
Leadership Styles and Employee Expectations

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Abstract:

Purpose: The article presents an analysis of management styles and their importance in shaping employees' expectations towards their superior in the company. The article aims to show the relationship between the company's leadership style and the expectations of employees regarding the performance of tasks.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study is based on a literature review and empirical research results carried out among 185 employees from 10 European companies operating in different sectors. The chi-square (χ^2) statistics were used to investigate the relationships between the variables analyzed, while the V-Cramer and Pearson's C (contingency) coefficients were used to determine the relationship's strength.

Findings: Based on the analysis, subordinates build their expectations associated with their tasks' performance and with the leader based on his/her leadership style. When leaders implement a situational management style, employees expect full freedom of choice regarding how to carry out tasks. However, when the superior represents an autocratic style, employees expect guidelines regarding the performance of tasks rather but do not want their work to be constantly controlled. The analysis also included the relationships between the analyzed data and the variables describing the employee's position, a type of company, sex, education, and seniority.

Practical Implications: The results demonstrate that personality, qualifications, values, and management style of leaders affect both the current operations and long-term success of employees and the entire organization. This analysis helped determine the desired characteristics, competencies, and character profile of contemporary leaders.

Originality/Value: The analysis allowed identifying the trends of changes in contemporary leaders' approaches in terms of their characteristics and style. Therefore, the study offers a valuable review of a wide range of issues related to leaders' characteristics, and it contributes to our understanding of the specificity of leadership in the business environment.

Keywords: Leadership style, inter-organizational relations, employee expectations.

JEL codes: M12, D84, D91.

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1. Introduction

Recently, researchers and management theoreticians have demonstrated a growing interest in leadership, in particular about the impact of management styles ineffective stimulation of employee engagement (Posadzińska *et al.*, 2020; Lord *et al.*, 2017; Hunter *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2011; Karaszewski, 2010). The importance of employee expectations towards leaders and the factors fostering positive relations between employees is emphasized (Drewniak *et al.*, 2020; Den Hartog and Belschak, 2012; Herold *et al.*, 2008). This article analyses employees' expectations regarding their leader in the company, based on the implemented management style. This analysis provides answers to the research question about the role and importance of leadership style in fostering employee engagement and contributing to pro-developmental employee behavior and increased engagement.

The studies exploring leadership in an organization are largely fragmentary. There is no homogeneous framework for the issues regarding various areas of company's activity, and the analyzed domains differ, so research results refer either to the individual, collective, organizational or social domain (Lord *et al.*, 2017; Dinh *et al.*, 2014; Meuser *et al.*, 2016). The article aims to fill this gap, at least partially, by demonstrating the essence and importance of leadership in shaping and stimulating employee engagement. The analyzed problem can also be defined as actions or behaviors that leaders undertake to introduce changes in a given group (Robertson *et al.*, 2012; Drewniak, 2017). Looking at the problem from a different perspective, one can see that the discussed issue also involves a specific strength of relations, human bonds between leaders and their followers (Cianci *et al.*, 2014; Carsten *et al.*, 2018).

People have been interested in and fascinated by the concept of leadership for a long time. Having a new leader is always a welcome prospect, inspiring hopes for a change in employees, and perceived by them as a potential cure for recurring problems. Researchers and management theoreticians have recently demonstrated a growing interest in the issues associated with leadership and the factors that determine its effectiveness (Schnurr and Schroeder, 2019). Researchers emphasize the importance of a broad spectrum of positive leadership factors (Landells and Albrecht, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2014). However, these are determined by the organization's specificity its structure, power distribution, local arrangements, etc. In other words, leadership should not be studied on its own, but always in the context in which it appears. Current theories on leadership focus mainly on the leader's performance within the company structure, implementation of the company's future vision, personal traits, and active engagement of employees in the process. This paradigm belongs to the Transformation Era in leadership development (Van Seters and Field, 1990). Tichy and Devanna (1996), proponents of transformational leadership theory, stressed the initial role of creating perspectives and assigning roles to allow employees to be fully involved in achieving the company's goals. Today, the trend has been extended to include suggestions for inducing positive

expectations among employees as well. Undoubtedly, leadership is a complex process involving relational, situational, and behavioral aspects (House and Aditya, 1997).

Various researchers - economists, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers - explore leadership and leadership styles in an organization. Regardless of the kind of activity, the specificity of the industry or type of organization, the leader bears most responsibility for the obtained results. The behavior of employees can reveal a lot about the leadership style adopted by central management. Personality, qualifications, and values of the people at the top of the company significantly affect both its current operations and long-term development (Słupska *et al.*, 2020).

2. Theoretical Background

Positive emotions experienced by employees determine creative processes in an organization. Such emotions stimulate and motivate staff to seek excellence, foster performance-oriented attitudes, allow employees to broaden their horizons, and implement creative experimenting. Also, outstanding performance helps employees meet their personal goals and aspirations, promoting the entire organization's development (Roberts, 2007). This results in an "upward spiral": positive emotions increase engagement, conducive to higher effectiveness of the entire organization, which reinforces positive emotions in employees (Fredrickson, 2003). Positive Organisational Scholarship focuses on studies regarding positive relationships, personal development and well-being of employees (Bono *et al.*, 2012), positive leadership (Cameron, 2012), and on practices associated with human resources management that promote positive phenomena in organizations (Hall and Las Heras, 2012; Drewniak and Posadzińska, 2020). Significant correlations have been demonstrated between the above aspects and outstanding performance in a company. Researchers established that positive interpersonal relationships between employees have positive effects on knowledge management (Davidson and James 2007; Słupska *et al.*, 2019) and increase productivity (Halbesleben, 2012), while positive leadership stimulates motivation and engagement of employees (Donaldson-Feilder *et al.*, 2011).

Leadership may be perceived as one of the most extensively researched topics, yet it remains among the least understood phenomena of our times (Posner, 2015; Gandolfi and Stone, 2016; Ford and Harding, 2018). Undoubtedly, the leader's personality, qualifications, and values affect both current performance and the long-term attitudes of employees (Zigarmi *et al.*, 2015). Numerous studies and extensive subject literature offer deep insights into leadership and its effect on an organization's success (Lord *et al.*, 2017; Natalicchio *et al.*, 2017; Parris and Peachey, 2013; Posner, 2015; Karaszewski, 2010). Review studies, mostly using the systematic literature review method (Gardner *et al.*, 2020; Dinh *et al.*, 2014; Harrison *et al.*, 2016; Landells and Albrecht, 2017; Oc, 2018; Yahaya and Ebrahim,

2016), explore the individual aspects associated with the importance of characteristics of modern leaders, and the effectiveness of various leadership styles.

The most common leadership approaches presented in the form of a focal theory include transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, strategic leadership, leadership and diversity, participative/shared leadership, and trait leadership (Meuser *et al.*, 2016). Previous empirical studies cannot sufficiently explain the leadership practices and their effects on intra-organizational relations or the effectiveness of individual team management practices. The analysis must be extended to include the relationships between a leadership style and the expectations of employees towards the approach of the company leaders (Posadzińska *et al.*, 2020). The factors that increase employee engagement should also be explored. It is suggested that in-depth research is required about the development of specific characteristics in corporate leaders, as well as about the vision of leadership, communication associated with it, and the areas of its implementation (McDermott *et al.*, 2011; Landells and Albrecht, 2017; Oc, 2018). Such studies would significantly contribute to the existing knowledge base.

Leadership is a combination of specific character traits and skills that help leaders motivate and persuade others to perform certain tasks. They include enthusiasm, willingness to lead, honesty and virtue, self-confidence, cognitive skills, and understanding of the managed entity (Bass and Bass, 2008; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). Leadership may also be understood as activities supporting individual team members in achieving the assigned targets and expectations. Leaders are not always convinced that they have the right arguments or that they can rationally present them. In other words, a leader believes that certain actions need to be taken but may struggle with communicating this conviction. Also, participation in the decision-making process is very time-consuming and is not always met with all subordinates' unanimous approval. Moreover, employees may be reluctant to undertake actions that, in their opinion, are the responsibility of the leader. Thus, a leader can never be certain that influencing subordinates the resulting actions will be compliant with his/her original intention. Therefore, employees' professional satisfaction and success in most cases depend on leadership styles (Zareen *et al.*, 2014; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016; Drewniak, 2017; Shazia *et al.*, 2014).

The question of engaging employees includes the analysis and characteristics of the factors affecting the level of employee engagement and its measurement (Drewniak, 2017). The key determinant of engagement is an employee's ability to manage the assigned resources independently, which, in turn, determines the innovativeness of his/her actions. However, it should be emphasized that, at present, the scope of innovation is not limited to a product and its improvements. Increasingly often, it applies to the processes, implemented concepts, and other organizational modifications conducive to the enhancement of the enterprise (Drewniak and Karaszewski, 2020). Engaged employees identify with the company, seek challenges and ways to satisfy their professional aspirations, fulfil their duties, think

innovatively, and undertake actions that increase the entire enterprise's competitive advantage. Such experience should be a source of internal satisfaction (Robertson *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, engagement in one's work consists of a positive approach to duties, complete interest, and attention, characterized by devotion in the performance of additional tasks, exceeding the formal scope duties included in the job description.

The currently observed intensive interest in promoting employee engagement in the development of company value results from the positive effect of engagement on workforce productivity, social behaviors, and fostering positive relationships (Drewniak *et al.*, 2020), as well as on the increase of innovation and improvement of the financial status of enterprises (Drewniak and Posadzińska, 2020). Simultaneously, many other issues impact the effect of employee engagement on the company's success. They include measures of engagement, correlation with satisfaction with work and responsibility for the results, the effect of organizational conditions: organizational culture, climate, level of teamwork in the organization and others (Bakker *et al.*, 2011; Neves and Caetano, 2009; Albrecht, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006).

3. Methodology

The analysis was based on the data collected in empirical research conducted in 2019. The study involved employees of large international enterprises. The choice of individual companies was dictated by their high potential for the development of relational competencies. The analyzed enterprises comprised primarily production and service companies representing internationally promising sectors. The study sample was huge; in all but one of the studied companies, the headcount was significantly over 250 employees. The data was collected through an online survey questionnaire. We obtained 185 completed questionnaires (105 completed by men and 80 completed by women). The respondents were mainly production workers, administration employees, managers, and sales representatives.

The empirical research goal was to determine the correlations between leadership styles and employee expectations regarding the degree of freedom in the performance of tasks in the company. Also, the collected data allowed identifying the determinants of employee engagement. The correlation analysis was applied to determine the strength of the correlation between two qualitative characteristics. To identify a relationship between these characteristics, the chi-square (χ^2) test was applied in the following form:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{j=1}^r \frac{(n_{ij} - \hat{n}_{ij})^2}{\hat{n}_{ij}}$$

where:

r - number of feature Y variants,
 r - number of feature X variants,
 n_{ij} - empirical numbers for X variant and j-Y variant,
 \hat{n}_{ij} - theoretical numbers for i-th X variant and j-th Y variant.

The calculations were based on the cross tabulation (contingency table) demonstrating numbers of individual variants of X and Y characteristics. Using chi-squared test, the following hypotheses were analysed:

H_0 : the variables are independent;
 H_1 : the variables are not independent.

P-value determines the statistical significance. When $p < \alpha$, H_0 is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is retained. This indicates a relationship between the variables. If $p > \alpha$, H_0 is retained. It means that there is no correlation between the analysed variables.

To determine the strength of the correlation, Cramer's V coefficient and Pearson's c coefficient were determined. Cramer's V coefficient is derived from:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{n \cdot \min(k - 1, r - 1)}}$$

where:

χ^2 - calculated χ^2 value,
 n - number of all observations,
 k - number of columns in the contingency table without total (number of variants of the first characteristic),
 r - number of verses in the contingency table without total (number of variants of the second characteristic),

Pearson's contingency coefficient is derived using the formula:

$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{\chi^2 + n}}$$

where:

χ^2 - calculated χ^2 value,
 n - number of observations

The following conventional interpretation thresholds are adopted:

- from 0.00 to 0.29 – weak correlation between the variables;
- from 0.30 to 0.49 – moderate correlation between the variables;
- from 0.50 to 1.00 – strong correlation between the variables.

4. Findings

Table 1 presents individual variants' values regarding the expectations towards the superior while performing a task and the leadership styles. Table 2 demonstrates the results of the chi-square test. Table 3 shows the strength of correlations between the variables. The chi-square coefficient was statistically significant. Therefore, we reject H0 proposing a lack of correlation between the variables and accept the alternative hypothesis. Thus, there is a statistically significant correlation between the superior's expectations while performing a task and the leadership style. The strength of this correlation was determined based on Cramer's V and Pearson's C coefficients. They were both statistically significant. The value of coefficient V was 0.312, and for coefficient C - 0.404. Therefore, there is a moderate correlation between the superior's expectations while performing a task and the leadership style. The correlation is presented in Figure 1.

Table 1. Table presenting numbers for the variants of features: expectations regarding the superior while performing a task and management style

		Leadership style				Total
		1. Autocratic	2. Passive	3. Democratic	4. Situational	
Expectations towards the superior while performing a task	1. Freedom of choice	5	4	20	41	70
	2. Guidelines without control	38	14	23	24	99
	3. Precise command	4	4	1	7	16
Total		47	22	44	72	185

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 2. Results of the chi-square test

	Net	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson's chi-square	36.011 ^a	6	.000
Reliability coefficient	39.497	6	.000
Linear correlation test	19.401	1	.000
N valid observations	185		

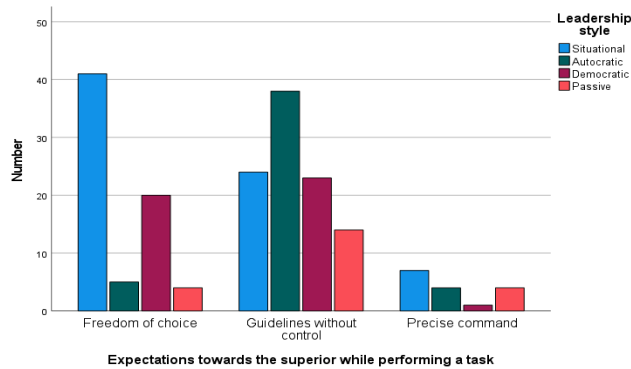
a. The expected size of 25.0% of the cells (3) is less than 5. The minimum expected size is 1.90.

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 3. Symmetrical measures

	Value	Approximate significance
Cramer's V	.312	.000
Contingency coefficient	.404	.000
N valid observations	185	

Source: Authors' calculations.

Figure 1. Correlation between the expectations towards the superior while performing tasks and the leadership style (N = 185)

Source: Authors' calculations.

The analysis also included the relationship between the "leadership style and the expectations towards the superior while performing tasks" variables and the variables characterizing the employee's position expressing the opinion, the type of enterprise, sex, education, and seniority. For nearly all the pairs of variables, the chi-square test was statistically significant, so the analyzed pairs were correlated. In most cases, Cramer's V and Pearson's C coefficients were also significant at $\alpha = 0.01$. The correlations between the analyzed variables were mostly moderate. In the case of the relationship between "position" and "leadership style," the correlation was strong (Pearson's C > 0.5). A strongly moderate relationship between education and leadership style perceived by the employees is noteworthy.

Table 4. Pearson's chi-square values for individual pairs of variables

		Leadership style	Expectations towards the superior
Position	Pearson's chi-square	66.62	36.11
	Significance	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$
Company	Pearson's chi-square	32.55	19.40
	Significance	$p < 0.001$	0.001
Sex	Pearson's chi-square	24.32	5.40
	Significance	$p < 0.001$	0.067

Education	Pearson's chi-square	57.65	32.29
	Significance	p < 0.001	p < 0.001
Seniority	Pearson's chi-square	24.17	4.19
	Significance	0.004	0.65
Expectations towards the superior	Pearson's chi-square	36.01	-
	Significance	p < 0.001	-

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 5. Cramer's V and Pearson's C coefficients for individual pairs of variables

		Leadership style		Expectations	
		Cramer's V	Pearson's C	Cramer's V	Pearson's C
Position	Index value	0.35	0.52	0.31	0.40
	Significance	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001
Company	Index value	0.30	0.39	0.23	0.31
	Significance	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	0.001	0.001
Sex	Index value	0.36	0.34	0.17	0.17
	Significance	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	0.067	0.067
Education	Index value	0.39	0.49	0.30	0.39
	Significance	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001
Seniority	Index value	0.21	0.34	0.11	0.15
	Significance	0.004	0.004	0.65	0.65
Expectations	Index value	0.31	0.40	-	-
	Significance	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	-	-

Source: Authors' calculations.

5. Discussion

The data analysis in Figure 1 reveals that the employees expected freedom in the performance of tasks, particularly when their superiors implemented a situational-dependent leadership style. On the other hand, when leaders in the analyzed companies implemented autocratic style, the employees expected instructions regarding performing tasks, but without ongoing control over their work. Exact instructions on how to perform tasks and continuous control of work were the least expected, regardless of the management's leadership style.

It should be emphasized that administrative employees, sales representatives, and managers with higher education expected situational leadership rather than a democratic management style, whereas production workers and those with vocational education pointed to autocratic style. This relationship confirms that production workers should be assigned a strictly defined range of tasks and the ways of completing them, whereas employees at higher positions expect a certain degree of autonomy in performing their work. An interesting correlation between the leadership style and seniority should be noted: the effect of situational leadership style is directly proportionate to the seniority. The situation is similar to the

democratic leadership style; however, in the case of employees with work experience of over 10 years, the autocratic style's importance decreases while that of situational leadership increases. Certainly, leaders are inclined to demonstrate greater trust and grant a higher degree of autonomy to employees' extensive experience and longer seniority.

The data analysis reveals that regardless of the leadership style, employees formed expectations towards their superior, such as the provision of guidelines as to how to perform tasks, but on the other hand, they would not like their work to be constantly supervised. It applies in particular to production workers. The expectation of exact instructions regarding the performance of tasks allows to cede the responsibility to the superior and contributes to a better organization of work time. A large number of employees expected full autonomy in choosing their work methods. It was probably associated with the complexity of their work and individual employees' organizational structure and competencies.

Acting under time pressure and making quick decisions, necessary at this position, justifies these expectations towards the superior. The employees in the survey identified a variety of leadership styles implemented in their companies. They often declared that superiors adjusted their management styles to individual situations, considering the hierarchy of tasks, their complexity, or the employees' competence performing the work. The passive leadership style was the least common one. The way employees perceived the leadership style might differ from the superior's point of view, which should be verified from the perspective of the effectiveness of individual management styles.

The observed results may indicate that leaders in the analyzed companies prioritized situational aspects of leadership, demonstrating the need to tailor their actions to the circumstances. Therefore, the decisions taken by the leader must be constantly adapted to the changing requirements. These findings demonstrate that leaders in the researched enterprises took into consideration both the circumstances and the dynamically changing expectations of their employees, which, in turn, shows that the skills and motivation of employees changed with time. Therefore, the combination of the directive (task-oriented) and supportive (relational) elements in the leadership needs to be adapted on an ongoing basis to the situation's specificity.

The effectiveness of actions taken by the leader will depend directly on the accurate composition of these elements. The directive aspect of a leadership style comprises various forms of influencing employees to achieve the goal (e.g., assignment of tasks, determination of assessment methods, the definition of roles, presenting schedules for task performance, etc.). The supportive actions introduce a relaxed atmosphere, contribute to the sense of satisfaction with work, and stimulate interpersonal relationships within the team. They were based on communication that facilitated emotional support and informal treatment of employees (e.g., expressing

appreciation, encouraging employees to share ideas and present initiatives, listening to suggestions both from within and outside the company).

6. Conclusions

Leadership is the art of inspiring people to undertake actions that help to achieve shared aspirations. It involves developing employee engagement, creating opportunities to present new ideas, and appreciating employees, which stimulates their innovativeness. Leadership also entails including employees in the decision-making process, providing the ability to define their own work, ensuring employees' well-being, collecting, and managing new ideas, promoting innovativeness in employees, and creating the environment for sharing knowledge and ideas.

Human capital is the principal strategic asset of an enterprise in the knowledge-based market environment, thus the need for modern and effective leadership. Various sources demonstrate that financial payment is a priority for employees deciding to search for a job and starting work. However, the stimulating effect of monetary remuneration is limited by a large number of subjective factors. In an unstable economy, when employees worry about their future, the motivation to work decreases, and financial motivation is insufficient. In such circumstances, building employee engagement in increasing the company's value by enhancing staff competencies and knowledge (which translates to the entire enterprise's increased knowledge potential) gains importance.

Therefore, engagement in one's work consists of a positive approach to duties, complete interest, and attention, characterized by devotion in the performance of additional tasks, exceeding the formal scope duties included in the job description. At present, with companies setting increasingly ambitious goals, a very high rate of technological advancement, and high expectations of specialized workers, leaders play a fundamental role in developing the social potential of the enterprise. A competent leader will be able to create an optimal work environment for employee performance and the company's development, regardless of the difficulties. Therefore, managers should provide employees with obligatory training and additional training opportunities to support the processes of self-education and the self-actualization of workers. Due to specialist skills mastered at the workplace and the time devoted to learning and gathering experience, employees identify with the company and feel good, as they realize that their know-how is crucial for the company.

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