

## STUDY OF LEADERSHIP STYLE, COPING STRATEGIES AND HAPPINESS IN ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES AND CORPORATE EMPLOYEES

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### **Abstract**

Any successful organization today is based on its leadership style and behavior. Leadership behavior has a critical role in any successful organizations (Larsson & Vinberg, 2010). Positive leaders and the coping strategies used by them can influence their followers and make them happy; which will be reflected in their performance and productivities of the organization positively. The present study focuses on Leadership Style, Coping Strategies and Happiness among academic and corporate employees. The aim of this study is to find out 1. Which leadership style and coping strategies is being preferred by academic and corporate employees; 2. Relationship between Leadership Style, Coping Strategies and Happiness between academic and corporate employees. Data has been collected from 40 academic employees and 40 corporate employees from Amity University, Haryana and Bangalore city by purposive sampling. Participants were assessed on Leadership Style Scale by Northouse (2009), Ways of Coping Questionnaire by Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Argyle and Hills (2002). Anova and correlation has been used. The results indicate: 1. The most preferred leadership style is democratic leadership by

### **Keywords:**

Leadership Style;  
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academic as well as corporate employees and the most preferred coping strategies is positive reappraisal and the next one is self-controlling by both the employees; 2. There is a significant relationship between democratic leadership style, confronting coping strategies and happiness.

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## **Introduction**

Executives, managers, supervisors or any corporate employee and teachers in academic institution are facing complex challenges on multiple fronts and are under increasing pressure to perform multiple tasks with their maximum productivity. According to the studies of last few years, leadership is emerging as an innovative approach for managing the employees and organization at all levels. In this challenging environment around the globe, effective leadership style is necessary to reduce negativities. Only an effective leader can make it possible for an organization to achieve its goals and they are the one who inspires, motivates and establish path for the group of people to engage in the inspiring mission.

The term leadership means the ability or the action of a person or an individual to lead a group or an organization. Leadership styles create strong influence on the employee performance and efficiency (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). It is the style of a leader through which he motivates, inspires, provide path or direction and implement plans for an organization or a group. Leadership skills can be used to motivate people to achieve their preferred goal. An effective leader influences followers in desired manner according to the requirements of team members and by developing their understanding of problem situations, enabling them to see stressful situations from a positive point of view and believe in their positive resolution (Lyons & Schneider, 2009; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). According to the Oladipo et al (2013), the success or failure of any organizations, nations and other social units has been dependent on the nature of their leadership style.

Leadership style is the ‘relatively consistent pattern of behavior that characterizes a leader’ (DuBrin, 2001) and the behavior engaged in by the leader when dealing with employees. Different leadership styles may affect organizational effectiveness or performance (Nahavandi,

2002) and it will have an immense impact on how employees perform and grow, to lead positive organizational outcomes. Lewin, Lippit and White (1939) identified three leadership styles which are

- Autocratic
- Democratic
- Laissez-faire

One of the dimensions upon which leadership behavior has been classified is the locus of decision making in the group. Some leaders make all or almost all the decisions regarding the group's activities, this leadership behavior is typically classified as 'authoritarian' or autocratic. Other leaders delegate a great deal of decision making responsibility to group itself, this type of leadership behavior is classified as 'democratic'. Heneman and Gresham (1999) reported that under the democratic style, leaders promote responsibility sharing, continual discussion and exercise with delegation. In other groups, neither the leader nor the group makes any decision. Individual behavior is left up to the individual; the leader in essence abdicates his leadership role. This kind of leadership behavior is called 'Laissez-faire'. Main emphasis, however, has been placed on the two 'opposites' the authoritarian and the democratic. The authoritarian leader has been described as directive, production centered, and homothetic. The democratic leader has also been called participatory, employee centered and idiographic. Milgron and Holmstrom (1991), Ittner and Larcker, (2002) state that democratic style is usually considered beneficial for most of the companies. This style focuses on management that provides guidance and help to its team and departments while discussing the issues with individual team members. These leaders do not reserve to their activities, decision and authority only but actually they concern about other employees' viewpoint.

Chen (2004) said that employees will generally be satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organizations if they are comfortable with the style of work, are satisfied with their supervisor and team mates, and perceives that the current policies and opportunities are available for promotion, within their organization. The leader takes time to transfer his knowledge to followers, develops his strengths, acts as a mentor or coach, and considers the individual's needs

and desires (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The leader can encourage them to use various effective strategies for coping with stress by promoting alternative, other views of problems and their resolution. Coping strategies refers to a conscious effort to solve the personal or interpersonal problems to tolerate stress. In a research conducted by Chan and Sidhu (2010) findings revealed some significant correlations between measures of leadership style and coping strategies of their employees.

The basis necessity for the successful long-term leadership is the development of stress resiliency and the effective coping mechanism and adaption processes. Effective leader always tries to reduce their own stress as well as the stress among their employees (Roberts, 2013). The transactional leader communicates clearly, cooperates, focuses on supervision, organization, and performance of the employees and the approach to problems is immediate and analytical, which could influence employees' everyday method of coping with stressful situations. The leader appears responsible, analytical and systematic by creating a structure and operating conditions and monitoring events which may also be reflected in employees (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to a research done by Mubarak (2014) explained that having a positive leader to increase the productivity is important and the need for happy leaders is greater, because of the competition in business environment.

There might be some difference in leadership style of academic and corporate setting, because the type of stressors and challenges are different. The style of work in academic settings and corporate settings also varies. But one thing can be assumed that a leader equally influences the team and its work efficiency with his/her style of dealing with challenges and also with the personality he/she carries. Optimistic leaders always spread the positive energy among the team members and keep them going until the goal is met. As an overview it can be seen that handling styles of a leader might influence the coping skills of the subordinates and also affects the happiness level of the followers. So, this study is targeting the leadership styles, coping strategies adopted by team members and also the variation in happiness among employees in corporate and academic settings.

Objective:

1. To find out which leadership style is being preferred by academic and corporate employees.
2. To find out which coping strategies is being preferred by academic and corporate employees.
3. To find out relationship between Leadership Style, Coping Strategies and Happiness among academic and corporate employees.

Hypothesis:

- 1) There will be difference in preference of leadership style adopted by academic and corporate employees.
- 2) There will be difference in preference of coping strategies used by academic and corporate employees.
- 3) There will be a relationship among leadership style, coping strategies and happiness between academic and corporate employees.

## **Methodology**

**Sample:** Data has been collected from 80 participants: 40 academic employees from Amity University, Haryana and 40 corporate employees from different MNC in Gurugram. The age range of the sample was 30-50 years. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Employees aged 30 to 50 years
- Academic and corporate employees

Exclusion Criteria:

- Employees below 30 and above 50 years.
- Businessman

## **Tools of the study:**

a) **Leadership Style Scale:** Leadership Style Scale, developed by Northouse (2009) was designed to measure three common styles of leadership: a) authoritarian leadership, b) democratic leadership, c) laissez faire leadership. It consists of 18 items; rated on five point Likert scale.

b) **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire:** Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by Argyle and Hills at Oxford University (2002) to measure the psychological well-being. It consists of 29 items in which few are reverse scored; rated on five-point likert scale.

c) **Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ):** Ways of Coping Questionnaire, developed by Folkman and Lazarus, (1980) was designed to measure the coping effort to cope up with the stressful situation. It consists of 66 items but not all 66 items are scaled. It consists of 8 sub dimensions; each rated on four-point likert scale.

### Procedure:

The study was carried out on 40 academic and 40 corporate employees. All employees were contacted personally. All the participants were informed about the nature and objective of the study, all the three questionnaires were distributed after clear understanding of instructions. Their questions and concerns were addressed individually.

### Statistical Analysis:

To find the preference of leadership style and coping strategies between academic and corporate employee, ANOVA has been applied and to find out relationship among leadership style, coping strategies and happiness, Correlation was used.

### Results

#### 1.1: Mean Subset of Leadership Style of Academic and Corporate Employee

Group	N	Leadership Style	Mean	S.D.
Academic Employee	40	Authoritarian leadership	19.90	3.08
		Democratic leadership	22.57	3.36
		Laissez faire leadership	19.40	2.87
Corporate Employee	40	Authoritarian leadership	19.32	3.91
		Democratic leadership	22.77	3.18
		Laissez faire leadership	20	3.08

**Table 1.2 showing results of ANOVA on Leadership Style of Academic and Corporate Employee**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Base Model	500.938 <sup>a</sup>	5	100.188	9.382	.000
Employees	.337	1	.337	.032	.859
Leadership Style	486.325	2	243.163	22.772	.000
employees * leadership style	14.275	2	7.138	.668	.513
Error	2498.725	234	10.678		
Total	2999.663	239			

From table 1.2, it can be said that no significant interaction effect was found between employees and leadership style ( $F=.668$ ,  $p=.51$ ) as well as employees are also not significantly differ from each other ( $F=.03$ ,  $p=.86$ ), but the three leadership styles are significantly differ from each other ( $F=22.77$ ,  $p=.00$ ). And if we see table 1.1, we can say that since both the employee prefer democratic leadership, as mean value of democratic leadership is greater than other two leadership styles (Authoritarian leadership and Laissez faire leadership) in both the group. Therefore, it can be said that hypothesis-1 is being rejected because both the employees prefer democratic style and they both are not significantly differ from each other.

**Table 2.1: Descriptive Statistics of Coping Strategies of Academic and Corporate Employee**

Group	N	Coping Strategies	Mean	S.D.
Academic Employee	40	Confrontive coping	9.77	3.16
		Distancing	10.25	4.11
		Self-controlling	12.27	3.41
		Seeking social support	10.05	4.81
		Accepting responsibilities	7.70	2.58
		Escape-avoidance	10.75	4.25
		Planful problem solving	11.10	3.33
		Positive reappraisal	13.65	4.38

Corporate Employee	40	Confrontive coping	9.25	3.05
		Distancing	9.70	3.24
		Self-controlling	11.35	3.89
		Seeking social support	10.20	2.92
		Accepting responsibilities	6.87	2.79
		Escape-avoidance	10.80	4.95
		Planful problem solving	10.62	2.99
		Positive reappraisal	11.80	3.34

**Table 2.2 showing results of ANOVA on Coping Strategies of Academic and Corporate Employee**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Base Model	1594.544 <sup>a</sup>	15	106.303	7.981	.000
Employees	61.256	1	61.256	4.599	.032
Coping Strategies	1478.794	7	211.256	15.862	.000
employees * coping strategies	54.494	7	7.785	.585	.769
Error	8310.900	624	13.319		
Total	9905.444	639			

From table 2.2, it can be said that no significant interaction effect was found between employees and coping strategies ( $F=.585$ ,  $p=.77$ ) while both the employees are significantly differ from each other ( $F=4.60$ ,  $p=.03$ ) and the coping strategies adopted by them, are also significantly differ ( $F=15.86$ ,  $p=.00$ ). And if we see table 2.1, we can say that both the employee prefer positive reappraisal, as mean value of positive reappraisal is greater than other coping strategies in both the groups. Therefore, it can be justified that hypothesis-2 is being accepted in the sense that techniques of positive reappraisal, used by academic employee is different from the techniques, used by corporate employee.



**Table 3: showing relationship between Leadership Style, Happiness and Coping Strategies among Academic and Corporate Employees**

<b>Variab les</b>	Autho ritaria n	Dem ocrat ic	Laiss ez faire	Happ iness	Confr ontive coping	Dist anci ng	Self contro lling	Seekin g social suppor t	Acceptin g responsib ilities	Escape avoidanc e	Proble m solving	Positiv e reapprai sal
Authori tarian	1	-	-	0.129	0.036	0.10 3	0.112	0	0.194	0.137	-0.035	-0.021
Democ ratic	-	1	-	<b>.255*</b>	<b>.233*</b>	0.00 1	0.053	0.02	0.051	-0.119	0.197	0.102
Laissez faire	-	-	1	0.171	0.176	- .033	0.076	-0.071	0.119	-0.041	0.169	-0.037
Happin ess	0.129	<b>.255 *</b>	0.171	1	<b>.245*</b>	0.12 1	0.059	-0.162	0.011	-0.192	0.093	0.132
Confro ntive coping	0.036	<b>.233 *</b>	0.176	<b>.245*</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Distanc ing	0.103	0.00 1	- 0.033	0.121	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Self contro lling	0.112	0.05 3	0.076	0.059	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Seekin g social support	0	0.02	- 0.071	- 0.162	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Accepti ng respons ibilities	0.194	0.05 1	0.119	0.011	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Escape avoidanc e	0.137	- 0.11 9	- 0.041	- 0.192	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Problem solving	-0.035	0.197	0.169	0.093	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Positive reappraisal	-0.021	0.102	-0.037	0.132	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

**Table 3.2: Summary of Correlation Table**

Variables	Democratic leadership	Confrontive coping	Happiness
Democratic leadership	1	.233*	.255*
Confrontive coping	.233*	1	.245*
Happiness	.255*	.245*	1

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

From table 3, it is clear that there is a significant positive relationship (at .05 level) between democratic leadership style and confrontive coping (.233), democratic leadership and happiness (.255), confrontive coping and happiness (.245). A very interesting thing is that the most preferred coping strategy used by both the employees is Positive Reappraisal and the second preference is for self-controlling, nevertheless, significant positive relationship is found with confrontive coping strategy. In fact, happiness in both the group is also related with confrontive coping strategy.

## Discussion

The present study was carried out to find out the preference of leadership style and coping strategies by academic and corporate employees as well as to find out the relationship among leadership style, coping strategies and happiness. Results indicate that both the employees prefer democratic leadership style and the most preferred coping strategy used by them is Positive Reappraisal ( $\bar{x} = 13.65, 11.8$ ), the second preference is for self-controlling ( $\bar{x} = 12.37, 11.35$ ). Here, interesting thing is that since preference of coping strategy by both the employee is same but the techniques adopted by them or the environment of the organization can be different because as per the table 2.2 not only coping strategies ( $F=15.86, p=.00$ ) but employees are also significantly differ from each other ( $F=4.60, p=.03$ ). Table 3 states that there is a significant

positive relationship between democratic leadership style, confrontive coping and happiness at .05 level.

Leadership is vital in any organization. It involves defining the direction of a team and communicating it to people, motivating, inspiring and empowering them to contribute to achieving organizational success. Leadership and the different styles have major impact on employees' performance and growth to lead positive outcomes (Chowdhury, 2014). Podsakoff et al (1990) said that leadership behavior can affect trust and satisfaction of employees to organization and if employees will be satisfied then definitely happiness will also be there.

The analysis of data shows that there is no significant difference found between academic and corporate employees with respect to leadership style (table 1.2). By referring table 1.1, mean score indicate that both the employees prefer democratic leadership style. Kirega (2006) evaluated worker's views of their senior and top leadership team and state that this style focuses on using the skills, experience, and ideas of other but still remains the final decision making power in the leader's hand. This leadership styles improve the performance in both short term and long term and can be used for any type of work project. According to Debashis (2006), this style provides confidence to employees who will help them for meeting deadlines, and departmental goals, to provide efficient team inputs.

The second variable in the present study is Coping Strategies. There are 8 sub dimensions of coping strategy that has been studied: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibilities, escape- avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal. The analysis of data shows that there is a significant difference between academic and corporate employees with respect to Coping Strategies. By referring to table 2.1, mean score indicate that both the employees are high in positive reappraisal coping strategy and the secondly preferred coping strategy is self-controlling. This clearly means that techniques of positive reappraisal, used by academic employee are different from the techniques, used by corporate employee.

From the Positive Psychology approach (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), how a variety of different coping resources, styles and specific strategies are important in successfully adapting to stress has been reported (Compas, 1987). Positive leaders wherever they work, create healthy climate for everyone work with them. The leaders help to encourage employees' in boosting their performances to meet their goals. According to Smith, Bryan & Vodanovich (2012) positive leadership are the source of knowledge, which help to distribute useful information to increase individual's knowledge that make them satisfied.

The third variable in the present study is Happiness. Happiness is when people are in positive mood. Correlation was calculated to find out the relationship among leadership style, coping strategy and happiness in both the employees. A significant correlation was found between democratic leadership style, coping strategies and happiness. By referring to table 3.1, it is found that out of eight dimension of coping strategy and three style of leadership, happiness is related with democratic leadership style and confrontive coping only. Voon et al (2011) also found the influence of leadership styles on employees' job satisfaction in public sector organizations in Malaysia and job satisfaction leads to happiness.

According to a study conducted by Stare, Pezdir and Eva (2013) the outcomes showed low to moderate correlations between the three basic leadership styles and coping strategies such as positive reappraisal, seeking social assistance, and negative escape/avoidance. The employees whose leaders used transformational and transactional leadership styles used all these coping. Employees who use escape, avoidance, and rarely the positive reappraisal might have seen their leaders using passive-avoidant leadership style.

Leadership style is a very important factor to regulate effective working environment. Leadership style includes coping strategies of the leader and type of personality he/she possess. An optimistic person spread positivity and motivation in the team. These days organizations require efficient leaders who can understand the challenges of the swiftly changing global environment. Also, leaders let people improve themselves by learning new skills that will be helpful to them in their career path, which shall reflect on their outcomes positively.

### Implications:

- The study provides basic understanding about leadership style, happiness and coping strategies
- Employees can benefit by identifying their leadership style which can be utilized to become a better leader.
- Coping strategies can be better understood by the employees to cope up with problems.
- Employees can benefit by selecting appropriate coping strategy to increase happiness.

### Limitations:

Although this research was carefully prepared, there are some limitations and shortcomings.

- The research was done on a small sample size.
- The study should have more participants to generalize the results for larger group.
- The subjects who knew English were able to participate as there was a lack of a reliable standardized test in Hindi.
- The number of questions might discourage participants' interest and motivation.
- Some of the questionnaires were filled in electronic form, thus it could not be made sure that all the instructions were clearly understood by the subject.

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