

Employee's Preference Toward Leadership Style of Selected Companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain

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Abstract

Leadership style was a challenge in management. Companies relied more on the leaders managing them. Likewise, it matters also to the working behavior of the employee who adopted the leadership style in the organization. The employee preference was attributed to Theory X and Theory Y of McGregor which was associated with Blake and Mouton's Leadership Style. In these propositions, the study was determined to understand the employee's preference toward the leadership style of selected companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain. A descriptive method was employed with the aid of the adopted questionnaires. Purposive sampling was used with 128 respondents to determine their preferences for leadership style. The hypotheses were tested using Chi-Square. Evidence showed a significant relationship between age and leadership style, and the null hypothesis was rejected. The more mature the employees were, the more they became aware of the preferred leadership styles. However, there was no evidence to show a significant relationship between employees' preference toward leadership style, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. The working behavior of the employees did not conform to the preference of the leadership style. As such, management considered different management theories for the employees to become more productive. Management assisted the employees to cultivate more and/or develop their knowledge and skills. As purported in the literature that it was a lifelong reinvention, it was a lifelong learner.

Keywords: McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, Blake and Mouton leadership style, Impoverished management, Task management, Middle of the road, Country club, Team management

1. Introduction

Leadership style was a concern in every management, likewise, fitting different management theories. Companies relied more on the leaders managing them. Leadership was necessary to guide the company on the right track. A good direction of business leads to success. Leadership was varied in the design of the business model. Blake and Mouton emphasized clearly leadership style with the use of a managerial grid, within which there were Impoverished Management, Task Management, Middle of the Road, Country Club, and Team Management. For that, leadership style was good to be identified and implemented respectively. But there were some situations in which leadership was questioned by the workers. Employees had certain expectations of their leader because they can be optimistic or pessimistic in the working environment. And people are always part of the success of the business operation as such it relied also on the performance of the workers. Employees were the most sensitive among the resources in the organization. Regardless of how noble the vision, mission, goals, and objectives are, if the employees were not incorporated nor practiced then

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it was meaningless. Sometimes leadership was tough enough to deal with it. On the other hand, management struggled also to intervene in the necessity of the workforce for being productive. According to McGregor, two behaviors were deducted in the working behavior, Theory X and Theory Y, and in this study, it was attributed to employee preference.

2. Framework of the Study

This study was anchored on the Leadership styles by Blake and Mouton, which are Impoverished Management, Task Management, Middle of the Road, Country Club, and Team Management in connection to McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y.

The study focused on the five leadership styles associated with Blake and Mouton. According to BusinessBall (2019), country club, impoverished, middle-of-the-road, produce-or-perish, and team styles had their characteristics and attributed to different approaches which corresponded to different personalities of the employees and the management or leadership style or known as the working behavior in the organizations. Though working behavior was shaped by the policies of the company, it was influenced also by the environments and personal traits or known as Theory X and Theory Y.

According to Tsahuridu (2015), managers had their understanding and opinion about dealing with employees. They had different interpretations of what people motivated them. It was a manner and a good approach to guiding employees. And if the leadership style will be utilized properly then it would be an advantage for the company, regardless of the nature of the environment as purported by Schoemaker et al. (2013). Likewise, in the study of Newstorm (1993), this gave proper direction and well-motivated employees. And it was pointed out that good leaders use autocratic, democratic, and laissez-fair in managing employees appropriately.

In the work of Kaleem et al (2016), leadership varied on the personalities of the employees in the company. Accordingly, it was a diverse culture that threatened the effectiveness of the management. Nevertheless, mid-management also had its own diverse culture in which adjustment was needed. And the study by Thuijsman (2015), leadership style had positive and negative influences on workers' acceptance of the organizational change. According to Rahbi et al (2017), leadership style was an important aspect that controlled the members in the working place. In fact, by doing such, employees will be happy and satisfied. And the study of Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014), the quality of work-life of the employees from small and medium enterprises was affected by the leadership style and this was related also to the organizational commitment. If it was so, then being productive was the concern of the management.

In the works of Byorum (2015), leaders adjusted and developed sound relationships with their members. On the other hand, the higher the salary the better employees would be because they secured the needs of belongingness and esteem. In the study of Cowen (2018), considering the workers had different behaviors then it was assumed also that they had different leadership styles. Due to this aspect, it was suggested that people in the management should know the leadership style in which they were effectively managing the group.

Accordingly, Theory Y referred to participative or having a positive working behavior unlike Theory X was considered an authoritarian and negative approach. The company managed well this working behavior properly to build a sound leadership style, (Mindtools, 2019). Based on the assumption of this theory, employees needed to be rewarded or punished for their work. They were forced or required to do the assigned task and closed monitoring was necessary. Job security, on the other hand, was the most important. Thus, some employees believed that such work was relaxing and normal in the working environment. They exerted efforts as part of a design for the job (Management Study Guide, 2019).

According to Sorensen and Minahan (2011), in the study of McGregor's Theory Y based on the empirical evidence, it was related to the success of the company because it was believed that the

aforementioned theory was applied to a general perspective including a different or diverse culture of the employees. Generally, it was the most accepted in the management approaches. But according to Bobic and Davis (2003), due to the diverse personality of complex behavior, Theory X then was good in management as responded to by some different employees. It was argued further that using strength and relying upon each other was necessary to improve the performance of the employees. Differently, the performance of Theory X was useful enough because of the strict implementation of the policies of the management.

According to MSG (2019), employees will do good things, and express sound behavior in the workplace place not to be appreciated or to gain respect but to maintain the corporate culture. This kind of approach showed how professional the employee was. However, not all employees were behaving like that. Some preferred to work hard and enjoy working in the company and some employees tend to be relaxed and calm in any circumstance as well. According to Aydin (2012), some employees dislike work and need to be threatened. Theory X had very limited professional development about the corporate culture as to the effect on the performance based on the indicators. Unlike Theory Y, it gives a positive impact on the working performance of the employees. In the given literature, management required to implement the policies and punishment should be applied respectively.

In the study of Arslan and Staub (2013), Theory Y had a positive influence on leadership behavior but Theory X could be effective in another way. Still, it is considered de-motivation, unlike Theory Y which gave an assumption to be highly motivated employees. It was helpful to the managers when adopted an appropriate style because employees tended to be in a good working relationship (MCI, 2015). In the idea of Geeta (2015), in the 21st-century of the working place, the leader should be effective. The leader should be confident enough to deal with the business for the company.

And the study of Bojadziew (2016), with the use of Theory X and Theory Y McGregor, leadership preferences were emphasized. Many employees preferred the characteristics of Theory Y for management style. In the study of Aithal and Kumar (2016), employees were not inclined to work for the sake of reward, instead, due to dedication and responsible. Workers were changing because of the responsibility in the company.

The study by Drewniak, R., Drewniak Z., and Posadzinska, I. (2020) shows the relationship between employees' expectations of the leadership style of the company. It clearly emphasizes the employees adjust their preferences based on the leadership style implemented by the management. Working behavior varies in the working environment. Likewise, demonstrates the profile of the employees affects the current operations and long-term success of the employees as well as the organization.

3. Objectives

The objective of the study was to determine the respondents' preferences, as Theory X and Theory Y, on leadership style using the managerial grid of Blake and Mouton.

4. Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey method through the aid of adopted questionnaires for Leadership Style by Blake and Mouton and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. The questionnaire was composed of three parts. The first part determined the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, and years in service. And the second part was a 5-point Likert Scale consisting of 15 items by McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. And the third part was about the leadership style by Blake and Mouton with a 5-point Likert Scale of 18 items.

After the respondents answered the questionnaire, part two, it computed by adding them together to get the total. According to the answers of the respondents, the following category was used to determine the working behavior of the employee if it is Theory X or Theory Y:

- 60 to 75: Strong Theory Y Management
- 45 to 59: Generally Theory Y Management
- 16 to 44: Generally Theory X Management
- 0 to 15: Strongly Theory X

For part three, the items for People 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 17 were computed by adding them together and the sum was multiplied by 0.2 and then plotted in the managerial grid of Blake and Mouton.

The items for Tasks 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 18 were computed by adding them together and the sum was multiplied by 0.2 and then plotted in the managerial grid of Blake and Mouton.

In plotting the final scores in the graph, the Y-Axis is for the People and the X-Axis is for the Task. A specific line was drawn with a corresponding dot until the intersection met and that area was considered the leadership dimension.

According to the managerial grid of Blake and Mouton, the following leadership has the corresponding score:

- A. Impoverish Management (1,1 to 4,4): Low People and Low Task
- B. Task Management (1 to 4 is for people then 5 to 9 is for the task): Low People but High Task
- C. Middle of the Road Management (5,5) medium for people and medium for the task
- D. Country Club Management (5 to 9 for people than 1 to 4 for the task) High People but Low task
- E. Team Management (6,6 to 9,9) High People and High Task

The study used purposive sampling. Based on the gathered information, there were 128 responses to the survey questionnaire. The Chi-Square was used to determine the preference of the employees as attributed to McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y concerning Leadership Style by Blake and Mouton if there was a significant relationship among the variables. Responses were tallied, tabulated, and computed with the use of frequencies of descriptive statistics in SPSS.

5. Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the two groups based on the profile of the respondents in terms of age category. The majority of the respondents belong to 18-25 years old (N=76 with 59.4%). This means that workers are already at the legal age to engage and take work responsibility. According to Hajjar (2012), Bahrain introduces new law which provides additional rights to minors and women, this idea is embodied in the minimum employment rights. Likewise, only 52 with 40.6% for 26-35 years old were involved in the study as provided in the data.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-25 years old	76	59.4
26-35 years old	52	40.6
Total	128	100.0

Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of gender. It is empirically emphasized that the mainstream of the respondents are female workers (N=85 or 66.4%). In the given companies, the majority are female workers may be because, the working population of the selected companies, is dominated by females or women. The participation of Bahraini Women had increased significantly in public life, particularly in politics, business, and social development (Supreme Council for Women). And under Article 2 *bis* of the Bahraini Labour Law, employers are prohibited from discriminating against employees based on sex or gender, (Abbas and Mohamed 2022). Regardless of the gender of the workers, they are treated fairly by the new law. Similarly, there are only 33.6% of male workers. Though in the male population, there are more male workers in 2015 (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Table 2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	43	33.6
Female	85	66.4
Total	128	100.0

Table 3 shows the educational attainment as the profile of the respondents. This means the majority of them are high school graduates (N=100, 78.1%). With due respect to the qualification of the company, it is really good to say that they can accept those individuals despite they are not yet college degree holders. It is clearly emphasized that as part of economic development, education does matter but what makes it more active is allowing those high school graduates to work to contribute more to economic development. It is also part of the government policies toward discrimination of employers against employees. However, it is provided further that high school graduates, diploma graduates, and college graduates have different minimum wages. Nevertheless, there are 28 (21.9%) are college graduates. Maybe their roles and their point of view might be different from those of other groups about the working environment and its impact on the business economy of the country. According to Holtz-Eakin and Lee (2019), the point of the importance of increasing educational achievement would create an intensive positive impact on the economy.

Table 3 Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Education

Education	Frequency	Percent
High School Graduate	100	78.1
College Graduate	28	21.9
Total	128	100.0

Table 4 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of years in service. Most of the respondents are 1 year but less than 3 years of working experience (N=60 with 46.9%). This means a profile of this aligns with the age category. Most of the respondents are young and it is explicit to say that they are new to exposure to the working environment. And there are 28 (21.9%) respondents having 5 years and above concerning the length of service. This group connotes that they are getting wiser due to their working experience. As time goes on in the working place, they are developing more of their knowledge and skills in response to the expectations of the company. Most likely, they can work more independently in contrast with the other group or category.

Table 4 Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Years in Service

Years in Service	Frequency	Percent
1 year but less than 3 years	60	46.9
3 years but less than 5 years	40	31.3
5 years and above	28	21.9
Total	128	100.0

5.1 Employee behavior in the workplace place based on McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

Table 5 shows the behavior of the employees in the workplace place according to McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. Majority of the respondents were inclined toward Theory Y with N=100; 78.1%. This means most of the workers are optimistic and able to be productive regardless if they are new or not in the organization. According to Management Study Guide (2019), in this theory, workers believed that such work was relaxing and normal in the working environment. They exerted efforts as part of a design for the job. Unlike Theory X with N=28; 21.9%, these groups of workers don't need to be compelled to do their tasks because they took

their job as self-direction and control. If they saw it as satisfying, then they expressed their commitment to the work.

Table 5 The behavior of the Employees in the workplace place

Theory	Frequency	Percent
Theory X	28	21.9
Theory Y	100	78.1
Total	128	100.0

5.2 Preference of Theory X and Theory Y toward leadership style

Table 6 shows the preferences of the employees based on McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y towards Leadership Style by Blake and Mouton. For Theory X, they preferred the leadership of Middle of the Road with 16 respondents which is 57.1%. And only 12 respondents or 42.9% preferred Team Management. In this case, the majority of the respondents believed and preferred the Middle of the Road considering they are Theory X. Companies should manage well this working behavior properly to build a sound leadership style, (Mindtools, 2019). Despite attributing as pessimistic in the working environment, Theory X is not bad at all by the fact that there are diverse personalities in the working place. For that, sometimes the company should use punishment and reward systems to guide the specific working behavior of the employees to improve the working performance (Bobic and Davis, 2003). Still, the management may fail to commit to the workers to do their best or lead the team for high performance and fails also to the people's needs. Warner and Witzel (2015), mentioned F. Taylor wanted to build a just compensation in relation to the performance of the workers. Within the idea of scientific management theory, employee theory X can be more productive as long they are rewarded based on their performance, but proper guidance is needed. For that, they deserved respect and recognition from the employers based on the management theory of social needs and psychological factors by E. Mayo [1880-1949]. Managers should exercise power with, as the idea of M. Follett [1868-1933], this kind of management is suited as well to Theory X despite their working behavior.

On the other hand, Theory Y preferred Team Management as their Leadership Style (N=17, 68%). According to Clayton (2017), the personality of Theory Y is suited for Team Management. Theory Y is optimistic about the working environment and Team Management is concerned with people and tasks. Therefore, Team Management is the most effective and balanced leadership style that concerns both the employees and production. The company has full support for the workers and for that, the company also is expected the employees to be more productive. Nonetheless, any management theories will do in favor of the company.

Table 6 Preferences of the employees based on Theory X & Theory Y for Leadership

		Theory		Total	
		X	Y		
Leadership	Count	16	32	48	
	Middle of the Road	% within Leadership	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within Theory	57.1%	32.0%	37.5%
	Count	12	68	80	
	Team Management	% within Leadership	15.0%	85.0%	100.0%
		% within Theory	42.9%	68.0%	62.5%
Total	Count	28	100	128	
	% within Leadership	21.9%	78.1%	100.0%	
	% within Theory	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 7 shows the approach of the respondents in terms of age. The results emphasize the ages 18-25 years old preferred the middle of the road as a leadership style 66.7%. This means most respondents believed that management should be concerned with both the employees and the production. The leader cultivates the interest of the employees as well as the interest of the company. Accordingly, for the Middle of the Road, management with this style tries to keep a balance between the organizational goals and the personal needs of the subordinates. Here, the leader focuses on adequate performance through a balance between the work requirements and satisfactory morale” (Business Jargons, 2020). This is posited in the theory of collective power by M. Follett [1868-1933], by individual or by group, it is organized for the achievement of the objectives of the organization.

Table 7 Leadership * Age Cross tabulation

		Age			Total	
		18-25	26-25	26-35		
Leadership	Middle of the Road	Count	32	12	4	48
		% within Leadership	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	100.0%
		% within Age	47.1%	100.0%	8.3%	37.5%
	Team Management	Count	36	0	44	80
		% within Leadership	45.0%	0.0%	55.0%	100.0%
		% within Age	52.9%	0.0%	91.7%	62.5%
Total	Count	68	12	48	128	
	% within Leadership	53.1%	9.4%	37.5%	100.0%	
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

On the other hand, the ages 26-35 preferred Team Management wherein the leader takes both people and production hand in hand in a high-level approach. This style feels that empowerment, trust, respect, and commitment help in nurturing the team relationships, which ultimately results in increased employee satisfaction and overall production of the organization” (Business Jargons, 2020). This means that it tends to have high production and yet high employees. Leadership expected the employees to have excellent or very good performance as output from which the company is benefited at. At the same time, employees are provided for their needs by the company. For the company, it is the best leadership style. Thus, it gives support answers to the needs of the employees and the company. Notwithstanding, management should uphold strictly the concepts of administrative theory by H. Fayol [1841-1925], this is much good for an organization to “govern” regardless of its business either private or public entity, (Wren, Bedeian, and Breeze, 2002).

Table 8 shows there is evidence to show that there is a relationship between age and leadership style. (Chi-square = 10.018^a, df = 2, p<0.007). This means that the more mature the workers are, the more working experience they have, the more kinds of leadership they encountered, and the more they appreciate the leadership in the working place. In other words, mature employees become more aware or sensitive to the kinds of leadership used by the management. Sometimes it is good to say that employees preferred good leadership more than anything else to make them happy or satisfied. It cultivates their personalities towards the leadership style used by the management. Hence, it is a lifelong reinvention. In lifelong learning, the work’s augmentation in the company through careers, work-life balance, and skills development are the key ideas of lifelong reinvention. It is the point in the working environment in which a longer life span leads to the development of knowledge and skills. (Reams, 2020). According to Indeed (2020), since leadership style is a factor that affects an employee’s performance and business efficiency as an effective leader, employees’

growth should match their leadership style considering the development and advances of maturity through the quality of the employees' experience, for growths, gaining more inputs to the roles and demonstrated high skills. The maturity of the workers gives them enough experience to appreciate the kind of leadership styles. For that, employees are already dedicated to their work and able to understand the kind of leadership being used by the management. With or without motivation from the management, the task will be done effectively.

Table 8 Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.018 ^a	2	.007
Likelihood Ratio	11.948	2	.003
N of Valid Cases	128		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.13

Aside from the age, the other socio-demographic profiles of the respondents such as gender, education, and years in service had no significant relationship to leadership.

5.3 Is there a significant relationship between leadership style and employee preference?

Table 9 shows that there is no significant relationship between Theory X and Theory Y in leadership style. (Chi-square = 1.475^a, df = 1, p<0.225). This means that the preference of the employees regardless of Theory X or Theory Y is not binding to the leadership style. Most likely, workers are focused on the working environment but not the leadership style used in the management. It must be noted also that the result is based on a few samplings only. The 128 total respondents are valid data. Despite that, the result is treated fairly to justify the opinion of the respondents. Although according to Clayton (2017), Theory Y is suited to team management as the leadership style of Blake and Mouton. Accordingly, it is the most effective leadership style attributed to Theory Y. But not at all times. However, if the employees either he or she is Theory X or Theory Y, are dedicated to the leader and the organization, the output as needed, and the personal needs may be achieved. In this situation, management will promote the team to be responsible and commit to the development of the company.

Table 9 Theory – Leadership Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.475 ^a	1	.225		
Continuity Corrections	.597	1	.440		
Likelihood Ratio	1.436	1	.231		
Fisher's Exact Test				.379	.218
N of Valid Cases	128				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.63.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

6. Conclusions

After careful analysis of the findings of the study, the researcher derived two very important conclusions. First, the study concludes that among the demographic profiles of the employees, age with the level of maturity is found to be significant at a 5% level of significance to the leadership style. The more mature the employees are the more aware of leadership styles they were appreciating or preferring. And the study found theory X and Theory Y have no significant relationship to leadership style. In this study, it seems that the

personality of the employees can not conform to the preference of the leadership style in the management based on the respondents.

Second, regardless of what leadership style is attributed to the management, scientific management theory is plausible to the worker Theory X. On the other hand, based on the idea of Elton Mayo [1880-1949] regarding his social needs and psychological factors, employees should acquire recognition and respect from employers. Though it is applicable as well for Theory Y, that is not the strongest point. Based on the management under the concept of shared power model by Follett [1868-1933], as long the workers make their own decisions and actions, they embraced their responsibilities. And the idea of H. Fayol towards Administrative Theory wherein the organization regardless of whether a public or private entity, shall ‘govern’ to achieve its objectives.

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