

**CORRELATES AND PREDICTORS OF EMPOWERING**

**LEADERSHIP STYLE:**

**A STUDY OF INDIAN MANAGERS**

By

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*Submitted*

*In fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of*

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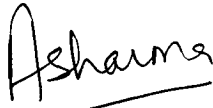
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**January 2005**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “**Correlates And Predictors Of Empowering Leadership Style: A Study Of Indian Managers**”, being submitted by Ms. Mahima Singh Thakur for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, to the **Indian Institute of Technology**, Delhi is a record of original bona-fide research carried out by her under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied that the thesis presented by Ms. Mahima Singh Thakur is worthy of consideration for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The results of this thesis have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for award of degree or diploma.



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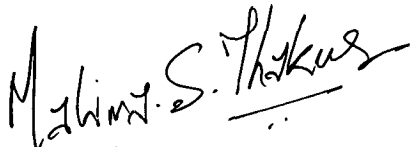
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mahima S. Thakur', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ms Mahima Singh Thakur

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## ***ABSTRACT***

With the advent of globalization, organizations are raring forward to experiment with new technologies, work organizations, political and economic institutions, business policies, ideologies and HR strategies. Developing a culture of empowerment is one such practice which is being espoused universally with an unprecedented fervor to achieve competitive advantage.

This empirical investigation attempts to study the correlates of empowering leadership style in Indian organizations. The study proposes that work attitudes, social attitudes and leadership styles, are learnt in a gradual incremental fashion as the individual develops. The childhood experiences of parenting of the individual have an impact on his attitudes, personality, values and cognitions which is reflected in his work psychology. Background variables of the individual (i.e. education, age, gender, regional background etc.) and aspects of personality such as emotional intelligence; compound the impact of parenting. Further, parenting, background variables and emotional intelligence help in the crystallization of social attitudes. Finally there is a complex interplay of impact of parenting, background variables, emotional intelligence, crystallized social attitudes and organizational climate affecting his empowering attitudes. Here in lay the roots of empowering leadership style. This may be related to organizational commitment. Thus in this study, an attempt has been made to analyse variables from each stage of this course. The study proposes a model of individual and organizational determinants of empowering leadership style.

Empowerment has been considered as a panacea for improving employee commitment and innovation (Rothstein, 1995) and a prerequisite to the survival of business in the emerging workplace and as an indispensable device for accomplishing a competitive edge in a globalized and liberalized economy (Goski and Belfry, 1991). Research and experience have shown that surgical turnarounds involving downsizing, closure of plants and companies are not proving to be as fruitful or fast, than non-surgical turnarounds as transformational turnarounds like empowerment, participative management, job redesign etc. (Khandwala, 1992, 1995a). Managers are being encouraged to adopt empowering attitudes and forms of functioning. These attitudes can be imbibed by organizational socialization and training in addition to family and socio-cultural influence.

Most of the attitudes have their roots in the family climate. Different parenting styles result in fostering different kind of attitudes (Baumrind, 1966, 1971, 1983, 1991a, 1991b, 1996; Rohner, 1986, 1994). Research (Coopersmith, 1967; Baumrind, 1983, 1991a; Buri, Louselle, Misukanis, and Mueller, 1988) suggests that authoritative parenting has been the most appropriate parenting style which is observed to result in high self esteem, self-reliance, resilience, optimism, maturity, and social acceptance where as authoritarian, rejecting-neglecting and permissive parenting was found to be associated with a variety of childhood problems including lack of self-assertion, lower cognitive competence, lower levels of individuation, social consciousness and autonomy and external locus of control (Baumrind, 1983, 1991b). Low confidence, low self esteem, external locus of control, high pessimism are a few of the personal factors which have been found being associated with reluctance in adopting empowering leadership

style. Authoritarian parenting is predominantly position centered and thus does not accord equal status to the child vis-à-vis the parent. Authoritative parenting is person centered and accords due importance to the individuality of the child. Indian parenting is predominantly position centered (Saraswati, 1997, 1998). The hierarchical framework in Indian society and families is so pervasive that according to Kakkar (1978) the Indian child internalizes the process of hierarchical structuring of persons and relationships. In this study the perception of authoritativeness (empowering constituent) in the childhood parental authority style of the managers is scaled and then it is studied in relation to the empowering leadership attitude of the managers. It is proposed that childhood exposure to empowerment through authoritative parenting would have a positive impact on the individual (ex. high self esteem, self confidence, democratic attitude etc.) and predispose him to be empowering towards his subordinates. Another variable which has been found to be associated with empowering leader behaviour is emotional intelligence (Barling et al, 2000; Palmer et al, 2001; Higgs, 2003). High inter and intrapersonal emotional awareness and emotional management has been found to be associated with transformational leadership style which is underscored with empowering norms. In addition to these factors organizational climate is found to have an impact on leadership behaviour. Seibert, Silver and Randolph (2004) conceptualize the micro dimensions of empowerment as a climate construct, naming it 'empowerment climate' which is defined in terms of employees shared perceptions of managerial structures, policies and practices related to empowerment.

Extensive research has been done on the empowering leadership style of the top rung of the organization but little has been done to study the empowering leadership style

of middle level managers. According to Spreitzer and Quinn (1996) middle level managers are the most underutilized and should be utilized in bringing about transformational changes as transformational leaders. Today more and more management practitioners and researchers opine that managers need to assume the role of leaders and developers. Researchers have studied the empowering leadership pattern of managers and its organizational correlates (Spreitzer, de Janasz & Quinn, 1999; Bass, 1998; Avolio & Gibbons, 1988) and the impact of personal variables on leadership style (Spreitzer & Quinn, 1997; Yousef, 1998; Blake and Mouton, 1997). However, they have looked at these relationships separately. This study makes a modest attempt to study these personal and organizational variables together and see their relationship with empowering leadership style of middle level Indian managers. The organizational variable which is studied is organizational climate and the individual variables which are studied are emotional intelligence, perception of childhood parental authority style and background variables (age, gender, educational qualifications and regional background). Organizational commitment also has been studied. The results show that empowering leadership style is positively related to authoritative parenting style, emotional intelligence, organizational commitment and perception of organizational climate. Authoritative parenting style, perception of organizational climate, emotional intelligence emerged as predictors of empowering leadership style. The study has been conducted in ten work organizations operating in north India. The sample taken consists of 321 middle level managers from these organizations. A comparative analysis of different sectors was done and the organizations were categorized on the basis of (a) nature of ownership i.e. Public sector, private sector, multinationals (Indian and global), international social organizations and

(b) and type of industry (oil sector, manufacturing sector, aviation sector, pharmaceutical sector, information technology sector, international social organization sector and banking sector). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the study. Qualitative data were collected using a qualitative interview schedule to tap on the hidden resources of information which may not lend themselves to the quantitative (survey) data technique. The quantitative data was collected through the administration of five standardized questionnaires/scales, which are *Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire* (Chadha, 2001), *adapted version of Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)*, (Buri, 1991), *Organizational Climate Questionnaire* (Rao and Abraham, 1996), *Adapted version of Gender Egalitarianism Scale (KGES)* by Kim & Jung (2000) and *Organisational Commitment questionnaire* by DeCottis and Summers (1987). *A questionnaire of empowering leadership style was constructed for this study and a background variables schedule was also used.* The questionnaires were administered on 321 managers. The data were subjected to univariate, bivariate and multivariate techniques using SPSS<sup>®</sup> 11.0. Most of the hypotheses have been supported in this study.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To develop a framework of empowering leadership style and its related factors and predictors.
2. To study the relationship between organizational level variables and empowering leadership style in different sectors operating in North India.

## **Hypotheses proposed :**

Hypothesis<sub>1</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between the level of empowering leadership style of managers and perception of favorableness of organizational climate.

Hypothesis<sub>2</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of empowering leadership style of managers.

Hypothesis<sub>3</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between perception of childhood authoritative parental authority style and level of empowering leadership style.

Hypothesis<sub>4</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between the level of gender egalitarianism attitude and the level of empowering leadership style of managers.

Hypothesis<sub>5</sub> : There will be a positive correlation between the level of organizational commitment and the level of empowering leadership style of managers.

Hypothesis<sub>6</sub>: Background of Managers will be significantly correlated to empowering leadership style.

Hypothesis<sub>6a</sub>: Women will have a higher level of empowering leadership style than Men.

Hypothesis<sub>6b</sub>: There will be negative correlation between the level of empowering leadership style and age of managers.

Hypothesis<sub>6c</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between level of education and level of empowering leadership style of managers.

Hypothesis<sub>6d</sub>: There will be a significant difference between the empowering leadership styles of managers from different regional backgrounds.

Hypothesis<sub>7</sub>: There will be significant difference in the level of empowering leadership style of managers from different organizational sectors.

Hypothesis<sub>8</sub>: Perception of organizational climate, emotional intelligence, perception of childhood authoritative parental authority style, and level of organizational commitment will predict the level of empowering leadership style of Indian managers.

The results supported hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6<sub>a</sub>, 6<sub>c</sub>, 6<sub>d</sub> and 7. Hypothesis 8 was partially accepted as organizational commitment did not emerge as a predictor of empowering leadership style. Emotional intelligence, perception of organizational climate, perception of childhood parental authority style, organizational commitment, gender egalitarianism attitude and background variables were found to be correlating with empowering leadership style. A comparative empirical analysis of organizations and sectors showed that the MNC sector differed significantly from public sector and international social organization sector. The study emphasizes that empowering leadership style is affected both by attitudes imbibed in childhood, that is, the family climate and the organizational climate in adulthood. Implications, limitations and suggestions for future research have also been included. The thesis is presented in eight chapters.

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