

# Perception of HR Professionals on their Leader's Workstyle: A Study from the IT Sector of India

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## Abstract

This study examines the perception of HR professionals on their leader's workstyle with a special reference to IT sector employees in India. We used a survey instrument holding both affirmative and non-affirmative variables on a leader's workstyle and collected data from 601 employees working in the field of information technology. The researcher analysed the quantitative data using SPSS where a correlation and mean were used to understand the strong variable and found that there is a positive affirmation among the leaders by being a role model or charismatic. The study also highlighted the areas that require the attention of leaders to improve their workstyle functioning by considering the non-affirmative variables as essentially the role of a leader is to bring value to their followers. The study gives out that non-monetary rewards are much considered by the employees in consideration to the other affirmative variables.

**Keywords:** HR Function, IT sector, Leadership, Perceptions, Workstyle

## 1. Introduction

Over the centuries that companies have existed in contemporary and postmodern civilizations, the standard approach for handling human resources in organizations has experienced significant changes. Starting from an engineering and more technical-oriented human resource management style that was predominant in industrial enterprises to a greater emphasis on effective control of the human resource's efficiency modern management styles consider the organization's strategic needs while accentuating the employee needs as a critical organisational resource.

This is because today any organization's dynamics are influenced by a complex set of economic, social, political, and psychological aspects, some of which are local, others worldwide, and all of which have a broad impact on macro analysis. The balance and context of interpersonal, in-group, and intergroup

processes are all influenced by the leader's workstyle. Leaders' workstyle is a very specific component that is dependent on the individual's input, but it is crucial for an organization's success.

A good awareness of a leader's workstyle in various backgrounds becomes a management tool that may be used for crisis management and prevention, employee feedback, and maximizing human resources (Lord & Maher, 2002). The most basic approach to a leader's workstyle is to apply the concept of style a distinctive, personal way of interpreting the world and acting by it to professional behaviour and any work-related issues.

Despite its widespread use in the disciplines of human resources management and organisational psychology, the leader's workstyle idea lacks unanimity among professionals and researchers in terms of both definition and application. The results of the disparity of approaches can be seen in a variety of tests and

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surveys, training programmes, management decisions about personnel, workgroup management, and so on. Leadership is typically a way or a process of influencing the followers such that the follower thinks that the leader is a great source of influence (Irving *et al.*, 2017).

In addition to abilities, occupational interests, and work values, (*Work Styles - O\*NET 25.0 Data Dictionary at O\*NET Resource Center*, 2020) states that work styles are one aspect of a worker's characteristics that can affect how well they perform in a job. Personal workstyle can also be understood as how an individual works, as a sum of skilful, organisational, ideological, and moral qualities that are communicated in people's daily tasks, or as a harmony of diverse motivational, affective, cognitive, and psychosocial factors that together ascertain each person's perspective on how to relate to their work and use their resources to accomplish personal and organisational goals.

According to McFletcher Inventory, (*McFletcher Work Style Patterns Inventory - Project Management Software Development*, n.d.), working style is a synthesis of three fundamental components: a person's preferred method of working (the want), what they do at work and what others expect of them. Work style is another concept that (Feuerstein *et al.*, 2005), define, examine, and define as an individual's cognitive, behavioural, and physiological response sequence that takes place while carrying out work tasks. According to this viewpoint, (*Working with Uncertainty - The Wellbeing Thesis*, n.d.), one's work style can also be defined by their ability to deal with uncertainty, make a decision when all the information isn't available rather than when they have to adhere to very specific and detailed procedures, and quickly adjust to new demands. Based on this the current study tries to investigate the Perception of an HR professional on the workstyle of his or her superior.

### 1.1 Workstyle and Leadership Style – A Comparison

How a leader directs the efforts of a team of people is referred to as their leadership style. The actions leaders take to solicit input from subordinates, make decisions,

address issues, and evaluate results are referred to as their leadership style. In contrast, the personality types of effective leaders are described by their leadership traits that are revealed as their workstyle. The ability to lead others on an emotional, social, physical and intellectual level has historically been measured as one of these traits exposed in their workstyle. Thus the particular study objective is to understand and determine the influence of a leader's workstyle through affirmative statements and the influence of a leader's workstyle through non-affirmative statements. Based on this the following hypothesis are formulated:

- There is no significant difference in the affirmative variables of a leader's workstyle.
- There is no significant difference in the non-affirmative variables of the leader's workstyle.

## 2. Literature Review

Niculiță, (2015), proposed broad definitions of work style: Work style is made up of a set of "personal work-related characteristics." Other definitions provide diverse approaches to what a work style is based on the research goals and conceptual frameworks: Work style, as per (Nakajima & Hotta, 2016), is the "unity of professional, organisational, political, and moral qualities that are revealed in individuals' everyday professional activity".

Work style can be defined as a set of particular attributes grouped by many distinct components when confronted as an application of the individual's personality style to work-related activities: Ways to manage and channel personal energy (extraversion - introversion); Specific ways to gather information (sensation and perception - intuition); Decision-making patterns (reason based - emotion based); Life-management patterns (reasoning, judgment of values and perception). These dimensions are most commonly measured by the MBTI Indicator, a preference-based rather than performance-based measure, the latter being the traditional approach to work-related traits (Kummerow *et al.*, 2010). Each one of the work style typologies or models incorporates heterogeneous dimensions or traits (attitudinal, motivational, emotional, cognitive, and psycho-social)

to create composite traits relevant to individuals' behaviour in work-related environments.

Pongratz & Voß, (2003) enlightened that an efficiency-related approach to work style is a more common approach which allows for a value-centred dimension. An efficient work style is considered positive and desired, whereas an inefficient work style is considered negative. This approach may be detrimental to human resource management practices. It seems that a factorial approach to the same construct may be more useful, as it reduces the efficiency problem to a matter of selecting the right person for the job and tailoring the job requirements to the employee. The guiding principle of such an approach is straightforward: "the right person for the right job."

Most definitions of work style produce typologies with varying hypothetical or practical values. The majority of real-world applications of work style definitions contribute to training programmes tailored to specific organisations or departments of human resources management. Carolyn Gellermann (n.d.), for example, has designed a series of workshops to assist in the formation of work teams based on heterogeneity and complementarity. Her (Niculiță, 2015), approach to work style is comprised of four work style typologies, as follows: Doers: task-oriented, present-oriented, stubborn, competitive, in need to see results or finish the task according to objectives, are often the drivers of the group; Expressive: people-oriented, active to a fault, future-oriented, they act based on their intuition, popular, self-confident, in need of stimuli (high sensation seeking level) Amiable: are people-oriented, like to support the action, are present time frame oriented, act cooperatively, in need of acceptance, may be perceived as conforming, unsure and often play the role of the feelers in a group. Analytics: information oriented, like to contribute data to the action, are historic time frame oriented, act based on data, in need of accuracy, may be perceived as picky, critical and often play the role of thinkers in a group. Other dimensions of work style typologies include social influence, the need for accomplishment or self-fulfilment, interpersonal orientation, independence,

practical intelligence, energy level, emotional balance and control, adapting skills, and conscientiousness.

Borman, Kubisiak, (1999), demonstrated the seven most common defining traits included in operational definitions of the concept: (self) achievement orientation, social influence, interpersonal orientation, adaptability, conscientiousness, independence, and practical intelligence. Even though some of the concepts discussed above have become obsolete in light of more recent applied research in related fields, the value of the analysis of early studies lies in the identified similarities with the Big Five model.

Modern work style studies have concentrated predominantly on the influence of innovative technologies and work environments on how an individual interacts with his or her work environment and professional activities. Hayman, (2009) personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement, studied flexible work schedules and employee welfare are pertinent to this point. Luse *et al.*, (2013), explored cognitive styles and their impact on virtual work teams. Sato, (n.d.) examines telecommuting in Japanese society and its effect on work behaviour, whereas (Miyatake *et al.*, 2011), investigate the relationship between work style and smoking.

Few studies (Hayman, 2009)personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement, regard flexible work plans and more consideration of the welfare of the employees' term to be a good work style. Considering the reality today, most HR managers ponder themselves effective by nature and act according to the requirements of an organisation. (Mash & Adler, 2018), in their study on HR managers' role perception and their conflict management style tries to bring out new aspects of a leader's role in an organisation. This shows the changes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the current role played by a leader in general.

The past studies describe the kinds of workstyle that are needed to achieve a positive and effective transformation. But there lack of studies on the perception of HR on their leader's workstyle in the IT

sector, for which the present study has been carried out to have a better and deeper understanding.

### 3. Research Methodology

Turbulence in recent times has led to a higher attrition rate, especially in the leading IT firms that recorded an all-time high level of attrition. Cognizant had a 21% attrition rate in the first quarter of 2021 followed by Infosys and Wipro. This was considered by the researcher in this particular study as headship and the workstyle followed by the superior leads at times the employees to decide on stay satisfied or quit the organization unsatisfied. The present study takes the base of the P-E fit model which has five subgroups in it. To have a better understanding of P-G (Person-Group) fit the following study has been done. For this study, 601 employees working in the IT sector were selected using simple random sampling. They were given an online questionnaire consisting of demographic variables, both affirmative and non-affirmative variables relating to the leader's workstyle and analyzed using SPSS.

### 4. Results

The present study examined the perception of an HR professional on the workstyle followed by their reporting managers. 19.3% of female and 80.7% of male respondents participated in the study. Most of the employees (94.7%) were post-graduates and belonged to the age group of 32-42 years. Subjects ranging from 0 years of reporting to 23 years of reporting

were considered for the study. To probe the analysis, a mean rating and correlation analysis of affirmative and non-affirmative variables on leadership workstyle was studied.

#### 4.1 Affirmative variables on Leaders' Workstyle

Table 1 shows the mean of the affirmative variables on the leader's style where the Mean value for the affirmative variables varies from a minimum of 3.49 to a maximum of 4.15 on a scale of 5.

The respondents have given the highest rating (4.15) when asked whether their reporting manager expresses confidence in them. This is followed by their agreeing to the fact that they respect and trust their reporting manager (4.09). Next, they have indicated (4.00) that their manager motivates and helps them in achieving the goals they have set. Apart from this, they have given a rating of (3.9) for two questions. This means that they have agreed that they are going the extra mile in the organization due to the value shown to them by their reporting manager and that their manager encourages them to think innovatively and creatively.

$H_1$ : There is no significant difference in the affirmative variables of the leader's work style.

From Table 2 it is inferred that, among all the affirmative variables, the significant value of correlation for the variable V63-non-monetary rewards given by my

**Table 1.** Affirmative variables on Leaders' Workstyle

Parameters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
V51 My reporting Manager motivates me to achieve the goals I have set for myself.	601	4.00	1.002
V53 I go the extra mile in this organization because I feel valued by my reporting Manager	601	3.90	.949
V55 My reporting Manager encourages me to be creative and innovative in my thinking	601	3.90	.985
V57 My reporting Manager expresses confidence in me	601	4.15	.840
V59 I would describe my reporting Manager as a "charismatic" person	601	3.63	1.010
V61 I would describe my reporting Manager as an excellent role model to follow	601	3.52	1.152
V63 Non-monetary rewards given by my reporting Manager are more valuable than the monetary rewards	601	3.49	1.071
V66 I highly respect and trust my reporting Manager	601	4.09	.897
V68 I consider my reporting Manager as a mentor to me	601	3.57	1.164
V70 My reporting Manager allows/encourages me to challenge the 'status quo' in my work	601	3.70	.955
Valid N (listwise)	601		

**Source:** Primary Data

**Table 2.** Correlation for affirmative variables on leaders' workstyle

Affirmative variables on Leaders' Workstyle		V51 My reporting Manager motivates me	V53 I go the extra mile in this organization	V55 My reporting Manager encourages me	V57 My reporting Manager expresses confidence	V59 I would describe my reporting Manager	V61 I would describe my reporting Manager	V63 Non-monetary rewards given by my reporting	V66 I highly respect and trust my reporting Manager	V70 My reporting Manager allows/ encourages
V51 My reporting Manager motivates me	Correlation	1	.583**	.667**	.606**	.370**	.436**	.075	.476**	.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.008	.002	.606	.000	.000
V53 I go the extra mile in this organization	Correlation	.583**	1	.421**	.634**	.456**	.379**	.274	.455**	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.002	.000	.001	.007	.054	.001	.001
V55 My reporting Manager encourages me	Correlation	.667**	.421**	1	.639**	.508**	.674**	.061	.668**	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002		.000	.000	.000	.676	.000	.000
V57 My reporting Manager expresses confidence	Correlation	.606**	.634**	.639**	1	.575**	.376**	.203	.600**	.471**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.007	.157	.000	.001
V59 I would describe my reporting Manager	Correlation	.370**	.456**	.508**	.575**	1	.449**	.169	.497**	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.001	.000	.000		.001	.242	.000	.003
V61 I would describe my reporting Manager	Correlation	.436**	.379**	.674**	.376**	.449**	1	.092	.688**	.535**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.007	.000	.007	.001		.523	.000	.000
V63 Non-monetary rewards given by my reporting	Correlation	.075	.274	.061	.203	.169	.092	1	.014	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.606	.054	.676	.157	.242	.523		.924	.622
V66 I highly respect and trust my reporting Manager	Correlation	.476**	.455**	.668**	.600**	.497**	.688**	.014	1	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.924		.000
V70 My reporting Manager allows/ encourages	Correlation	.493**	.451**	.531**	.471**	.417**	.535**	.071	.515**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.001	.003	.000	.622	.000	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Primary Data

reporting (.606, .054, .676, .157, .242, .523, .924, .622) with all other variables is greater than 0.05. Hence there is no significant relationship exists between the

variable non-monetary rewards (affirmative variable) given by my reporting with all other variables taken in the study.

## 4.2 Non-Affirmative variables on Leader's Workstyle

In the below Table 3 few non-affirmative variables on leaders were asked of the respondents and the results are given below:

The Mean value for the non-affirmative variables varies from a minimum of 2.36 to a maximum of 3.13 on a scale of 5. This means the respondent's perception varied between "Disagree" and "Neutral". It means they are not in agreement with the negative remarks about their reporting manager. Although the extent of denial is not so strong, they do not feel that their reporting manager's behaviour at the workplace is negatively impacting their work.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in the non-affirmative variables of the leader's work style.

The Table 4 shows that the significant value for V52 (.983) with V69, V54 (.984) with V69, V56 (.933) with V69, V58 (.281, .313) with V65, V69, followed by V60 (.972) with V69, V65 (.281, .067) with V58, V71, and V71 (.067, .372) with V65, V69 doesn't have a significant correlation. To summarize, among all the non-Affirmative variables V69 "Every conversation with my reporting manager feels like a performance review" does not correlate with the variables V52, V54, V56, V58, V60 and V71.

**Table 3.** Non-Affirmative variables on Leaders' Workstyle

Parameters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
V52 My reporting Manager does NOT like when I question his/her views when I see things differently	601	2.94	1.207
V54 My reporting Manager does not seem to care about me as a person	601	2.36	1.178
V56 My reporting Manager does not like when I question the old way of doing things	601	2.77	1.210
V58 My reporting Manager defines and decides my work goals on his own	601	2.96	1.176
V60 I would describe my reporting Manager as a "manager" and not as a "leader"	601	2.94	1.284
V62 If my reporting Manager does a favour for me, he/she expects a favour in return	601	2.47	1.140
V65 If I make an error, my reporting Manager is sure to mention & criticize it before taking corrective action	601	3.12	1.179
V67 My reporting Manager often interferes in my work and does micro-management	601	2.79	1.232
V69 Every conversation with My reporting Manager feels like a performance review	601	3.13	1.168
V71 My reporting Manager is not interested in my career progression	601	2.51	1.192
Valid N (listwise)	601		

Source: Primary Data

**Table 4.** Correlation for non-affirmative variables on leader's workstyle

NON-AFFIRMATIVE VARIABLES ON LEADER'S WORKSTYLE		V52 My reporting Manager does NOT like	V54 My reporting Manager does not seem	V56 My reporting Manager does not like when	V58 My reporting Manager defines	V60 I would describe my reporting Manager	V62 If my reporting Manager does a favour	V65 If I make an error, my reporting Manager	V67 My reporting Manager often interferes	V69 Every conversation with My reporting	V71 My reporting Manager is not interested
V52 My reporting Manager does NOT like	Correlation	1	.616**	.694**	.459**	.585**	.294*	.338*	.484**	-.003	.478**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.001	.000	.039	.016	.000	.983	.000
V54 My reporting Manager does not seem	Correlation	.616**	1	.795**	.472**	.665**	.452**	.319*	.392**	.003	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.001	.000	.001	.024	.005	.984	.000
V56 My reporting Manager does not like when	Correlation	.694**	.795**	1	.609**	.729**	.493**	.384**	.568**	-.012	.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.006	.000	.933	.000

V58 My reporting Manager defines	Correlation	.459**	.472**	.609**	1	.366**	.507**	.155	.509**	-.146	.538**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.000		.009	.000	.281	.000	.313	.000
V60 I would describe my reporting Manager	Correlation	.585**	.665**	.729**	.366**	1	.519**	.434**	.482**	-.005	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.009		.000	.002	.000	.972	.000
V62 If my reporting Manager does a favour for me	Correlation	.294*	.452**	.493**	.507**	.519**	1	.481**	.641**	.315*	.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.001	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.026	.003
V65 If I make an error, my reporting Manager	Correlation	.338*	.319*	.384**	.155	.434**	.481**	1	.592**	.390**	.261
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.024	.006	.281	.002	.000		.000	.005	.067
V67 My reporting Manager often interferes	Correlation	.484**	.392**	.568**	.509**	.482**	.641**	.592**	1	.279*	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.050	.002
V69 Every conversation with My reporting manager feels like a performance review	Correlation	-.003	.003	-.012	-.146	-.005	.315*	.390**	.279*	1	-.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.983	.984	.933	.313	.972	.026	.005	.050		.372
V71 My reporting Manager is not interested	Correlation	.478**	.527**	.637**	.538**	.567**	.410**	.261	.428**	-.129	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003	.067	.002	.372	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data

## 5. Discussion

Any organization's dynamics are influenced by a wide range of economic, social, political, and psychological factors, some of which are local while others are global, and which have a significant impact that can be seen at the macro analysis level. The balance and context of interpersonal, in-group, and intergroup processes are greatly influenced by the leader's workstyle. Work style is a very specific factor that relates to the individual's contribution, but it is still important for the success of the organisation. A solid grasp of a leader and his or her work style serves as a management tool for crisis management and prevention, employee feedback

gathering, and making the most of human resources to the fullest possible. And also, a good environment is a better and happy place with contentment for an employee to work in. In turn, it helps in boosting employee morale and organizational output.

## 6. Conclusion

Leaders who are characterized with more tend to showcase a leadership workstyle to influence others by satisfying their subordinates, even the subordinates are happy to work with them where they are allowed to express their feelings on work-related matters. Study findings indicate that the superior behaves as a role

model by being able to reach out fast and should not be felt like a review process. As such, HR Professionals do look into non-monetary rewards given by the reporting manager. Overall, except on some occasions, the respondents feel that the manager is doing things right only to a required extent and the perception is not very encouraging. Often, with several years of knowledge and experience within and outside an organisation, leaders follow certain principles to themselves that would take the organisation as well as the followers a long way.

An organisation should have the right form of leaders to be effective and to make successful transformations. A leader has to be more friendly and approachable rather than following the concept of autocratic leadership styles, which do not have value in the current scenario.

## 7. Scope for Future Research

Furthermore, the researchers can also take up various leadership styles viz transactional, transformational and Laissez-faire and understand how each of these styles makes the employees transform better. This study can also be extended to other industrial areas including organisation which offers work-from-home options.

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