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Why are effective leaders so rare?

Exploring possible explanations in the human propensity for inflexibility and rigidity

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ABSTRACT

While the theoretical descriptions portray leadership as a very positive and enabling force, the reality of leadership is starkly different and it is often about disengaged employees and stressful work environments. One of the key factors that could be driving this phenomenon is the evidence that a large proportion of leaders and managers are likely to be ineffective. (J. Hogan, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2010). ***This thesis presents a case that one key reason why a large proportion of leaders are ineffective is because effective leadership requires adaptability and flexibility whereas fundamental human nature has a very high propensity for rigidity and inflexibility.*** *This high tendency for inflexibility is likely to have its roots in the fact that a significant part of mental life is unconscious, filled with contradictions and influenced by stable personality patterns developed in early childhood. (Westen, 1998) The thesis argues that psychodynamic theories of personality development offer the most meaningful lens through which these features of human nature can be investigated. Starting with the foundation of model of fundamental human polarity(Blatt, 2008) (which identifies need for 'self-definition' and need for 'relatedness' as the two often counteracting but equally significant definitive themes of personality development) the thesis builds an integrated framework combining three other psychodynamic models – adult attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), Three Neurotic Styles (Horney, 2013) and dark side personality traits (R. Hogan, Hogan, & Warrenfeltz, 2007).*

The insights offered by these models to understand human propensity for inflexibility and the implications of this framework for specific practice areas such as leadership development and executive coaching are discussed.

KEY WORDS

Ineffective leadership, leadership versatility, fundamental polarity of human nature, adult attachment styles, three neurotic styles, dark side personality traits, leadership emergence and effectiveness

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INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership can be defined as the *'ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members'. (Simonton, 1994)* The two core dimensions of leadership effectiveness that consistently appear across most of the studies (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011) are – the leader's ability to drive task performance (whether or not the group meets its objectives) and the leader's ability to develop positive, enabling relationships with the team members (whether or not the team members are engaged and satisfied with the leader).

As a practitioner and a student of Human Resource Management, throughout my career across one and half decades, I have been acutely aware of the significant gap that exists between idealized descriptions of effective leadership in theory versus the actual reality of leadership that can be seen on the ground. It also appears that in spite of significant investment of time and money and range of approaches and tools being used, it's not clear whether we have discovered ways of ways of systematically improving leadership effectiveness. (Ready & Conger, 2003). On this background, ***'Why 'effective leadership' is so rare in real life and why is it so difficult to develop?'*** become very important questions.

I have always had some sense that at least part of the answer to this question is likely to be about elements of human nature that we don't fully understand and that are not very easy to change at will. This was due to extensive evidence around us that indicates that failure to be an effective leader is rarely due to lack of knowledge of what an effective leader should do, because that knowledge is abundantly available – it is almost always due to failure in internalizing and practicing that knowledge.

While thinking about this question, I came across the model of fundamental polarity of human nature (Blatt, 2008) which proposes that personality development from infancy to adulthood is driven by two fundamental dimensions – self-definition and relatedness. Self-definition dimension is about drive to assert individuality and obtain mastery over the environment – the relatedness dimension is about connecting, relating with others by building empathetic bonds. While recognizing the fact that often these dimensions can pull an individual in opposite directions, the model states

that development of mature and integrated personality is fundamentally dependent on the individual growing on both these dimensions. The vast body of research based on this model indicates these two dimensions can be seen playing a foundational role in personality development as well as psychopathology. Studying this fundamental polarity and importance of balance between two counteracting dimensions made me think about its potential implication for leadership. There is a large body of literature on leadership effectiveness (Bass, 1990; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Sloan, 1994; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010) which indicates that leadership is essentially about managing multiple counteracting forces and having capacity to adopt to suit requirements of changing environment. This body of research demonstrates that flexibility, adaptability and versatility are defining ingredients of effective leadership.

Juxtaposing these two strands – the first about the model of fundamental human polarity and the second about the definitive importance of adaptability for leadership effectiveness gave rise to an interesting question. This question – ***'Are there fundamental aspects of human nature which make development of flexibility and adaptability so rare and difficult?'*** is the central line of enquiry for this thesis.

I found out that there are three other conceptually interlinked psychodynamic models that build on the model of fundamental polarity and throw great amount of light on human proclivity for inflexibility. Hence at the core of this thesis is the attempt to build an integrated framework that brings together four key psychodynamic models – fundamental polarity of human nature (Blatt, 2008), adult attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), 'Three Neurotic Styles' (Horney, 2013) and dark side personality traits (R. Hogan et al., 2007). The 'adult attachment theory' helps us understand how mental representations formed in early childhood about 'the self' and 'the other' have the potential of bringing in certain inflexibility in patterns of interpersonal relationships. The ''Three Neurotic Styles'' model throws light on evolution of three types of neurotic trends that result in excessive reliance on few types of behaviours, which leads to lack of adaptability. The 'dark side personality traits' model describes eleven dimensions that have the potential to create performance risks at workplace.

For each of the models, its interlinkages with the other model and insights that can be drawn form it about leadership adaptability have been described. The thesis ends with holistic application of the integrated framework to four important areas of practice – leadership development, executive coaching, selection and promotion for leadership roles and gender issues in leadership development.

I have chosen to focus in great depth on a synthesis of these four models, and therefore my contribution with this thesis will be of a theoretical nature. I will conclude with suggestions for future research that indicate ways in which this integrated framework might be tested.

While many earlier studies have captured interlinkages between some pairs of models covered in this thesis, **I hope that the integrated framework which conceptually combines all of these four key psychodynamic models will be an original contribution of this thesis.** It will not be an exaggeration to say that the foundation of the integrated framework – the model of fundamental polarity of human nature is one of the most important principles to understand human proclivity for rigidity and imbalance. It's my sincere hope that the integrated framework presented in this thesis will serve as a useful lens for scholars as well as practitioners of leadership and human development.

OUTLINE OF THE MAIN THESIS

1. Significant gap exists between what leadership 'should be' versus what it actually is

2. This gap exists because large majority of leaders are ineffective

3. Majority of leaders are ineffective because ideal leadership requires flexibility but fundamental human nature has high proclivity for inflexibility

4. Humans have high proclivity for inflexibility because of the fundamental polarity of human nature, which can be best understood using psychodynamic models

Main psychodynamic models in this context

4.1: Fundamental Polarity
4.2: Adult Attachment
4.3: Three neurotic styles
4.4: Dark side traits

1. Rhetoric versus reality of leadership: Huge gap exists between what leadership 'should be' and what it actually is

'The history of the world is but the biography of great men': Thomas Carlyle

Leadership is undoubtedly one of the most studied and debated subjects in social sciences. It is also a subject that has potential for significant impact on individuals, organizations, countries and even world at large. Review of leadership research in organizational settings indicates, that leadership impacts a wide range of important outcomes – from organization's productivity (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenen, 2007) to profits (Ensley & Pearce, 2001) and from employee well-being (Kuoppala, Lamminpaa, Liira, & Vainio, 2008) to intrinsic motivation of employees (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006)

One of the most intriguing and important aspects of the subject of leadership is the significant gap and contradiction that often exists between the descriptions of what leadership should be ('the ideal of leadership') and what leadership is ('the reality of leadership'). Many academic frameworks –such as – transformational leadership (Bass, 1990), servant leadership (Parris & Peachey, 2013), Authentizotic leadership (de Vries, Manfred FR Kets, 2001) and many practitioner books – such as 'Authentic leadership' (B. George, 2003) , Primal Leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013) describe leadership to be a very positive force that creates enabling work cultures, engaged and thriving individuals and high performing organizations. But there is a large amount of evidence that shows that the reality of how majority of employees experience leadership is not at all that positive. Many studies show significant decline in trust levels that people have in businesses (Harrington, 2017) and CEOs, very high levels of disengagement amongst employees of business organizations (Mann & Harter, 2016), and increasing levels of stress at workplace (Murphy & Sauter, 2003). In fact this glaring gap between the idealized descriptions of what leadership should be and what it actually is has given rise to a whole body of writing and publications (for example, books such as 'Leadership Bullshit' (Pfeffer, 2015)) warning people about not falling for such 'naïve and unrealistic leadership propaganda'.

'Why is 'effective leadership' (where leadership is a positive enabler for employees as well as organizations) so rare and difficult to develop' is one of the most important questions in the field of organization and leadership studies.

2. **Understanding the phenomenon of ineffective leadership**

We earlier defined effective leadership the *'ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members'. (Simonton, 1994)*. Hence leadership can termed as ineffective when it fails to meet any or all of these objectives. When we focus on the individual leader's role with reference to ineffective leadership – it can either be due to incompetence or due to 'destructive' leadership behaviour. Destructive leadership is defined as - (Quoting from (Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013) *' … volitional behaviour by a leader that can harm or intends to harm a leader's organization and/or followers by (a) encouraging followers to pursue goals that contravene the legitimate interests of the organization and/or (b) employing a leadership style that involves the use of harmful methods of influence with followers, regardless of justifications for such behaviour.'*

While the characteristics and behaviour of the individual leader definitely contribute to the rise of ineffective leadership, frameworks such as 'toxic triangle' (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007) highlight the fact that other factors such as follower characteristics and environmental context also have a role to play in this phenomenon. While acknowledging the role of these other factors, this thesis will limit its focus on the role of individual leader in ineffective leadership.

Significant amount of evidence indicates that ineffective leadership is quite common. Studies done by Gallup Organization (Beck & Harter, 2014) indicated that 82 % of the times organizations failed to choose right talent for managerial positions. In a European study (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010) covering a large national sample, at least 30 to 40% employees reported that their supervisor showed consistent and frequent destructive behaviour in the six months preceding the study. A comprehensive review of twelve published studies on management derailment (J. Hogan et al., 2010) found out that majority of the studies reported that

at least 50% of the managers were ineffective. Important point to note here is that the twelve studies reviewed in this paper came from a diverse range of sources – including listed companies as well as non-profit organizations, including studies done by leadership consulting practitioners as well as academic researchers.

3. The ideal of leadership adaptability v/s the reality of human proclivity for inflexibility

This thesis is an attempt to present a case that the reason why ineffective leaders are so common is mainly because what effective leadership requires is high level of flexibility but the human nature fundamentally has high proclivity for inflexibility. Because of this contradiction, the adaptive characteristics required for being an effective leader are neither common nor are they very easy to develop. This thesis also argues that this fundamental human tendency for rigidity and inflexibility can be best understood using insights from psychodynamic theory.

3.1 - Understanding the Ideal of leadership adaptability and flexibility

It can be said that leadership is often about dynamically balancing many counteracting forces (for example, focusing on the long term vision and at the same time ensuring achievement of near term results). This is the reason why many studies identify capabilities such as versatility, adaptability and flexibility as essential ingredients of leadership effectiveness. One such pair of (sometimes) counteracting facets that has often emerged in leadership studies is 'focus on task' and 'concern for people'. The Ohio State University studies (Stogdill, 1950) attempted to identify behaviours that led to effective leadership. The two key dimensions of behaviour these studies identified were – *'consideration'* – which is the about mutual trust, respect and concern for team members' feelings and *'initiating structure'* – which is about defining own as well as team member's roles to ensure goal achievement and focus on planning and scheduling (Fleishman & Peters, 1962)

The same theme about balance between task responsibilities and team responsibilities can also be seen in the four key characteristics of 'transformational leadership'. The four key characteristics are – *charisma* (related to defining vision and instilling pride), *inspiration* (related to setting high expectations and focusing

efforts), *intellectual stimulation* (related to encouraging careful problem solving) and *individualized consideration* (which is about providing personal attention and coaching the team member) (Bass, 1990)

The full range leadership theory (FRLT) (Bass & Avolio, 1997) refined the transformational leadership model and proposed that in addition to the transformational leadership factors, it is also important to look at transactional leadership factors. The three transactional leadership factors identified in this model were: *Contingent Reward Leadership* (which is about clarifying task requirements and providing rewards contingent on fulfilment of these requirements), *Management by Exception-active* (which is about active vigilance by the leader to ensure standards of performance are met) and *Management by exception – passive* (when leaders intervene only if some mistakes or non-compliance has taken place) (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003)

We are in the midst of an era of unparalleled uncertainty and turbulence due to forces of technological disruptions, political upheavals and unpredictable geopolitical changes. Many scholars and practitioners have argued (e.g. (Bill Pasmore PhD & CMC, 2010)) that due to this high degree of uncertainty, the importance of leadership agility and versatility has become even more important. In addition to the 'focus on task' / 'concern for people' pair mentioned earlier, these scholars have identified many such pairs of counteracting facets that the leaders need to balance with agility and versatility. For example, Sloan (Sloan, 1994) identified the following pairs of 'paradoxical polarities' : vision and pragmatism, low cost and high value, global and local, unity and diversity, process and results, change and continuity, competition and collaboration, individual contribution and collective contribution, cost control and strategic investment. There have been many research studies that have tried to define and measure the constructs related leadership adaptability and versatility. It has been suggested that 'adaptability' is a 'meta-competency' that enables a leader to develop other competencies and respond appropriately to demands of the changing situations. (Briscoe & Hall, 1999). One study highlighted the importance of 'social intelligence', which enables leaders to assess organizational situations accurately and select responses that are most appropriate to the context (Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991). The 'leaderplex model' (Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997) proposes that one of the key factors that determines leadership effectiveness

is ‘leadership repertoire’ – which is the range of behaviours available to the leader, that allow the leader to respond appropriately to a variety of different situations and demands. ‘Leadership Versatility Index’ (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2010) proposes that effectiveness of leader is linked to his or her using his capabilities exactly to the required degree (for the given context) – neither overdoing the capability nor underleveraging the same. ‘Learning agility’ – the ability to learn new capabilities and respond to changing and novel situations has been identified as a key ability for higher leadership potential. (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000). Some scholars have termed the flexibility required for effective leadership as ‘mastery of opposites’ (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010)

Significance of flexibility and adaptability highlighted in other domains

The capacity to balance multiple counteracting forces and to adapt behaviour to suit the requirements of the changing context has been identified as a very valuable and desirable human capacity in many other fields of study.

For example, studies from the field of adult learning have found out that adaptive flexibility of learning style is predictive of higher degree of self-direction and more integrated personality development. (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, ; Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002)

Individuals having high level of ‘ego-resiliency’, which is defined as the ability to adapt one’s level of control to suit the situation have been shown to have higher levels of self-confidence and better psychological adjustment. (Block & Kremen, 1996)

Scholars from the field of interpersonal theory (Leary, 2004) have proposed that possessing a wide range of interpersonal responses is a sign of high functioning personality.

Scholars studying ‘wisdom’ have argued that wisdom is about (Quoting from (Staudinger & Glück, 2011)) ‘ … *mastering the basic dialectics shaping human existence, such as the dialectic between good and bad, positivity and negativity, dependency and independence, certainty and doubt, control and lack of control, finiteness and eternity, strength and weakness, and selfishness and altruism’*

Review of different models of ‘human development’ indicates that in many of them, the ultimate state of development is defined as ‘ability to manage paradoxes with ease’ – for example, as per the ‘constructive development’ theory proposed by Robert Kegan, (Eriksen, 2006) the fifth and ultimate stage of development is called ‘interindvidual’ stage, and it is characterized by ability to manage contradictions and capacity to tolerate plurality within oneself. As per the ‘spiral dynamics’ model proposed by Clare W Graves (Roemischer, 2002) , the eighth and ultimate stage of development is called ‘holistic’ (it is represented by the colour turquoise) and it is characterised by flexibility, spontaneity and capacity to integrate diverse ways of knowing and being.

To summarize this section, it can be said that enhancing the capacity for flexibility, adaptability and versatility appears to be a key feature of human development and acquisition of wisdom. Particularly for leaders, who have to face continuously changing environment and also manage a large number of complex and often counteracting forces, ability to adapt and choose situation specific responses seems to be a very critical ingredient for effectiveness. For purpose of this thesis, we will refer to this capability as **‘leadership adaptability’** in the sections that follow.

3.2 - Reality of human proclivity for inflexibility

As described earlier, ‘leadership adaptability’ requires the leader to be very conscious and aware of the situation and to be in control of his or her responses to the various elements of the situation. It also requires the leader to have a great degree of flexibility and the ability to modify his or her behaviour across a wide range, depending on what the context demands. The core postulates of contemporary psychodynamic theory (Westen, 1998) throw a lot of light on why this kind of versatility is so rare and so difficult to develop

- Significant part of mental life is unconscious – hence people can often behave in a way that they themselves cannot understand or explain
- Many mental processes operate in parallel and an individual often may have contradictory feelings or emotions about the same stimulus
- Stable personality patterns, especially related to social relationships begin to get formed in childhood and shape the adult behaviour in a significant way

The following section of the thesis presents four psychodynamic models and by connecting them builds an integrated framework that can help us develop a much nuanced understanding of underlying root causes and various possible manifestations of tendency for inflexibility in human nature. Each following sub-section focuses on one model, and covers introduction to the model, its interlinkages with the other models and also described specific insights about 'leadership adaptability' that can be drawn from the model.

The main proposition of this thesis is that these four psychodynamic models presented here represent a foundational and very important lens through which proclivity of human nature for inflexibility and rigidity can be understood. Given the significant negative impact that inflexibility can have on leadership effectiveness, this understanding can be very valuable for selection as well as development of effective leaders.

4.1.1 - Model 1: Two fundamental polarities (relatedness and self-definition) of personality development (Blatt, 2008)

'If I had two wishes, I know what they would be –
I'd wish for roots to cling to, and wings to set me free …'
Denis Waitley

Overview & Introduction

This model proposes that throughout the lifespan, personality development and human behaviour is influenced by two fundamental dimensions – the first dimension is about interpersonal relatedness (also termed as anaclitic) and the second dimension is about self-definition (also termed as introjective) The dimension of interpersonal relatedness is about the desire to connect with the other, to experience love and belonging. The dimension of self-definition is about the desire to assert oneself as a separate individual and an urge for independence.

It is argued that the manner in which an individual develops on both these dimensions throughout the lifespan has a significant implication on personality

development and particularly on patterns of social relations. To quote Dr. Blatt : (Piers & Shapiro, 2011) : *" … personality development evolves, from infancy to senescence, through a complex dialectic transaction between these two fundamental psychological dimensions – between the development of increasingly mature, intimate, mutually satisfying, reciprocal, interpersonal relationships and the development of an increasingly differentiated, integrated, realistic, essentially positive sense of self or identity. These two fundamental developmental processes evolve through a life-long, complex, synergistic, hierarchical, dialectic transaction such that progress in one developmental line usually facilitates progress in the other. An increasingly differentiated, integrated, and mature sense of self emerges out of constructive interpersonal relationships and, conversely, the continued development of increasingly mature interpersonal relationships is contingent on the development of a more differentiated and integrated self-definition and identity. Meaningful and satisfying relationships contribute to the evolving concept of self, and a revised sense of self leads, in turn, to a capacity for more mature levels of interpersonal relatedness. The specification of this normal synergistic developmental process provides a basis for identifying adaptive and maladaptive variations of this fundamental developmental process"*

This model proposes that these two dimensions of fundamental polarity represent foundational concepts in the study of personality and behaviour. Developing a deeper understanding of processes related to their development and interaction can be helpful in studying a wide range of phenomena related to personality.

While identifying foundational determinants of human personality, many other scholars also have identified constructs or concepts very similar to the two dimensions (self-definition and relatedness) captured in this model. Freud referred to these dimensions as 'egoistic' –urge towards happiness and 'altruistic' – urge towards union with others (Freud, 2015). Rank referred to them as 'self-directedness' and 'other-directedness' (Rank, 1945). Bakan stated that these dimensions were about the 'duality of existence' and called them 'agency' and 'communion'. (Bakan, 1966). Bem linked them with concepts of masculinity and femininess and termed them 'instrumentality' and 'expressiveness' (Bem, 1977). Erikson termed them as 'identity' and 'intimacy' (Erikson, 1994). They were also termed by some scholars as 'individuation' and 'symbiosis' (Mahler, Bergman, & Pine, 1975). Baxter referred to

them as ‘autonomy’ and ‘connectedness’ (Baxter, 1990). Angyal described related constructs of ‘autonomy’ and ‘surrender’ (Angyal, 1941) . Loewald referred to existence of this polarity in terms of ‘separation’ and ‘union’. (Loewald, 1994). Adler stressed upon importance of balance between ‘self-perfection’ and ‘social interest’ (Adler, 2013). During his studies of life-narratives, McAdams (McAdams, 1988) discovered that two specific themes – ‘power’ (related to strength and impact on environment) and ‘intimacy’ (related to closeness and communion) were the two most critical themes in understanding organization of personalities.

4.1.2: Human polarity: Implications for leadership adaptability

As described earlier, to be truly effective, the leaders need to have very high level of flexibility, awareness and capacity to adapt their behaviour to meet the demands of the situation. From the model of two fundamental polarities described above, it can be derived that only individuals who have evolved to a higher level of maturity on both these interdependent lines of development (relatedness as well as self-definition) will be able to develop this kind of versatility. Two specific theoretical applications of this model are described below that help us understand this maturation process in detail

A) Understanding Erickson’s model of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1994) through the lens of fundamental polarity

Erickson’s model of psychosocial development defines eight distinct stages and each of these stages is defined to have a specific goal that needs to be achieved for the ‘growth of the personality’. When we look at these eight stages defined in this model, it can be seen that the each of the stages clearly relates to either the dimension of relatedness or to the dimension of self-definition, in a particularly alternating pattern. Thus it can be said that Erikson’s model of psychosocial development further provides support to the proposition that relatedness and self-definition represent fundamental lines of development that are ‘synergistically interdependent’. Blatt (Blatt & Levy, 2003) has proposed that an additional stage of ‘cooperation versus alienation’ be added in between the ‘initiative versus guilt’ stage and the ‘industry versus latency’ stage to the psychosocial development model. With

this addition, Erickson's model of psycho-social development can be integrated with the two fundamental lines of development as follows:

Stage	**Conflict**	***Developmental Line (Dimension of Polarity) (Blatt & Levy, 2003)***
Infancy	Trust v/s Mistrust	*Relatedness*
Early childhood	Autonomy v/s shame	*Self-definition*
Early School	Initiative v/s Guilt	*Self-definition*
	Cooperation v/s alienation*	*Relatedness*
School	Industry v/s inferiority	*Self-definition*
Adolescence	Identity v/s role confusion	*Self-definition*
Young adulthood	Intimacy v/s isolation	*Relatedness*
Maturity	Generativity v/s stagnation	*Self-definition*
Old Age	Integrity v/s despair	*Self-definition*

** The additional stage proposed by Blatt (Blatt & Levy, 2003)*

B) **Differentiation- Relatedness scale** (Diamond, Blatt, Stayner, & Kaslow, 1995)
As mentioned earlier, versatility requires a very high degree of tolerance of ambiguity. It also requires the capacity to see self as well the other in a balanced way and the capacity to stay away from the simplistic, one sided judgements (completely positive or completely negative) about the self and the other. The 'Differentiation- relatedness scale' defines 10 points, which represent increasing levels of maturity. The lower end of the spectrum (Points 1 to 5) represent lower levels of maturity typically characterized by superficial, undifferentiated one-sided judgements about the self and the other. The higher end of the spectrum (Points 6 to 10) represents deeper, differentiated and nuanced judgements about the self and the other, which typically lead to reciprocally transformational relationships.

4.2.1 - Model 2: Adult Attachment Styles (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

Introduction & Overview

The attachment theory was initially developed by Bowlby (Bowlby, 1972) based on his work with infants – he postulated that human beings are endowed with an 'attachment behavioural system' that allows infants to regulate proximity to an attachment figure (which is most often, the primary care giver, often the mother). This system drives the infants to continuously scan the environment to ascertain the proximity of and attention from the attachment figure. Given the fact that human infants are completely dependent on the care givers for safety as well as survival, this behavioural system has very strong and significant evolutionary origins. In last few decades, many scholars have explored the continuity of attachment patterns beyond childhood and applicability of attachment theory over the adult life span. There is a broad consensus amongst scholars that the attachment theory has the power to work as a foundational framework for studying how individual's think about themselves and processes that influence patterns of interpersonal relationships.

Adult Attachment Styles: Four Category Model

Bowlby, while developing the attachment theory proposed that infants develop 'internal working models' about their own self and about the caregivers. These models enable the infant to interpret as well as predict the caregiver's behaviour. Work on the adult attachment styles has indicated that these working models about 'the self' and the 'other' continue to influence the individual well into adulthood and possibly have an ongoing impact on the individual as well as his or her interpersonal relationships.

Bartholomew proposed (Bartholomew, 1990) that both of these working models can be visualized as either positive or negative – and created an interaction matrix with four quadrants, presented as the four category model of adult attachment styles. It is proposed that models about the self are mainly about self-concept and self-worth. Models of the other are mainly about whether or not 'the other' is caring and dependable.

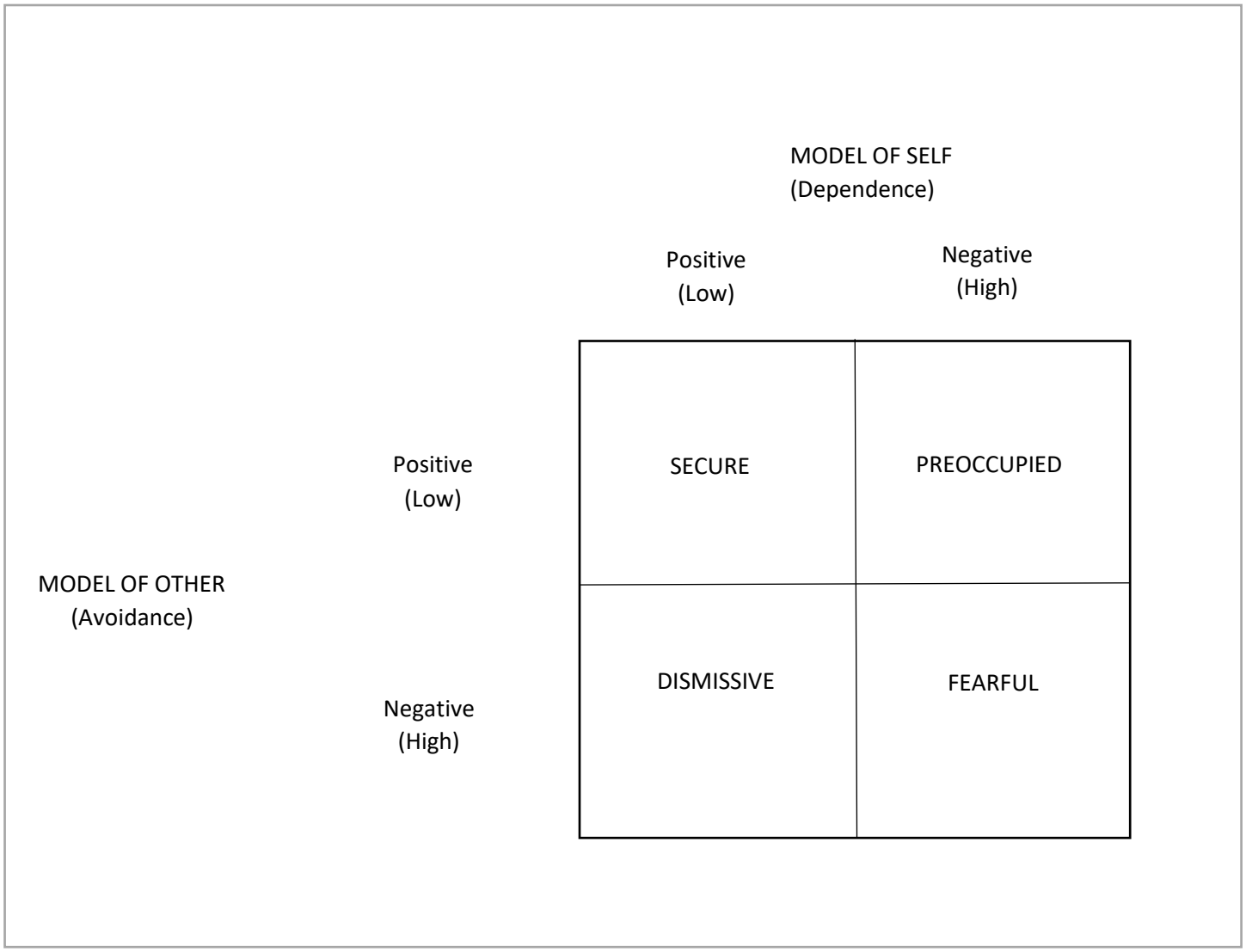
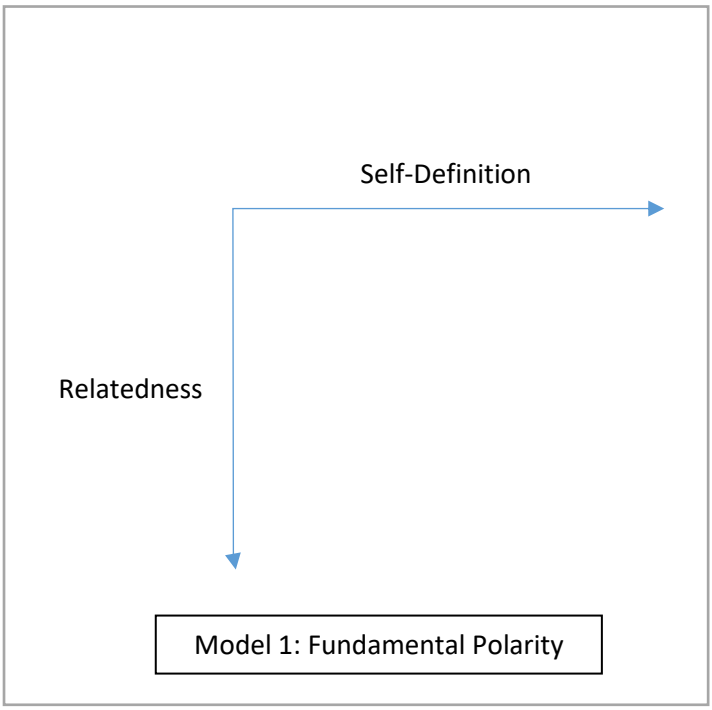


Figure 1: Adult Attachment Styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991)

The four dimensions defined in this model can be understood with help of this description: Quoting from (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) *"The dimensions can be conceptualized in terms of dependency on the horizontal axis and the avoidance of intimacy on the vertical axis (see labels in parentheses). Dependency can vary from low (a positive self-regard is established internally and does not require external validation) to high (positive self-regard can only be maintained by others' ongoing acceptance). Avoidance of intimacy reflects the degree to which people avoid close contact with others as a result of their expectations of aversive consequences. The dismissing and fearful styles are alike in that both reflect the avoidance of intimacy; they differ, however, in the person's need for others' acceptance to maintain a positive self-regard. Similarly, the preoccupied and fearful groups are alike in that*

both exhibit strong dependency on others to maintain a positive self-regard, but they differ in their readiness to become involved in close relationships. Whereas the preoccupied cell implies a reaching out to others in an attempt to fulfil dependency needs, the fearful cell implies an avoidance of closeness to minimize eventual disappointment"

4.2.2: Interlinkages between adult attachment styles (Model 2) and the fundamental polarities (Model 1): In the first model about fundamental polarities that we reviewed earlier, the two foundational lines of development were proposed – the first line is about 'relatedness' – it's about the desire to connect with the 'other' and form intimate relationships. The second line is about 'self-definition' – it's about the desire to assert yourself and to form a distinct and positive self-identity. It can be seen that the two axes used in the four category model of adult attachment have a close linkage with the two foundational lines of development described in the first model. The axis about the 'model of other' is linked with the 'relatedness' dimension and the axis about the 'model of self' is linked with the 'self-definition' dimension. This inter-linkage can enrich our understanding of both the models.



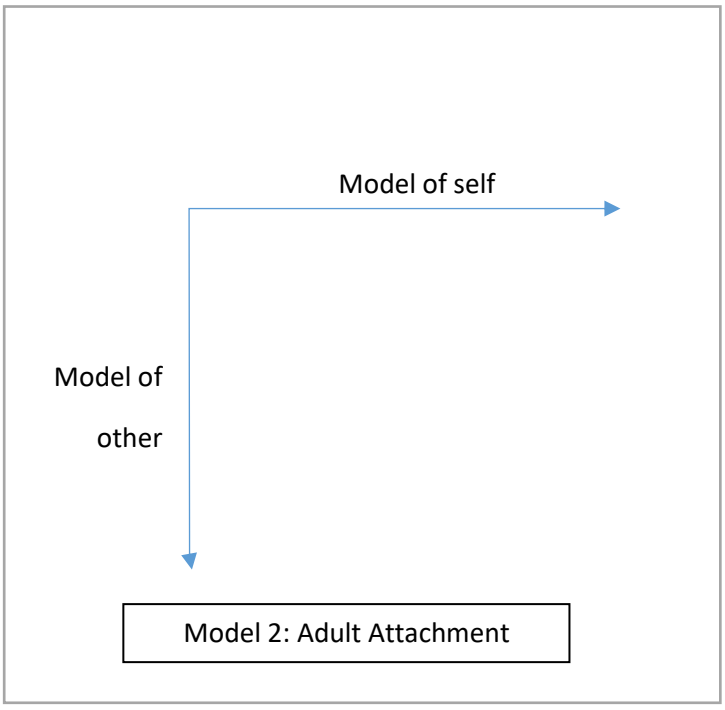


Figure 2: Interconnection between 'fundamental polarity' and 'adult attachment'

Concept of ‘Internal Working Models’ or ‘mental representations’

One of the most important ideas proposed by Bowlby was the concept of ‘internal working models’. He postulated that the actual experiences with attachment figures are cognitively processed and stored in the form of a working models about the self and the others. He also theorized that these models are carried forward into adulthood and they continue to influence thoughts, actions and behaviours related to relationships. (As described in (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)). Many scholars have also made a case that the mental representations are not only about the self and the other, but are also about the relationship between the self and the other. (Kernberg, 1995; Loewald, 1962).

Blatt (Blatt & Levy, 2003) has made a case that by definition process of maturity and development is essentially about the representations of the self and the other becoming more nuanced. More mature representations enhance tolerance for ambivalence and contradictions. The significance of the concept of ‘Internal Working Models’ lies in the fact that it helps us understand the mechanisms and the processes through which the attachment patterns formed in childhood get carried forward into adulthood and the manner in which they continue to affect the personality and interpersonal relationship patterns of individuals.

Adult attachment theory and leadership

It has been suggested (based on Bowlby and Ainsworth’s work, quoted in (Davidovitz, Mikulincer, Shaver, Izsak, & Popper, 2007)) that the principles of attachment theory become relevant in any adult relationship that meets three critical criteria – maintenance of proximity, which is about the desire of the attached individual to be close to the attachment figure, particularly under stressful conditions, provision of safe haven, which is about the attachment figure providing comfort and relieving the distress of the attached individual and provision of secure base, which is about the attachment figure providing a sense of security to the attached individual, which in turn enables the attached individual to embark on exploratory behaviours. Given the fact that interpersonal relationship processes are a significant part of leadership, it can be seen that the adult attachment theory will have the potential to offer many insights to studies on leadership.

4.2.3: Adult attachment styles : Implications for leadership adaptability

In the earlier section, we had established that adaptability – the ability for flexibility and versatility, necessary to dynamically balance many counteracting forces and to modify one's own behaviour to suit the unique context of different situations is an essential ingredient of leadership effectiveness. We had also discussed the special significance of one specific pair of (sometimes) contradicting aspects that the leader needs to effectively balance – 'focus on task' and 'concern for people'.

Many studies have indicated that the leader's 'attachment style' has an important bearing on his or her capacity for versatility and adaptability and hence also has an impact on his or her leadership effectiveness. Based on the theoretical considerations, it can be predicted that 'secure' attachment style should be positively linked with high levels of versatility, because a leader with secure attachment style is likely to have comfort with autonomy as well as intimacy. The comfort with autonomy or positive view about the self will enable the leader to take charge, set direction for a task and the comfort with intimacy, or the positive view about the 'other' will provide the leaders with capacity to build emotional connect with the team members. The theoretical considerations also predict that insecure attachment style of any type (preoccupied / dismissing / fearful, from the four category model (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991)) is likely to negatively impact the versatility of the leader, because the leader is likely to have inflexible pattern of interpersonal relationships – either being over-dependent (pre-occupied attachment style) or under-dependent (dismissing attachment style). Many empirical research studies have broadly confirmed these predictions that have been made using theoretical considerations. The findings from a set of three studies involving military cadets (Popper, Mayseless, & Castelnovo, 2000) indicated positive correlation between dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass, 1990) and secure attachment style. Unique part of this research was that for the first two studies the instructor's evaluations were used to generate data about leadership qualities and in the third study, feedback was gathered from the followers to capture data about the leadership qualities. In this research, all types of insecure attachment styles were negatively correlated with transformational leadership. A study covering small business owners and managers (Johnston, 2000) found out that leaders with secure attachment style, on the whole, were better at delegation, created more decentralized organization, had more

positive, non-conflictual interactions with their team members and also had lower rates of staff turnover. Leaders with insecure attachment styles, on the whole, had difficulties in delegation and reported higher levels of staff turnover. Another set of studies (Davidovitz et al., 2007) generated specific insights about the kind of negative impact associated with each type of attachment insecurity. Preoccupied (attachment-anxious) leaders were more focused on their own need for approval and were found to be lacking in their ability to provide task oriented support. This had an overall negative impact on their capacity to drive group performance. Dismissive (avoidant) leaders appeared to use the leadership role as an opportunity to showcase their own independence. Their followers reported that they did not receive adequate emotional support from these leaders. This was found to have negative impact on the group functioning and also on the mental health of the followers. Another study (Popper & Amit, 2009) found out strong and significant positive correlation between secure attachment and potential to lead (as measured by 'Leadership Evaluation Questionnaire) filled by peers and supervisors. This study also presents a case about important impact the trait of anxiety has on leadership. It argues that high level of anxiety (typically associated with preoccupied attachment style) negatively impacts self-confidence – a factor which has important impact on manifestation and perception of leadership. Scholars have also argued (MANNING, 2003) that secure attachment style would also be a predictor of high cross-cultural competence. This argument has been based on the assumption that the secure attachment style is likely to positively influence two key factors required for cross-cultural competence- relationship competence and openness to new experiences.

4.3.1 - Model 3: Three neurotic trends or styles (Horney, 2013)

Overview & Introduction

Horney (Horney, 1937) defined 'basic anxiety' as the feeling of insecurity a child has about being helpless and lonely in a potentially dangerous and indifferent world. This feeling of insecurity can be particularly impacted by factors in the environment (especially parental behaviour) such as erratic behaviour, lack of warmth, parental conflict, discrimination and others. Faced with such 'basic anxiety', the child tries to identify ways to deal with the dangerous and uncontrollable world. Horney further argues (Horney, 2013) that in this process, the child actually develops patterns,

which eventually get deeply embedded in the child's personality. Horney called these patterns 'neurotic trends' and proposed that these trends or styles can be mainly classified into three main configurations – moving towards others, moving against others and moving away from others.

The key themes associated with these styles can be described as follows: Based on (Horney, 2013)

Moving towards others (Compliance): Driven by the need to obtain affection and support from others, this pattern is characterized by acceptance of one's own helplessness and excessive dependence on others to obtain feeling of security.

Moving against others (Aggression): This pattern is characterized by presumption about the hostility from others. It is driven by the need to fight, defeat others and to assert one's own strength

Moving away from others (Detachment): This pattern is characterised by drive neither to belong nor to fight, but to create a distance between the self and the others. This pattern is often associated with a need to create a space of one's own, where one does not need to interact too much with others.

Horney postulated (quoted in(Coolidge, 1998)) that this trend not only was about distancing oneself from others, but also at the same time it was about alienation from one's own self.

Neurotic behaviour: Horney defined neurotic behaviour as one in which there is excessive and rigid reliance on one of these three styles. This rigidity leads to severe internal conflict – because the particular trend used to reduce anxiety often actually contributes to increasing the anxiety (for example, an individual who uses 'moving towards others' or excessive dependence as a tactic to reduce anxiety, also becomes more anxious due to the resultant increase in vulnerability) She also argued that the impact of this internal conflict does not only remain limited to interpersonal relationships but also negatively impacts the core personality structure of the individual.

She hypothesized that in contrast to these neurotic patterns, in a normal individual, there is <u>no rigid dependence on any of these three trends, but there is presence of a</u>

flexible capacity to choose the most appropriate response suitable for a given context and situation.

4.3.2: Interlinkages between adult attachment styles (Model No.2) and three neurotic trends (Model no.3)

From the description of themes associated with the three neurotic trends above, it can be seen that conceptually, each of the neurotic trends is associated with model of self as well as the model of the other. It can be seen that the 'moving towards others' (compliant) neurotic trend closely maps to with 'pre-occupied' adult attachment style (wherein the 'model of self' is not positive, but the 'model of the other' is positive). The 'moving against others' (aggressive) trend closely corresponds to 'dismissing' attachment style (wherein the 'model of self' is positive but the 'model of the other' is not positive). The 'moving away from others' (dismissive) trend is similar to the 'fearful' attachment style (where both the 'model of self' as well as the 'model of the other' are negative). The figure below shows the conceptual correspondence between adult attachment styles and the three neurotic trends. It must be noted here, that the author could not locate any scholarly publication that has conceptually or empirically reviewed this correspondence.

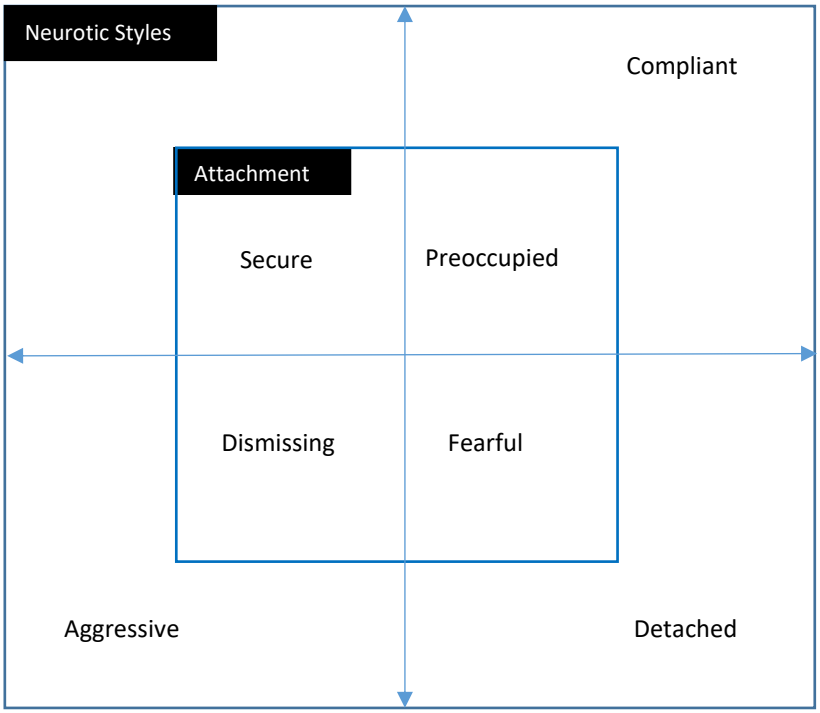


Figure 3: Interconnection between 'adult attachment' and 'tripartite neurotic styles'

4.3.3.: Three neurotic styles: Implications for leadership adaptability

As mentioned earlier, Horney conceptualized (Paris, 1998) 'healthy personality' as one which allows the individual to flexibly moves across any of the three trends and modify behaviour in a way that is most appropriate for the context. As it can be easily seen, this corresponds with the concept of leadership adaptability that we have been exploring in this thesis. In contrast, it can be seen that being rigidly anchored into any of the three neurotic trends will significantly impair a leader's effectiveness.

4.4.1: Model 4: Dark side personality traits (R. Hogan, 1997)

Introduction & Overview

Over the last few decades, many scholars have focused their attention on studying personality factors that lead to leadership derailment. (Conger, 1990; Furnham, 2016; McCartney & Campbell, 2006). As discussed earlier, it has been suggested (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997) that leadership or managerial performance can be conceptualized to have two distinct components – 'task performance', which is mainly about technical results and 'contextual performance', which is mainly about the impact on interpersonal domain created by the individual, such as helping and supporting other colleagues. It has been found out that personality factors have a significant impact on contextual performance (J. Hogan, Rybicki, & Borman, 1998)

One important strand of research that emerged from studies of leadership derailment focused on 'subclinical traits'. One of the earlier studies of this area, (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) identified 'subclinical traits' as the '*middle ground between "Normal" personality traits such as the 'Big Five' and 'clinical' traits used to diagnose psychological pathologies' (Quoted from (Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011).* These 'subclinical traits' do not necessarily impair day to day functioning of the leader, but are indicative of a potential derailment risk under specific stressful situations. Many scholars and practitioners developed lists and frameworks to enumerate these dark side traits. (Dotlich & Cairo, 2003; Miller, 2008; Oldham & Morris, 1990) In organizational context, one of the most widely used and researched frameworks of subclinical traits is the 'Hogan Development Survey' (HDS) (R. Hogan, 1997)

The 'Hogan Development Survey' (HDS) was designed to identify dysfunctional dispositions that create performance risks for individuals – typically through their

negative impact on interpersonal relationships. (R. Hogan et al., 2007). The design of the HDS draws from multiple frameworks including the neurotic trends (Horney, 2013) , interpersonal circumplex (Alden, Wiggins, & Pincus, 1990), PROFILE instrument (Jones, 1988) and the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual - IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The HDS identifies eleven mutually exclusive dimensions, which represent 'dark side personality' patterns that have the potential to create performance risks. While the eleven HDS scales have direct, one to one correspondence with eleven personality disorders defined as per the Axis 2 of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV, the HDS framework is distinct from the 'personality disorder' framework in two very significant ways. First, and most importantly, the HDS is designed for use in non-clinical setting. Second, the DSM IV personality disorder is a classification framework that uses 'types' to categorize individuals – but the HDS is 'dimensional' in nature - which means that a single individual can have high as well as low scores across all dimensions and the individual is not 'categorized' to belong to a single specific dimension.

4.4.2: Relationship between HDS (Model 4) and three neurotic trends (Model 3)

It is important to note here that the eleven dimensions of the HDS as well as the corresponding eleven personality disorders from DSM-IV have been conceptually (Guenole, 2014) as well as empirically (Coolidge, Moor, Yamazaki, Stewart, & Segal, 2001) found to be clustering around three sub-groups that correspond to the three neurotic trends identified by Horney.

This interrelationship is summarized in the following table -

		DSM-IV (Axis 2)	
Neurotic Trends (Model 3)	**HDS Dimensions (Model 4)**	***Personality Disorders***	***Clusters***
Moving Away (Detachment)	Excitable	*Borderline*	*Cluster A (Odd & Eccentric)*
	Skeptical	*Paranoid*	
	Cautious	*Avoidant*	
	Reserved	*Schizoid*	
	Leisurely	*Passive-Aggressive*	
Moving Against (Aggression)	Bold	*Narcissistic*	*Cluster B (Dramatic & Erratic)*
	Mischievous	*Antisocial*	
	Colourful	*Histrionic*	
	Imaginative	*Schizotypal*	
Moving Towards (Compliance)	Diligent	*Obsessive-compulsive*	*Cluster C (Anxious and fearful)*
	Dutiful	*Dependent*	

Relationship between HDS scales and leadership performance

Many studies have explored the impact HDS dimensions have on the leadership performance of individuals. A study focusing on relationship between HDS and 'transformational leadership' (Khoo & Burch, 2008) found out that transformation leadership scores were negatively correlated with HDS dimensions of 'Cautious' and 'Reserved' but were positively correlated with the dimension of 'Colourful'. Another study focused on relationship between HDS, critical managerial work behaviours such as trust, dependability, adaptability and overall managerial performance (Gaddis & Foster, 2015). It found out that all the five HDS dimensions (Reserved, Cautious, Sceptical, Leisurely and Excitable) belonging to the 'Moving away from others' cluster had negative relationship with ratings on overall managerial work performance. The negative impact of the Moving away from other HDS dimensions on leadership performance has also been replicated in other studies. (Benson & Campbell, 2007). In a multi-wave, multi-method study involving military school cadets (Harms et al., 2011), the HDS dimensions of 'Sceptical' and 'Imaginative' were found to have significant negative impact on the leadership development process.

It is important to note here that while many of the studies, including those quoted above have found negative impact of some of the HDS dimensions on leadership performance, on the whole the relationship between these two constructs is more complex and nuanced. Some HDS dimensions do also appear to have positive impact on leadership – these aspects are discussed in more depth in the next section.

4.4.3: Dark side personality traits: Implications for leadership adaptability

A study focused on reviewing importance of the trait paradigm in leadership research (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009) makes a case that the relationship between a given personality trait and its impact on leadership effectiveness may not necessarily be a linear one. This study proposes that both the bright as well as dark side traits (e.g. HDS dimensions) have potential for negative as well as positive impact on different facets of leadership effectiveness. This prediction is completely in alignment with the earlier principle discussed in this paper that leadership is often about capacity to balance counteracting forces.

The prediction that some of the dark side traits may have positive impact on leadership effectiveness was confirmed in a study (Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015) that looked at relationship between HDS dimensions and the four dimensions (Forceful, Enabling, Strategic and Operational) of the versatile leadership model. (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). In this model, the four dimensions of leadership are defined as follows: (Quoting from (Kaiser et al., 2015)) '*Forceful leadership is defined as assuming authority and using personal and position power to push for performance. Enabling leadership is defined as creating conditions for others to contribute through empowerment, participation, and support. Strategic leadership is defined as positioning the team for the future by setting direction, making bold moves, and supporting innovation. And Operational leadership is defined as guiding the team to execute near-term goals by specifying the details of implementation, focusing resources, and monitoring performance'* This study made a prediction that high score on a particular HDS dimension may positively impact one of the leadership dimensions but at the same time, negatively impact some other leadership dimension. For example, high score on HDS dimension of 'Bold' (which is about high degree of confidence, assertiveness and expectations about success and

power) may positively impact the ‘Strategic’ dimension of leadership and at the same time negatively impact the ‘Operational’ dimension of leadership. The data obtained in this study showed general support for these predictions.

This study also challenged the commonly held view that low scores on HDS dimensions necessarily only had positive impact on leadership effectiveness. It actually showed that very low HDS scores may actually have significant negative impact on certain leadership dimension. For example, a very low score on HDS dimension ‘Diligence’ (which is a scale about detail orientation, hard work and high standards of performance) may have a significant negative impact on ‘Operational’ dimension of leadership. This study concluded that moderate scores – that is scores closer to average levels on dark side dimensions may have the most optimum impact on overall leadership effectiveness.

This kind of an ‘inverted U’ type relationship – where both, low as well as high scores on a trait have negative impact and average score have a positive impact on leadership performance have been found out for other traits such as narcissism (Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015) and assertiveness (Ames & Flynn, 2007). These findings once again emphasizes the importance of flexibility and adaptability for leadership effectiveness.

5. INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK: COMBINING THE FOUR MODELS

The four psychodynamic models described earlier and their interconnections can be combined to form a single integrated framework as shown in the Figure 4. As it can be seen, at the core of this framework are the two axes that represent the fundamental polarity of human nature (covered in Model 1) – each axis representing one dimension of the polarity - self-definition and relatedness.

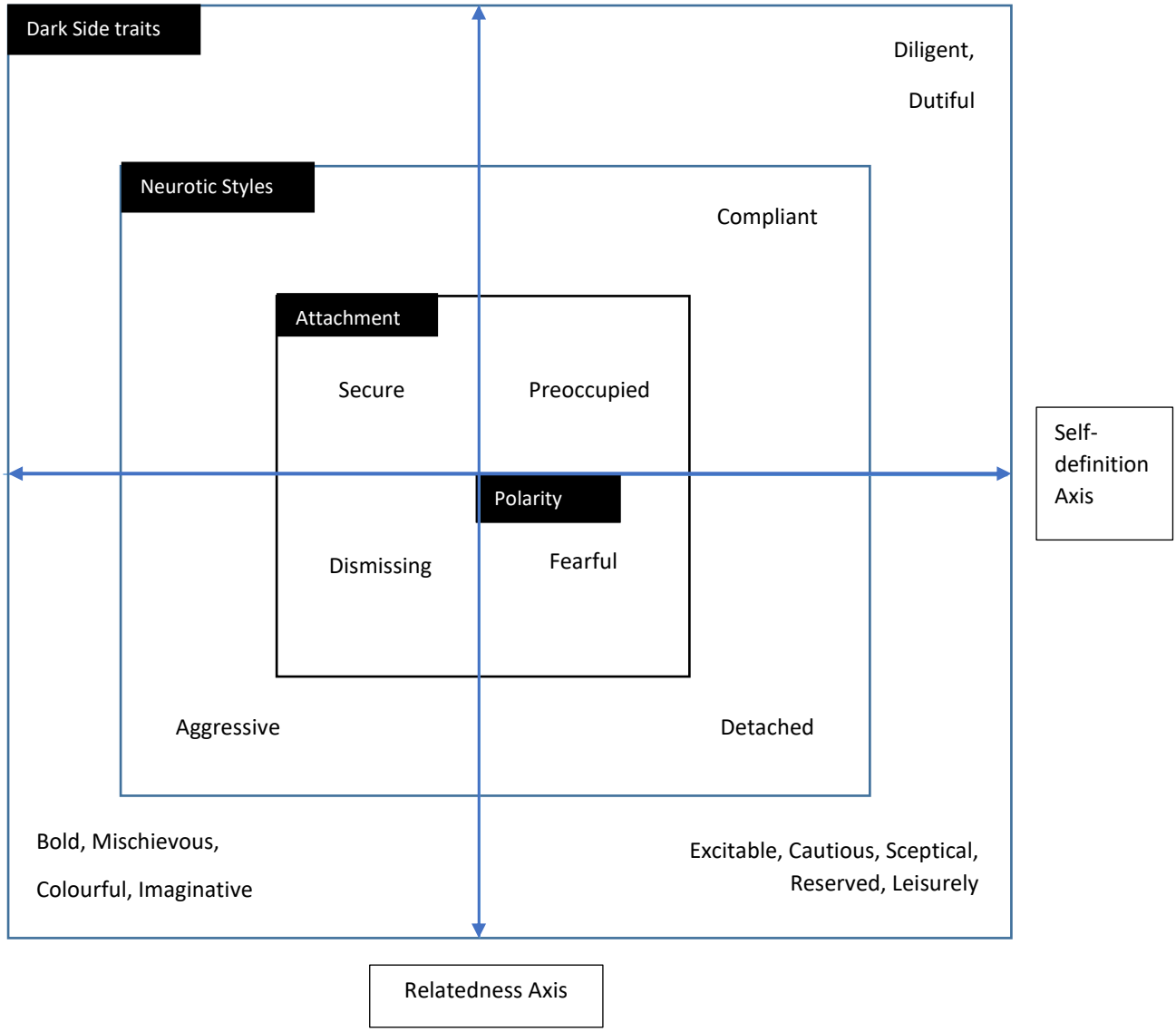


Figure 4: Integrated framework combining the four models

Significance of the integrated framework

Capabilities such as self-awareness and interpersonal skills are fundamentally important for leadership effectiveness. (J. M. George, 2000; Kerr, Garvin, Heaton, & Boyle, 2006). Given the foundational nature of principles covered in the integrated framework, it will not be an exaggeration to state that this framework offers one of the most important lenses for any individual to work on enhancing self-awareness and developing deeper understanding about his or her own patterns of interpersonal relationships.

Each of the other three models (Attachment Styles, Neurotic Trends and Dark Side Traits) build on the fundamental polarity and provide additional set of insights. The value of this integrated framework is that it will enrich our understanding of each of the individual models – this can be used to draw additional insights when using any of these four models.

For example, think of an individual who is being coached by an executive coach who is leveraging Hogan Development Survey (HDS) for the coaching process. Let's assume that the coachee's HDS report shows that only two of the eleven dimensions – Bold and Mischievous are in the 'High Risk' zone (90th Percentile and above) By leveraging the integrated framework presented in the thesis, the executive coach can draw many more additional insights from this data – for example, he will be able to understand that the coachee is <u>likely</u> to have patterns associated with 'dismissing' attachment style – which are mainly about positive image of the self but a negative image of 'the other'. Hence few possible areas of exploration could be – does the executive have such an excessively positive self-image that it comes in the way of developing awareness and acceptance of one's own shortcomings? Or does the executive have such a such a strong negative pattern of thinking about others that it comes in the way of one's ability to develop trusted, authentic relationships ? Such insights (after necessary validation and confirmation) can add a valuable additional dimension to application of any of these four models.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

This sections presents insights for four specific applied themes – leadership development, executive coaching, selection and promotion of leaders and gender issues in leadership development – that can be drawn from the integrated framework presented in this thesis.

6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This paper has tried to make an argument that effective leadership needs significantly high level of flexibility and adaptability, but given the nature of human mind (as it can be understood using the four models presented here), it may not be so easy for leaders to develop this flexibility. Hence one of the most important priorities for leadership development would be to make leaders aware of the importance of versatility for leadership effectiveness and enhance their self-awareness about their own personality patterns that may be coming in the way of their becoming more versatile.

In this context, it will be relevant to consider, typically what percentage of non-clinical populations tend to show some inherent potential for imbalance. To develop a broad sense about this, we can look at empirical research done using the models presented in this paper. From the studies of adult attachment patterns (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2009; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) it can be seen that in non-clinical populations, around 40 to 43 percent of adults tend to get categorized into non-secure attachment styles. Studies covering managerial population using the Hogan Development Survey, have found out that more than 95% of the population has at least one HDS scale in the ‘risk zone’ (that is percentile score 70 or higher). This is also consistent with the data published (R. Hogan et al., 2007) by Hogan Assessment Systems. This data points in the direction, that among non-clinical population, many individuals are likely to have some patterns of imbalance that may come in the way of developing leadership adaptability. These individuals are likely to need development support on the relevant themes of imbalance.

The case being presented by this paper also helps us see the proposition of ‘strengths based development’ (Hodges & Clifton, 2004) in a more balanced perspective. The ‘strengths based development’ approach makes a very strong case for benefits of investing in inherent strengths possessed by an individual, for accelerating the development process. This approach has certainly found strong

empirical support (Clifton & Harter, 2003). But while accepting validity of this principle from the ‘strengths based development’ approach, it is important to be very cautious about the unstated implication about weaknesses arising from it. While paying attention to the principle of ‘focus on your strengths’, practitioners often end up making an assumption that it is acceptable to ‘ignore your weaknesses’. (It is important to clarify here that the scholarly and practitioner literature on ‘strengths based development’ usually does not make this as an explicit recommendation). The case being made by this paper about importance of leadership versatility makes it clear that while focusing on your strengths could be a valuable strategy, ignoring your weaknesses may not be a very desirable approach in leadership development. Hence, effective leadership development approach is likely to combine both these elements – on one hand, it is about building on your inherent strengths and also equally on the other hand it is about improving on your weaknesses.

This paper also highlights the importance of schemas or mental representations in leadership development. In fact many scholars have argued (Lord & Hall, 2005) that leadership development is fundamentally a process in which better capabilities for knowledge, information processing and emotional regulation are developed through refinement of deeper cognitive structures i.e. schemas. Given the depth and intensity required for this, it can be inferred that leadership development is likely to require sustained efforts over a long period of time. In this context, it has been proposed (Kaiser et al., 2015)that most leadership development interventions need to include aspects such as assessment of existing schema’s held by the leader, identification of problematic or dysfunctional aspects of these schemas and also helping the leader in correcting and replacing these schemas with more appropriate patterns. It will not be an exaggeration to state that helping the individual develop a deeper understanding of his or her own ‘model of self’ and ‘model of the other’ schemas and their implications can be a most important starting point for a leadership development journey.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE COACHING

Executive coaching can be broadly defined as a short- to medium-term relationship between an executive and a consultant, which is targeted at improving the executive's work effectiveness (Feldman, 2001). Prevalence of executive coaching as an intervention for leadership development has seen significant increase during last few decades. (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). While the coaching principles are also often used by supervisors and managers to support their team members' development – in this section, we will specifically focus on 'executive coaching' wherein an independent professional (who is typically not a part of the reporting hierarchy of the employee) works with the employee over a series of conversations aimed at supporting the employee's development.

As described in the previous section about 'implications for development', one of the most important objectives of leadership development is helping the leader refine and improve his or her mental models/schemas. Executive coaching aims to achieve this objective through the conversations and relationship between the coach and the coachee. To understand the significance of this relationship in the context of executive coaching, it is important to study the construct of 'working alliance', which is often used in the fields of psychotherapy and counselling. 'Working alliance' can be defined as *'the emotional alignment between the client and the therapist, which is based on trust, respect and mutual regard, as well as agreement about the tasks and goals of the therapy' (Quoted from Pg. 417* ((Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)) Quality of the working alliance has been found to be one of the most important predictors of therapeutic change across variety of treatment modalities and clinical issues. (Castonguay, Constantino, & Holtforth, 2006). In fact some scholars (For example (Fonagy & Bateman, 2006)) have argued that the working alliance may be the single most important active ingredient of all psychotherapeutic treatments.

It has been proposed that the 'attachment theory' provides one of the most meaningful frameworks through which the relationship between the therapist and the client and hence the nature of working alliance can be studied. Bowlby (Bowlby, 1988) proposed that the therapists mainly act as attachment figures – providing to the clients, a 'safe haven' – a relationship that helps the clients deal with the anxieties and insecurities and a secure base – a relationship which enables the client explore the world and also explore the difficult aspects of their own life and

relationships. It has been proposed that through the therapy, the clients move to a more secure attachment orientation by leveraging this relationship with the therapist to establish new interpersonal patterns. (Dozier & Tyrrell, 1998)

In conclusion, it can be said that the process of refining mental schemas of the client is at the heart of the coaching process. And a very important medium through which the coach supports the client in this process is through developing an effective relationship – a working alliance. Hence the insights from psychodynamic concepts covered in this paper such as mental representations, adult attachment theory can be very relevant for enhancing the executive coaching process and capabilities.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR SELECTION AND PROMOTIONS INTO LEADERSHIP

Given the significant impact leaders have on the results as well as the culture and the employees of the organization, decisions about selection for and promotion into leadership positions assume great importance. Concepts from psychodynamic theory such as dark side personality traits can offer many important insights that can improve these decisions. The dark side personality traits have been studied by scholars investigating wide range of domains such as – leadership derailment, organizational psychopathy, dark triad (which includes the traits of narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism) and processes related to leadership emergence and effectiveness. One of the most important insights emerging from all these investigations is that often some dysfunctional traits tend to show the individual in very positive light during selection or the early stage of the career – but the same dysfunctional traits significantly impair the leader's ability to effectively perform over a sustained period of time. For example, studies have found out that high levels of narcissism are linked with leader emergence (Brunell et al., 2008; Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006). But at the same time, many studies have established that narcissism is associated with significant negative behaviours that will impair the leader's long term effectiveness – a study (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007) focusing on CEO's of computer hardware and software industry found out that narcissism was associated with risky decision-making and volatile performance. Another study (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006) found out that narcissism was negatively associated with contextual performance, which is the domain of

performance associated with contributions to organization's social capital and going beyond the normal call of duty to contribute to larger organizational objectives. Similar patterns have emerged from the studies of 'dark triad' traits – high scores on these traits often help individuals acquire leadership positions (Furnham, 2016; R. Hogan & Hogan, 2001). But at the same time, many scholars and practitioners have shown that leaders with high 'dark triad' traits, eventually derail due to the negative impact of these traits (Babiak, 1995; Dotlich & Cairo, 2003).

While the serious risks that such leaders with dysfunctional traits create for long term well-being of the organizations are evident, it appears that such leaders and managers are not at all uncommon. In fact some studies have shown that percentage of people showing these dysfunctional patterns could be higher within senior organizational leaders than the percentage that is typically found in overall population. (Babiak, Neumann, & Hare, 2010; Lilienfeld et al., 2012).

Large number of books on themes related to destructive leadership (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Carter, 2004; Furnham, 2016; Hare, 1999; Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2006; Lloyd, 2005; Lubit, 2003; Stout, 2006) in the scholarly as well as practitioner press and their popularity is also a possible sign that this phenomenon is very important and not uncommon.

This implies that it is very important that adequate attention is paid for potential dysfunctional traits during selection and promotion decisions. It should be particularly kept in mind that many dysfunctional traits tend to show the individual in a positive light in the initial impression and selection context as described earlier and hence adequate efforts should be taken to identify and mitigate potential risks associated with these traits.

6.4 - IMPLICATION: GENDER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Women are significantly under-represented at senior leadership levels in corporate sector. (For example – less than 6% of the senior executives in Fortune 500 companies were women, as reported in (Eagly & Carli, 2007)). A wide variety of factors are likely to contribute to the reasons of this under-representation and a comprehensive review of all these factors is outside the scope of this thesis. For this particular section in the thesis, we will focus our attention on three of the four psychodynamic models covered earlier to explore if they provide any relevant

insights on the subject of gender and leadership. As described in the previous sections, versatility and adaptability appear to be essential ingredients of leadership effectiveness. In case there are any patterns associated with gender that affect the capacity for leadership adaptability, then gender is likely to have an impact on development of leadership effectiveness. With this perspective, we will look at the psychodynamic models.

<u>Very important note about statements related to gender in this section</u>

Some broad statements about patterns related to gender and their implications have been made in this section. It is very important to note here that these are only meant to be directional statements, which make an attempt to capture broad patterns. These are in no way meant to be implied as sweeping generalizations about all men or all women. These are also not meant to be generalizations about one or the other gender having higher potential for leadership.

1. Fundamental Polarity (Relatedness and self-definition)

As described earlier, this model proposes that from infancy to adulthood, the human life is driven by two fundamental dimensions – the 'relatedness' dimension is about the desire to connect with other and the 'self-definition' dimension is about asserting one's independence. Evidence from some studies related to mental health has indicated pattern of gender differences in these dimensions - in many studies, men endorsed more self-critical items and women endorsed more interpersonal items. (Riley & McCranie, 1990; Whiffen & Sasseville, 1991). In many other studies, the area of interpersonal relationships has been found to be a more significant vulnerability for women as compared to men. (Cyranowski, Frank, Young, & Shear, 2000; Leadbeater, Blatt, & Quinlan, 1995)

In a large cross-cultural study (Costa Jr, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001) using the 'Five Factor Model' of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987) small but consistent differences were observed across gender on the similar lines. On an average, the

men reported themselves to be higher on assertiveness and women rated themselves higher on warmth and agreeableness.

2. Adult attachment styles

As described in the earlier section, the two main dimensions across which the insecure attachments can be visualized are: preoccupied and dismissive. Preoccupied insecure attachment is associated with excessive dependence on others and drive to maintain relationships. Dismissive insecure attachment is associated with avoidance of intimacy and excessive self-reliance. A few studies have found out presence of gender differences across the insecure attachment patters. Men tend to show the ‘dismissive’ attachment pattern more commonly and women tend to show ‘preoccupied’ attachment pattern more commonly. (Del Giudice, 2009; Shaver et al., 1996)

3. Three neurotic trends or styles

This model proposes that to deal with fundamental anxiety experienced in the early childhood, human beings develop three types of neurotic patterns – Moving away from others, moving against others and moving towards others. The ‘away’ pattern is characterized by desire to create distance between the self and the other. The ‘against’ pattern is characterized by presumption about hostility from others and the drive to fight. The ‘towards’ pattern is characterized by acceptance of own helplessness and excessive dependence on others. Consistent gender differences have been found across these three patterns – men tend to show higher tendency for ‘against’ and ‘away’ patterns and women show more tendency for ‘towards’ pattern. (Coolidge, 1998; Furnham & Trickey, 2011)

Implications of these findings for gender issues in leadership development

When these findings about the three models are read in conjunction with the two critical leadership tasks described earlier (‘focus on task’ – which often requires asserting yourself and ‘focus on team’ – which requires one to build empathetic connection with the team) we can make a very broad directional prediction – that men leaders, on an average are likely to be more task focused but less team relationship focused. And the converse is likely to be true for women leaders.

Hence there is some indication that on an average men and women are likely to have different patterns of imbalance. And to become more versatile, men and women may have to adopt different strategies – more men are likely to have a need to work on enhancing their interpersonal relationship skills and on reducing potential negative effects of being excessively assertive and task focused. On an average more women are likely to have a requirement to work on enhancing their assertiveness and task focus and reducing potential negative effects of excessive interpersonal sensitivity.

LIMITATIONS

While this thesis has focused on role played by individual leader in the phenomenon of ineffective leadership, to holistically understand this subject, many other factors including the role played by the followers, other factors in organizational environment such as culture etc. need to be studied. These other factors have not been covered due to the conscious choice made about the scope and focus of this thesis.

As described earlier, the integrated framework in this thesis has been built by establishing interlinkages between each successive pair of the four models. Conceptual as well as empirical studies establishing these interlinkages are available except for one pair: Model 2 (Adult attachment) and Model 3 (Three Neurotic Styles)

Since this thesis was approached as a theoretical essay, it has not included any empirical investigation.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this thesis was approached only with a theoretical lens, it will be very valuable to investigate the framework proposed in this thesis using empirical methods. One particular approach could be design of a diagnostic and developmental leadership intervention that can use all the four models used in this framework.

Among the four models covered in this framework, the two models – i.e. adult attachment and dark side personality traits have been investigated to some extent by organizational scholars. However there appear to be very few empirical studies or theoretical explorations in organisational context using the other two models (fundamental polarity of human nature and three neurotic styles). Specifically the model of fundamental polarity may offer many valuable insights related to supporting

individuals on awareness building as well as modification of their schemas about self and others.

CONCLUSION

In this section I have tried to recapture the most important insights that I came across during the process of working on this thesis

Significance of adaptability and versatility**:** While it is common knowledge that adaptability is a very valuable capacity to have, it was very interesting to learn that it has an almost universal significance across a range of domains pertaining to human life. It was very fascinating to learn that not only adaptability and versatility are defining ingredients for effective leaders (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010), but they are signature markers of wisdom, (Staudinger & Glück, 2011) and human growth and development. (Roemischer, 2002)

Foundational importance of the fundamental polarity of human nature: The two dimensions (relatedness and self-definition) identified by the model of fundamental polarity (Blatt, 2008) appear to have an all pervasive and long lasting impact on personality development. Wide range of important insights about an individual – from whether or not the individual has the capacity to be an effective leader to whether the individual has high risk of derailment can be drawn by leveraging this lens of exploration.

Contradiction between the ideal of flexibility v/s reality of human propensity for inflexibility: While flexibility and adaptability clearly emerge as very desirable capacities to have, the psychodynamic models help us understand why individuals acquire stable, almost rigid patterns of imbalance. Given the fact that these patterns get formed at a very young age and they create deep schemas about models of self as well as models of others – these patterns are not something one can change easily and at will. This helps us develop a very sympathetic understanding of the human condition and nature of struggle many individuals have to go through to attain balance and harmony. This helps us understand why the adaptability required for effective leadership is not so common and also provides us certain indicators on how possibly we can work on developing this adaptability.

Depth and intensity of work required in leadership development: A significant part of leadership development process is about helping leaders refine and develop deeper cognitive structures (schemas) (Lord & Hall, 2005). Key frameworks presented in this thesis help us understand that this is likely to be a very intense and deep process – requiring very high degree of motivation and awareness on the part of the learner and insightful support on part of the facilitators. (Kaiser et al., 2015)

To conclude, it can be said that the human polarity based integrated framework designed in this thesis can be used as a foundational lens to understand the aspects of human nature that can potentially come in the way of development of versatility and wisdom. Hopefully this framework will provide useful insights not only for developing leadership effectiveness but also for every other context that focuses on human development - from parenting and teaching to coaching and counselling.

It can actually be said that if each one of us is able to fulfil both the dimensions of polarity – the need for self-definition and the need for forging deep connection with others, in a synergistic way, not only will we grow towards our full potential as individuals, but we are also likely to have very positive, transformational impact on other people in our lives. Wishing for a world full of such individuals can be a wonderful vision to have for the whole of humanity.

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