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## Executives' Leadership Development and Yoga Practices

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### Abstract

Yoga practice is a cosmic training programme which increases deep and constant self-awareness in the individual by evolutionary process of development. This evolutionary development of leadership by higher level spiritual practice of yoga is the need of the hour in management science. This study was focused to probe the leadership behaviour differences among the yoga practicing and non-practicing groups of executives. With this objective a survey was conducted on 334 executives (out of 334, 167 were yoga practicing executives) of large scale public sector organization in India. The executives were selected at random to assess the common character difference among the yoga practicing and non-practicing executives. About 61 dimensions of executives' leadership behaviour were measured through six standardized tools. Discriminant analysis was applied in this study. The results revealed that yoga regularly practicing executives had good self-management and social facilitator capabilities than occasionally and non-yoga practitioners.

*Keywords:* Executives' Leadership, Yoga, Managerial Leadership, Spiritual Practice

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### 1. Introduction

In this century of technological revolution a famous jargon is 'becoming number one is easier in management than remaining in number one.' Therefore the challenge of 21st century is sustainable growth and development of productivity. Many companies embrace sustainability (Newcomer, 2006). The sustainable development should start from executives' leadership qualities. Mahadeven (1996) noted that 30 or 40% of productivity in the organization could be improved without additional finance or new technology, but with executives' leadership qualities. Unfortunately many talented and skilful persons

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(Asian Labors) refuse to accept a leadership role because of the frustrations due to uncompensated overtime, headaches or stress, corporate greed, problems involving people and organizational politics in work place (Sircar, 2000; Sinha, 2001; Salamani, 2004; Benson, 2005; Nazzal, 2006). Khera (1999) noted that the character-based leadership alone gives a sustainable development in the management rather than charismatic or authoritative leadership. To develop this character based leadership among executives; review of existing literature shows that yoga practice plays a significant role in executives' leadership development.

## 2. Review of Literature

Yoga/meditation is considered as a higher-level holistic process for developing mental alertness, emotional stability and creativity. Yoga/meditation is otherwise called culturing of mind. Mind does play a crucial role in engendering physical ailments of various stresses (Siddharthan, 2000). Yoga/meditation bestows inner strength, sharpens the intellect, teaches to control one's emotion, and brings in rare concentration and efficiency into actions and work, making one do the right things in the right way at the right time. That is why yoga is often described as "Skill of action" (Kumari, 1999; Bedi, 2000; Dhar, 2000; Vvempati & Telles, 2000; Maharishi, 2000c; Bhushan & Sinha 2001; Koda, 2001; Mishra & Sinha, 2001; Antony, 2002; Singh, 2002; Pragadeeswaran, 2002). Yoga and meditation are called as higher-level spiritual practices. This evolutionary development of leadership by higher-level spiritual practice of yoga is the need of the hour in management science (Heifetz, 2006; Waite, 2001; Mathur 2001; Xavier, 2001; Anandan, 2002). Yoga practice is a cosmic training programme, which increases deep and constant self-awareness in the individual by evolutionary process of development (Pragadeeswaran & Panchanatham, 1999; Krishnamoorthy, & Desikachari, 2000; Swamiji, 2001; Bhavani, 2002; George, 2004). Whetton and Cameron's (1991) model for leadership skill also identified that one of the personal skills of a leader is self-awareness, which will manage stress and solve the problem of the leaders. Constant self-awareness or self-discipline will create a sustainable link among mind-body-action. Constant self-awareness is a process of continuous awareness of individuals in their own behaviour, which leads to self-realization. This self-realization or realization of atma is the prescription for developing all qualities of leadership. Constant self-awareness can be attained by regularly scheduled self-examination, which is otherwise called self-study or culturing of the mind or swadhya or meditation. The process of introspection (yoga) helps an individual to bring back his/her mind from emotional feelings towards consciousness and to build a constant self-awareness. From the above piece of literature it is clear that regular practice of yoga/meditation will increase self-awareness. Hence, the objective of this research is to probe into the difference in the executives' leadership behaviour among yoga regularly practitioners, occasional practitioners and non-practitioners.

## 3. Methodology

Section below discusses subjects of the study, test materials and methods of data collection.

### 3.1 Subjects of the Study

A survey was conducted in a large-scale public sector organization, Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited, Neyveli, Tamil Nadu, in order to measure the long-term effect of executives' leadership behaviour due to introspection. This organization is also located at a feasible distance of 60 Km from the researchers' place of work. Nearly 22,000 employees are working in this organization. The reason for



selecting this organization was the reasonable number of executives practicing introspection and the feasible location factor for the researchers. After obtaining formal permission from the authorities of this organization, the researchers took efforts to estimate the actual population size of introspection (yoga/meditation) practicing executives in the above organization. To estimate the population size of introspection practicing executives, the list of executives who were trained in the yoga/meditation from NLC Training Centre and other private organizations at Neyveli, such as Temple of the Conscious, Aurobindo-Mother society, Pranik healing society, Ayurvedic dispensary and Esha yoga club was taken into account. The Researchers took proper care in the estimation of population size, because some of the executives were exposed to yoga/meditation training programme in more than that of the two organizations. The estimated population size introspection practicing executives was 639. From the above estimated population executives the sample was selected on scientific basis. Thirty percent of the large sample size amounting to 200 executives was selected from the population size of 639 introspection-practicing executives on a random basis. Out of 200 executives, only 167 returned the responses. Hence the sample size was determined as 167 each for both yoga/meditation practicing and non-practicing executives. After the collection of 167 responses from yoga/meditation (introspection) practicing executives, an equivalent size of 167 yoga/meditation non-practicing executives was selected on random basis by considering their designation and overall experience as a base for sampling.

### *3.2 Test Materials*

After the reviews and the self-reports (Norbert, 1999) of yoga practitioners, the following variables were identified from this study. The variables, which influence the executives' leadership behaviour, along with the practices of introspection (yoga), were considered: occupational stress, emotional competence, blocks to creativity, work values, and quality of life. These variables were considered as independent variables. The six executives' leadership styles, such as coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter and coaching styles were included in this study as dependent variables. Sex, age, educational qualifications, marital status and the number of dependents were included as demographic variables. Organizational variables such as designation, department, monthly income, experience in the present position and overall experience were also included, and the frequency of introspection practices was considered in this study.

After the identification of variables, psychological tools suitable to Indian conditions were selected. The psychological tools were used to measure the variables of executives' leadership behaviour and executives' leadership styles: About 61 dimensions of executives' leadership behaviour were measured through six standardized tools such as Emotional Competency Scale (Sharma & Baradwaj, 1995), Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava & Singh, 1981), Blocks to creativity Instrument (Khandwalla, 1988), Works Value Inventory (Super, 1970), Quality of Life Inventory (Noriega, 1997), Managerial Style Scale (McBer & Co., 1980).

### *3.3 Method of Data Collection*

After obtaining formal permission from the NLC authorities, the researcher personally circulated the above questionnaires among the executives of NLC. The executives were highly encouraged and they in turn supported the attempts of the researcher. On average, the executives took 2-3 working days to complete the questionnaires.



**Table 1:**  
**Canonical Discriminant Functions for Executives' Frequency of Introspection Practice**

Function	Eigen value	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage	Canonical correlation	Test of functions	Wilk's Lambda	Chi-square	df	Significance
1.	0.937 <sup>a</sup>	81.4	81.4	0.696	2	0.425	258.261	118	0.000
2.	0.214 <sup>a</sup>	18.6	100.00	0.420	2	0.824	58.522	58	0.456

Notes: a = First 2 canonical discriminant functions are used in the analysis.

#### 4. Analysis and Interpretation

Discriminant analysis is carried out to see whether there are any common factors among the 61 variables that can differentiate the three groups of managers, on the basis of frequency of introspection practices such as non-practitioners, regular practitioners, and occasional practitioners. Only one variable coaching style of leadership has failed in tolerance test and it is exempted from the analysis. Canonical discriminant analysis has been undertaken. In this procedure, only those variables among the 61, which give a higher discrimination power, are chosen. These variables are combined into one, by giving different weightages. Those sets of weights, which give the highest discrimination power between three groups, are selected by iteration. These sets of weights are called as linear combination. The first linear combination is called Function-1. Function-1 is derived on the basis of the amount of variance in the data. For the remaining variance another set of weightings are selected and that combination gives the highest discrimination power between three groups. This is called Function-2. In this section, discriminant function analysis was worked out for the 61 variables and discussed. The first row of Table 1 shows that a significant amount of variance exists in all the 61 variables, and this can be explained by a discriminant function. Wilk's Lambda is 0.425, which is significant (chisquare = 258.261,  $p = 0.000$  at 118 df).

The Eigen value of the first function is 0.937 and it explains 81.4% of the total variance of all the 61 variables. The canonical correlation is a correlation among all the 61 variables put together, and the value of first discriminant function is 0.696. The second row of the table shows the second function. There is no scope for the second function as Wilk's Lambda 0.824 is not significant (chi-square = 58.22,  $p = 0.456$ , at 59 df). But for academic interest, the second function is included for further studies. Table 2 shows the loading of the variables in the respective functions. The loadings are nothing but simple product moment correlation between the variable and the function. It shows how much variance a particular variable shares with the function. The variables are ordered in terms of the magnitude of loadings. Even though function-2 is not significant, it is also discussed for the sake of academic interest. The variables loaded in the first function are shown in Table 2; 38 variables were loaded in Function-1. A closer look at these variables reveal that many characteristics such as interpersonal relations (0.510), self-motivation (0.506), self-affirmation (0.494), adequate expression and control of emotions (0.476) etc., are positively loaded; while, role ambiguity. (-0.514), role conflict (-0.481) and strenuous working conditions (-0.475) are negatively loaded.

The observation of all the variables in the Function-1 shows that the variables are closely related to individual development or to individual behaviour development of an executive. Hence, collectively the 38 variables are named under the Function 1 as "Self-management". As stated above, though the second function is not statistically significant, it is presented here for academic interest. This function is loaded

Table 2

## Group Correlation Between Discriminating Variables And Standardized Canonical Discriminant Functions

Function	S.No.	Significant Variables	Correlation
Function-1 Self management	1	Role ambiguity	-0.514
	2	Interpersonal relations	0.510
	3	Self motivation	0.506
	4	Self-affirmation	0.494
	5	Role conflict	-0.481
	6	Adequate expression and control of emotions	0.476
	7	Strenuous working conditions	-0.475
	8	Self-care	0.467
	9	Encouragement of positive emotions	0.460
	10	Ability to function with emotion	0.441
	11	Way of life	0.433
	12	Role overload	-0.426
	13	Unreasonable groups and political pressure pressure	-0.422
	14	Self-recognition	0.418
	15	Unprofitability	-0.366
	16	Altruism	0.341
	17	Management	0.341
	18	Resource myopia	-0.324
	19	Creativity	0.322
	20	Educational status	0.301
	21	Rigidity	-0.284
	22	Achievement	0.233
	23	Intrinsic impoverishment	-0.211
	24	Esthetics	0.190
	25	Self-potency	0.161
	26	Democratic style	0.158
	27	Experience in the present position	-0.145
	28	Dependents in family	0.123
	29	Fear of failure	0.113
	30	Adequate depth of feeling	0.112
	31	Affinitive style	-0.100
	32	Coaching*	0.098
	33	Sex	0.068
	34	Prestige	0.062
35	Low status	-0.058	
36	Touchiness	-0.037	
37	Marital status	-0.030	
38	Age	0.016	
Function-2 Social facilitation	39	Monthly income	-0.347
	40	Intellectual stimulation	0.225
	41	Authoritative style	-0.222
	42	Overall experience	-0.200
	43	Ability to cope with problem emotions	0.176
	44	Surroundings value	0.171
	45	Economic returns value	0.167
	46	Poor peer relations	0.164
	47	Security	0.156



Table 2 contd....

Function	S.No.	Significant Variables	Correlation
	48	Pacesetting style	0.136
	49	Variety value	0.131
	50	Coercive style	0.131
	51	Responsibility for persons	0.127
	52	Supervisory relations	0.115
	53	Associates value	0.104
	54	Starved sensibilities	-0.092
	55	Independence value	-0.080
	56	Designation	-0.064
	57	Department	-0.061
	58	Under participation stress	0.058
	59	Conformity	0.058
	60	Powerlessness	-0.038
	61	Allergy to ambiguity	0.028

Notes: \* Failed in tolerance test

loaded highly positive with intellectual stimulation (0.225), ability to cope with problem emotions (0.176), surroundings value (0.171), economic returns value (0.167), etc., and highly negatively loaded with monthly income (-0.347), authoritative style (-0.222), overall experience (-0.200), etc. The observation of all the variables reveals that the variables are closely related to the social interest of executives. Hence, the Function 2 could be "Social facilitation" variables at the organisational level.

#### 4.1 The Validity of the Discriminant Functions

Table 3 shows the classification matrix. Discriminant co-efficients (weightages) are derived for three groups, and based on these weightages, a check was made to see whether the application of these weightages to individual subjects correctly classifies them back to their respective group. This analysis is carried out in table 3. From the total sample a portion of the sample was separated. This portion will not be included in the discriminant analysis. This is called "hold out sample". The sample that is included in the analysis is called "analysis sample". Discriminant functions were derived for the analysis sample. Based on the discriminant functions, the sample was reclassified. 73.4% of originally grouped cases are correctly classified. The first three columns in the Table 3 show serial number, original group membership and number of cases in each group. The next three columns under predicted group membership reveal number of cases in each group after reclassification based on discriminant functions. It can be seen that 76% of the cases in the non-practitioners group is correctly reclassified. Similarly, in the regular and occasional practitioners groups there are 66.7% and 82.9% respectively. The overall reclassification accuracy is 73.4%. This is statistically significant when compared to chance accuracy. For example, if all the subjects are classified under one group, 33.3% of the cases will be correctly classified, as there are three groups. Hence, by chance alone 33.3% can be correctly classified. But 73.4% of the cases are correctly classified. This is much greater than chance level. Hence, one can conclude that the discriminant functions derived from the data are valid.

#### 4.2 Difference among the Groups

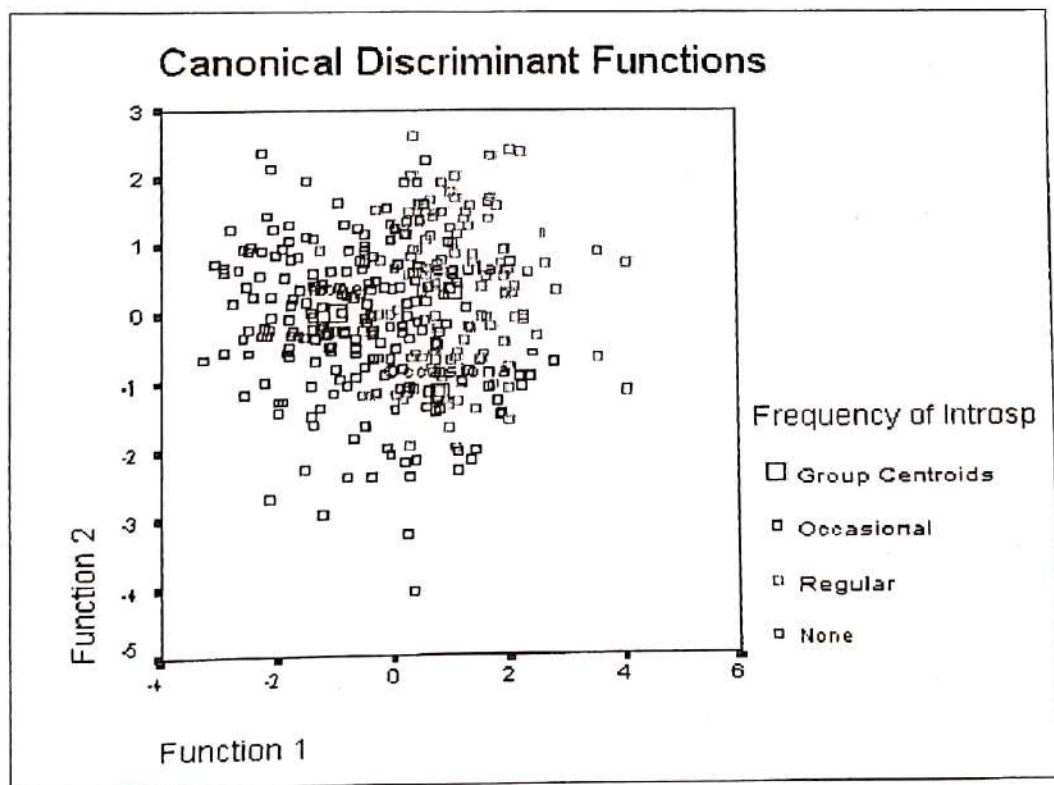
Figure 1 shows the position of groups in the two-dimensional vector space of the two discriminant functions. The group centroids are shown as dark squares. The first discriminant function is named as

**Table 3**  
**Overall Classification of Sample in Discriminant Analysis**

S. No.	Actual Groups	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership		
			Non-introspection practitioners	Regular introspection practitioners	Occasional introspection practitioners
1.	Non-introspection practitioners	167	127 76%	25 15%	15 9%
2.	Regular introspection practitioners	126	11 87%	84 66.7%	31 24.6%
3.	Occasional introspection practitioners	41	1 2.4%	6 14.6%	34 82.9%

"self-management" and the second is named as "Social facilitation". The centroid of non-introspection practitioner group is located at the negative side of function 1 and at the neutral side of function 2. The centroid of occasional introspective practitioner group is located at the negative side of function 1 and at the neutral side of function 2. The centroid of occasional introspective practitioners group is located at the positive side of function 1 and at the negative side of function 2. The centroid of regular introspective practitioners group is located at the positive side both in functions 1 and 2.

It is further inferred that executives who regularly practice introspection have good self-management capacity and social facilitator personalities. Though occasional introspection practitioners have good self-



**Figure 1: Canonical Discriminant Functions**



management skill, they lag behind in social facilitation habit and the non-introspection practitioners lag behind in both functions. Hence, regular practice of introspection improves the executives' personality as well as social well-being nature than the occasional and non-practitioners of introspection.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

The Eswar-Panch model for executives' leadership development through introspection (yoga) is shown in Figure 2. This model is developed with the results of group correlation table in the integrated study using discriminate analysis.

The stimulation of one's awareness develops good leadership qualities among men and women (Adair, 1991; Mukerji, 2000; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003). Survival of a leader has two main parts. The first looks outward, offering tactical advice relating to one's organization and the people in it. The second looks inward, focusing on one's own human need and vulnerabilities. It is designed to keep you from bringing yourself down (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). This model systematically explains how the need-based variables in executives' leadership behaviour are developed through the practice of introspection (or) yoga/meditation. The regular practice of introspection has developed two important need-based factors in executives' leadership behaviour, namely, Self-management and Social facilitation. Self-management (Roland, 1988) means spiritual self-transformation i.e., "The fundamental goal of all relationships and living is the gradual inward self-transformation towards subtle qualities and refined aspects of power in the quest of self-realisation." This concept of Self-management behaviour is otherwise called super leader. Super leader (Charles & Henry Jr., 1991) is defined as the person who incorporates the attitudes of positive and constructive self-talk, identification and replacement of destructive beliefs and assumptions and they work as a model of constructive thought pattern or productive thinking. The success of a leader also lies in the sub-ordinates' participation or group involvement. Therefore, the leaders have to behave as Social facilitators. This Social facilitation is nothing but the process by which individuals (leader) often try harder to contribute to a task just because other people are present (Newstrom & Davis, 1995). Otherwise it is called socio-economic thinking. This model "Eswar-Panch" greatly correlates with the views on primal leadership of Goleman (2002) who states that "Primal leader is a leader with emotional intelligence, values and ethics. Such leaders have an accurate sense of their strength and limitations. These leaders are highly effective both in managing themselves and managing social relationships." The following lines clearly explain how regular introspection practitioners develop primal leadership behaviour.

### *5.1 Self-management*

The regular practice of introspection develops Self-Management Behaviour (SMB). The SMB is positively influenced by the demographic variables such as educational status; number of dependents in the family, age factor and it is negatively influenced by experience in the present position. Female sex is more dominant in this behaviour than male sex. Bachelors also are more dominating in the SMB than married executives.

This SMB increases the dominance of executives' leadership style in democratic and coaching styles and decreases the dominance in affiliative style of leadership. When developing SMB, regular introspection practice reduces the following stressors such as role ambiguity, role conflict, strenuous working conditions, role overload, unreasonable groups and political pressure, intrinsic impoverishment,



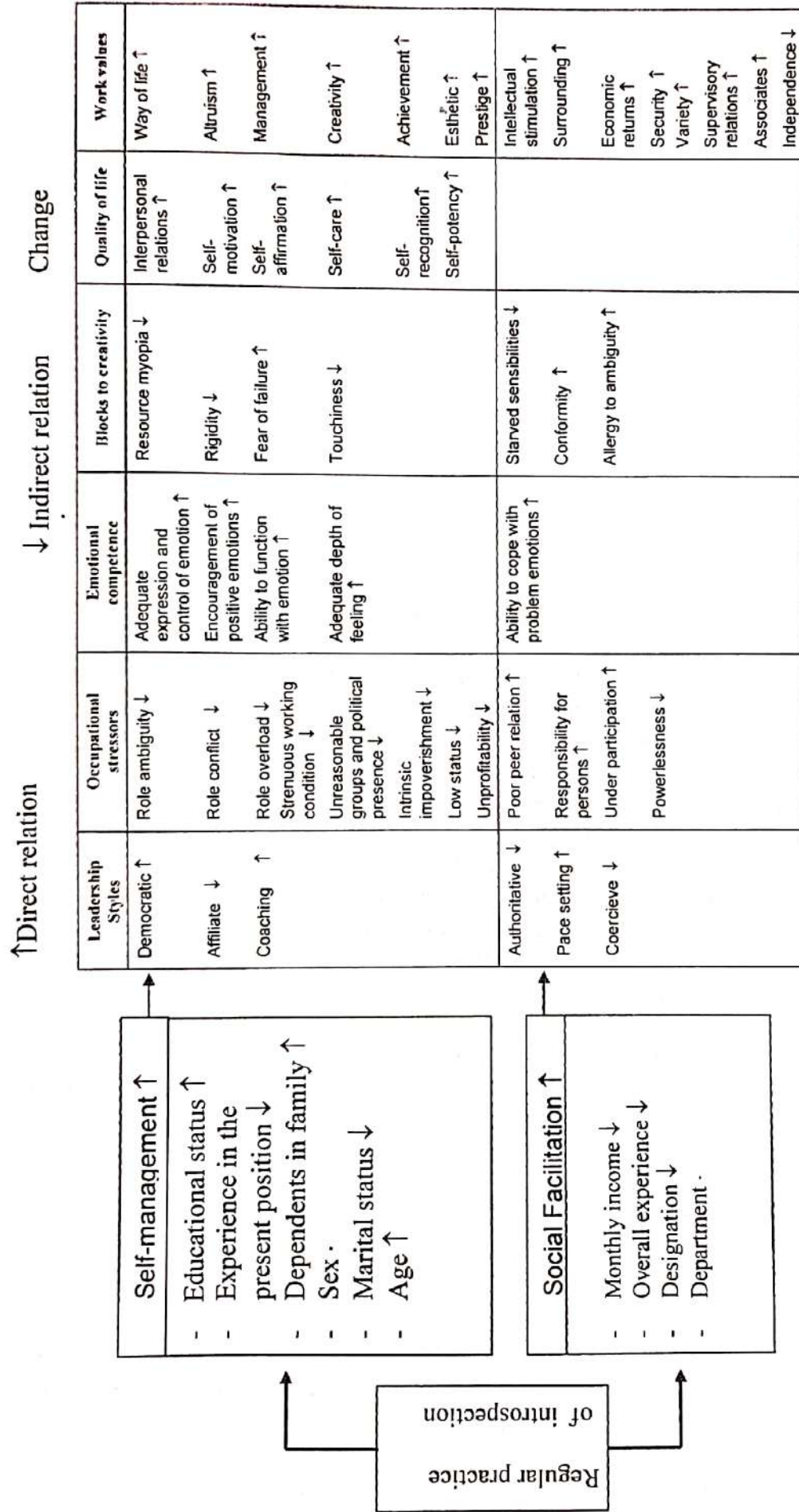


Figure2: "Eswar-Panch" model for executives' leadership development through introspection

low status and unprofitability and it is called stress reduction process. Variables in emotional competence such as adequate expression and control of emotions, encouragement of positive emotions, ability to function with emotion and adequate depth of feelings are increased by regular introspection practice to develop SMB.

The SMB is also developed in regular introspection practice by reducing the blocks to creativity, such as resource myopia, rigidity, touchiness and increases one of the blocks to creativity, fear of failure. The symptoms of SMB enhancement are clearly identified in the quality of life dimensions. All the dimensions of quality of life are enhanced by the regular practice of introspection. In order to attain self-management, the following altruistic values viz., management, creativity, achievement, esthetics are increased as well as the egoistic values viz., way of life and prestige are also increased in a balanced way. Thus the regular practice of higher level of spiritual based introspection called yoga/meditation increases the self-management factor in executives. These higher level spiritual practices also increase the social facilitation.

### *5.2 Social Facilitation*

The organizational variables in monthly income, overall experience in the organization, designation levels and the department negatively influences Social facilitation of executives. Social facilitation increases the dominance of pace setting style of leadership and decreases the dominance of authoritative and coercive styles of leadership. To facilitate the social facilitation behaviour among the executives, introspection should be regularly practiced. It decreases the occupational stressor called powerlessness and increases the occupational stressors such as poor peer relations, responsibility for persons, and under participation. It is called Stress refining process. The social facilitation behaviour will develop when the ability to cope with problems is increased by regular practice of introspection. The regular practice of introspection increases the two-blocks to creativity, fear of conformity, and allergy to ambiguity and decreases only one block called starved sensibility, which will develop social facilitation behaviour among the executives. In order to enhance the social facilitation factor, the following egoistic values are increased and balanced by regular practice of introspection, except in the case of the value named independence. The balanced egoistic values are intellectual stimulation, surroundings, economic returns, security, variety, supervisory relations, and associates. Thus social facilitation behaviour is developed by the regular practice of introspection. This social facilitation factor is highly essential now-a-days for executives to cope with organizational environment. Though this factor of social facilitation is statistically not significant, it is discussed here for academic interest. Thus, the regular practice yoga/meditation increases the Self-management and Social facilitation attitude of an individual.

## **6. Managerial Implications**

The entire management training schedule aims at exploiting holistic training programmes for the development of leadership qualities, because conventional training programmes have not given the expected results. That is, conventional training programmes are only changing the outward behaviour of an individual. This change cannot withstand for long. Therefore, there is a need for advanced training programmes, which can give sustainable change by self-realisation in an individual. Whenever the self-awareness of an individual in the organisation increases, automatically the self-realisation will blossom. But the main factors that affect the self-awareness of an individual are stress and emotion. This study identifies the practice of yoga/meditation as one, which reduces the depression and tension due to stress



and emotion. The study also finds that the practice of yoga/meditation significantly solves the crucial challenge of emotional imbalance in executives' leadership behaviour. This balance or optimization effect on emotion and stress due to regular introspection practice will give the best result for self-realisation among executives. The self-awareness due to regular introspection induces an individual to generate new ideas or alternative thinking called creativity. The emotional and stress balancing or equilibrium thinking in regular introspection helps an executive to maintain and execute the work values in an altruistic nature. The practice of introspection always inculcates character-based leadership among executives, rather than power and charismatic leadership. The yoga/meditation (introspection) is one of the best training tools, because it increases the quality of life of an individual by self-realization.

The above effects of yoga/meditation on executives' leadership development are clearly explained in the 'Eswar-Panch' model of this study. This model satisfies the management training world in the thrust of holistic approach for sustainable development in leadership behaviour of an individual. This model is a holistic design, because it links inter disciplinary subjects such as psychology, sociology and philosophy with business management. Therefore, the proposed model also helps the training managers to design the training programmes in the need-based areas such as stress management, emotional intelligence development, creative thinking, altruistic values and quality of life. In short, this is the best model for executives to empower the inner power. There is a lot of scope in this field for enhancing the managerial applications. Poor self-discipline is a serious disadvantage in the business of modern day living. Today's world faces a liberal menu of economic instability, industrial pollution, and oppressions of political hegemony and violence in the office and in private life. Living in such a world is really a challenging one for an individual. In this scenario, the 'Eswar-Panch' model suggests that the regular practice of yoga and meditation will increase the stability of mind by emotional balance. This balance effect changes an individual to a self-disciplined altruistic person in the world.

### **7. Limitation of the Study**

A simple random sampling technique was adopted in this study. In addition to the limitations related to the methods of data collection, this study also suffered from paucity of literature in quantitative form related to behavioural changes due to yoga and meditation practices. In spite of the above limitations, the researcher deliberately adopted the norms of scientific research in this study, and has attempted to deploy a scientific way to measure the changes of intrinsic and qualitative nature in executives' behaviour at the time of practice of yoga. Hence, the findings of this study could be used for further academic research.

### **8. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research**

Today, organizations are struggling with the issues of downsizing, global competition and productivity. The challenges for HR professionals in this scenario are to maintain peace, mental health and career momentum of workers. Owing to the global competition, many young managers suffer from psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and physical ailments. Therefore, tension and depression are the major psychological threats to future leadership. Owing to these psychological threats, sustainable commitment in leadership behaviour is blocked. This Eswar-Panch model will help organizations to train their executives holistically with sustainable commitment for the development of the organization. Peter Drucker has stated that the purpose of organizations is to convert ordinary people into extraordinary people. Hence, this model may help to fulfill the dream of Peter Drucker.



Research is a continuous process. Of course, the field of introspection or yoga/meditation called holistic or spiritual based model in executives' leadership development training programme is the need of the hour. This study, which enlightens the idea of research in the holistic field, is a starting point. Based on experience gained from this study, the researcher suggests the following areas for further research. Though it is a tough task to measure the intrinsic changes in executives' leadership behaviour by yoga/meditation, a 360-degree evaluation may give a better measurement. The 360-degree measurement is nothing but evaluations of peers, bosses, customers, subordinates, and family members towards the leadership behaviour of executives. An interesting study can be done in the field of optimizing stress or stress refinement and egoistic values by yoga/meditation practices in executives' leadership styles. Similarly, there is a lot of scope for studying the family-work life relationship in emotional balance and its impact on executives' leadership styles. It is further suggested that further research can be made in the identification of impact of managerial ethics by yoga/meditation and its relation to executives' leadership styles. Finally, the role of creativity through introspection in conflict management can be considered for research in the future.

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