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## LEADERSHIP STYLES

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### Key Words

Followers, leadership style, leadership, Influence, Inspire, Motivate

### ABSTRACT

The Leadership style a leader chooses to use plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness and outcomes of their leadership. In this paper, I provide a comprehensive overview of various leadership styles, exploring the definitions, key features and characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, and examples of prominent world leaders associated with each style. The leadership styles examined include: transformational, transactional, autocratic, laissez-faire, charismatic, servant, democratic and pace-setting leadership. Each of these styles is analyzed and dissected in terms of its unique characteristics and features and its suitability in different contexts. By understanding the diverse range of leadership styles, individuals can develop their leadership capabilities and organizations can adopt effective leadership practices to drive success and create positive work environments.

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership refers to the process of influencing and guiding others towards the achievement of a common goal or vision (Northouse, 2018). Simply put, leadership is the ability to inspire, motivate, and empower individuals or groups to work collaboratively and effectively. Nizarudin (2017), stated that leadership encompasses a wide range of skills, traits, and behaviors, including decision-making, communication, strategic thinking, empathy, and vision setting – which are quite key for every leader.

### DEFINING LEADERSHIP STYLE

Leaders usually exhibit a style of leadership as they motivate and inspire their followers. Leadership style therefore, refers to the manner in which a leader chooses to lead and interact with their followers (Northouse, 2018). It reflects the leader's behaviors, attitudes, and actions in influencing and directing others. Leadership style has a huge influence on how a leader makes decisions, communicates expectations, motivates followers, and creates a work environment.

Leadership style is an expression of the leader's leadership approach. It reflects the leader's preferences, values, and beliefs about how to effectively lead and influence others. There are several leaderships styles and these different leadership styles can impact the dynamics, productivity, and culture within an organization or group in several different ways.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

Transformational leadership is a leadership style in which the leader inspires and motivates his/her followers to achieve exceptional performance by creating a vision, setting high expectations, and challenging the followers to exceed their own self-interests for the benefit of the organization or society at large (Collins, 2014). Transformational leaders focus on transforming individuals and organizations by encouraging creativity and promoting personal growth.

Bass and Riggo (2006) noted the following, as the main features and characteristics of transformational leadership:

*Visionary:* Transformational leaders have a clear vision of what they want to achieve.

*Effective communicators:* Transformational leaders are good communicators who articulate their vision effectively to their followers.

*Inspirational and motivational:* Transformational leaders inspire and motivate others by providing a compelling future direction. They also create a positive and motivating environment.

*Forster change:* Transformational leaders are change leaders or drivers.

*Empathetic:* Transformational leaders are empathetic and understand their followers' needs and concerns.

*Intellectual stimulation:* They encourage creativity and innovative thinking, challenging the status quo and promoting new ideas.

Transformational leadership has the following advantages:

Transformational leaders inspire their followers to go above and beyond, resulting in higher levels of motivation and commitment (Bass and Riggo, 2006).

By setting high expectations and encouraging innovation, transformational leaders can drive their teams or organizations to achieve outstanding results (Kouzes and Posner, 2017).

Transformational leaders create a positive and supportive work environment that promotes collaboration, creativity, and a sense of purpose (Northouse, 2018). They are known to create an all-inclusive work environment.

Transformational leaders are change leaders, they lead and drive change in organisations or societies. (Collins, 2014).

The notable disadvantages of transformational leadership include:

Transformational leadership relies heavily on the leader's influence, and if the leader is absent or fails to provide proper guidance, it can negatively impact the followers (Bass and Riggo, 2006). Followers often become over-reliant on the leader's guidance and decision-making.

Transformational leaders may set extremely high expectations, leading to increased stress and burnout among their followers (Bass and Riggo, 2006). The leaders too, face burnout as they invest too much time and energy in supporting and developing their followers.

Since some individuals naturally resist change, they may resist the transformational leader's vision or find it difficult to adapt to the constant changes and challenges (Kouzes and Posner, 2017). The ideas of the leader may simply face resistance.

Examples of Transformational Leaders:

*Nelson Mandela:* The former President of South Africa, exemplified transformational leadership through his vision of a democratic and all-inclusive South Africa. He demonstrated transformational leadership when he inspired and united millions of South Africans during the anti-apartheid movement, and his emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness.

*Barack Obama:* The first black president of the United States, riding on the slogan "Change we can believe in" and "Yes we can" inspired Americans to continue their belief in democracy, bridged the gap among the people of America through promotion of inclusivity and diversity and drove the country to affordable healthcare through the Abama Care initiative.

Bass and Riggo (2006), observed that transformational leadership is best suited for environments that require innovation, adaptability and a strong focus on personal growth. It is suited for environments that are undergoing change such as in mergers, acquisitions or restructuring of organisations.

### TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

Transactional leadership is an approach that focuses on the exchange relationship between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2018). In this leadership style, the leader maintains stability and achieves goals through a system of rewards and punishment. For any good performance, the leader provides rewards (such as bonuses, improved salaries, promotions, and recognition) while poor performance receives punishments (like demotions, warning letters, reprimands, salary cuts and terminations).

Kouzes and Posner (2017) and Bass and Riggio (2006), discussed the features and characteristics of transactional leadership as:

*Clearly defined expectations:* Transactional leaders establish clear expectations and ensure that everyone understands these expectations.

*Defined contingent rewards:* In line with the expectations, transactional leaders also provide well defined rewards and punishments to their followers based on meeting the set performance targets.

*Exchange relationship:* This leadership style is based on an exchange relationship - a reward for good performance and punishment for poor performance.

*Monitoring performance:* Transactional leaders closely monitor the performance of their teams and intervene when deviations occur to ensure compliance with established standards.

*Goal oriented:* This type of leadership is focused on achieving goals.

The advantages of transactional leadership style are:

*Clear expectations:* Transactional leaders set specific goals and performance standards, providing clarity to their followers about what is expected of them. Helps followers and team members know what is expected from them in clear terms (Northouse, 2018).

This leadership approach promotes efficiency and productivity by emphasizing adherence to established procedures and standards (Judge et.al, 2004).

*Goal achievement:* This leadership style is solely focused on achieving goals (Podsakoff et.al, 2000).

*Quick decision-making:* Transactional leaders make decisions efficiently, relying on established protocols and systems (Bass et.al, 2003).

Disadvantages of transactional leadership style include:

**Limited creativity and innovation:** Transactional leadership discourages creativity and innovation as the focus is primarily on meeting predetermined goals and targets (Yukl, 2018).

**Lack of long-term motivation:** The rewards and punishments provided by transactional leaders may primarily focus on short-term goals, potentially leading to a lack of sustained motivation among followers in the long term (Judge et.al, 2004).

**Inflexibility and limited adaptability to change:** Transactional leaders may struggle to adapt to rapidly changing environments and circumstances or unexpected challenges due to their reliance on established rules and procedures (Judge et.al, 2004).

#### Examples of Transactional Leaders:

**Bill Gates:** Gates, the co-founder of the software giant Microsoft, exhibited transactional leadership by setting well defined goals, and rewarding the achievement of these goals.

**Angela Merkel:** Merkel, the former Chancellor of Germany, is known for her pragmatic leadership style, focusing on achieving specific goals through consensus-building and negotiating with various stakeholders.

Podsakoff et.al (2000) noted that transactional leadership is suited for environments that require clear structures, have well defined processes and involve goal-oriented tasks. It is a perfect fit for stable and established organisations, compliance-intensive industries such as those in healthcare, and in performance-driven and results-oriented environments.

#### **AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Autocratic leadership, also known as authoritarian leadership, is a leadership system in which the leader holds absolute power and makes decisions without any input from followers (Pearce and Sims, 2002). The leader exercises full control over the decision-making process and typically expects strict compliance from the subordinates.

Pearce and Sims (2002) and Sosik and Dinger (2007) outlined the features and characteristics of autocratic leaders as :

**Centralized decision-making:** Autocratic leaders make all the decisions independently, without any input or feedback from their followers.

**Direct supervision:** Such leaders closely monitor and control their subordinates' work, often providing detailed instructions and closely overseeing their subordinates' tasks.

**Limited individual autonomy:** Autocratic leaders expect strict adherence to rules and procedures, leaving little or no room for individual initiative or independent decision-making.

**Authoritarian Control:** The leader has absolute control over the team and expects team members to follow instructions without question.

Advantages of Autocratic leadership style are outlined as:

**Quick decision-making:** Autocratic leaders can make decisions swiftly since they don't have to consult with others, which can be beneficial in situations that require immediate action (Yukl, 2013).

**Clear direction:** With autocratic leadership, there is a clear chain of command and well-defined roles and responsibilities, providing clarity to followers (Pearce and Sims, 2002).

**Suitable in crisis situations:** This style can be effective in crisis situations where decisive action is necessary, and there is limited time for consultation or consensus-building (Sosik and Dinger, 2007).

The disadvantages of autocratic leadership style are:

**Lack of creativity and innovation:** Autocratic leadership stifles creativity and innovation since the focus is primarily on following instructions and procedures (Northouse, 2018).

**Reduced employee morale and motivation:** The lack of involvement and participation in decision-making can lead to decreased employee morale, job dissatisfaction, and demotivation (Pearce and Sims, 2002).

**Dependency on the leader:** In autocratic leadership, the leader holds most of the power and knowledge, creating a dependency on their presence and decision-making abilities (Sosik and Dinger, 2007).

Autocratic leadership style has been known to create a tense work environment that is often exhausting for employees and leads to high employee turnover.

Examples of autocratic leaders.

**Adolf Hitler:** Hitler's leadership during the Nazi regime exemplified autocratic leadership, with him holding absolute power, making decisions unilaterally, and demanding unquestioning obedience from his subordinates.

**Kim Jong-un:** The leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, exhibits autocratic leadership, centralizing power and decision-making within his regime, and exerting strict control over all aspects of the country. This is the same approach that *Vladimir Putin* adopts.

Sosik and Dinger (2007) suggested that autocratic leadership is best suited for environments that require quick decision-making, clear direction and a hierarchical structure. Autocratic leadership is a very common approach in military setups.

## **LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Laissez-faire leadership, sometimes referred to as delegative leadership, is a leadership style in which the leader has a hands-off approach, minimal involvement and allows followers to make decisions (Vecchio et.al, 2010). Northouse (2018) observed that laissez-faire leaders provide little guidance or supervision to their followers, allowing them significant autonomy and freedom to make decisions and perform tasks.

According Sosik et.al (2004), Vecchio et.al, (2010) and Northouse (2018), the main features and characteristics of laissez-faire leadership style include:

**Mistakes are normal:** Laissez-faire leaders are comfortable with followers or team members making mistakes.

**Leader is still accountable:** Despite members or followers making mistakes and having autonomy, accountability still falls on the leader.

**Minimal intervention:** Laissez-faire leaders avoid interfering with the day-to-day operations and decision-making processes, allowing their followers to work independently.

*Trust in followers' abilities:* These leaders have confidence and trust in the skills and expertise of their subordinates and believe that they are capable of managing their own tasks and responsibilities.

*Absence of direct control:* Laissez-faire leaders provide the necessary resources and support but refrain from giving explicit instructions or closely monitoring their followers' work.

Advantages of this style of leadership include:

*Promotes creativity and innovation:* Laissez-faire leadership allows followers the freedom to explore new ideas, experiment, and think independently, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation (Northouse, 2018).

*Personal growth:* As a result of the leader's hands-off approach, followers have a chance to be hands-on. This facilitates for growth and development.

*Empowers employees:* By granting autonomy and decision-making authority, this style can empower employees, increase job satisfaction, and promote a sense of ownership (Sosik et.al, 2004).

*It allows for quick and faster decision making.* Since employees are not micro-managed, they are able to make quicker decisions (Vecchio et.al, 2010).

*Suitable for highly skilled teams:* Laissez-faire leadership supports experienced and self-motivated teams who require little supervision and can thrive in an autonomous work environment (Sosik et.al, 2004).

Laissez-faire leadership style's disadvantages are:

*Lack of direction and clarity:* Without clear guidance or direction from the leader, there is a risk of confusion, lack of co-ordination, and a lack of alignment with organizational goals (Vecchio et. al, 2010).

*At its worst, opposers of the laissez-faire leadership approach have argued that it represents passivity or even an outright avoidance of leadership.* Yet some have argued that some leaders take advantage of this style as a way of avoiding responsibility for their followers' or team members' failures.

*Potential for reduced productivity:* In the absence of direct supervision, some individuals may lack the necessary motivation or discipline, leading to decreased productivity and performance (Yukl, 2013).

*Lack of support and feedback:* Followers may require guidance, feedback, and support from their leaders, which may be lacking in a laissez-faire leadership style (Northouse, 2018).

Examples of Laissez-faire leaders:

*Herbert Hoover:* During his presidency, Hoover adopted a laissez-faire approach to the economy, advocating for limited government intervention and allowing the market to self-correct during the Great Depression.

*Mahatma Ghandi:* Ghandi, a famous leader in India who championed a non-violent resistance against the British colonial rule. Ghandi believed in self governance as the best governance system.

*Steve Jobs:* He is cited as a laissez-faire leader who is known for giving instructions to his team about what he would like to see, and then leaving his team to their own devices to innovatively figure out how to meet his expectations.

Sosik et.al (2004) and Vecchio et.al, (2010) noted that the laissez-faire approach is best suited for environments that value autonomy, self-direction, and individual initiative. This applies in industries that rely heavily on research and development, creativity and innovation, and on highly skilled and self-motivated teams.

### **CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Charismatic leadership is an approach in which leaders inspire and motivate their followers through their personal charm and appeal, qualities, vision, and persuasive communication (Conger and Kanungo, 1998). Charismatic leaders often have a compelling presence and possess exceptional charm and charisma, and the ability which influences, attracts and mobilizes followers.

According to House and Shamir (1993) and Conger and Kanungo (1998), the main features and characteristics of this leadership approach include:

*Charismatic presence:* charismatic leaders possess magnetic personalities that attract and captivate their followers, with charm and self confidence.

*Visionary leadership:* charismatic leaders are visionary and have a clear sense of direction. They communicate this vision effectively to their followers.

*Persuasive communication:* They are skilled communicators, using powerful rhetoric, story-telling, and emotional appeal to influence and mobilize their followers.

*Self-confident:* Charismatic leaders often exhibit strong self-confidence and optimism.

The following are the advantages of charismatic leadership style:

*Inspires follower commitment:* Charismatic leaders inspire deep loyalty and commitment among their followers, who are motivated to work towards the leader's vision and goals (House and Shamir,1993).

*Effective communication:* charismatic leaders excel in communication. Their persuasive communication style enables them to convey their vision effectively (Conger and Kanungo, 1998).

*Strong motivational impact:* Charismatic leaders can create a high level of enthusiasm and energy, boosting morale and motivating followers to exceed expectations (Conger and Kanungo,1998).

The disadvantages of this leadership approach include:

*Overreliance on the leader:* Charismatic leadership heavily depends on the leader's personality and presence, which can create challenges if the leader is absent or unable to sustain their charisma (Northouse, 2018).

*Lack of checks and balances:* The persuasive abilities of charismatic leaders can sometimes lead to unquestioning follower loyalty, potentially bypassing critical thinking and healthy skepticism. This leaves room for potential manipulation of followers (Northouse, 2018).

*Potential for abuse of power:* Charismatic leaders' strong influence can be used for both positive and negative purposes, and there is a risk of leaders exploiting their followers or pursuing self-interest over the common good (Bass and Riggio, 2006).



Lack of continuity: This leadership style rides on the personal qualities and presence of the leader. In the absence of a charismatic leader, a leadership void arises.

#### Examples of charismatic leaders

*Martin Luther King Jr.:* A prominent civil rights leader in the United States, exemplified charismatic leadership. Through his powerful speeches and non-violent activism, he inspired millions and led the civil rights movement to achieve significant social change.

*Frederick J. Chiluba:* The second republican president of Zambia is known to have had such a magnetic personality about him. Through his charisma and persuasive speech, he led the country from a one-party state to a multi-party democratic state.

*Steve Jobs:* Jobs, the co-founder of Apple Inc., was known for his charismatic leadership style. His compelling vision, persuasive communication, and ability to inspire innovation played a crucial role in transforming Apple into a global technology giant.

Most pastors are charismatic leaders.

From Northouse (2018) and Bass and Riggio (2006)'s studies, charismatic leadership is best suited for environments that require inspiration, vision, and the ability to mobilize and engage followers. It is observed in social movements, grassroots mobilization of organisations and in times of crisis or significant change.

#### SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

Situational leadership is a flexible leadership style that adapts to the specific needs and capabilities of individual followers or groups (Hersey et al., 2013). Situational leadership style emphasizes the leader's ability to assess the situation (i.e. readiness or development level of their followers) and adjust the leadership approach accordingly.

The main features and characteristics of situational leadership as observed by Northouse (2013) and Hersey et al. (2013), are:

*Readiness assessment:* Situational leaders assess the readiness level of their followers in terms of their competence and commitment to a particular task or goal, and then tailor the leadership style to the situation.

*Differentiated leadership styles:* Depending on the follower's readiness level, situational leaders may adopt different leadership styles, ranging from directing and coaching to supporting and delegating.

*Flexible and Adaptive approach:* Situational leaders are adaptable and flexible, adjusting their leadership behaviors based on the changing needs and development of their followers.

*Not a one-size fits all approach:* Situational leadership recognises that different situations require different leadership approaches.

#### Advantages of situational leadership style are:

*Effective leadership matching:* By adapting the leadership style to the followers' readiness level, situational leaders can provide the appropriate support and guidance, maximizing individual and team performance (Yukl, 2013).

*Development and growth:* Situational leadership encourages the development of followers by providing the necessary support, coaching, and autonomy at each readiness level (Hersey et al., 2013)

**Improved decision-making:** By considering the specific situational factors and the readiness of their followers, situational leaders can make more informed decisions that align with the needs and capabilities of their team (Yukl, 2013)

Disadvantages of this leadership approach are as follows:

**Time and effort-intensive:** Assessing and adapting leadership style to individual followers or groups can be time-consuming and requires a high level of emotional intelligence and situational awareness (Hersey et al., 2013)

**Complexity:** Situational leadership requires leaders to be knowledgeable about various leadership styles, and possess the ability to assess readiness accurately - which can be challenging for some leaders (Northouse, 2013)

**Potential for inconsistency:** Constantly changing leadership styles based on the situation may lead to inconsistency in decision-making and unclear expectations among followers (Yukl, 2013)

Examples of leaders who demonstrated situational leadership:

*Winston Churchill:* Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II, is often cited as an example of situational leadership. His ability to adapt his leadership approach based on the changing demands and challenges of the war contributed to the successful mobilization of the British people.

*Inonge Wina:* The first woman to hold the position of vice president in Zambia, exemplified situational leadership at the time of passing of Zambia's fifth republican president – Micheal Chilufya Sata. When Mr. Sata died, the ruling party then (the Patriotic Front) was rattled with several factions, each led by a different individual – all of whom wanted to become president of the Patriotic Front (so they could go on and be elected president of Zambia). Ms. Inonge Wina showed exceptional situational leadership when she held the party together through that turbulent moment to the point where the Patriotic Front elected a new party president.

Situational leadership, being an adaptable and flexible style, is best suited for environments undergoing a crisis or emergency situation, those characterized by rapid changes and those that require a lot of training and development.

## **SERVANT LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Servant leadership is a leadership style that focuses on serving the needs of others and prioritizing the well-being and development of followers (Greenleaf, 2002). With this approach, leaders aim to support and empower their followers, enabling them to reach their full potential, while achieving organizational goals.

Yukl (2013) and Irving and Longbotham (2007), observed the main features and characteristics of servant leadership as:

*Service orientation:* Servant leaders prioritize the needs of their followers and actively seek to serve them, fostering a culture of support, empathy, and care.

*Empowerment and development:* They promote the personal and professional growth of their followers, providing mentorship, guidance, and opportunities for skill development.

*Collaboration and teamwork:* Servant leaders emphasize collaboration, teamwork, and creating a sense of community among their followers. This fosters a supportive and inclusive work environment.

*High morality:* Servant Leaders operate with high ethical standards and moral principles

The advantages of this leadership approach are:

Enhanced employee engagement: Servant leadership promotes a sense of purpose, belonging, and fulfillment among followers, leading to increased employee engagement and satisfaction (Dierendonck and Patterson, 2015).

Improved performance: By prioritizing the growth and development of followers, leaders inspire and motivate the followers to perform at their very best (Greenleaf, 2002).

Improved organizational culture: This leadership style fosters a positive and supportive organizational culture, built on trust, respect, and open communication (Sinek, 2014).

Long-term success: By prioritizing the growth and development of followers, servant leaders can cultivate a talented and motivated workforce, contributing to the long-term success of the organization (Irving and Longbotham, 2007)

The disadvantages of servant leadership style are:

Time and resource-intensive: Servant leadership requires significant time and investment in supporting and developing followers, which may pose challenges in fast-paced or time-constrained environments (Greenleaf, 2002).

Balancing organizational goals: Servant leaders need to strike a balance between meeting the needs of individual followers and achieving organizational objectives, which can be very challenging (Sinek, 2014).

Vulnerability to exploitation: In some cases, followers may take advantage of the servant leader's support and generosity, leading to potential misuse of resources or lack of accountability (Greenleaf, 2002).

When the needs of different stakeholders conflict, decision making becomes a challenge for such leaders (Irving and Longbotham, 2007).

Examples of servant leaders:

*Jack Ma:* The CEO of Alibaba comes out as a very good example of servant-leadership, often dedicating time to coaching young executives, prioritizing the needs and concerns of followers alongside achievement of organisational goals.

*Pope Francis:* Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, is often regarded as a servant leader. He emphasizes humility, empathy, and addressing social injustices, actively engaging with followers and promoting a more inclusive and compassionate Church.

Servant Leadership is best suited for environments that prioritize collaboration, empowerment and development of individuals and teams. It is very popular in non-profit and social sector organisations.

## **PACESETTING LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Pacesetting leadership is a leadership system in which leaders set high-performance standards for themselves and their followers (Goleman et.al, 2013). Leaders lead by example, demonstrating excellence and expecting their followers to meet those same standards.

Here, the leader leads by example. According to Northouse (2013), pacesetter leaders typically have a strong drive for achievement and strive for continuous improvement.

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013), noted the following features and characteristics as representative of pacesetter leadership style:

*High-performance expectations:* Pacesetter leaders set very ambitious goals as well as performance standards, while expecting their followers to follow suit.

*Lead by example:* Pacesetter leaders demonstrate the desired behaviors and work ethic themselves, serving as role models for their followers. They lead by example.

*Strong emphasis on results:* Pacesetter leaders prioritize achieving results and focus on delivering high-quality outcomes within the required timelines and deadlines.

These are the advantages of pacesetter leadership:

*Drives performance and excellence:* Pacesetter leaders push their followers to perform at their very best, encouraging them to strive for excellence and continuously improve (Northouse, 2013).

*Quick and efficient execution:* This leadership style promotes a sense of urgency and drives swift action, as pacesetter leaders set high expectations and deadlines (Goleman et al., 2013).

*Demonstrates competence:* Pacesetter leaders' own high level of performance and expertise can instill confidence in their followers and establish credibility (Northouse, 2013)

Pacesetter leaders – lead by example.

Disadvantages of pacesetter leadership approach include:

*Potential for burnout:* The relentless pursuit of high standards and fast-paced execution can lead to increased stress levels and burnout among followers (Goleman et al., 2013)

*Limited development and stifling growth:* Pacesetter leaders tend to focus more on immediate results rather than the long-term development of their followers, potentially stifling their growth and learning opportunities (Goleman et al., 2013)

*Negative impact on morale:* Constantly striving to meet high-performance expectations can create a tense and demanding work environment, potentially lowering morale and leading to low job satisfaction (Northouse, 2013).

Examples of pacesetter world leaders:

*Elon Musk:* Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, is associated with pacesetter leadership. He is known for setting aggressive goals and expects his teams to achieve extraordinary results in the areas of electric vehicles and space exploration.

*Jeff Bezos:* Bezos, the founder and former CEO of Amazon, demonstrated pacesetter leadership throughout the company's history. He established a culture of high standards, customer obsession, and rapid innovation, driving Amazon's success over his years of managing the business operation.

## DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

Democratic leadership, also commonly known as participative leadership, is a kind of leadership approach where the leader involves team members in the decision-making process, encouraging open communication, and seeking consensus on important matters (Yukl, 2013). In this approach, the leader values the input and ideas of team members and followers, empowering them to participate actively in shaping organization's goals, strategies, and operations. Democratic leadership emphasizes collaboration and involvement from all team members.

Avolio and Bass (2004), observed the features and characteristics of democratic leadership as:

*Inclusive Decision-Making:* Democratic leaders believe in the value of diverse perspectives and seek to involve team members in the decision-making process. They encourage open discussions, actively listen to ideas, and consider multiple viewpoints before making final decisions.

*Shared Vision and Goals:* In a democratic leadership style, leaders foster a shared vision and common goals by engaging team members in defining the organization's direction. This helps build a sense of ownership and commitment among team members.

*Supportive Communication:* Democratic leaders maintain open lines of communication with their team members. They actively seek feedback, provide regular updates, and ensure that everyone has access to information necessary for their roles.

*Empowerment and Autonomy:* Team members under democratic leadership are empowered to take initiative, make decisions, and contribute to problem-solving. This autonomy increases motivation and promotes a sense of responsibility for the organization's success.

*Trust and Respect:* Democratic leaders cultivate an environment of trust and respect, valuing the contributions of each team member. This fosters a positive and collaborative work culture, where team members feel valued and encouraged to express their ideas.

Advantages of Democratic Leadership style include:

**Higher Employee Engagement:** By involving employees in decision-making, democratic leadership increases their level of engagement and commitment to the organization's goals (Avolio and Bass, 2004)

**Enhanced Creativity and Innovation:** The inclusive nature of this leadership style encourages team members to share their ideas freely, leading to greater creativity and innovative solutions (Yukl, 2013).

**Improved Problem-Solving:** With diverse perspectives, democratic leaders can tap into the collective intelligence of the team to arrive at more comprehensive and effective solutions to challenges (Northouse, 2013)

**Stronger Team Cohesion:** Team members feel valued and included under democratic leadership, which fosters a sense of camaraderie and cooperation among team members (Avolio and Bass, 2004)

Democratic Leadership system has the following disadvantages:

**Time-Consuming Decision-Making:** Involving multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process can be time-consuming, leading to slower decision-making compared to autocratic styles (Northouse, 2013).

**Lack of Direction in Crisis:** In situations requiring quick and decisive action, a purely democratic approach may result in delays or indecisiveness (Avolio and Bass, 2004).

**Potential for Conflict:** With multiple opinions, conflicts may arise during the decision-making process, requiring strong conflict resolution skills from the leader (Yukl, 2013)

**Examples of prominent world leaders with Democratic Leadership Traits:**

**Nelson Mandela:** As the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela exemplified democratic leadership by championing inclusivity, reconciliation, and collaboration in the country's post-apartheid era. He involved various parties in the decision-making process, working towards a unified vision of a democratic and free South Africa.

**Jacinda Ardern:** As the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern is known for her democratic leadership style, which includes empathetic communication, active engagement with citizens, and consensus-building in decision-making.

## CONCLUSION

Leadership style plays a significant role in shaping the success and effectiveness of a leader in various settings. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership, and different situations call for different leadership styles. Understanding the strengths, characteristics, and potential drawbacks of different leadership styles empowers a leader to adapt their approach and maximize their impact on their teams and organizations.

## Acknowledgment

This paper was inspired by a strong passion and interest I have in the concept of leadership. It is interesting to realise the extent to which leadership styles shape, motivate and inspire teams and organisations. I was encouraged to do a paper on this topic as a matter of personal development as well as seizing a much rare opportunity of contributing to this debate and the eventual molding of upcoming leaders. It is my hope that this paper will be of paramount help to upcoming leaders.

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