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ASPECTS AFFECTING FLEXIBILITY OF CZECH MANAGERS' LEADERSHIP STYLE

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Abstract

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The paper examines the potential aspects that affect the flexibility of Czech managers' leadership style, because the ability to lead subordinates flexibly seems to be necessary for managerial practice in these days full of rapid change. A tool which makes it possible to determine the degree of flexibility of individual managers within the situational leadership style is represented by original method LBAII® developed by Ken Blanchard Companies, which the authors were provided with solely for this purpose. Due to the fact that research based on this method had not been conducted in the Czech Republic, an opportunity to learn new information from this field about the selected sample of Czech managers occurred. First of all, the article introduces the concept of a situational leadership style as well as an explanation of its use in practice. Subsequently it describes in detail the methodology of the authors' primary research and presents the outcomes of a questionnaire survey conducted in the form of contingency tables and other tools (correspondence map, box plot, scatter plot), which aptly illustrate the data found. Finally, the results obtained are discussed and aspects related to the achieved scores of flexibility of the monitored managers are established based on verified hypotheses.

situational leadership style, LBAII®, flexibility of leadership style, manager's sex, management level, management area, number of subordinates

We are currently witnessing a permanent crisis, we are in a period of turbulence and chaos in which only those companies can succeed that are able to respond quickly and innovatively to changing conditions; this is also closely related to the increasing demands on managers' ability to react sufficiently flexibly to these changes. In an effort to achieve the best possible results, managers must encourage high morale of their subordinates, their sense of cooperation as well as their willingness to work. Competent subordinates make a manager's job easier in case he or she can delegate a number of tasks to them without having to constantly supervise. In practice, however, such a vision is not easy to achieve, given the fact that for its implementation managers are required to be able to correctly recognize how they should approach their subordinates and consequently adapt their leadership style. Such flexible management depends on the personality of the superior manager, the personality of a subordinate employee, the nature and difficulty of the task, and the overall situation in the company (demands for efficiency, speed, teamwork, etc.).

The above mentioned method of managing people was probably most accurately defined by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard as they presented their model of situational leadership, capturing the process of ideal maturing of a group or individual under the guidance of an experienced manager. The model is based on the premise that effective leadership depends on an appropriate combination of supportive and directive behavior. Depending on the extent of use of these two factors we can assess whether a manager employs directing, coaching, supporting or delegating. The suitability of applying a leadership style largely depends on the level of development, or so-called maturity, of a worker in relation to the task. The level of a manager's ability is demonstrated especially in the situation of

a changing (higher or lower) level of workers when he or she must adequately with the situation change the leadership style.

Effective managers adapt their behavior to the needs of subordinates as well as task conditions. Because subordinates are unique individuals, managers must deal with them differently. In this connection Bass (2008) points out that no leadership style is effective in all situations and that there is no best style that could be considered a universal method. Hooijberg and Choi (2001) believe that to achieve effective leadership it is necessary to distinguish the specific needs of the organization and adapt the leadership style to them. Silverthorne and Wang (2001) consider the situational dimension the independent variable for determining the situational leadership as predictors of success and productive behavior in organizations. Hersey and Blanchard argue that even before a manager opts for a leadership style, he or she should first be correctly oriented in a given situation and understand what the main objectives to be achieved are (Watkins, 2011).

If we transfer situational leadership into practice, Hersey and Blanchard talk about the following degrees of support that managers can provide to their subordinates (Graeff, 1997):

S1 = Directing leaders: They define the role and tasks of subordinates and subsequently they check them thoroughly. A decision is made by the manager – communication is considerably one-way.

S2 = Coaching leaders: They continuously define roles and tasks, but they also work with ideas and suggestions of subordinates. A decision is made by the manager but communication is more two-way.

S3 = Supporting leaders: Managers participate in the decision making, but checking is primarily the subordinate's responsibility.

S4 = Delegating leaders: Managers are included in the decision making and problem solving, but a subordinate makes decisions and even determines "when and whether a manager will participate".

To understand the application of the theory of situational leadership completely it is necessary to explain at this point what exactly is meant by the terms "directive" and "supportive behavior", whose combination is the basis for determining the extent of the four leadership styles (S1, S2, S3 and S4). Blanchard (1985) defines these terms as follows (Fig. 1):

Directive behavior – the rate at which the manager engages in one-way communication, listens, provides support and encouragement; explains subordinates their roles and tells them what to do, where, when and how to do it; then the manager thoroughly supervises their performance.

Supporting behavior – the rate at which the manager engages in two-way communication, listens, provides support and encouragement, facilitates interaction and includes subordinate in the decision making.

1: *Model of situational leadership*
Source: The Ken Blanchard Companies. Copyright © 1985–2010

Costanz (2005) claims that the strong point of the situational leadership style includes its directivity and flexibility, which is applied naturally. Situational leadership is clearly defined, easy to use and logical. Although situational leadership is normative, it allows flexibility in which a manager can balance the extent of leadership and support while monitoring the needs of the participants according to their ability and motivation. Costanz emphasizes that situational leadership recognizes the different values of each team member as well as their strengths and weaknesses, which it also develops. It also differentiates by sex, age, cultural background, socioeconomic background, or sexual identity. Diversity subsequently enriches and strengthens the team, but at the same time it puts high demands on the manager to get to know the individual team members. Costanz also highlights the fact that the situational leadership style has been checked during time and has been applied to both small and large population as well as various industries for more than 40 years. As Costanz postulates situational leadership requires excellent judgment and knowledge of the assigned task and assessment of people. However, every manager does not have the character, responsiveness and energy to engage in the situational leadership style and apply it in practice every day. Specifically she highlights the suitability of this style in the academic environment where the situational leadership style allows adaptation to the ever-changing needs of students and their abilities. Universities are places where diversity is regarded as a benefit rather than a difficulty.

Graeff (1997) characterizes situational leadership as the best model for its flexibility, resilience, and applicability to a wide range of organizations. Despite the fact that problems can occur for example in work maturity, it is true that the situational leadership style contributes to the successful management of the decision-making process.

Silverthorne and Wang (2001) made a study that dealt with evaluating the situational, so-called adaptive and non-adaptive leadership style in Taiwanese business organizations. The basic premise of the study was that the adaptive management style is much more beneficial than the non-adaptive style, which this study confirmed. Even Hanbury, Sapat and Washington (2004) approached the measurement of leadership skills, i.e. efficiency and flexibility, using the methodology of LBAII®. Out of 600 managers of municipalities addressed in an electronic form, 52% of them, i.e. 312 managers, participated in the questionnaire survey. The average flexibility score reached the value of 17.66. Avery (2001) dealt with the preferences of situational leadership styles with Australian managers and concluded that supervisors and middle managers prefer the supporting style of leadership. More than 50% of the managers from her sample were able to use more than one leadership style claiming that their favorite one is the supporting leadership style. Scientific studies dealing with women in leadership positions had not been conducted up to 1970. It could be due to the fact that the study would have required a larger sample but the number of women in management in general was low. Later, several important scientific studies occurred; for example, Eagly *et al.* (1990) searched for the relationship between sex and leadership and found that women and men show certain differences in the management style used.

However, in today's globalized world, it is also necessary to think about whether there are specifics of the management process in relation to cultural differences. Ronen (1986) conducted 25 studies that evaluated differences in values and work attitudes. Significant cultural and national differences were demonstrated in 17 studies. Due to the fact that, the situational leadership style has not been examined in the Czech Republic yet, there is a scope for the author's research focused on defining the aspects that affect leadership style flexibility with Czech managers. Based on the findings from theoretical resources and an analysis of previously conducted research in the subject area, the author determined aspects that show a presumption that they could affect leadership style flexibility, and which were used to formulate hypotheses whose verification will help to meet the objective of the research:

H1: The manager's sex affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

H2: The manager's level of control affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

H3: The manager's management area affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

H4: The nature of the manager's economic activity affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

H5: The number of the manager's direct reports affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subject of this paper is to present the results of primary research, whose aim was to identify aspects affecting the flexibility of Czech managers' leadership style. The quantitative research was divided into two phases – first phase (December 2010–January 2011) and second phase (December 2011–January 2012).

To test the situational leadership style, the sample comprised Masaryk University students who at that time studied the third year of bachelor's degree in the combined form of study, and who were expected to have employment experience due to their form of study. The research was conducted through a questionnaire survey within course Management I as completing the questionnaire thematically related to the course and content of the study and it was part of the course requirements, which ensured a high response rate. Table I shows the numbers of respondents by individual phases of the research. Empirical research included 562 respondents who provided information both about themselves and

I: *Sample size*

	Number of respondents	Number of respondents in managerial positions	Number of superior respondents
First phase	314	81	270
Second phase	248	68	175
Total	562	149	445

Source: Authors

about their superiors, if they have them, i.e. further increase in the study sample by 445 persons. As for respondents, only questionnaires of those who already had had experience with staff management were used for research purposes.

If the entire research sample is divided into two homogeneous parts, then the reliability of the results of these groups will be different due to the fact that the assessment of one's own response has a somewhat different explanatory power than the estimated response of someone else, even on the basis of experience with that person. Division of the research sample was determined according to the following features:

- respondents who already have experience with staff management, so they are in a superior position;
- direct superiors of respondents.

In order to conduct the research, representatives of The Ken Blanchard Companies, which is owned by one of the founders of the theory of situational leadership, were approached, and negotiations regarding the possibility to provide original methodology called *Leader Behavior Analysis II*® (LBAII®), which can be used to test respondents in connection with research focused on the issue of situational leadership in Czech conditions, were started. The methodology was provided to the authors under the condition that after finishing the research they will present concrete partial results to the company and these results will subsequently be included in an international meta-analysis, which will be carried out in the United States in the future. After receiving the original text of the test that uses twenty questions with four possible provided answers to discover important aspects of the situational leadership style, it was translated into the Czech language[1] and its translation was consulted with a native speaker.

In the preparatory phase of the research (May–November 2010) the authors studied relevant literature, made contact with Blanchard Companies representatives, had the original questionnaire translated and complemented with identification questions; this phase also included a pilot survey on a selected sample. In the phase of data collection, the authors approached the respondents with a detailed briefing to complete the questionnaire properly, collected data and carried out their follow-up check. The statistical analysis of the gathered data consisted in entering the data into the SPSS program and performing analyses using Excel, SPSS and STATISTIKA 10.

The questionnaire was sent to the respondents in an electronic form and contained a total of 53 questions divided into three sections. Sections I and II each described twenty different model situations occurring in ordinary business practice, and a respondent could choose to answer out of four provided options. Respondents were advised to carefully consider the situation presented within the guidelines for completing the questionnaire, and to take into account the different circumstances when addressing them – for example, the superior's personality and his or her predispositions, team composition, nature of the task, time requirements needed to complete the task, total efficiency of a solution, etc.

Section I was based on the assumption that the respondent is a superior, which was fulfilled by 149 students. In Section II the respondents evaluated the way how their direct superior reacted based on their past experience of mutual cooperation. As mentioned above, a total of 445 respondents from both phases met this condition.

Section III 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 instructions how to evaluate the test where the surveyed style flexibility score is a numerical indicator of how often the respondent uses a different leadership style (S1, S2, S3 and S4) in addressing each of the twenty different situations presented. If the respondent is often inclined to one style, he or she shows less flexibility, whose score ranges on a scale of 0 to 30, where the values below 14 indicate low flexibility and in contrast the values above 20 indicate high capacity of flexibility. This means that the more evenly the presented four options of the leadership style were applied in the twenty situations, the more flexibility is reflected in the gained value.

1 Some research has focused on the comparison of internal consistency of the different language versions of the LBAII® tool and confirmed the integrity of the concepts.

RESULTS

a) Results of testing the respondents in superior positions

In the case of testing the impact of *sex* on leadership style flexibility (Tab. II), the very low p-value can suggest that sex plays a certain role in the achieved average scores of these two leadership style factors; moreover, at the 10% significance level it is even significant. The following descriptive statistics show that the average flexibility score of males (19.45) and the average flexibility score of females (18.30) differs slightly.

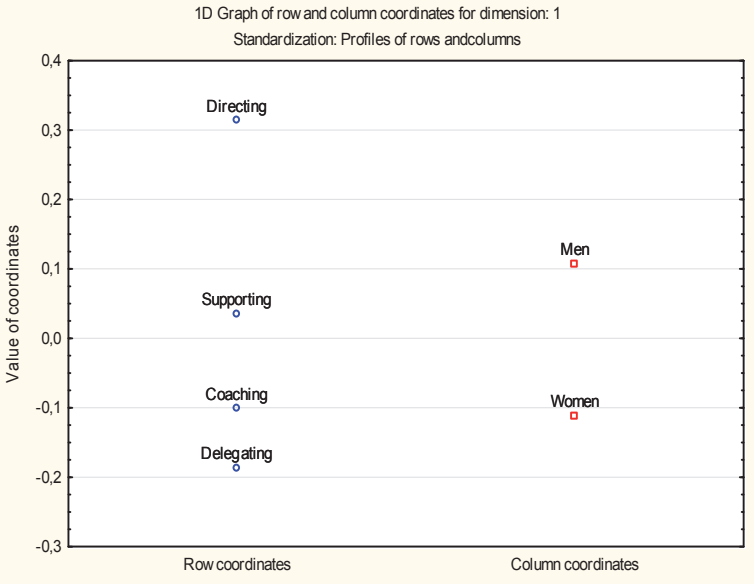
When comparing the observed frequency of use of the individual leadership styles males and females are represented alike. The correspondence map (Fig. 2) suggests that females tend to be closer to delegation and coaching, while men tend rather to directing and supporting.

The achieved average score of leadership style flexibility of managers categorized according to the *level of control* (Tab. III) differs slightly: top management shows the lowest flexibility score while middle management shows the opposite. The p-value test (p = 0.269), however, did not show that the level of management has a significant impact on the leadership style flexibility.

II: *Output values of t-test "Sex and flexibility of respondents"*

Variable	t-tests; grouped: Respondents' sex Group 1: male Group 2: female								
	Male average	Female average	t	sv	p	Number of males	Number of females	F-ratio Dispersions	p Dispersions
Style flexibility	19.44	18.30	1.67	147	0.0967	76	73	1.16392	0.5157069

Source: Authors



2: *Correspondence map of sex and leadership styles of respondents*
Source: Authors

III: *Contingency table "Level of control and flexibility of respondents"*

Respondent's level of control	Two-dimensional table of descriptive statistics		
	Respondent's flexibility style Average	Respondent's flexibility style N	Respondent's flexibility style Standard
Top management	18.25806	31	5.310164
Middle management	19.75609	41	3.878018
Line management	18.67532	77	3.850637
All groups	18.88590	149	4.208309

Source: Authors

We can determine averages of the achieved flexibility scores for managers from the following descriptive statistics, differentiated by the *area of management* (Tab. IV). The highest score shows the IT management area (20.08) while the lowest flexibility score achieved comes from the service area (17.38). The used Kruskal-Wallis test came out as insignificant (p = 0.48) and therefore it showed no significance of the impact of a manager's management area on flexibility.

When testing the impact of the nature of the prevailing *economic activity of an organization* on flexibility of the leadership style (Tab. V), the highest flexibility score was achieved by the respondents who work as superiors in organizations engaged in IT or science (20.78), followed by the respondents working in organizations with a business focus (19.62). On the contrary, the lowest score of leadership style flexibility can be found in organizations providing services (17.38). Although the test with a p-value (p = 0.17) did not clearly demonstrate the link between the nature of an economic activity and leadership style flexibility, the importance of this (in)dependence certainly cannot be underestimated in the future due to the fact that the p-value is relatively low, and further research should focus on it.

The descriptive statistics presented below (Tab. VI) shows that the Spearman test with the value of R = –0.0037 demonstrates an almost negligible indirect relationship between the *number of direct reports* of a manager and the achieved flexibility scores of his or her leadership style; this is also related to the indicator of the p-value (p = 0.9658). The relationship between the leadership style flexibility and the number of direct reports has not been proved.

IV: *Contingency table "Management area and flexibility of respondents"*

	Two-dimensional table of descriptive statistics		
Respondent's management area	Respondent's flexibility style Average	Respondent's flexibility style N	Respondent's flexibility style Standart
Administration	18.37838	37	3.939482
Information technology	20.07692	13	3.839738
Business activity	19.62068	29	4.988657
Marketing and promotion	17.85714	14	4.469678
Production and operation	19.44000	25	3.136877
Research and development	18.00000	2	0.000000
Education	19.00000	6	7.456540
Services	17.37500	16	3.981205
Other	20.00000	7	3.265986
All groups	18.88590	149	4.208309

Source: Authors

V: *Contingency table "Economic activity and flexibility of respondents"*

	Two-dimensional table of descriptive statistics		
Economic activity (reduction)	Respondent's flexibility style Average	Respondent's flexibility style N	Respondent's flexibility style Standard
IT, science	20.78260	23	4.30598
Administration, education, health care	18.42105	19	5.18883
Production	18.71429	28	3.57830
Services	18.26667	60	3.83501
Business	19.26315	19	4.72396
All groups	18.88591	149	4.20831

Source: Authors

VI: *Test of the significance of the Spearman correlation coefficient (respondents)*

	Spearman correlations			
Variable pairs	Number of valid	Spearman R	t(N-2)	p-value
Respondent's style flexibility & Number of subordinates	132	-0.003767	-0.042953	0.965804

Source: Authors

b) Results of testing the respondents' direct superiors

In the case of testing the effect of *sex* on leadership style flexibility of superior respondents (Tab. VII) it was found out that the achieved average flexibility score of men (20.11) and the average flexibility score of women (19.96) are almost identical. A two-sided t-test (p = 0.75) came out very insignificant, which implies the conclusion that there is no evidence of difference between the flexibility of men and women.

The sample included approximately twice as many men as women and this ratio is maintained also for the frequency of use of the majority of the preferred leadership styles. To illustrate the results better with highlighting the tending of the sexes to certain leadership styles, a correspondence map (Fig. 3) was used again; it indicates that women are closest to delegating and subsequently to coaching, while men tend to directing and subsequently to supporting. Exactly the same conclusions were also determined in the testing of the respondents in leadership positions, suggesting a certain preference stability of the used leadership styles in terms of sex, although statistical significance cannot be maintained here. Another interesting finding is the fact that despite a certain preference diversity of the leadership style in terms of sex, women and men do not show different scores of leadership style flexibility.

The achieved average score of leadership style flexibility of managers categorized according to the *level of control* (Tab. VIII) is almost identical, and the test with a p-value (p = 0.929) did not demonstrate that the level of control has a significant impact on flexibility.

When testing the connection between the *management area* of a manager and his or her leadership style flexibility, a significant impact was demonstrated, as shown in Table IX, which captures the p-value of the test at p = 0.0498.

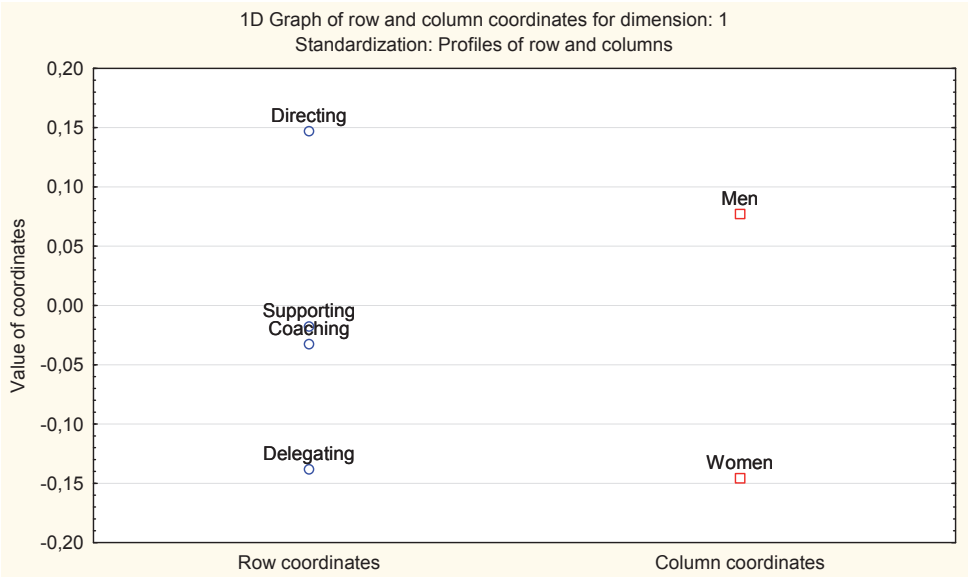
The following box plot (Fig. 4) indicates that in the area of information technologies (21.52) and education (21.33) managers show a clearly higher flexibility score in comparison with other areas of management. Especially the area of services (18.55) and other unspecified and numerically underrepresented areas (e.g. economy, logistics, corporate micromanagement, etc.) show a lower flexibility score (18.19), which the managers achieve.

The observed p-value of the test (p = 0.57) showed no significance of the impact of the nature of the *organization's economic activity* on flexibility. We can determine from Tab. X that the managers

VII: *Output values of t-test "Sex and flexibility of superiors"*

Variable	t-tests; grouped: Superior's sex Group 1: Females Group 2: Males								
	Female average	Male average	t	sv	p	Number of females	Number of males	F-ratio Dispersions	p Dispersions
Style flexibility	19.97	20.11	-0.31	442	0.7503	154	290	1.0271	0.8381

Source: Authors



3: *Correspondence map of sexes and leadership styles of superiors*
Source: Authors

VIII: *Contingency table "Level of control and flexibility of superiors"*

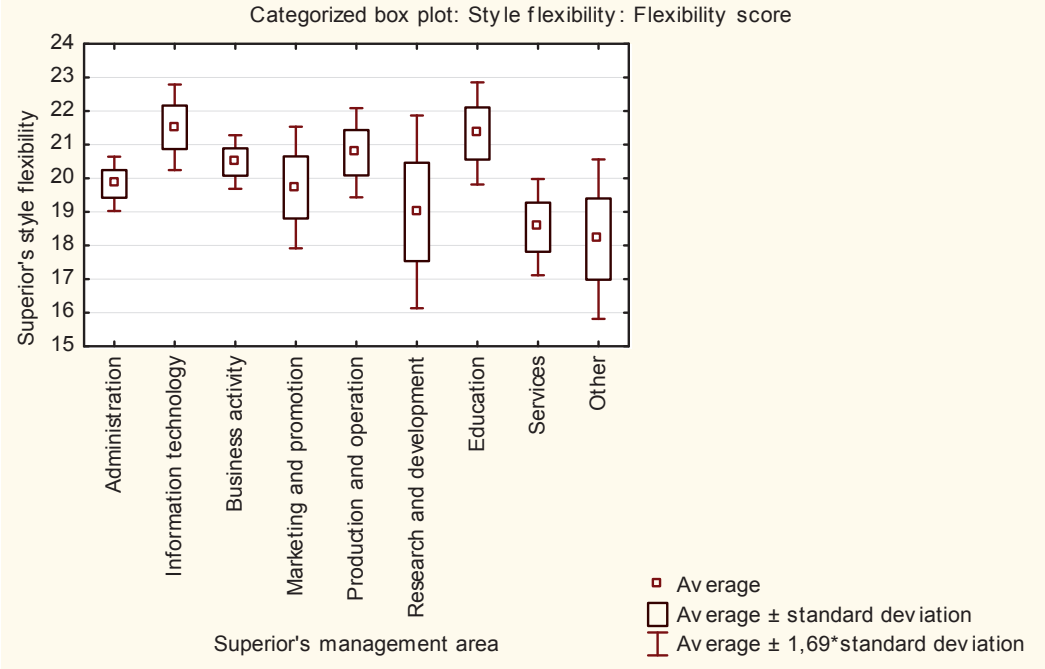
Parsing table of descriptive ststistics			
Superior's level of control	Superior's style flexibility Average	Superior's style flexibility N	Superior's style flexibility Standard
Top management	20.14379	153	4.403076
Middle management	19.95238	168	4.543613
Line management	20.00000	111	4.928580
All groups	20.03240	432	4.587268

Source: Authors

IX: *Analysis of variance*

	Analysis od variance Marked effects are significant at the level of p < ,05000							
Variable	SS effect	dF effect	MS effect	SS error	dF error	MS error	F	p
Superior's style flexibility	325.067	8	40.63	8740.60	422	20.71	1.96	0.049

Source: Authors



4: *Box plot of manager's management area and leadership style flexibility*
Source: Authors

demonstrate the highest average flexibility score in cases where the main economic activity of an organization is business, information technology or science; on the other hand, the lowest flexibility is reflected in public administration organizations, education, health care, and subsequently in the services. Interestingly, for the respondents working as superiors, the result indicated almost the same tendency as far as the management areas are concerned; however, due to the fact that the p-value was very low (p = 0.17), it can be concluded that the respondents in management positions show a closer relationship between the nature of the organization's economic activity and the style flexibility of their management, than is the case with direct superiors of the sample of respondents. It is worth noting also that these two compared groups of superiors in services show the lowest (the respondents in a management position) or the second lowest flexibility score (the respondents' superiors), which does not correlate with the generally held beliefs about providing services, which should be adapted to consumers as much as possible.

X: *Contingency table "Economic activity and flexibility of superiors"*

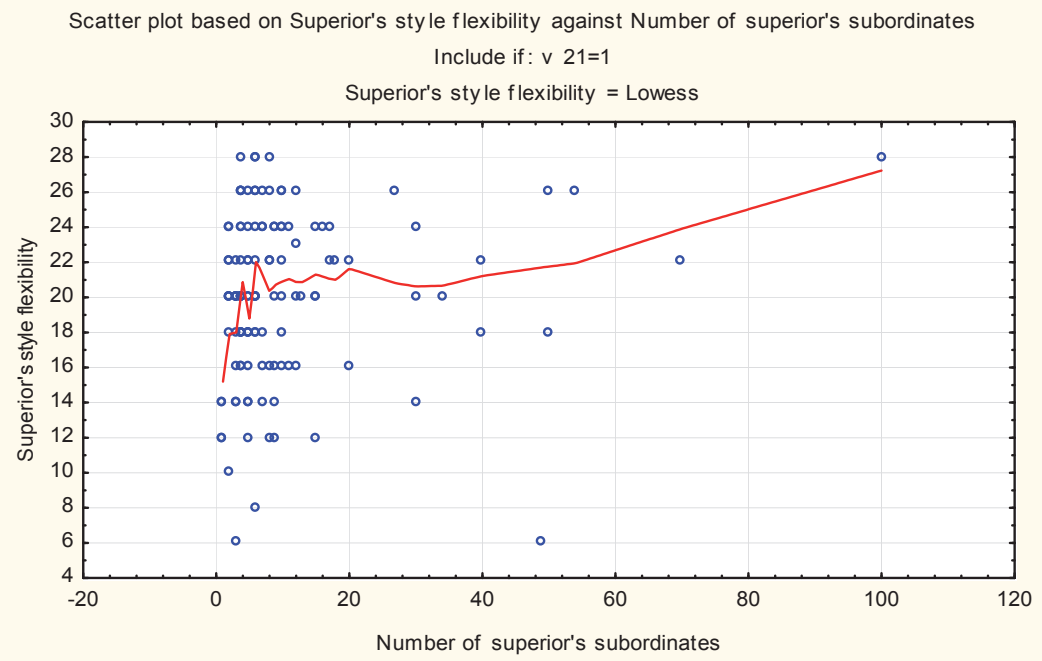
Economic activity (reduction)	Two-dimensional table of descriptive statistics Superior's flexibility style Average	Superior's flexibility style N	Superior's flexibility style Standard
IT, science	20.35483	62	4.616778
Administration, education, health care	19.63440	93	4.596276
Production	20.12359	89	4.660813
Services	19.90909	143	4.543853
Business	20.85714	56	4.668768
All groups	20.07674	443	4.598689

Source: Authors

XI: *Test regarding the significance of the Spearman correlation coefficient (superiors)*

Variable pairs	Spearman correlations Marked correlations significant at the level of p <,05000 Number of valid	Spearman R	t(N-2)	p-value
Superior's style flexibility & Number od subordinates	432	0.0994938	2.07343	0.03872

Source: Authors



5: *Scatter plot*
Source: Authors

The descriptive statistics in Table XI shows that the Spearman test with the value of R = 0.099 implies a weak direct correlation between the *number of direct reports* of a manager and the attained score of his or her leadership style flexibility. This weak dependence, however, came out statistically significant (p = 0.039), which means that the test showed a certain degree of correlation between the leadership style flexibility and the number of subordinates.

The following scatter plot (Fig. 5) shows a slight increasing trend, suggesting that a manager tends to use a more flexible management style in the case of a growing number of subordinates. The chart is not representative for values of x > 20 because due to the small number of measurements it is irrelevant to focus on this part of the chart; however, the trend is clear for values between 0–20, suggesting that the respondents' superiors seem to be more flexible with the increasing number of subordinates.

DISCUSSION

The results of testing the *sex* dimension in both the groups show that we can confidently state identical tendencies of both sexes to certain leadership styles; women are closest to delegation and subsequently to coaching, while men tend rather to directing and subsequently supporting. The above suggests a certain stability of preference of the used leadership styles in terms of sex. Another interesting finding is a fact that despite a diversity of leadership style preferences based on sex, women and men do not show different average scores of leadership style flexibility in the group of superiors, and only slightly different scores for the group of respondents in management positions; however, significant correlation would be demonstrated in this group even during testing at the 10% significance level, and therefore it would be appropriate to observe in the future how the sex aspect affects the leadership style of managers. This finding confirms an assumption by Eagly *et al.* (1990) that sex actually plays an important role in the leadership style.

When examining the aspect of *level of control* in the group of superior respondents, no significant differences were detected; however, the achieved average flexibility score of respondents in management positions categorized according to the level of control differs slightly. The lowest flexibility score was observed in top management whereas the highest in middle management. The results of the conducted testing indicate that top management shows the worst results of leadership style flexibility. The reason may be a situation when a manager reaches the highest possible position in the company and his or her motivation for ever-rising performance decreases over time, because he or she cannot be promoted further. Another possible explanation is awarding lucrative positions in state-run companies in exchange for one's loyalty, which is quite common in the current functioning of the Czech economy, which unfortunately means that the top positions in companies are not always held by the most efficient and most capable managers.

In the aspects of *management area* and the *nature of economic activity* in the group of respondents in a management position, very similar results were reported. The highest average flexibility score can be found in the IT management area whereas the service area reported the lowest flexibility score. In the context of the prevailing economic activities of the organization, respondents who work in organizations engaged in IT or science reached again the highest flexibility score. On the contrary, the lowest average score of leadership style flexibility can be found in organizations providing services, which does not correspond with the generally held beliefs about providing services, which should be adapted to consumers as much as possible. Due to the low p-value we definitely cannot underestimate the result of testing, and it would be appropriate to further observe this possible dependence in the future.

The respondents' superiors demonstrated a significant influence of the *management area* on the manager's leadership style flexibility. In the area of information technologies and education the managers clearly show a higher average score of flexibility compared to other management areas. On the other hand, especially the service sector and other unspecified areas (e.g. economy, logistics, etc.) report a lower average score of flexibility, which the managers achieve. These findings fully correspond with the assumption by Costanz (2005), who highlights the suitability of using the situational leadership style with its flexible options in the university environment where it enables adaptation to the ever-changing needs of students and their abilities.

In the case of the *nature of the organization's prevailing economic activity* in the sample of superiors, the managers show the highest average score of flexibility provided that the main economic activity of the organization is business, information technology or science; in the contrary, the lowest average value of flexibility is observed in public administration organizations, education, health care, and subsequently in services. Interestingly, the results for the respondents in management positions indicated an almost identical trend; however, due to the fact that the p-value was very low, we can infer that these managers show a closer relationship between the nature of the organization's economic activity and the flexibility of their leadership style than is the case of direct superiors of the researched sample of respondents. It is also worth noting that in services these two compared groups of superiors show the lowest (respondents in the superior positions) or the second lowest average flexibility score (superiors of the respondents), which again confirms the aforementioned unexpected situation in the service area.

When comparing the results of research by Hanbury *et al.* (2004) with the results of the current research we can say that Czech managers working in the public administration sector show significantly higher average values of their leadership style flexibility than their American counterparts. Respondents in management positions reached an average score of 18.42. The respondents' superiors surpassed the result of the American study by as much as two points on the rating scale, as they reached the average flexibility score of 19.63.

A weak direct correlation between the *number of direct reports* of managers in the group of superiors and the flexibility of their leadership style was demonstrated when testing: superiors act more flexibly as the number of subordinates grows. This slight dependence came out statistically significant, and therefore it would be useful to deal with it in further research.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyses of the obtained outputs from the conducted research, the formulated hypotheses can be verified as follows:

H1: The manager's sex affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

Hypothesis H1 was rejected, but due to the low p-value observed in the group of respondents in management positions, we can conclude that finding the dependency is not excluded for other subsequent research.

H2: The manager's level of control affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

Hypothesis H2 was rejected because no significant correlation occurred in either of the researched groups.

H3: The manager's management area affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

Hypothesis H3 was confirmed for the group of respondent superiors.

H4: The nature of the manager's economic activity affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

Hypothesis H4 was rejected, but due to the low p-value observed in the group of respondents in management positions, we can conclude that finding the dependency is not excluded for other subsequent research.

H5: The number of the manager's direct reports affects his or her leadership style flexibility.

Hypothesis H5 was confirmed for the group of respondent superiors; considering the outcome of the Spearman test we can argue that the correlation is only weak but statistically significant.

Based on the results of the process of verifying the hypotheses we can now determine aspects that affect the leadership style flexibility of Czech managers, which meets the research objective. Tests showed that the leadership style flexibility *is greatly affected by the management area of the manager*. Due to some boundary values of the variables tested, it can be argued that it *is also partly affected by the manager's sex, the number of subordinate employees, and the prevailing economic activity of the organization*. The conclusions of the research also suggest further options to validate the other aspects that could affect the flexibility of the situational leadership style, such as the manager's age, the length of practice performed, the method of preparation for the management function, motivation for potential improvement, the prosperity of the organization, etc.

SUMMARY

In order to achieve the best possible results from employees, the managers are required to have the ability to correctly recognize how they should approach their subordinates, and subsequently adapt their leadership style. Such flexible leadership depends on many aspects and the presented model of the situational leadership style implies that there is no single correct style that can be used under any circumstances. The proven way to test managers using the LBAII® method is fairly widespread abroad, but in the Czech Republic it had not been used for these purposes, or no outcomes of such research had been published, respectively. Therefore, the objective of this work was to identify the aspects that affect the flexibility of Czech managers' leadership style. For testing purposes the authors selected students of the Faculty of Economics and Administration at Masaryk University in Brno, who at that time studied the third year of their bachelor's degree in the combined form of study, and who are expected to have experience of employment due to the form of their studies. 562 respondents participated in the empirical research and they provided information both about themselves and about their direct superiors in the number of 445 persons. In the case of respondents, only questionnaires of those who already had experience with staff management were used for the research purposes; this condition was fulfilled by 149 respondents. After electronic collection of data, which was statistically evaluated, the testing demonstrated that the leadership style flexibility is greatly affected by the management area of managers: the highest average score of flexibility was reported with managers in the field of information technology and education, while managers operating in the services achieved the lowest average score of flexibility. Due to some boundary values of the variables tested, it can be argued that the leadership style flexibility is also partly affected by the sex of managers, the number of their subordinate employees and the prevailing economic activity of the organization, and therefore it would be appropriate to pay more attention to these aspects in future research.

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