

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND VALUE SYSTEMS

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**Abstract.** *The relationship between a person's values and his or her task and relations oriented leadership styles was examined in this study. Values were measured both independently of each other and in the form of a value system using the ipsative, rank-order design. Findings indicate that high-task leaders give greater importance to the value of achievement than low-task leaders, and high-relations leaders give greater importance to the values of benevolence and security as compared to low-relations leaders.*

Values are the most deeply ingrained part of personality in a person. Values play an important role in decision making (Fritzsche, 1995). Values also affect various aspects of organizational life. Values could thus have a major role to play in the leadership process. Trait theories of leadership have generally held that certain personality traits enhance leadership effectiveness. It is possible that some specific values could be related to certain leadership styles. In this paper, we report a study that looked at how the importance given to certain values is related to task-oriented and relations-oriented leadership styles.

### Values

Rokeach (1973) defined value as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite mode of conduct or end state of existence. Values could also be organized hierarchically giving rise to a value system. Value system is an organized set of preferential standards that are used in making selections of objects and actions, resolving conflicts, invoking social sanctions, and coping with needs or claims for social and psychological defenses of choices made or proposed (Williams, 1979). Two people might be having a similar set of values but as long as there is even one value whose relative importance is different in these individuals, the behaviors of those individuals might be quite different. Since it is more important to see the relative rankings of various values than seeing the absolute importance attached to each value, the ranking of the values or the ipsative model becomes more relevant (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987).

Various people have attempted to classify values. However, the foundation for most of these classifications has been the value survey of Rokeach (1973). According to Rokeach, there are two kinds of values—instrumental values and terminal values. An advantage of

Rokeach's value survey is that the respondents need to deal with only 36 concepts each being conveyed by two or three short phrases (Braithwaite & Law, 1985). Values could be clustered under various motivational domains based on the interrelations between values. Impact of values on attitudes and behaviors, as well as on different social structures could be interpreted more effectively by using value domains rather than independent values. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) identified the following eight domains by classifying most of the 36 values of Rokeach: Enjoyment, Security, Achievement, Self-Direction, Restrictive-Conformity, Prosocial, Social Power, Maturity.

These domains simplified the concept of values largely. Since everything could be classified into one of the eight domains, it made it much easier to deal with a person's value system with these eight domains than with the 36 values. The number of domains was subsequently increased to ten and some of the domains were renamed (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). The ten domains are:

01. Achievement (Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards),
02. Benevolence (Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact),
03. Conformity (Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms),
04. Hedonism (Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself),
05. Power (Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources),
06. Security (Safety, harmony, and stability of society),
07. Self-Direction (Independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring),
08. Stimulation (Excitement, novelty and challenge in life),
09. Tradition (Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide for oneself),
10. Universalism (Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all the people and for nature).

## Leadership

Leadership is a relationship in which leaders engage with followers on the basis of shared motives and values and goals—on the basis, that is, of the follower's "true" needs as well as those of leaders: psychological, economic, safety, spiritual, sexual, aesthetic (Burns, 1978). Leadership styles have been studied under three approaches: the trait approach, the behavioral approach, and the contingency approach (Yukl, 1998).

The Ohio Studies were one of the first sets of studies made on leadership behaviors. They distinguished between initiating structure and consideration as far as leadership was concerned. Blake and Mouton (1984) presented a grid that has two dimensions—concern for people and concern for production. Concern for production is akin to the initiating structure of the Ohio studies and emphasizes results, bottom line, performance, profits, or mission. Concern for people is similar to the consideration of the Ohio studies. It is shown through the various attempts that the person makes to be liked by his or her subordinates, and to be able to solve their problems. Feelings like sympathy, affection, trust, respect etc. are the hallmarks of a person high on consideration.

Task-oriented leaders simply direct their subordinates, with little concern for explanation or involvement. Such people are hard working; they feel powerful, and submit to no one. They are highly domineering and can even use coercive means like threat to get their

way with their subordinates. Since these people are so ambitious and want success at any cost, they are most likely to give high importance to achievement. In addition, they act on their own that would probably also make them more self-directive. These people are also likely to have a strong need for power.

*Hypothesis 1: Concern for production or task-oriented leadership will be positively related to the values of achievement, self-direction, and power.*

Similarly, a concern for people, or relations-oriented leadership behavior signifies an inclination towards people, involving them and maintaining flexibility in any decision taken. Everything is based on a generation of good feelings. Since such people are concerned much about others, they are likely to be guided by values like benevolence and universalism. They will also be guided by a sense of obligation to gain social acceptance that would make them value tradition and conformity. Relations-oriented people are likely to keep their relationships very secure.

*Hypothesis 2: Concern for people or relations-oriented leadership will be positively related to the values of benevolence, universalism, tradition, conformity, and security.*

It is difficult for a person with a high concern for production to have a high concern for people. It is difficult to reconcile internal efficiency and flexibility because the more the structured nature of the task, the more difficult it becomes to change it to meet subordinates' ideas. Similarly, there is a trade off between internal concerns and external efficiency (Yukl, 1998). However, this trade off will be there only if a person is extremely high on any one dimension. If not, then it is possible to have some amount of both the dimensions. There has to be a point beyond which any higher emphasis on one concern—production or people—leads to a fall in the other.

*Hypothesis 3: Concern for people and concern for production will be positively related up to a point beyond which they will be negatively related to each other.*

## **Method**

The organization chosen was a large private heavy engineering firm based mostly in the eastern part of India. The sample consisted of 50 leader-subordinate pairs. The leaders surveyed were part of top management ranging in designation from general manager to senior manager. Of the 50 leader-subordinate dyads surveyed, 43 leaders and 26 subordinates were at least 36 years old. Our entire sample, barring one exception, consisted of males.

For our data collection, we used two questionnaires. The first one measured task and relations oriented leadership style (Northouse, 1997) of the leader. The questionnaire had 20 items. Subordinates were asked to rate how often their boss engaged in each of the 20 described behaviors. They indicated their response to each item on a five-point scale: 1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Occasionally; 4=Often; 5=Always. This questionnaire was given to the subordinates as the leadership style of a person could be best measured by surveying his or her subordinates. The second questionnaire listed the 10 values with their descriptions, which the leaders themselves had to rank in order to generate the ipsative value system. Besides this, we also asked them to rate these values based on their importance on a five-point scale: 1=Not at all important (no actions are guided by this); 2=Not important (hardly any actions are guided by this); 3=Indifferent; 4=Important (many actions are guided by this); 5=Extremely important (all actions are guided by this).

## Results

We first looked at the rank orderings of values given by the leaders, and used non-parametric statistical techniques to look at the relationship between value rankings and leadership styles. We split the sample of leaders into two groups—high-task and low-task—based on the median score on the task dimension of the leadership scale. Taking one value at a time, we arrived at the median rank given by respondents in the high-task and low-task groups separately. For each group (high-task and low-task), we arranged the median ranks for all the ten values in ascending order to obtain the composite rank order (Rokeach, 1973). The composite rank order of the ten values for the high-task and low-task groups is given in Table 1. In the case of a tie between two or more median scores, we resorted to the mean to arrive at the composite rank order. For each of the ten values, we also used the median test to see if the rankings given by respondents in the two groups (high-task and low-task) were different. The only value that was ranked significantly ( $p < .05$ ) differently by the two groups was achievement, which was given a higher rank by the high-task leaders as compared to the low-task leaders. This supports hypothesis 1 partially. High-task leaders also considered self-direction to be less important ( $p < .10$ ) than low-task leaders. We repeated the same procedure for relations-oriented leadership style also. Table 2 presents the composite rank order for the high-relations and low-relations groups of leaders. High-relations leaders gave significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher ranks to security and benevolence and lower ranks to self-direction and power, as compared to low-relations leaders. This provides partial support for hypothesis 2.

We then looked at the independent value ratings given by the leaders, and used correlation analysis to look at the relationship between value ratings and leadership styles. The correlation matrix for two leadership styles and ten values is presented in Table 3. Task-oriented leadership style was significantly ( $p < .05$ ) positively related to achievement, and moderately ( $p < .10$ ) positively related to power. It was not related to self-direction. This supports our hypothesis 1 partially. Task was also positively related to benevolence ( $p < .01$ ), universalism ( $p < .10$ ), and conformity ( $p < .10$ ). Relations-oriented leadership style was significantly ( $p < .001$ ) positively related to benevolence and security, and moderately ( $p < .10$ ) positively related to universalism. It was not related to tradition and conformity as hypothesized. Thus, our hypothesis 2 was also only partially supported. Relations was also moderately ( $p < .10$ ) negatively related to hedonism and significantly ( $p < .05$ ) positively related to achievement.

To test our hypothesis 3, we plotted a scatter diagram for task and relations. Task and relations, which were significantly correlated to each other ( $r = .57$ ,  $p < .001$ ), increased together without any limit. Thus, our hypothesis 3 was not supported.

## Discussion

The summarized value systems (composite rank orders) for the low-task and the high-task leaders show that achievement is shifted to the third place in the low-task people as against its first rank given by the high-task people. As against this, power and self-direction move up for the low-task people. This goes to show that achievement is foremost on the minds of people when they are too task oriented. Security is considered more important than universalism by the high-task leaders, while low-task leaders prioritize differently. Similarly, benevolence is placed above tradition, stimulation, and conformity by the high-task people as

compared to the low-task people who consider benevolence less important than tradition, stimulation and conformity.

Findings show that relations oriented leadership style is positively related to the values of benevolence and security. This is in line with a typical high-relations person who goes out of his or her way to be nice to people. However, tradition, conformity, and universalism are not significantly related to relations. Probably a high-relations person is more concerned with the welfare of his or her immediate world rather than the welfare of the larger society as a whole.

The findings do not support our third hypothesis. Task and relations are related and this relationship is positive at all levels including at very high levels. This high degree of correlation between task and relations oriented leadership styles could be explained by the fact that the leaders surveyed are senior executives with possibly mature subordinates. In such a case, probably both the task and the relation dimensions could be very high. This is in conformity with the various situational leadership models (Hersey & Blanchard, 1994). If followers' tasks are highly structured and followers have high needs for achievement and independence and a high level of education and experience, then a leader should follow a style that is high on both task and relations. The tasks in the organization surveyed are highly structured and the subordinates surveyed probably have high need for achievement and vast experience (mostly in the same organization). The high correlation between the task dimension and the relations dimension is probably indicative of the existence of nurturant-task style of leadership that is prevalent in the Indian context.

Findings show that there is some commonality between the value systems of the high-task and high-relations leaders. The importance given to achievement is high for both high-task and high-relations leaders. It can probably be said that both these groups strive for achievement through their respective strong leadership styles. Akin to the high-task group, for the high-relations group, benevolence is placed higher than tradition, conformity, and stimulation. High-relations leaders consider security to be more important than universalism and tradition, while low-relations leaders do just the reverse.

This study provides preliminary evidence that values like achievement and benevolence are given relatively greater importance by leaders who are high on task or high on relations. Studies have generally shown that those who are high on both task and relations tend to be more effective (Yukl, 1998). Our findings seem to suggest that relative importance given to the values of achievement and benevolence could be a determinant of leadership effectiveness.

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**Table 1. Composite rank order of high-task and low-task groups**

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>High-task (N=24)</i> | <i>Low-task (N=26)</i> |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1           | Achievement *           | Self-Direction †       |
| 2           | Self-Direction †        | Power                  |
| 3           | Power                   | Achievement *          |
| 4           | Security                | Universalism           |
| 5           | Universalism            | Security               |
| 6           | Benevolence             | Tradition              |
| 7           | Tradition               | Stimulation            |
| 8           | Stimulation             | Conformity             |
| 9           | Conformity              | Benevolence            |
| 10          | Hedonism                | Hedonism               |

† =  $p < .10$ . \* =  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2. Composite rank order of high relations and low relations groups**

| <i>Rank</i> | <i>High-relations (N=23)</i> | <i>Low-relations (N=27)</i> |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1           | Achievement                  | Self-Direction **           |
| 2           | Security *                   | Power *                     |
| 3           | Self-Direction **            | Achievement                 |
| 4           | Power *                      | Universalism                |
| 5           | Universalism                 | Stimulation                 |
| 6           | Benevolence *                | Tradition                   |
| 7           | Tradition                    | Security *                  |
| 8           | Conformity                   | Hedonism *                  |
| 9           | Stimulation                  | Conformity                  |
| 10          | Hedonism *                   | Benevolence *               |

\* =  $p < .05$ . \*\* =  $p < .01$ .

**Table 3. Correlations Between Variables (N=50)**

|                    | <i>Mean</i> | <i>01</i> | <i>02</i> | <i>03</i> | <i>04</i> | <i>05</i> | <i>06</i> | <i>07</i> | <i>08</i> | <i>09</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>11</i> | <i>12</i> |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 01. Task           | 39.62       |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 02. Relations      | 38.60       | ***.57    |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 03. Power          | 3.60        | †.26      | .21       |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 04. Achievement    | 3.94        | ** .44    | *.30      | †.28      |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 05. Hedonism       | 3.62        | -.01      | †-.24     | -.07      | *-.31     |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 06. Stimulation    | 3.96        | -.06      | .07       | .14       | .13       | -.20      |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 07. Self-direction | 4.00        | .06       | .07       | .06       | ** .43    | -.09      | .19       |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 08. Universalism   | 3.66        | †.28      | †.24      | †.24      | *.31      | .06       | *.29      | *.34      |           |           |           |           |           |
| 09. Benevolence    | 3.80        | ** .40    | ***.46    | .16       | ***.48    | *-.29     | .09       | .19       | *.34      |           |           |           |           |
| 10. Tradition      | 3.72        | .14       | .02       | -.15      | .09       | .13       | .01       | .19       | .16       | .08       |           |           |           |
| 11. Conformity     | 3.72        | †.24      | .17       | .13       | .09       | .05       | .13       | -.12      | .17       | .06       | -.06      |           |           |
| 12. Security       | 4.60        | .18       | ***.49    | .03       | .12       | -.18      | .16       | ** .36    | *.34      | *.29      | *.32      | .17       |           |

† =  $p < .10$ . \* =  $p < .05$ . \*\* =  $p < .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .