INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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- Use (**ed.**) for one editor, and (**ed.s**) for multiple editors.
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BOOKS

- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
- Hunker, H.L. and A.J. Wright (1963), "Factors of Industrial Location in Ohio," Ohio State University.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

JOURNAL AND OTHER ARTICLES

- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Garg Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19–22 June.

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

ONLINE RESOURCES

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WEBSITE

- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Natural Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on December 17, 2011 http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP STYLE AS PREDICTORS OF ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Handling conflicts constructively is one of the greatest challenges in the present world. Though societies have matured and scientific knowledge has increased yet organisations face damaging conflicts. In order to overcome such types of situations organizations should have leaders who can handle those situations and help the organization to effectively meet the changing demands of today's environment. Leaders influence learning of executives in the organizations by helping to promote vision that guide and ensure organizational learning processes in which executives routinely share their learning with others and improve their ability to perform better. The current paper describes the relationship of conflict management and leadership style with that of organizational learning which is supported by literature review and shows that no research has been carried out on all the three variables together in Indian organizations.

KEYWORDS

Conflict Management, Innovation, India, Leadership Style, Organizational Learning.

INTRODUCTION

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about (*Robbins et al., 2009*).The definition is broad enough as it encompasses large range of conflicts that employees experience in organizations like incompatibility of goals, differences over understanding of facts, disagreements based on behavioral expectations etc.

Conflict is an interpersonal process that arises from disagreements over the goals to attain or the methods to be used to accomplish these goals.(*Newstrom and Devis, 1998).*Conflict can occur within an employee, between individuals or groups and across organizations as they compete. While conflict is endemic in organizational life, it need not always be negative. Those working together must understand the basic principles of how to use conflict to facilitate becoming a learning team that increases its capacity to take effective action through diffusion of knowledge and skills.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Leader is defined as any person at any level of organization, in any field, who significantly influences others, for good or bad, to achieve the organization's mission or the mission of the people of the organization (*Haldar, 2010.*) Organizations are in search of good leaders and strong management for best performance. Leaders should challenge the status quo, to create visions of the future and to inspire members to achieve their targets in an organization. There are various theories of leadership like The Great Man Theory, Trait Theory, Situational Leadership, Contingency Theory, Transactional Theory and the recent Transformational Theory developed by Bass and Avolio 1994. According to them transformational leadership is a process in which the leaders take actions to try to increase their associates' awareness of what is right and important, to raise their associates' motivational maturity and to move their associates to go beyond the associates' own self-interests for the good of the group, the organization, or society. Such leaders provide their associates with a sense of purpose that goes beyond a simple exchange of rewards for effort provided. Transformational leadership display five styles of leadership.

The transactional leadership style is an exchange process based on the fulfillment of contractual obligations.It consists of three factors: Contingent reward leadership, Management-by-exception (active) and Management-by-exception (passive) (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Antonakis et al., 2003).

The laissez-faire leadership style "represents the absence of transaction of sorts with respect to leadership in which the leader avoids making decisions, abdicates responsibility, and does not use his/her authority" (Antonakis et al., 2003). Laissez-faire leadership is virtually an avoidance of leadership behaviors, avoidance of taking any action (Stewart, 2006; Bass, 1999). This is also defined as non-leadership or the most passive leadership.

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

Dixon (1999) defined organizational learning as the intentional use of learning processes at the individual, group and system level to continuously transform the organization in a direction that is increasingly satisfying to its stakeholders. Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together.(*Senge, 1990).* All organizations learn in a different way. Some learn lesser and some to a greater extent. Sometimes learning is not achieved up to the level it should as organizations repeat their mistakes, fail to satisfy customers and are no able to improve their performance.

Organizational learning requires four steps of the learning cycle and each step is dependent on the other. The organization defines a strategy for accomplishing their tasks and those tasks are delegated to individuals. The task system works on certain norms. Although the norms, strategies and assumptions may be tacit rather than explicit guide the way the organization accomplishes its tasks.(*Argyris and Schon,1978).*

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Rognes, J. and Schei, V. (2009) in their paper demonstrated that an integrative approach is useful for various outcome-dimensions of conflict. The authors have pointed out that motivation and good relationship is necessary for organisation's growth. Many conflicts that organizations face have a constructive approach to handle. The authors have used a model in which an integrative approach is used to find out the outcome like quality, fairness, satisfaction and trust. The authors have conducted five studies on a large number of people and the results showed that intergrative Sapproach to conflict management would be positively related to agreement quality, perceived fairness, satisfaction and trust. In all studies authors have found different outcomes and have concluded that demographic characters play a role in integrative approach while as individuals characters are also important.

Hanna K., et al., (2010) in their paper have discussed that leaders influence student learning by helping to promote vision that guide and ensure organizational learning processes in which teachers routinely share their knowledge and improve their ability to teach well (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Bell et al., 2003; Voulalas and Sharpe, 2005).The authors have considered vision to be the essence of leadership. The purpose behind this tudy was to find the relation between leadership style (Transformational, Transactional and *laissez-faire*) and organizational learning. Transformational leadership, vision and organizational learning processes are the key to school improvement (*Bass, 2000; Fullan, 1995, 1997; Lam, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1998; Leithwood, 2004).* According to MLQ factorial structure leadership style correlate with work effectiveness in the following way: Transformational factors are more positively related with work effectiveness. Amitay et al., (2005*)* studied the relationship between leadership style and organizational learning in 44 community health clinics. The result was found that transformational leadership elevates the interests and aspirations of employees, was associated with more intensive organizational learning activity. *Ben-Horin Naot et al. (2004*) found correlations between high-level organizational learning and supportive leadership**.**

Moore L. et al.,(2006) in their paper have described the demographics and leadership styles of current Extension leaders and the influence of demographic variables on leadership style. Of the 47 participants 70.2% were males. Mean age was 54.5 years. The mean tenure in extension was 22years.The authors have described about transformational and transactional leadership. *Krishnan and Park (1998*) noted that demographic characteristics exert considerable influence on the leadership style of top managers. Differences in the preferred leadership styles of men and women is perhaps one of the most well researched aspects of leadership. In the meta analysis by *Eagly and Johnson (1990)* where they found that women tend to use a more participative and inclusive style while men tend to use a more directive and controlling style.

Carla Curado in her paper states that Organisational learning seems to develop competencies that are valued by the clients, hardly imitable and they contribute to the competitive advantage of the firm. However the organizational learning process remains a "black box" to all researchers *(Crossan and Berdrow, 2003)* Organisational learning turns out to be unique competitive advantage to the firm (Geus, 1988). In order to leverage knowledge based resources the firm should promote the organizational learning *(Tetrick and Da Silva, 2003).* The author also talks about the Chief Knowledge Officer and his role in the organization. The author has concluded that in designing the organization for organizational learning it might be better to follow the organic design approach; the existence of CKO element in the firm's structure, Dynamic approach to social change is required.

RESEARCH METHODOLGY

OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the study:
1. To study the Conflict Management strategies in Indian Organizations.
2. To study the Leadership style of executives in select Indian Organizations.
3. To study the Organizational Learning in select Indian organizations.
4. To study the Conflict Management and Leadership Style as Predictors of Organizational Learning.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: Conflict management and leadership style predict organizational learning.

SAMPLE

The sample comprises of middle and senior level executives of an Indian manufacturing organization. In total 30 samples were collected by convenience sampling method.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (n=30)

Title	Parameters	Frequency	%
Age (Yrs.)	25-34	11	36.66
	35-44	15	50.00
	45 and above	04	13.33
	Non-Respondents	0	0
Gender	Male	30	100
	Female	0	0
Qualification	Under graduates	22	73.33
	Post graduates	05	16.66
	Non-Respondents	03	10.00
Experience (Yrs.)	5-10	13	43.33
	11-20	12	40.00
	21-30	04	13.33
	Non-Respondents	01	3.33
Nature of organisation	Manufacturing	30	100

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Three standardized scales were used on each subject of the sample. The details of the instruments are:
1. Organizational Conflict Management Scale (OCS) by Dr. Upinder Dhar & Dr. Santosh Dhar (2003).It has twenty statements with 4 items each with high reliability and validity. The scale measures the level of conflict.
2. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 360 Degree Feedback (MLQ) by Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass (1995). The scale has 45 Statements, 3 Dimensions (Transformational, Transactional, Passive/Avoidant) with 9 factors. It is on five point Likert scale and measures the style of leaders in an organization.
3. Organizational Learning Diagnostics (OLD) by Udai Pareek (2003). It has twenty three items grouped in three columns under Phases heading and the next five columns under Mechanisms heading.It is on five point likert scale.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data is analyzed graphically and by using the statistical tools like correlation analysis, regression analysis and Cronbach's Alpha to get the objective of the study with the help of SPSS 16.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Fig. 1 shows the score of organizational learning is highest (2563/3450, 74.3%) among all the three variables followed by leadership style (4975/6750, 73.7%) and the least is the conflict management. According to Hambrick & Mason, 1984, the cognitive bases of a strategic leader are reflected in organizational outcomes such as an organizational culture supportive of learning.

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Leaders play a central role in the organizational learning process in multiple ways. Because of their central role in an organization and their ability to span boundaries across levels, not much learning in an organization could take place without leaders providing guidance, support, and institutionalization (Berson et al., 2006).In this study also organizational learning is highest followed with leadership style.

FIG. 1: VARIABLE WISE RESPONSES
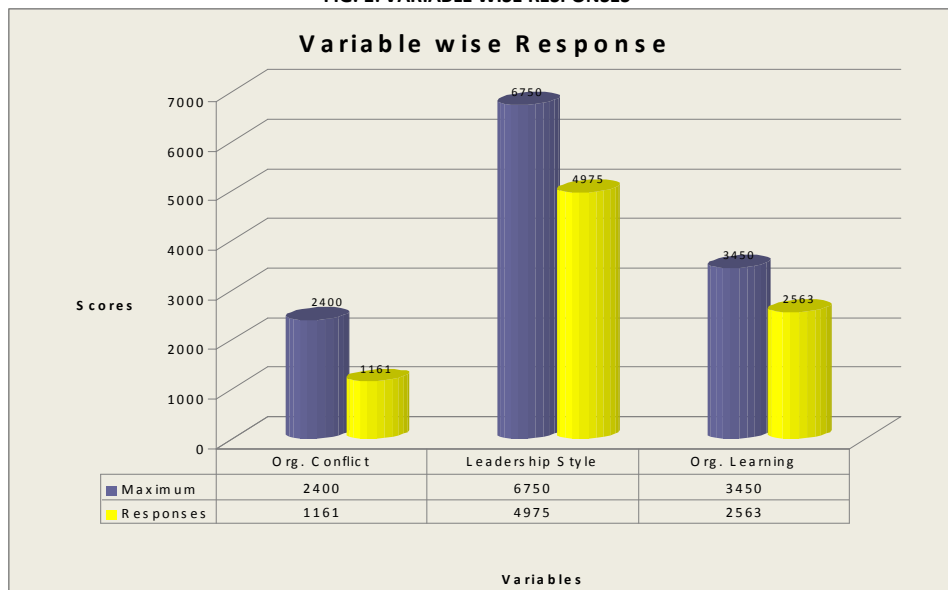
The conflict management is on the lower side. Managing conflicts constructively and effectively in organizations is not an easy task. As per Sayeed and Mehta (1981) who reported that there is very little relationship between leadership style and effective conflict management. This finding to some extent supports the present study concerning emergence of fewer relationships between leadership and conflict management.

In order to improve organizational learning, proper leadership style and conflict management strategy needs to be adopted. When a leader tends to adopt more than one method to deal with a conflicting situation he is said to be flexible since his approach is to try different methods which would have been totally avoided by a manager who rigidly applies a particular method and sticks to it over a period of time. This is supported by Sayeed and Mathur, 1980.

FIG. 2: LEADERSHIP STYLE- FACTOR WISE
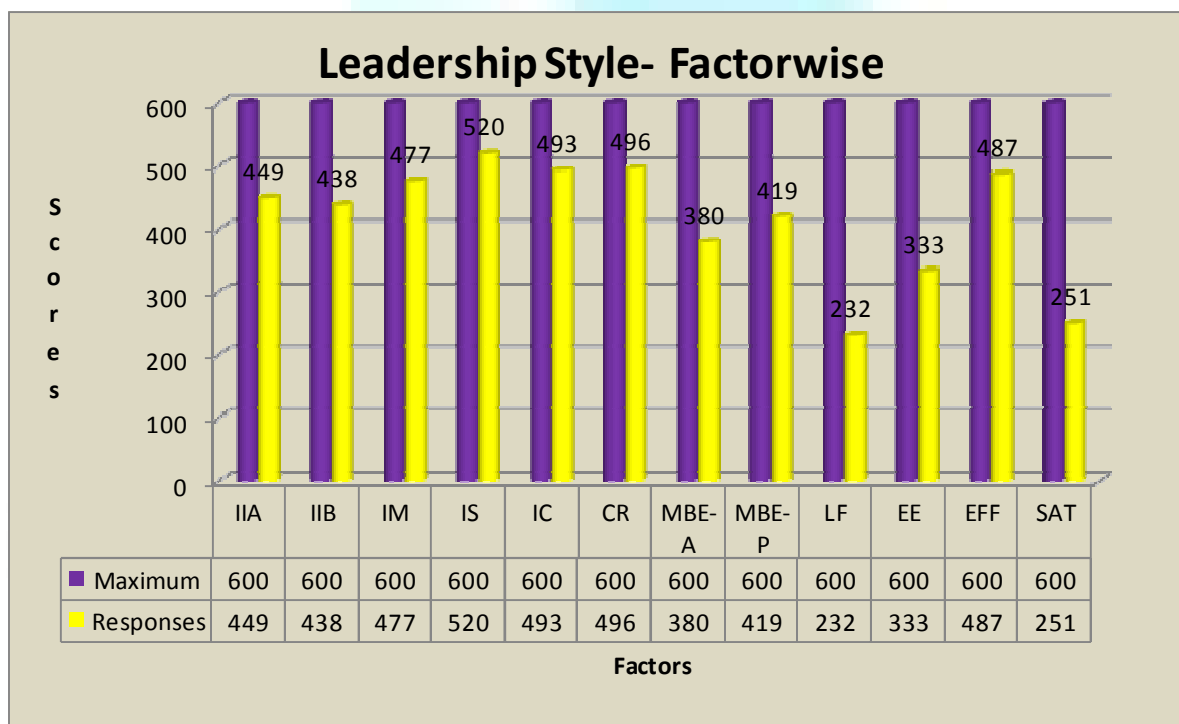
IIA: Idealised Influence (Attributed); **IIB**: Idealised Influence (Behavioral);   **IM**: Inspirational Motivation; **IS**: Intellectual Stimulation;   **IC**: Individualised Consideration; **CR**: Contingent Reward; **MBE-A**: Management by Exception (Active); **MBE-P**: Management by Exception (Passive); **LF**: Laissez Faire; **EE**: Extra Effort; **EFF**: Effectiveness; **SAT**: Satisfaction.

Fig. 2 shows various factors of leadership style. The first five factors belong to transformational leadership. The next three factors are of transactional leadership while the remaining are of laissez faire. The highest score is shown by Intellectual Stimulation, IS (520/600, 86.66%) of transformational leadership style. This is supported by Tichy and Devanna (1986) stating that the intellectual stimulation of subordinates is more important at higher levels of the organisation.The role of transformational leadership is crucial in cultivating organizational learning at school. (Leithwood et al., 1998; Silins et al., 2002; Johnson, 2002). This is followed by Contingent Reward, CR (496/600, 82.66%) of transactional leadership immediately followed by Individualised Consideration, IC (493/600, 82.16%) of transformational leadership. The least score is of laissez faire (232/600, 38.66%). A similar outcome is typical of employees' laissez-faire leadership style, characterized by avoiding making decisions, abdication of responsibility and renunciation of their authority (*Antonakis et al., 2003; Bass, 1999; Stewart,*

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2006).According to Kotter (1999), leadership is about coping with change by setting directions; aligning people; motivating and inspiring towards a vision. Transformational leadership is based on personal values, beliefs and qualities of the leader. It focuses on qualities like vision and shared values useful in building relationships and enlisting followers in the change process. The transformational leader brings about major changes in the organisation's vision, strategy, culture and promotes innovation in culture and technology. According to Steers (1991), effective transformational leadership can influence major change in the attitudes and assumptions of subordinates and build commitment to the organisation's goals and stimulate dedication to greatness.

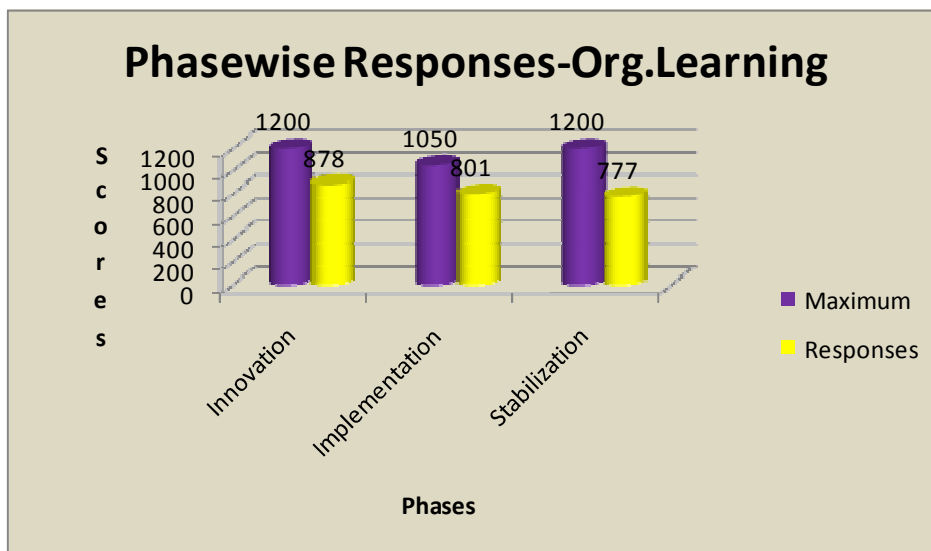**FIG. 3: ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING- PHASE WISE**

Fig. 3 shows phasewise responses of Organisational learning.Out of the three factors of Organisational learning the highest score is of implementation (801/1050, 73.16%) followed by innovation (878/1200,76.28%) and the least score is of stabilization (777/1200,64.75%). According to Nelson et al., 1995; Romm et al., 1996; Gulati et al., 2004; Lewis, 2004, organisational learning promotes implementation part in information systems. According to authors a learning organization with a more adaptive culture is necessary in order to accommodate changes in work procedure, organizational structure and job responsibilities caused by implementation part of information system. Lindley and Wheeler 2001 show that a learning organization will drive the continual development of an information system which caters to changing business processes.

The second highest score is of innovativeness. The results show that organisational learning supports innovativeness which according to Farrell and Mavondo. 2004; Baker and Sinkula, 1999 in their studies have proved that organisational learning leads to innovativeness. Also, it has been found that organizational learning makes business process reengineering (BPR) easier (Smeds, 1997). In terms of individual impact, some research studies (Harris, Mowen, and Brown, 2005) indicate that learning orientation has an influence on employee job satisfaction and his or her ability to openly accept challenges and organizational commitment.

FIG.4: ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING- MECHANISE WISE
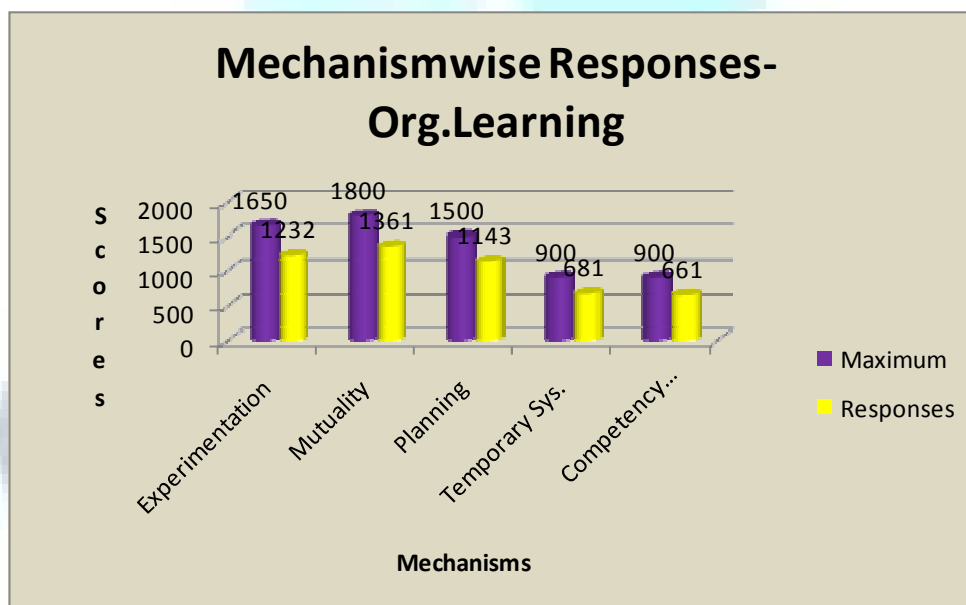
Fig. 4 shows mechanism wise response of organisational learning. The highest score is of planning (1143/1500, 76.2%) followed by temporary systems (681/900, 75.66%).The least score is of competency building with (661/900, 73.44%). According to Serrat (2009) who states that in a learning organization, planning is based on careful reflection through probing questions that draw on data and information from monitoring, review and self- and independent evaluation. To stimulate creativity and generate new ideas and innovative practices, an organization should take a balanced approach to the importance of both planned and emergent learning. Planning is an important aspect of any organisation for its ultimate objective. Leadership styles have to play significant role in planning things and helping develop needed competencies of HRs for organizational excellence help and inspire people to go beyond the perceptible world which should be in tune with well designed roles, structures and processes for oragnisational learning to thrive.

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DATA ANALYSIS BY USING SPSS 16

The analysis of data is done by using the statistical techniques like Regression and Correlation Analysis.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Org._Learning	85.43	**8.89**	30
Conflict_ Mgmt.	38.70	**5.78**	30
Leadership_Style	165.83	**6.45**	30

The descriptive statistics shown in Table 2 shows that the Standard Deviation of conflict management is lowest which means all respondents have less variability in their views about conflict level in their organization. As the average age of the respondents is nearly 40 and they have settled down in their life, they want to build a healthy environment in the organisation by co-operating with each other. Many interactions in life are mixed-motive conflicts in which the collectively optimal outcome requires mutual cooperation but individual self-interest makes it tempting not to cooperate (Axeirod, 1984; Kelley& Thibaut, *1954;* Rubin & Brown, *1975).* Learning to manage conflict is integral to a high-performance team in an organisation. Although very few people go looking for conflict, more often than not, conflict results because of miscommunication between people with regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals, or values. The link between positive affect and decisions to cooperate or help another person has long been established (Isen & Levin, 1972).

TABLE 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN VARIABLES

	CM	**LS**	**OL**
CM	1		
LS	0.244**	1	
OL	-.553	-.365	1

**p< .05 (CM- Conflict Management, LS- Leadership style and OL is Organisational Learning).

The correlation between conflict management and leadership style is 0.244 but is insignificant while as correlation between conflict management and organizational learning is negative and insignificant. This is supported by Bose and Pareck (1986) who witnessed a relationship between dysfunctional managerial leadership style and functional conflict management approaches (viz., confrontation, arbitration, compromise and negotiation). The other relationships between the overall functional style and approach and avoidance conflict management were non-significant. The results obtained here are in contrast with the results of (Lam, 2002; Leithwood and Menzies, 1998) who found out that leadership improves the process and the result of organizational learning activities. The research literatures indicate transformational as well as transactional forms of leadership to be positively associated with processes of organizational learning.

TABLE 4: REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Variable	Beta	Sig.
Conflict Management	**-.493**	.004
Leadership style	**-.245**	.135

DependentVariable: Organisational_Learning

In table 4 we see that both the independent variables are not predictors of organizational learning as the beta is negative in both the cases but conflict management is significant (p<.05)as compared to leadership style. The reason may be due to small sample size and the sample taken from only one organization. According to Tompkins and Rognes (2004) the right type of conflict at critical moments in a group's development propels the group to the next stage. However, if theconflict is too emotionally negative, or if it is the wrong type of conflict for that stage, the group is likely to repeat a prior stage in which the learning was incompletely integrated, thus giving the team another opportunity to master that stage. As Hogan et al. (1994) pointed out that organizations will not ask for psychologists help if psychologists continue to argue that leadership has significant impact on group, team and organizational effectiveness. It is not only these two variables which are affecting organisational learning but there are other variables which do have an impact on orgaisational learning.

TABLE 5: COEFFICIENT OF DETERMINATION

R	R square	Adjusted R square
.602	.362	**.315**

Dependent Variable: Organisational_Learning

The Coefficient of correlation (R) is found to be .602. Adjusted R square is 0.315 which shows that the two independent variables i.e conflict management and leadership style together predict organizational learning with 0.315 of determination. Hence 31.5% of dependent variable is explained by two independent variables. There are other variables which can have an effect on the dependent variable and hence other effect of other variables can be taken into consideration.

CONCLUSION

The present study, examining linkages between organizational conflict and leadership styles as predictors of organizational learning has been studied. The result of this study has shown that out of the three leadership styles the most preferable style is Transformational as shown in fig.2 .Throughout the learning process, leaders provide the guidance which is necessary to cross organizational boundaries and integrate what is learned. Also leaders are important in institutionalizing learning by integrating new and existing knowledge in the organization's policies and practices.

While our review has presented leadership as a great influence on organizational learning, we realize that this is not always the case. When leaders rely on warnings and fear, followers may avoid bringing new ideas and accept institutional procedures. The results in this study do not support that the two independent variables predict the dependent variable to a larger extent but both the independent variables definitely have an effect on the organistional learning. In practice we suggest developing specific training programs to help employees articulate a style that is task-oriented, inspiration-oriented and communication-oriented and reduce the conflicts so that organization can be more learned. Attention must be directed not only towards different methods of managing conflict but also conditions under which active and passive roles are to be preferred.

LIMITATIONS

First, the data was collected by means of questionnaires from two sectors of organization which was selected at random and the sample size was too small. The organization was a single organization and hence the effectiveness could not be generated. In this study we examine the link between leadership style and conflict management issues. However, since only manufacturing organization was involved, more research is needed to examine the appropriateness of the measures to other sectors as well.

FUTURE RESEARCH

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Future research on the linkage between leadership theories and conflict management strategies offer a wide scope for future research. At the organization level, a valuable contribution would be to conduct mediation studies to identify how leaders influence the exploitation of institutionalized knowledge through culture and social processes. The role of transformational leaders in exploration has been explored at multiple levels of the organization, but their role in exploitation bears further analysis.. In fact, we expect such leaders to find the right balance between exploiting institutionalized learning from the past and exploring new learning which could a bridge a link between leadership style and organizational learning.

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