

A Comparative Study on Rensis Likert's Model and Managerial Grid Model with respect to Leadership Skills

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doi.org/10.64643/IJIRTV12I8-190903-459

Abstract: This study presents a comparative analysis of two seminal behavioral theories of leadership: Rensis Likert's Four Systems of Management and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid. Both models offer frameworks for understanding and classifying leadership styles based on a leader's orientation towards the task (production) and the people (relationships/subordinates). The primary objective of the research is to critically examine, evaluate and contrast the conceptual theories of structures, underlying dimensions, and practical implications of these two models in developing effective leadership skills within an organizational context. In this study the researcher is trying to explore the both models, with its history, objectives, comparative analysis, and utilization in leadership skill to Management.

Likert's model classifies leadership into four systems: System 1 (Exploitative Authoritative), System 2 (Benevolent Authoritative), System 3 (Consultative), and System 4 (Participative Group), advocating that System 4 is the most effective in fostering high productivity and long-term organizational health. Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid plots leadership styles across two axes—Concern for Production and Concern for People—identifying five key styles, with the (9,9) Team Management style being promoted as the most optimal. This study compares the both models, reveals that while both models ultimately converge on a similar "ideal" style—highly participative, trust-based, and team-oriented (System 4 and 9,9 Team Management)—they differ in their dimensionality and focus. Likert's model is broader as compare to Managerial grid theory in various dimensions and aspects. This research highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each model, concluding that both provide valuable diagnostic tools for leaders to assess their current style and develop skills toward more effective, human-centric management. The paper suggests that a combined understanding of both models offers a more comprehensive approach to leadership development, equipping managers with the ability to

diagnose not only their personal style but also the overarching organizational climate.

Key words: Comparative, Rensis Likert's model, Black and Mouton's Managerial grid, four management system, leadership skill, style, Behavioral theory, Task production, people orientation, Exploitative Authoritative, Benevolent Authoritative Benevolent Authoritative, Participative, people relation, conceptual theory structure, Management team, etc.

I.INTRODUCTION

Management is the backbone of any successful organization. It maintains focus, adapts to challenges, and fosters growth. Management is a process of five essential functions staying intact and integrated to drive success. These functions are Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, and Controlling. In management the Leadership is an indispensable element in organizational success. It directs, motivates, and guides individuals and groups toward achieving goals. Over the decades, there were so many scholars who have proposed the various models to describe leadership behavior, styles, and effectiveness. Among these, Rensis Likert's Leadership Systems and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid are widely acknowledged for emphasizing behavioral aspects of leadership. Rensis Likert introduced a spectrum of leadership styles ranging from authoritarian to participative systems, which reflect differing levels of employee involvement and decision-making authority. On the other hand, the Managerial Grid Model conceptualizes leadership along two key behavioral dimensions—concern for people and concern for production—resulting in five distinct leadership styles. Although both models contribute significantly to our understanding of

leadership behavior, they differ in structure and focus. This paper examines and compares these models with regard to leadership skills, their operationalization in organizations, and their implications for leadership development.

II.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

A Comparative Study on Rensis Likert's Model and Managerial Grid Model with respect to Leadership Skills" have the following objective

- To understand the concept of leadership skills and their importance in organizational effectiveness.
- To study Rensis Likert's leadership model, with special reference to its leadership styles and underlying assumptions.
- To analyze the Managerial Grid Model and its dimensions of concern for people and concern for production.
- To compare Rensis Likert's Model and the Managerial Grid Model in terms of leadership behavior, managerial effectiveness, and skill development.
- To examine how both models, contribute to the development of leadership skills such as communication, decision-making, motivation, and team building.
- To identify similarities and differences between the two leadership models with respect to managerial orientation and leadership outcomes.
- To evaluate the practical applicability of both models in modern organizational settings.
- To assess the relevance of both models in improving managerial performance and organizational productivity

III.AN OVERVIEW

3.1. Leadership: Leadership is defined as the process of influencing individuals and groups to achieve organizational objectives. And the leadership style is a leader's method of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people there are many types of leadership styles like as Autocratic, Paternalistic Democratic, Laissez fair, Transactional, Transformational Collaborative, Situational, etc., Early theories such as the trait approach focused on inherent qualities of leaders. However, behavioral

theories shifted focus to what leaders *do*, rather than who they *are*. It is within this behavioral tradition that Likert's and the Managerial Grid models are placed.

3.2. Rensis Likert's Leadership Model: Rensis Likert was an American organizational and social psychologist known for developing the Likert scale, a psychometrically sound scale based on responses to multiple questions. The scale has become a method to measure people's thoughts and feelings from opinion surveys to personality tests. Likert also founded the theory of participative management, which is used to engage employees in the workplace. Likert's contributions in psychometrics, research samples, and open-ended interviewing, In1961, Rensis Likert developed a model that categorized leadership styles into four systems which are as under.

System 1: Exploitative-Authoritative

- Leaders have low trust in subordinates.
- Decisions are centralized.
- Communication is top-down; rewards and threats are used for motivation.

System 2: Benevolent-Authoritative

- Leaders still hold decision-making power but are more considerate.
- Some information is shared, and motivation includes rewards.
- Communication remains mostly one-way.

System 3: Consultative

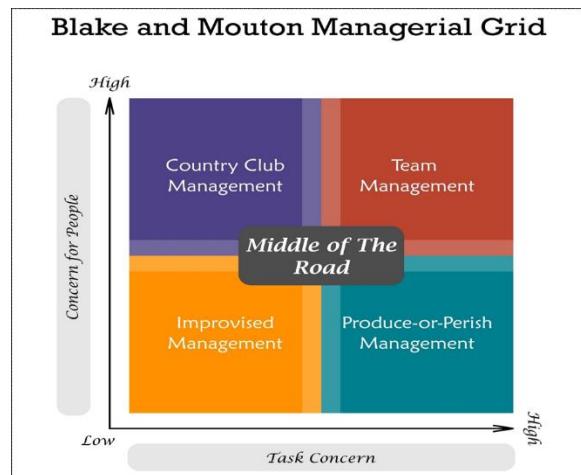
- Leaders consult subordinates before making decisions.
- Trust and respect are higher than earlier systems.
- Communication flows in both directions.

System 4: Participative-Group

- Highest level of participation.
- Decision-making is decentralized.
- Strong emphasis on trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

Noted: Rensis Likert argued that the participative system (System 4) yielded higher productivity, morale, and cohesiveness.

3.3. Managerial Grid Model; Robert Rogers Blake was an American management theoretician. He did pioneer work in the field of organizational dynamics. Together with Jane S. Mouton he developed the Managerial Grid Model (1964), which attempts to conceptualize management in terms of relations and leadership style. The Managerial Grid Model was developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton in 1964.



The Managerial Grid plots leadership styles based on two independent behavioral dimensions, each measured on a 9-point scale (1 being low, 9 being high).

1. Concern for Production (X-axis): This dimension reflects a leader's focus on achieving goals, task efficiency, work scheduling, and the volume or quality of output.
2. Concern for People (Y-axis): This dimension reflects a leader's focus on the human element, including employee needs, comfort, satisfaction, morale, and building strong relationships based on trust and respect.

The grid identifies five main leadership styles, often the focus of research

Style (Coordinates)	Name	Description	Research Implications
(1,1)	Impoverished Management	Low concern for both people and production. The leader exerts minimum effort to get required work done and merely aims to preserve their job and seniority.	Associated with disorganization, low employee morale, and ineffective organizational performance.
(9,1)	Authority-Compliance (or "Produce or Perish")	High concern for production, Low concern for people. Leaders believe that efficiency results from tight control and procedures, often at the expense of employee needs.	Can result in high output in the short run but often leads to high turnover and resentment. Based on McGregor's Theory X assumptions.
(1,9)	Country Club Management	Low concern for production, High concern for people. Leaders focus on friendly, comfortable atmospheres, believing this will lead to satisfied employees who will then produce.	Can lead to a relaxed environment but often results in below-average performance due to a lack of direction and control.
(5,5)	Middle-of-the-Road Management	Moderate/Balanced concern for both people and production. The leader attempts to maintain a balance, compromising between work goals and employee needs.	Results in average performance where neither production nor morale is pushed to high limits. It's often a compromising style.
(9,9)	Team Management	High concern for both production and people. Leaders foster a working environment where empowerment, trust, respect, and shared goals lead to high employee satisfaction and excellent results.	Considered the most effective and ideal style by Blake and Mouton, associated with high organizational performance and reduced turnover.

Noted: Blake and Mouton highlighted that an ideal leader should strive for Team Management (9.9) to achieve optimal organizational performance.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: DIMENSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1. Leadership Skills in Likert's Model: Rensis Likert's approach emphasizes the degree of employee involvement and participation. Leadership skills in this model revolve around: Effective upward and downward flows Communication Skills, Trust Building skill creating a supportive environment, Decision making skill through Balancing centralized and decentralized processes. Motivation: Encouraging participation and intrinsic motivation. And Conflict Resolution skill: Addressing issues through collaboration.

*** In participative systems, leaders must possess high interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.

4.2. Leadership Skills in the Managerial Grid model related to

- Task Orientation: Planning, organizing, and directing work processes.
- People Orientation: Empathy, support, motivation, and listening.
- Balance and Flexibility: Adjusting behavior based on situational needs.

*** Leaders high on both axes (9,9) demonstrate skills such as:

- Goal setting and execution.
- Mentoring and coaching.
- Team-building and empowerment.
- Performance evaluation with sensitivity to people.

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BOTH MODELS WITH RESPECT TO LEADERSHIP SKILLS.

5.1. Conceptual Differences

Sr. No.	Feature	Likert's Four Systems	Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid
1	Primary Dimensions	A continuum of Participation (from authoritative to participative)	Two independent axes: Concern for People and Concern for Production
2	Measurement/Scale	Four distinct systems (1 to 4)	A two-dimensional grid with 81 possible points (5 highlighted)
3	Ideal Style	System 4 (Participative Group)	(9, 9) Team Management
4	Common Ground	Both models advocate for a participative, employee-centered approach (System 4 / 9,9) as the most effective for long-term productivity and morale.	
5	Key Difference	Likert's model is more focused on the overall organizational climate (communication, motivation, decision-making).	The Grid is more focused on the leader's behavior in balancing task and relationship objectives.
6	Situational Aspect	Likert's model is largely universal (System 4 is always best), ignoring situational variables.	The Grid is also largely universal (9,9 is always best), though it describes different behavioral combinations.
7	Scope	Broader scope, defining an entire management system/culture.	Narrower scope, defining a specific leadership style.
8	Emphasis	Participation and morale as outcomes of style.	Task vs. people behavior as determinants of effectiveness.
9	Orientation	Holistic organizational culture perspective.	Behavioral style approach.

5.2. Skill Implications

5.2.1. Communication: Likert's Model: Strong emphasis on two-way communication, particularly in System 3 and System 4. While in Managerial Grid the Communication skills are implicit—leaders high on concern for people demonstrate openness and feedback. Likert's model more explicitly integrates communication into leadership effectiveness, while

the Grid touches it indirectly through relational behavior.

5.2.2. Decision-Making: Likert: Decision-making shifts from autocratic (System 1) to collaborative (System 4). While in Grid: Decision-making style corresponds to where a leader lies on the concern axes; team managers include participative decisions.

***Comparison: Likert's model systematically tracks participative decision-making across systems, whereas the Grid places the ideal decision-maker at the intersection of task and people concerns.

5.2.3. Motivation and Trust

- Likert emphasizes motivational strategies and trust building as central to higher system effectiveness. The Grid implies motivational skills through concern for people but does not explicitly address trust mechanisms.

5.2.4. Conflict Management

- In participative systems (Likert), conflict is addressed openly with group problem-solving.
- In the Grid, conflict resolution emerges through people-oriented behavior, especially in Team Management.

*** Comparison: Likert's model proactively embeds conflict management within participative norms, while the Grid assumes it emerges from relational orientation.

VI.PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS

6.1. Application of Likert's Model: Management can use Likert's model to assess and transform leadership culture. For example:

- Conducting surveys to determine current leadership system.
- Promote System 4 behaviors via training programs and policy changes.
- Increase employee empowerment through participative decision-making.

***Impact on Leadership Skills: Leaders trained under Likert's framework develop strong interpersonal skills, group facilitation, and participative decision-making competencies.

6.2. Application of the Managerial Grid: In management, the managerial grid has been used as a diagnostic and developmental tool. Applications include:

- Leadership workshops to plot personal leadership style.
- Executive coaching to shift toward (9,9) team leadership.

- Integration into performance appraisal and development plans.

*** Impact on Leadership Skills: Leaders refine skills related to balancing task demands with people support, enhancing flexibility, and situational responsiveness.

VII. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF BOTH MODELS

7.1. Strengths of Likert's Model:

- Provides a clear continuum from authoritarian to participative leadership.
- Emphasizes organizational trust and morale.
- Offers a systemic view of leadership's impact on overall organizational effectiveness.

Criticisms: May oversimplify complex behaviors into four broad systems. Cultural and contextual factors may influence its applicability.

7.2. Strengths of the Managerial Grid

- Simple and intuitive two-dimensional framework.
- Emphasizes balance between task and people behaviors.
- Helpful for self-assessment and leadership training.

Criticisms: (i) Lacks contextual variables (e.g., culture, industry). (ii) Not all situations require high concern for both axes (i.e., contingency factors). (iii) May imply one "best" style universally (Team Management) without situational nuance, etc.,

VIII. COMPLEMENTARY NATURE OF BOTH MODELS

Although developed independently, Rensis Likert's Model and the Managerial Grid can be viewed as complementary:

- Likert focuses on the climate and culture created by leadership behaviors.
- The Grid focuses on specific leader behaviors across task and relational dimensions.

***When combined, these frameworks allow organizations to both:

1. Understand how leadership behaviors shape employee involvement and organizational climate,
- and 2. Develop specific behavioral skills that balance

task objectives with human needs. Together, they encourage leaders to build participative, human-centered, and performance-oriented environments.

IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

9.1. Training and Development Strategies

Integration of Models: Leadership development programs can incorporate elements from both:

Use the Grid for skill assessment and feedback.

Use Likert's concepts to promote participative behaviors and trust-building.

Skill Building Focus Areas Training can target: (i) Effective communicative competence. (ii) Conflict resolution and negotiation. (iii) Empowerment and delegation. (vi) Balanced decision-making. Building a positive organizational climate.

9.2. Organizational Interventions

Organizations seeking to enhance leadership effectiveness might:

- Conduct organizational diagnosis to locate current leadership approach.
- Introduce participative decision-making practices.
- Formalize feedback and communication channels.
- Reward leaders who demonstrate balanced concern for people and results.

X. CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

In today's complex and dynamic work environments, leaders face challenges that demand both performance excellence and human-centered leadership. The evolving workplace—characterized by globalization, technological change, and workforce diversity—requires leadership that fosters innovation, collaboration, and adaptability.

Likert's participative system and the high people/task orientation of the Managerial Grid both align with contemporary leadership imperatives such as: (i) Transformational Leadership (ii) Servant Leadership (iii) Emotional Intelligence (vi) Inclusive Leadership. As organizations embrace agile structures and employee engagement becomes central, the principles from both models remain relevant.

XI. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of Rensis Likert's Model and the Managerial Grid indicates that both offer valuable insights into leadership skills and behavior. Likert's framework highlights the importance of participative leadership for organizational effectiveness, trust, and morale. The Managerial Grid provides a practical diagnostic tool for identifying leadership strengths and areas for development through its focus on people and task dimensions. While each has its limitations, the integration of both models can provide a holistic approach to leadership development that balances cultural, behavioral, and performance considerations. Effective modern leadership requires not only an understanding of task and relationship dynamics but also the ability to create environments of trust, participation, and shared purpose. By leveraging the strengths of both models, organizations can cultivate leaders capable of navigating complex challenges while promoting engagement, innovation, and sustained performance.

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