

Does king lear, present an implicit theory of leadership essays examples

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



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Introduction

Implicit leadership theory refers to qualities considered as specific and suited for leadership, qualities that contribute to shaping the image of a person as leader (Schyns & Meindl 21). Considering, however, that there are various types of leadership, such as autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, democratic, participative, laissez-faire, people-oriented, servant, task-oriented, transactional, transformational or abusive (Bansal, et al. 188), the implicit theory of leadership shapes on the features of each leadership style. William Shakespeare's " King Lear" implicitly delineates several leadership styles, visible in the characters' development, decision-making and in their attitude in different situations. Implicit theories of leadership are entrenched in most of the characters from " King Lear", each outlining various features consistent for the specific leadership style that they represent.

Body

King Lear's character exerts mostly the laissez-faire leadership traits. By giving up his throne and proclaiming his two elder daughters as equal

successors of his reign, Lear willingly agreed to allow his daughters to do whatever they pleased with his kingdom and implicitly with his life. The main characteristic that defines this leadership style is leaving others to do the work, while the leader regularly communicates with them on the achieved results and actions taken for various aspects (Murugan 38). However, Lear was wrongly treated by his two daughters, Goneril and Regan, as they have interpreted his laissez-faire leadership as a proof of weakness of which they eagerly took advantage. He realizes his own weakness of giving his daughters the helm of his kingdom, as entrenched only in his good heart: “Filial ingratitude! Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand/ For lifting food to't? [] O Regan, Goneril!/Your old king father, whose frank heart gave all,-/Oh, that way madness lies;” (Shakespeare 183).

Although King Lear has the attributes of a previous exemplar leadership figure, he no longer exerts leadership traits, because he had gone mad as result of his two daughters (Goneril and Regan) usurping him. It is because of his past leadership style that Earl of Kent remains in his services even after Lear banishes him for opposing the old king's decision of disinheriting Cordelia.

The inherent qualities specific to the autocratic leadership style are the fact that the autocratic leader exerts supreme or a high degree of power over the subordinates, the decisions mostly belongs to the autocratic leader with little or no consultations with others (Murugan 37).

There are many figures that exert these features that make them suited for the autocratic leaders in “ King Lear”. Goneril and Regan are two of these figures. Once they saw themselves as rulers of their father's reign, they only

ruled as they pleased, without taking into consideration their father's advices or any other persons' recommendations. Especially Goneril, the eldest daughter of King Lear, expresses the inherent qualities of autocratic leadership, sustaining the implicit theory of leadership. She is authoritative over everybody, including her father, her sisters or her husband. She makes her own decisions, following her own purposes. As such, she decides to plot her husband's death in order to remain a widow, as she planned to marry the illegitimate son of Earl Gloucester, Eduard. Similarly, she poisons her sister Regan, considering her a threat to her plan to marry Eduard. " But being a widow, and my Gloucester with her,/May all the building in my fancy pluck" (Shakespeare 274).

Likewise, her intention of killing her sister Regan also hides her thirst for power, in addition to her greed for having Eduard for herself, while she was still married to the Duke of Albany. By killing Regan, Goneril would become the single heiress of her father's throne, ruling over the entire England.

Hence, these are implicit autocratic leadership features that make Goneril not only an autocratic ruler, but a despotic one, maddened by power.

Nevertheless, unlike her father, Goneril does possess the ability to see the end results, the big picture, which is an implicit leadership trait. Her weakness only stands in the fact that she is over-absorbed by her plans of attaining greatness, that she becomes a slave of her own plots, as she loses her judgement when deciding to kill her sister Regan and her own husband and agrees to kill her other sister, Cordelia and their father, former King Lear. Because she abuses her power, she also exerts abusive leadership features.

Because of her native kindness, ethical personality and because of her original thinking, King Lear's youngest daughter, Cordelia, expresses two leadership styles, respectively the charismatic and the transformational leadership. After she was disinherited by her father because she could not falsely flatter him, as her two sisters did, she accepts the marriage proposal from the King of France, becoming like this the Queen of France. She exerts inherent leadership skills as she has the analytical ability to understand that her two sisters usurped their father's throne and disposed of him as they pleased. She presents the implicit charismatic leadership theory traits as she convinces the French authorities to support her in her plan of reinstating her father on England's throne, mistakenly granted to the traitors Goneril and Regan. Therefore, she influences and motivates others to fight for a desiderate that it is not theirs, exhibiting charismatic leadership qualities (Schyns & Meindl 135). She nevertheless convinces them that justice must be served and the fight for reinstating King Lear on England's throne becomes the goal of the French army, under Cordelia's firm command. Cordelia also expresses the power of sacrifice, another representative feature of charismatic leadership, as she ends up being murdered at Edmund's command.

Earl Kent, also banished by King Lear because he defended the King's youngest daughter Cordelia for the King's unjustified anger, is the representative of the people-oriented or relations-oriented leadership skills. The people-oriented leadership style is characterized by the leader's orientation towards doing what it is best for people (Bansal et al. 171). In Kent's case, he only pursued what it was better for the interests of King Lear,

England and its people. Earl Kent understood immediately that disinheriting Cordelia and splitting the throne between Goneril and Regan would bring negative consequences upon England. Moreover, after he was banished by Lear, he remained faithful to his former master, masking himself into a servant, Caius, in order to continue to serve for Lear. This is an indication of loyalty and abnegation from his side that translates the servant leadership style. Kent continues to support his former leader, aiming to reinstate him and to bring England back on a harmonious development, away from the current plots for power conducted by Goneril and Regan. Kent follows King Lear as his loyal servant even in his death and Shakespeare makes clear the fact that Earl Kent was not interested in power, but in protecting his patron. As such, towards the end of the play, when Kent is offered the throne of England, he refuses, saying that he will have to follow his master in his journey. His master, King Lear was already dead, hence, Kent's loyalty for him transcended through life and death. Hence, the most powerful implicit theory of leadership shapes Earl Kent in Shakespeare's "King Lear", as the proponent of the people-oriented and servant leadership styles.

Conclusion

Beyond its obvious tragism, an attentive analysis of William Shakespeare's "King Lear" indicates various leadership typologies in its characters. The play presents implicit theories of leadership, outlining the traits and features that shape characters such as King Lear, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia or Earl Kent as the representatives of various leadership styles. This essay analysed "King Lear" characters' reactions, decision-making and attitudes in given

circumstances. Accordingly, it investigated the laissez-faire leadership style (specific for King Lear), the autocratic leadership (specific to Goneril and Regan), the abusive leadership style (defining Goneril), charismatic and transformational leadership traits (specific to Cordelia) and people-oriented and servant leadership style (characterizing Earl Kent). Hence, the play “King Lear” presents implicit theories of leadership, expressed through its characters.

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