

IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH LEADERSHIP-STYLE EFFICIENCY OF MANAGERS

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Abstract

KUCHYNKOVÁ LADISLAVA. 2016. Identification of Factors Associated with Leadership-style Efficiency of Managers. *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, 64(6): 1971–1979.

The position of a manager is always associated with the need for efficient management of subordinates. Successful managers lead their subordinates efficiently due to the fact that they can properly diagnose competence of subordinates for the desired performance. In this context, it can be assumed that in the case of these managers there are factors that can positively affect their ability to successfully identify the appropriate leadership style. The ambition of this paper is to identify just such factors based on the analysis of data obtained from primary research on a sample of 149 respondents. The analysis included five factors that showed a premise that they could have an impact on the efficiency of the leadership style of managers: sex, the level of management, management area, the nature of the economic activity of an organization, and the number of direct subordinates. The major finding of the testing is the proved significant correlation between the level of management of a manager and the efficiency of their management style.

Keywords: leadership style, efficiency of leadership style, situational leadership style, preparedness level, directing, coaching, supporting, delegating

INTRODUCTION

Development of subordinates represents an important part of managerial work at all levels of management. The competent subordinates facilitate a manager's job because it is possible to delegate many tasks to them without the need to supervise them constantly. In practice, however, such a vision is not easy to achieve since its implementation requires that managers are able to correctly recognize what attitude to their subordinates they should use and consequently they should be able to adapt their leadership style accordingly. Such efficient leadership is dependent on the personality of the senior manager, the personality of the subordinate, the nature and difficulty of the task, and the overall situation of the company (e.g. requirements on the speed of fulfilling the given task or a need of teamwork, etc.). Literature offers many examples and possible solutions on how to become an efficient manager. One of them is a model of the situational leadership style, which

lists different ways, which are always appropriate in a given situation, of how to influence others.

A good manager motivates others to do the best. "It is anyone who accepts and bears a responsibility to make decisions, and who can make a contribution that significantly affects the organization's ability to perform well and achieve results." (Drucker, 2006) Drucker further states that if managers perform their roles efficiently, they increase their possibilities to act appropriately and flexibly to the situation, and to achieve the best possible results. Chemers (1997) believes that leadership is a process of social influence in which one person asks for another's help to achieve a goal. He further emphasizes that the personality of a manager is an important dimension of leadership and it can play an important role in the retention of the manager in the organization. Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1997) point out that leadership is part of management, but not entire management: "Leadership is the ability to persuade others

to enthusiastically try to achieve set goals. It is the human factor that puts the group together and motivates it in the orientation towards the target." Burrell *et al.* (2010) understand leadership as "a process carried out within the organizational role, which focuses on the needs and rights of the people working under the leadership. And Bateman and Snell (2004) consider motivating, problem solving, planning and organizing the essential elements of efficient leadership.

Mann Hyung (2008) defines the leadership style as a managerial activity that affects subordinates in such a way that they are willing to voluntarily meet the goals of the organization. Efficient managers adapt their style of behavior to subordinates and the assigned task. Since each worker is a unique personality, managers should approach them differently if they want to be successful. Pierce and Newstrom (2003) characterize leadership as the interplay between superiors and subordinates including the situation in which they find themselves. These authors suggest that there are many factors that influence a manager's leadership efficiency in a given situation, such as time space, nature of work, level of autonomy of subordinates etc.

Most management theorists agree that leadership efficiency is a function of leadership, subordinates and a current situational variable. Authoritative styles are usually described in the relationship between leaders and subordinates. Silverthorne and Wang (2001) consider the situational dimension as the independent variable for determining the situational leadership as a predictor of success and productive behavior in organizations. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) see leadership styles as a continuum that ranges from an authoritative leadership style to the laissez-faire managerial leadership style or leadership focused on subordinates. Situational theories are based on the assumption that different behaviors come into force in different situations, and that the same behavior is not optimal in all situations.

Theoretical Background

The idea that different management styles can be used depending on a corporate culture, nature of the task, the nature of the workforce, and managers' personalities and skills, was developed by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973). They argued that the leadership style is dependent on the prevailing circumstances, and therefore managers should be trained in various styles so that they are always able to use just the best one. Their theory – the continuum of behavior in leadership – claims that efficient managers can be those who are sufficiently flexible in resolving different situations.

Nevertheless, the original theory of situational leadership was developed by Hersey and Blanchard and they first introduced it in 1969 in *Training and Development Journal* (1969), where they called it "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership", and only in 1977

the title was changed to "Situational Leadership Theory". Authors Hersey and Blanchard argue that even before a manager decides for a particular leadership style, they should first be correctly oriented in a given situation and understand what the main objectives to be achieved are (Watkins, 2001). The model by Blanchard and Hersey assumes that once a manager is able to identify and implement an appropriate leadership style, they become a more efficient leader. Efficient managers should handle the application of all the four leadership types and they should also switch smoothly between these types depending on the situation. If you the subordinates are enthusiastic beginners (i.e. willing but incapable), the group leader should be rather directive; on the other hand, when it comes to a group of very experienced people, then they should delegate as much as possible. If the individuals are unwilling and incapable, then it is necessary to convince and lead them; or a group may be unwilling (but capable) and in this case it is appropriate to show support, etc.

The first fundamental step towards efficient leadership under this model is an accurate setting of a specific task or sub-activity. Both a subordinate and a manager must share the same attitude so that smooth communication intelligible to both parties can take place between them, and so that a common vision about the performance, process and outcome within the assigned task could be achieved. After a clear definition of an activity and the associated sharing of its goals comes the diagnosis of the proved level of a subordinate's preparedness to complete the required task. In the course of a working life people reach different levels of preparedness, which is continuously affected by setting new duties. It can be concluded that the readiness to perform is defined by the extent to which subordinates demonstrate their ability and willingness to perform specific tasks, with ability representing the knowledge, experience and skills that individuals use to contribute to the solution of specific tasks or activities. Willingness is then an indicator of the extent to which individuals demonstrate self-confidence, sense of responsibility and motivation to accomplish a specific task. Ability and willingness interact but different levels of their mutual influence can be traced for each individual; hence it is necessary to approach each subordinate individually. According to Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2008) we can divide the level of preparedness to perform into four levels, each representing a different combination of ability and willingness:

- **Preparedness Level 1** – subordinates are not ready to complete the task individually and lack self-confidence or motivation and an effort to take responsibility for its accomplishment.
- **Preparedness Levels 2** – subordinates lack the necessary skills, but they are willing to trust themselves to the extent that it is acceptable for

the manager, or they are motivated and want to spend some effort.

- **Preparedness Level 3** – subordinates are able to perform the task, but they feel uncertain and are afraid of independent work, or they are reluctant to use their skills for the benefit of performing the given task.
- **Preparedness Level 4** – subordinates are capable and confident enough or they want to take responsibility for fulfilling the task.

Campbell (2008) extended this concept with a list of behavior indicators, which he assigned to each preparedness level. The following Tab. I actually presents clear guidance that can help managers in diagnosing the preparedness level of individual subordinates in the situations of solving specific tasks:

The process of diagnosing the level of preparedness to perform a given task is emphasized mainly because it subsequently serves as the ground for the choice of the most appropriate leadership style that managers use to efficiently influence their subordinate or subordinates (Hambleton and Gumpert – 1982; Montgomery, Blodget and Barnes – 1996). The situational leadership style model offers four different styles, whose sequence is identical with the above mentioned preparedness levels:

- Preparedness levels 1 – **directing**
- Preparedness levels 2 – **coaching**
- Preparedness levels 3 – **supporting**
- Preparedness levels 4 – **delegating**

Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2008) further complement these styles with specific

I: *Indicators of the preparedness level for the task*

Preparedness Level	Indicators
Preparedness Level 1	Unsatisfactory level of tasks performance Hesitation and task delay Misunderstanding task assignment Too much respect from the task Avoiding responsibility
Preparedness Level 2	Enthusiasm, zeal and eagerness Susceptibility and interest in the task Moderate level of competence Open attitude to information gain New task without experience
Preparedness Level 3	First independent performance Lack of confidence Proving knowledge and skills Need for feedback and encouragement Performance fluctuations
Preparedness Level 4	High level of task completion Ability to work independently Commitment and pleasure from the task Continuous information to the manager Always objective reports on the progress

Source: Campbell (2008)

II: *Efficient and inefficient behavior*

Leadership style	Efficient behavior	Inefficient behavior
Directing	Instructing Management Leadership Assigning tasks	Humiliation Dominance Attacking High demands
Coaching	Passing information Explaining Mutual clarification Persuading	Manipulation Commanding Limitation of activities Rationalizing
Supporting	Participation Encouraging Support Empowerment	Looking down on others Trivializing the situation Confusing subordinates Indecision
Delegating	Delegation Supervision Delegation of responsibility Allocation of tasks	Avoiding contact Being reserved Ignoring Resignation

Source: Hersey, P.; Blanchard, K. H.; Johnson, D. E. (2008)

manifestations of both efficient and inefficient behavior of managers (see Tab. II). It includes a list of such forms of conduct that are acceptable in a given context and even desirable, or on the other hand absolutely counterproductive. With the proper use of the leadership styles depending on an appropriate situation, the subordinate should be the one who will determine the appropriate behavior of the manager because this behavior determines how the manager will deal with them.

Survey Methodology

Although managers can use the above-characterized simplified guide to recognize the preparedness level of subordinates to perform an assigned task, and they will also become familiar with examples of both efficient and inefficient manners of conduct corresponding to the specific preparedness levels, it cannot be assumed that every manager is always able to respond adequately in a given situation so that their way of leadership would be most efficient and point towards accomplishing the desired goal. Moreover, managers are not expected to have this deeper theoretical understanding of the problems of the situational leadership style in practice. In this context arises the question what factors may affect the manager's ability to lead their subordinates efficiently? Therefore, the main objective of this article is to identify those factors which will be determined on the basis of the results from the primary research.

Data collection for this quantitative research was conducted in the form of an electronic questionnaire survey in September 2012. The 149 graduates of Faculty of Economics and Administration in Masaryk University who already have their own experience with staff management were chosen for the purpose of testing the situational leadership style.

On the basis of theoretical resources, outputs of the so-far conducted research, and also with regard to the possibility of analyzing the sample of respondents, five factors that were subjected to a further analysis in relation to the efficiency of managers' leadership style were determined:

Manager's sex

Efficiency based on gender is compared in studies by Anderson (1995) and Murphy (1994), though no significant differences were found. However, Bartošová (2007) discovered that joint-stock companies with a larger representation of women within management perform better financially than joint-stock companies with a lower representation of women. Overall, owners of companies with a higher representation of women had assets a third higher than in the opposite case.

Management level

The influence of management level on the efficiency of a manager's leadership style was

examined by Avery (2001), where she looked at the preferred style of management leadership in Australian organizations, though she did not address the level of efficiency achieved by the style of leadership used. In connection with her conclusions, it can be assumed that testing managers from various levels of management might bring different outcomes – for example, managers at an operational level (first line) often interact directly with workers in production, where it is necessary to use a different style of leadership than with employees in middle management who report directly to the organization's top management. Apart from Avery's study, most of the other research has not addressed the influence of a manager's position on the level of their activity relating to a situational style of leadership, which is why this potential factor can be viewed as having been neglected, which increases the need for research into this area.

Management area

Mann Hyung's research (2008) was inspirational in terms of examining the influence of the management area. In his study he looked at whether there existed differences in various areas of management and reached the conclusion that in Korea, where he carried out his research, the supervisors were unable to accommodate their style of leadership to a given situation, even when specific differences between the various areas of management (human resources and administration) required a preferred style of leadership, which is why the author predicts that with more detailed study it would be possible to discover a relationship between the manager's level and the style of their leadership, not only in the preferred style of leadership but also in its efficiency. It can be assumed that, for example, a manager in charge of a sales department will use a different style of leadership to that of a manager in charge of information technology.

Nature of the manager's economic activity

Burrell *et al.* (2010) conducted research which examined the usefulness of a situational style of leadership in public and medical spheres, and reached the conclusion that supervisors working in these spheres were not capable of fully applying situational leadership in practice, which from the viewpoint of the needs of certain professions (e.g. a rescue team) is an unsettling finding, while this inability to adapt often also prevents the use of a significantly high level of professionalism in a particular field. On the basis of these results a hypothesis was formed that the type (character) of economic activity in a particular organization may have an influence on the supervisors' leadership style, e.g. a different method of management will be required for employees in industrial production than for employees in the health service. In view of the fact that the published research has always focused on a specific area of economic activity without attempting to compare results from various

spheres, it can be assumed that no study has thus far been carried out with comprehensive results which examine in detail the situational style of leadership in relation to the character of the organization's economic activity where the manager operates, which is why it is important to examine this potential factor through separate research.

Number of employees directly subordinate to the manager

Wheelan (1990) and Lacoursiere (1980) also examined the validity of the situational theory of leadership within teams, although from earlier studies it was found that none of the researchers looked at the issue of whether there existed a relationship between how many direct subordinates a manager had and his/her leadership style. Today in particular, when the issue of a well functioning team is extremely important for businesses because of the growing need for teamwork, this potential factor appears to be important in terms of testing managers, which would open up an entirely new approach in the research in the event of the proposed relationship being established.

Due to the fact that the published results of previous research often differ in some respects, resulting in inconsistent conclusions leading to doubts about the correct testing of the situational leadership style, we used the opportunity to obtain the original methodology *Leader Behavior Analysis II* directly from the authors. It can be used to test respondents in the context of a situational leadership style to avoid controversial research results, as in the case of using a single methodology we can expect to gain data that can be subsequently compared easily with other studies carried out in this way and which can also be included in the upcoming meta-analysis, which will be conducted in the USA.

The questionnaire was sent to the respondents in an electronic form and contained a total of 33 questions divided into two sections. In Section I described twenty different model situations occurring in ordinary business practice, and a respondent could choose to answer out of four provided options. Section II contained thirteen questions aimed at the general identification of the organization (its dominant economic activity, legal form, number of employees) and the position of the respondent within the management hierarchy (his or her position towards the organization, level and area of control).

The original methodology includes a guide for test evaluation; the style efficiency score is a numerical representation of the extent to which the respondent appropriately used the chosen leadership style in terms of the described situation. The efficiency value is an indicator of the respondent's diagnostic skills for choosing the appropriate leadership style provided by the model. The situational leadership model assumes that a particular leadership style

is more appropriate compared to the others in a given situation. The questionnaire involves five situations in which the style of S1 or S2 or S3 or S4 is more efficient than the others due to the skills and commitment of the staff member. Each response option is assigned a value of an excellent, good, adequate or inadequate response. The efficiency score takes values from 20 to 80; the values below 50 indicate low efficiency of the leadership style, and inversely, values above 58 indicate high efficiency of the used leadership style. If the respondent selects all excellent answers, the resulting value will be calculated by multiplying 4×20 answered questions, which means achieving the total of 80 points. The value of efficiency is the most important value derived from the situational leadership style model. Due to the possibility of assigning the achieved scores of leadership style efficiency to the values of the specified range, it is possible to apply a parametric statistical analysis for the purposes of interpreting the results.

Survey Results

When testing the effect of **sex** on the efficiency of a leadership style it was found that the average efficiency score of male respondents in superior positions (56.39) and the average efficiency score of female respondents in superior positions (57.45) differ only slightly (see Tab. III). Therefore, the test does not consider this difference to be significant and it can be argued that no significant difference between the achieved efficiency scores of men and women was found at the 5 % significance level, with the p-value for this test being $p = 0.16$.

As we can see in Tab. IV, the achieved average efficiency score of respondents in superior positions, who are categorized by **levels of management**, differ in certain respects. The lowest efficiency score is shown for top management, whereas middle management and line management show no significant differences in the scores of achieved efficiency.

A subsequently performed test with p-value ($p = 0.00039$) proved that the level of management has a significant impact on the efficiency of the leadership style (see Tab. V). In addition, the following outputs of Scheffe's multiple comparison test (see Tab. VI) at the 5 % significance level proved a significant difference between the efficiency of top management and the other two lower levels of management, but between these two groups of managers (i.e. middle management and line management) no significant difference was proved.

It is clear from the descriptive statistics shown in Tab. VII that the average efficiency score of respondents in superior positions, who are categorized by **management areas**, differs slightly. The highest value of the efficiency score quite clearly shows the area of R and D management. Conversely, the lowest efficiency score shows the service area; however, the test with p-value ($p = 0.60$) does not

III: Output values of t-test „Sex and efficiency“

Variable	t-tests; grouped: Respondents' sex								
	Group 1: male				Group 2: female				
	Female average	Male average	t	sv	p	Number of females	Number of males	F-ratio Dispersions	p Dispersions
Style efficiency	57.45	56.39	1.40	147	0.1634	73	76	1.3146	0.2445

Source: Own

IV: Contingency table „Level of control and efficiency“

Respondent's level of control	Two-dimensional table of descriptive statistics		
	Respondent's efficiency style average	Respondent's efficiency style N	Respondent's efficiency style standard
Top management	54.0645	31 (20.8 %)	3.7677
Middle management	57.3902	41 (27.5 %)	4.5874
Line management	57.8052	77 (51.7 %)	4.5452
All groups	56.9128	149 (100 %)	4.6207

Source: Own

V: Analysis of variance

Variable	Analysis of variance							
	Marked effects are significant at the level of $p < ,05000$							
	SS effect	dF effect	MS effect	SS error	dF error	MS error	F	p
Superior's style efficiency	322.16	2	161.08	2837.70	146	19.44	8.29	0.00039

Source: Own

VI: Output values of Scheffe test

Respondent's level of control	Scheffe test; var.: Efficiency of respondents		
	Marked differ. are significant at the level of $p < ,05000$		
	{1} M = 54.065	{2} M = 57.390	{3} M = 57.805
Top management {1}	xxxxxx	0.007770	0.000525
Middle management {2}	0.007770	xxxxxx	0.888332
Line management {3}	0.000525	0.888332	xxxxxx

Source: Own

VII: Contingency table „Management area and efficiency“

Respondent's management area	Two-dimensional table of descriptive statistics		
	Respondent's efficiency style average	Respondent's efficiency style N	Respondent's efficiency style Standard deviation
Administration	57.6757	37 (24.8 %)	3.7644
Information technology	57.6154	13 (8.7 %)	5.2684
Business activity	56.7931	29 (19.5 %)	5.1087
Marketing and promotion	55.8571	14 (9.4 %)	4.5380
Production and operation	57.4000	25 (16.8 %)	4.4347
Research and development	59.5000	2 (1.3 %)	3.5355
Education	56.6667	6 (4.0 %)	5.6451
Services	54.7500	16 (10.7 %)	5.2852
Other	56.8571	7 (4.7 %)	4.4132
All groups	56.9128	149 (100 %)	4.6207

Source: Own

VIII: Contingency table „Economic activity and efficiency“

Economic activity	Two dimensional table of descriptive statistics		
	Respondent's efficiency style average	Respondent's efficiency style N	Respondent's efficiency style Standard deviation
IT, science	56.7391	23 (15.4 %)	4.6045
Administration, education, health care	57.3684	19 (12.8 %)	3.7000
Production	57.7143	28 (18.8 %)	4.5774
Services	56.8333	60 (40.3 %)	4.5405
Business	55.7368	19 (12.8 %)	5.8485
All groups	56.9128	149 (100 %)	4.6207

Source: Own

IX: Test of the significance of the Spearman correlations coefficient

Variable pairs	Spearman correlations			
	Number of valid	Spearman R	t(N-2)	p-value
Respondent's style efficiency & Number of subordinates	149	-0.1273	-1.5596	0.1210

Source: Own

consider these differences significant and it showed no significant correlation between the efficiency of a leadership style and the management area of the manager at the 5 % significance level.

When testing the connection between the **nature of the prevailing economic activity of an organization** and the efficiency of the management style of a manager, it was found (see Tab. VIII) that the average efficiency score of the respondents assessed by the nature of the economic activity of the company differs slightly.

The highest efficiency score is shown for superiors in organizations engaged in production, followed by respondents working in public administration, health care and education. On the other hand, the lowest score of leadership style efficiency of managers can be found in organizations

engaged in commercial activities. The p-value test ($p = 0.68$), however, did not prove that the nature of the economic activity has a significant impact on the leadership style efficiency.

We can determine from the data presented in Tab. IX that the Spearman test with the final value of $R = -0.1273$ implies an indirect relationship between the **number of direct subordinates** and the achieved efficiency score of a manager; nevertheless, this context did not prove to be statistically significant, implying that the test failed to show a connection between the efficiency of a leadership style and the number of subordinates.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the assessment of the impact of sex on the leadership style efficiency, we can say that the average score of men (19.45) and the average score of women (18.30) differ slightly, and when tested even at the 10 % significance level a significant dependence of these quantities would be demonstrated, therefore; therefore, it is appropriate to monitor in the future whether sex significantly affects the efficiency of a leadership style.

In the case of management levels very interesting conclusions were found. The lowest efficiency score was achieved by top management with a value lower by more than 3 points on the rating scale (54.06) compared to the remaining two levels of management, while middle management (57.39) and line management (57.81) show no significant differences in the scores of achieved efficiency. However, the test with a very low p-value ($p = 0.00039$) showed a significant effect of managements levels on the efficiency of the leadership style. In the multiple comparison test were also recorded significant differences between the efficiency of top management and the other two lower levels of management, but no significant difference was proved between these two groups of managers (i.e. middle management and line management). The results of the testing clearly show that top management achieved the worst results of the leadership efficiency. This finding may be related to the fact that after achieving the highest possible position within a company a manager's motivation after some time

stagnates because they have achieved enough self-fulfillment. Another possible explanation for this unflattering state relates to unfortunate practices common in the current functioning of our economy when businesses are not run by only the most efficient managers.

The average efficiency scores of respondents judged by management areas differ slightly. The highest value of the efficiency score shows quite clearly the area of R and D management (59.50), suggesting that superiors working in research and development make decisions most efficiently, which may be closely related to their job. Their profession is usually their biggest hobby, so they are very committed to it and truly understand their work. Furthermore, they know that the financial and material resources that are available are often very limited, and therefore they cannot afford to waste time, performance of unnecessary work, etc. On the other hand, the lowest efficiency score was achieved in the service sector (54.75), which is a considerably unfavorable outcome and it may indicate a state of stagnation of the quality of services provided by in our country. However, the test performed using the ANOVA method showed no significant correlation between the efficiency of a leadership style and the management area of a manager.

Regarding the average efficiency score of the respondents assessed by the nature of the economic activity of an organization, slight differences can be detected; the highest efficiency score is achieved by superiors in organizations engaged in production (57.71), followed by the respondents working in public administration, health care and education (57.37). Conversely, the lowest efficiency score can be found in organizations engaged in commercial activities (55.74). Therefore, in commerce there are managers who are unable to choose the most appropriate style of leadership that a given situation demands. However, it can be argued based on the p-value test ($p = 0.68$) that the nature of the economic activity of an organization does not affect the efficiency of the management style of a manager.

No significant correlation between the number of direct subordinates of a manager and the efficiency of their leadership style was demonstrated in testing, but given the fact that the p-value is relatively low ($p = 0.12$), we can assume a border connection between these observed variables.

Thus, the above mentioned findings of statistical validation imply that the efficiency of the leadership style of a manager is greatly influenced by the level of management of the manager. Due to the low p-values found for the variables tested, it can be argued that the efficiency of a leadership style is also to some extent related to the sex of the manager and to the number of employees directly subordinate to him/her, which is why it would be useful to pay more attention to these aspects in future research concentrating on the leadership style of managers.

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