for efficient performance, being committed therefore remains necessary^{31,36}. In the end, it can be stated that best leaders are the one who are the best learners as well. So, effective leaders should learn from their experiences, improve on it, and bring development in their performance. These include learning from historical figures, and improving on their skills that might prove useful for modern employers.

2.3 Leadership Style for Different Organizational Situation

As every organizational situation that arises is different, in the same way the leadership style adapted to tackle every such situation should also be different as every leadership style has different and unique attributes that are specific for specific situation. Further, Lynch¹⁵, stated that single leadership style is not applicable to every situation in an organization. Authoritarian leaders or autocratic leaders present clear description of expectations as to the requirements, needs, preset the answers related to what is to be done or how is to be done. Authoritarian leaders take decisions autonomously with no contribution or participation from the followers or subordinates or the rest of the group. Authoritarian leadership is applicable to circumstances wherein there is limited time for group decision-making or in case of an urgent situation or where in a situation the leader knows what is best and is the most well-informed associate of the group¹⁵. Democratic leadership also called the participative leadership wherein the leader offers direction and supervision to group members and encourages them to participate in the group and permit participation from other group members. Democratic leaders support the group members to contribute but keep hold of the final verdict over the decision-making process⁷. Declarative

leadership, also known as laissez-fair leadership provides slight or no guidance to the members of the group and decision-making process along with the final step to be taken is left up to members of the group. This style is successful in situations where members of the group are highly qualified and well aware of what is expected of them and also excel in the area of expertise. Transactional leadership style follows a strict bureaucratic structuring, formalization and standardization of organizational activities to ensure certainty, control, and compliance so as to achieve set goals with no motive to favour any change while following the routine activities only¹⁹ which is a requirement in situations of catastrophe and emergency at organizational level²¹ thus contributing to be a quality of resilient leadership. Transformational leadership style focuses on being responsible for long-term sustainability through the creation of alternative ideas, paths, and modes of operating and behavioral standards²⁷ and so being future oriented is the most important property of this leadership. Therefore in case of situations where change is happening and is to be managed is the situation where this leadership style will work the best. Situational leadership depends on three factors that influence the situational leader's decisions. These factors are the ability of the followers, the situation and the ability of the leader. The leader adjusts in accordance to the limitation of the situation presented to him by his followers or the subordinates and sometimes the situation itself. Adaptability is the main characteristic of this leadership style⁷. Herein the leaders are required to be dynamic enough so that different situations can be tackled.

2.4 Interrelationship between Leadership, Workforce Behavior (Organizational Culture) and Organizational Performance

Performance can be understood as the systematic process, which tries to improve organizations operation by developing the performance of individuals and the teams¹⁴. Such activities bring better results for the organization at large, and bring development within shared understanding of what to achieve, manage, and develop for the same. In modern organizational working system, leadership and organizational culture have been considered as the most crucial elements in bringing development in the organizational performance¹².

The 'organizational culture' or 'workforce behaviour', which comprises of the values, belief, and perceptions shared by the employees in the organizations determines the working performance of the organizations³⁴. This culture and behaviour of the workforce is the core of values that are shared by the people working together every day. Organizational culture and values like authenticity, collaboration, openness, and trust are some of the values that the leaders can emphasize in order to bring marked development in the company²⁹. The popularity has also been enhanced by the fact that the principal reason for popular interest in organizational culture and leaders is to determine the linkage between these aspects and organizational performance¹⁷. In this case, identical cultural type and the leadership type are known to coordinate and influence the performance of the organization.

According to Tsai³⁴, managing organizations now call for workforce behaviour as one of the main evidence that shows performance improvement in the organization. Workforce behaviour shows the underpinning dimensions that conditions the working of the employees within the organization like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. When leaders understand the core values of these working elements, then, they are able to influence the employees and bring changes for the organizations. Leaders need to appreciate their function in boosting the nature of the workforce behaviour, which will ensure consistent positive behaviour among the employees in their work performance.

In the end, to improve workforce behaviour and organizational performance, leaders need to find more flexible relationship with the employees in order to improve performance, which is essential in the workplace³³. For organizations to remain competitive and perform well in the market, such loose ties and loyalty needs to be established with the followers. Leaders also include the need to keep up with technological advancement and make the followers to do the same. Technological development plays important role in shaping the performance of the organizations, since it saves time, gives quality, and generates more finance for the organization³³. For organizations to perform well in the market, leaders need to adapt to technological change and adjust to e-learning, virtual workforce, virtual organizations, and so on, along with the workforce that ultimately builds positive organizational performance.

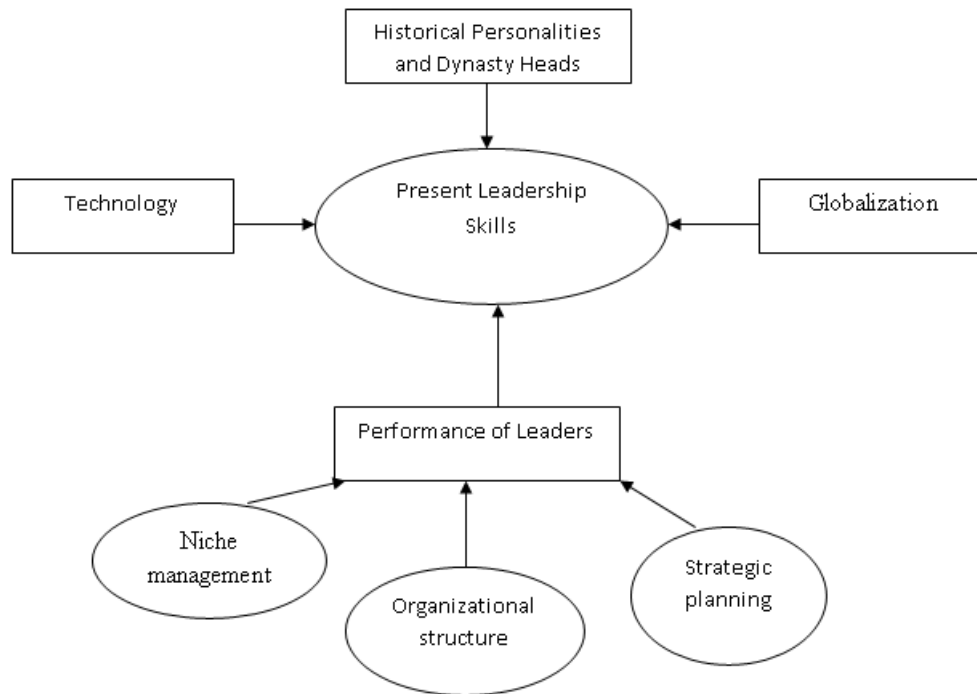


Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of literature review.

3. Discussions and Conclusions

These various styles of leadership allow employees and subordinates to think critically in order to bring changes in the organization, and help them commit towards positive changes in their work performance. Leadership is a practice by which a person persuades others to achieve a purpose or aim and drives the organization in the direction that makes it more unified and coherent. To bring performance level at higher ground therefore means that leaders should be able to treat right, connect, understand, and communicate with the followers and subordinates as part of team work. It is required to shape the present leadership skills and role in organizational context, from historical personalities and dynasty heads since for every new evolving style the base remains the same.

Leaders should always learn how to connect and emphasis on teamwork, which they can start with by listening to other people's ideas and visions, and being dynamic and versatile to many changing environments within and outside the organization. This is because all surrounding aspects like leadership skills, workforce behaviour, and environmental and technological changes, determine the organizational performance at large, and in

modern day business market, organizational performance determined the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and financial viability of the organization. A leader is required to identify the issues that are old and out of date but are still prevalent in the organisation like technology so that proper growth of the organisation can be witnessed. Further every situation that arises in an organisation is different and requires different leadership style to deal with it because every situation has different attributes and so does different leadership styles.

4. Limitations and Future Scope

While conducting the study, there were some limitations to this study. Firstly, the study is based on secondary data that includes the study of different authors, thus it is possible that the study could be biased as per the findings of these researches. Secondly, the study includes the research papers of all times that of past few decades to till date thus giving the study a mixed conclusions that is a thought process of all times about the role of leadership in building an organizational culture and effectiveness.

For future study, it is suggested to work with primary data so the latest status of role of leadership in building an organizational culture and effectiveness can be studied.

Further it is suggested to conduct the study specific to a leadership style so that its effect on performance delivery and in setting overall behaviour pattern in organisation.

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