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Examining the connection between information processing and leadership

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This project sought to examine the relationship between individual differences in information processing styles and aspects of leadership styles and leadership behaviours. In this study leaders rated their own leadership styles and reported on their styles of information-processing. In addition, one follower for each leader also rated their leaders' leadership styles, and also rated their leaders' approaches to influence in the workplace and conflict management.

In total, around 250 leaders and 250 followers responded to the survey, of which about 160 pairs of leaders and followers were matched as working together and providing useable questionnaire responses.

This study provided a number of interesting findings. These are some of the highlights:

1. Leaders who think in ways that facilitate action-focused problem-solving and lower stress were rated as better leaders by their followers.
2. Leaders who use effective tactics of influence were rated as better leaders by their followers. In addition, leaders who influence followers by engaging them in career-development opportunities are also evaluated more positively.
3. Leader who have a preference for logical, conscious, and rational thinking are more likely to evaluate their own leadership in a way that is consistent with their follower's evaluation of their leadership.
4. Leaders' tendency to express emotion is related to followers' perception of the leader's charisma.
5. Styles of conflict management and influence overlap considerably, such that leaders who use effective influence tactics also tend to use effective conflict management styles.

The results of this study suggest practical applications for leadership selection and development, where individual differences in thinking styles may predict leadership potential.