

# Leadership Learning – Does it lead to Individual Transformation

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## ABSTRACT

Learning is a continuous process with diligence and with ardour for transformation. Learning effectively happens through our own experiences. Is leadership a skill or a trait? It's still questionable. We are often called as a leader, once we lead a group of people or an event or an institution. But leadership as a learning element brings in more ingredients to it. It is a continuous process of influencing behaviour. There need to have a mutual relation between leader and his followers. Leadership as a process will result in human metamorphosis. All stakeholders related to this process will undergo a transformation. That's the power of true leadership. Leadership has different approaches and the style of leadership change according to occasion and environment where it is applied. Knowingly or unknowingly all of us are taking the role of a leader in different context. This paper emphasises the role of leadership in holistic development through learning. The paper specifically examines learning elements in leadership role and how it will lead to transformation. Very often a leader faces several challenges and how it may create a hindrance for future performance is a matter of concern. The paper examines leadership learning from three different perspective a) Skill or trait b) Prospects of leadership c) Challenges of a leader and also provides a conceptual framework on propinquity of leadership learning and transformation. The study also conducts an opinion survey among three category of leaders 1) social leaders 2) Managers 3) Educational leaders. A comparison is made with regard to the opinion of the three categories of leaders. Conclusion is drawn on the basis of both conceptual framework and opinion survey.

**Keywords:** ardour, metamorphosis, holistic development , conceptual framework

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning is not created by chance but by continuous effort and diligence. Having a continuous learning culture will lead to transformation. To embrace success through transformation learning unlearning and relearning is necessary. Leadership learning is of high relevance in the context of individual growth, organisational development and social enrichment. Each individual plays the role of a leader in one situation or other. Transformational theory of leadership emphasis on good relationship with team members. The organisational goals are achieved through influence and inspiration, with strong bond between leader and team. Great man theory is of the opinion that leaders are born with certain traits and they cannot be made. They possess some basic instincts in influencing people and creating a positive attitude. According to this theory personality traits such as confidence, charm, intellect, social aptitude, honesty etc possessed by an individual will influence his/her leadership role rather than self-developed skills. On the other hand, behavioural theory says that there are several acquired skills which makes an effective leader. This theory states that an individual can learn skills to become good leader. Leadership styles and transformation takes place with the influence of internal and external factors. The output /result and follower satisfaction is important in any leadership style.

### Significance Of The Study

Leadership is not only related to leading somebody but inspiring and motivating people to work in an organised way. Learning through leadership will elevate the thoughts and calibre of an individual which in turn will lead to a self – transformation and also an organisational change. The traits and skills of a good leader will change from situation to situation. Its need of the hour to discuss the possibilities for transformation through leadership. Does all leadership roles lead to transformation? What are the hinderances faced by a leader in performing his/her job . There are elements of learning in each role. On this background of different leadership styles and its impact on society the present study is of high relevance as it tries to analyse the learning elements and holistic development of an individual and an organisation thereby. The study also compare skill based and trait based components of leadership .

### Objectives Of The Study

1. To compare the skill based and trait-based components of leadership
2. To analyse the learning elements in leadership leading to holistic development of an individual
3. To examine the challenges faced by a leader and developing a framework for transformation

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study which tries to analyse the leadership components and its possibilities on transformation. Primary and secondary data is used for the study. Primary data is collected from leaders of three sections of the society. Social leaders, managers and educationalists are the target respondents to collect primary data.

**Sample selection:** Purposive sampling method is used to collect data. 30 Social leaders, Managers and educationalists are selected from 2 northern districts in Kerala, Malappuram and Calicut. Hence the sample size for the study is 90. Special care is taken to select people who possess leadership role. Hence the methodology used for sample selection is purposive sampling.

**Data Collection:** Data is collected using structured questionnaire and interview method. Regarding objective one structured questionnaire is used with scaling and ranking questions. Regarding objective two and three interview method is adopted since its more of qualitative in nature.

### Hypothesis:

**H0:** There is no significant difference in the ranking given by three category of respondents with regard to traits and skills.

**H0:** There is no significant difference between high degree and moderate degree skill and trait components

**H0:** There is no significance difference in the opinion of male and female regarding the relevance of psychological hinderances.

**Tools for analysis:** The study uses simple statistical tools Friedman Test, T test and Descriptive statistics like mean score, percentage etc. A conceptual frame work of transformation is developed after analysis and discussion.

### Limitations Of The Study

The data collection is confined to respondents from 2 districts in Kerala. Since many of the factors are psychological in nature responses may have limitations. Conclusions are drawn based on the limited resources available in this regard.

### ANALYSIS & DISCUSSIONS

Leadership skills and traits are often used interchangeably. A correct mix of skills and traits will give birth to a good leader. How to decide this mix?. Is leadership an inherent trait or a developed skill. Great man theory says that good leaders are born not made. But at the same time there are several live examples were successful entrepreneurs and leaders have developed their skills through continuous learning and hard work. If we start a business, we will learn how to manage people, how to face challenges, how to take decisions like that. So, circumstances will also create leaders. Hence this is always a debatable topic that Are leaders born or made? Experienced hands from industries are of different opinion regarding this combination of skills and in born traits. An opinion survey is conducted among leaders from three different sectors of society.

This section gives results of an opinion survey conducted among leaders from three different sections of society, 1) Social leaders 2) Managers 3) Educational leaders. Social leaders are people oriented and they wish to make innovative changes in the social system catering to the needs of all sectors of the society. According to them a good leader is always some body who can influence people and bring in changes.

**Table 1 : Rank score of Leadership Qualities**

Social Leaders	Managers	Educationalists
*Inspire	*Trust	Decision making
*People oriented	*Confidence	*Integrity
Decision makers	Communication	Communication
*Confidence	Decision making	* Confidence
*Selflessness	Strategic Thinking	Competence
*Adaptable	Relationship building	Strategic thinking

*Passionate	Creativity	*Empathy
*Trust	Positive attitude	Organising skill
Agility	*Passion	*Perseverance
Organising skill	*Inspire	*Transparency

\*Trait based components

Above table shows the ranking of leadership qualities by 3 selected categories of respondents. By comparing traits and skills, it can be noted that as far as social leaders are concerned out of TEN qualities SEVEN are related to traits while skill-based components are only THREE in number. When it comes to managers it can be noted that FOUR components are trait based while SIX are skill based. In case of educationalists FIVE are trait based and FIVE skills based. Interview with social leaders also reveal that trait-based qualities are more needed for a social leader, while in other two cases skill components are more. It can also be noted that out of the top ranked FIVE qualities, confidence and decision-making skill are common in all three categories.

Using Friedman Test the null hypothesis “Ho: There is no significant difference in the ranking assigned by three category of respondents” is tested and since p value (.001) is less than .05, Reject H0. Hence it is concluded that there is significant difference in the ranking given by three category of respondents.

Traits and skills comparison is made based on the degree of involvement required by each component. Based on the mean score the degree of qualities of a good leader can be classified as below. In a 5 point scale factors having mean score above 4 is set as high degree, above 3 is set as moderate.

**Table 2 : Traits Of A Good Leader**

High Degree	Moderate
Trust	Thinking Capacity
Confidence	Emotional intelligence
Inspire	Self-motivated
Perseverance	Honesty
Passion	Empathy
People oriented	Selflessness
Adaptable	
Integrity	
Transparency	

**Table 3 : Skills Of A Leader**

High Degree	Moderate
Decision making	Conflict management
Communication	Critical thinking
Strategic Thinking	Problem solving
Organising skill	Planning
Competence	Listening skill
Relationship building	
Agility	
Creativity	
Positive attitude	
Negotiation skill	

Results of mean score shows that trust and confidence seem to be the most important trait while Decision making and communication are the most important skill needed for a leader. Results of T test shows that there is significant difference in the mean score between traits and skills.

**Table 4: Table showing result of T Test of Traits at 5% level of significance**

High Degree and Moderate Degree Comparison			
Df	Table value At 5%	Calculated value t=	Result
13	2.16	2.85	Reject Ho

Result shows that calculated value is greater than table value and hence reject H<sub>0</sub>. Thus, it can be concluded that there is significant difference in the degree of traits. High degree traits are having more importance than moderate degree traits.

**Table 5: Table showing result of T Test of Skills at 5% level of significance**

High Degree and Moderate Degree Comparison			
Df	Table value At 5%	Calculated value	Result
13	2.16	1.32	Accept H <sub>0</sub>

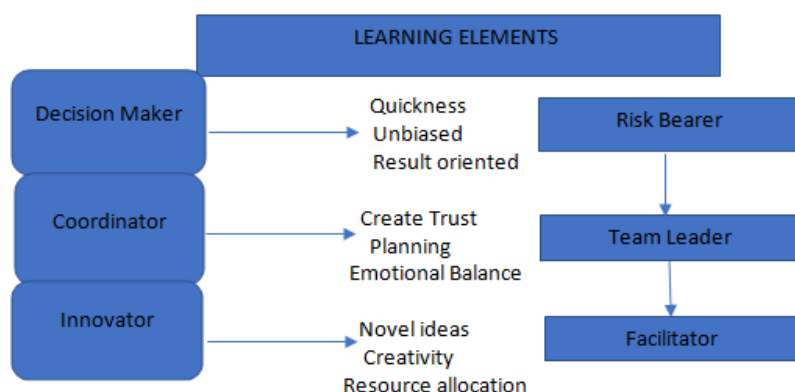
Result shows that calculated value is less than table value and hence accept H<sub>0</sub>. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the degree of skills. Both High degree and moderate degree skills are having equal importance in leadership practices.

This section of paper deals with an analysis on learning elements of leadership which provides scope for further development and transformation. Learning elements in leadership varies according to the different roles played by the leader. It also varies from circumstances to circumstances. Leadership ability also varies at different levels of an organisation. In an organisation both the manager and CEO will be performing the role of leader. The ability of these two individuals as leaders vary. The competencies to be learned also differ from task oriented to people oriented to organisation oriented. According to John C Maxwell there are 5 Ps in leadership. Position, permission, Production level, people development, pinnacle. Learning aspects of leadership can be summarised based on the roles performed by a leader

- Role of a decision maker: As a decision maker a leader will have to undertake situational analysis. Expertise view will have to be taken care off. Many times, decision will have to be taken all of a sudden without having time to discuss. Unbiased and quick decision-making capacity is important
- Role of Coordinator: As a coordinator, leader will have to do people management that too variety of people with different background, culture, habits etc. Creating trust and faith of fellow members is important.
- Role of a risk bearer: A leader will have to take more responsibility and is accountable to others. At times he or she will have to be solely responsible for the decisions taken and also face the uncertainty.
- Role of innovator: A leader must bring in innovation to the system. He should update himself to the latest trends and practices. Continuous learning and adaptability to changing environments is necessary for a leader.
- Role as a team leader: Going along with a team will help the leader to learn different skills. An emotional balancing is required by a leader to lead a team. At the same each one in the team should feel that he or she is important in achieving the goal.
- Role as a facilitator: At times leader should be silent viewer and a facilitator to team members rather than leading them. Let the members perform.

From the above situations, the learning takes place at each stage. Learning elements and its prospects towards transformation can be summarised as below

**CHART 1: Learning Elements**



## CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP

There are several challenges faced by a leader. This section tries to analyse the challenges faced by leaders. A gender wise comparison is also made. Hinderances are broadly classified as Physical Factors which are manageable and psychological factors which are unmanageable. But very often leaders fail due to the mental pressure and the anxiety created by the surroundings. Is there any gender wise differences in leadership challenges? Does the growth prospect is same for male and female? Challenges are broadly classified as follows:

### Manageable challenges-Physical & measurable

Enabling Change
Technical Constraints
Managing a Team
Resource allocation
Cultural diversity
Managing pressure
Time constraints
Capacity of the team

### Unmanageable Challenges-Psychological & non measurable

Misunderstandings
Lack of transparency from counter parties
Managing difference of opinion
Internal conflicts
Non-Cooperation from colleagues
Betray

These two factors affect the transformation of an individual and an organisation as a whole. Even though there are good leaders, the circumstances will be an obstacle at times. How to make changes will be an unknown factor. All the physical challenges mentioned above is measurable and can be reduced or managed through different techniques. But the actual hinderance in a leadership role is the psychological factors which influence our mind.

Survey among 55 men and 35 female ( Total 90) gives the following result with regard to the challenges they faced in their leadership role

**Table 6: Mean Score – Gender wise comparison of opinion on Physical Hinderances**

Physical Hindrances			
Highly Relevant	Relevant	Less relevant	Irrelevant
21 men 12 female	25 men 8 female	6men 13 female	3 men 2female
Mean score – Men		Mean Score – Female	
Managing pressure	4.6	Enabling Change	4.7
Time constraints	4.32	Capacity of the Team	4.4
Enabling Change	4.12	Managing Team	4.2
Managing Team	3.8	Technical Constraints	3.8
Technical Constraints	3.7	Time constraints	3.62
Capacity of the team	3.45	Cultural diversity	3.61
Resource allocation	3.3	Managing Pressure	3.5
Cultural Diversity	2.7	Resource allocation	3.3

**Table 7: Mean Score – Gender wise comparison of opinion on Psychological Hinderances**

Psychological Hinderances			
Highly Relevant	Relevant	Less relevant	Irrelevant
6 men 12 female	12 men 18 female	27 men 5 female	10 men 0 female
Mean score – Men		Mean Score – Female	

Internal conflicts	4.2	Internal conflicts	4.6
Non Cooperation	3.7	Betray	4.2
Difference of opinion	3.67	Lack of transparency	3.8
Lack of transparency	2.8	Misunderstandings	3.7
Misunderstandings	2.6	Non-Cooperation	3.5
Betray	2.3	Difference of opinion	2.6

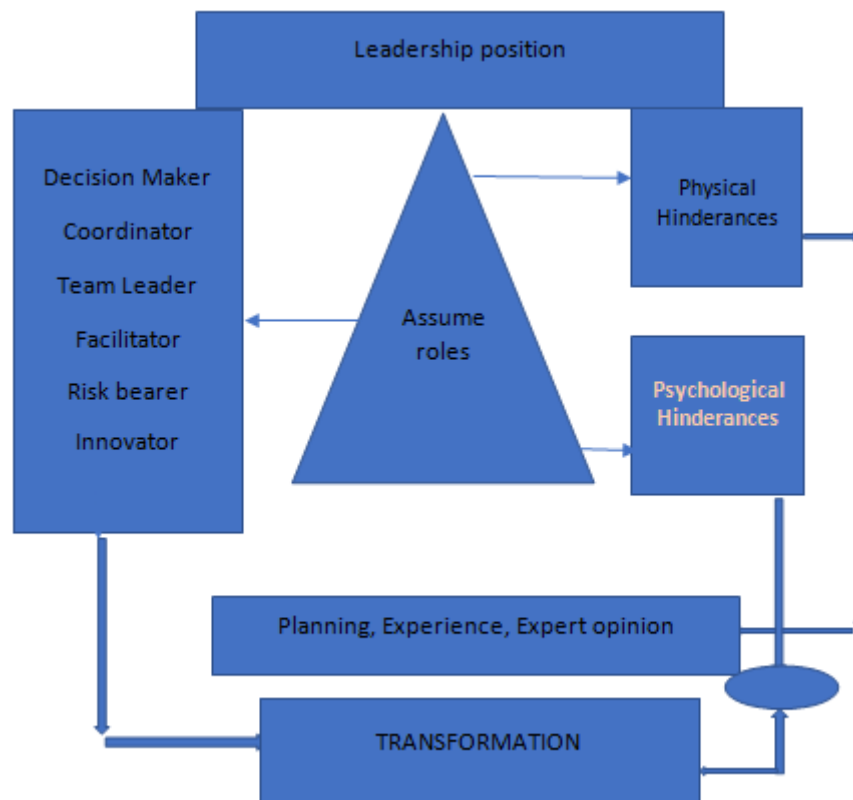
Above Table shows the comparison of opinion survey conducted among men and female regarding hinderances. It can be noted that regarding Physical hinderances 'managing pressure' seems to be the most relevant for male with mean score 4.6 while for female its less relevant with a mean score of 3.5. Among psychological hinderances both men and women are of the opinion that 'internal conflicts' are the most relevant one with mean score 4.2 and 4.6 respectively.

**Table 8: Table showing result of T Test at 5% level of significance**  
Gender wise comparison – opinion on Psychological Hinderances

Mean Score Male	Mean score Female	df	Table value At 5%	Calculated value	Result
3.2	3.7	10	1.81	1.98	Reject Ho

T test result shows calculated value is greater than table value and hence reject H0. Hence there is significant difference in the opinion of men and female regarding psychological hinderances and its noted that women are more affected by such hinderances than men.

**Chart 2: Conceptual Framework on Transformation Through Leadership**



This paper depicts the model that assuming different roles will expand the scope of leadership learning. But as the scope expands physical hinderances get reduced and psychological hinderances get started. Physical challenges are manageable though may not be possible initially but with experience it can be. But psychological factors still remain as a ceiling over the head of all leaders. Breaking up the psychological barriers is not easy. But transformation happens only if we could manage both.

## **CONCLUSION**

Leadership learning is a continuous process and if moulded with right ingredients it will lead to transformation. The study tries to analyse in detail leadership traits and skills. The results of opinion survey conducted among three sectors of society shows that for social leadership traits are more important than skills. In case of corporate leadership skills are more important, while for educationalists both traits and skills are equally important. Freidman test shows that there is significant difference in the ranking given by three categories of respondents. According to the mean score , Trust and Confidence are the most important traits while Decision making and communication are most important skills for the leaders. T test shows that there is significant difference between high degree components and moderate degree components. The learning elements of leadership depends upon different roles performed by leaders. Its also concluded that challenges faced by leaders can be broadly classified into physical challenges and psychological challenges. From gender wise analysis its further noticed that psychological factors are more challenging to female while physical factors more relevant for male leaders. The study concludes that there is a gap in healing the psychological hinderances and hence there is a ceiling limit for transformation to take place. Hence steps to be taken to address both physical and psychological hinderances for having an effective transformational leadership.

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