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## **PECULIARITIES OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP STYLES IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES FROM ROMANIAN IT SECTOR**

**Abstract.** *This article analyse the peculiarities of gender related leadership styles for managers from IT small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) by using MLQ and LBDQ questionnaires. In our analysis, we compared the characteristics of leadership styles of the two genders using two different approaches: assessment by subordinates and self-assessment. We concluded that, while both genders can successfully lead teams, they use different approaches. Women focus more on the friendship and familiarity with employees, based on a desire to help the development of every individual, while for male leaders, rules and results are critical elements in shaping and coordinating their teams. Our results show a differentiation between managerial practices of male and female managers and thus different results.*

**Keywords:** *leadership, management, leadership styles, small and medium companies, IT.*

**JEL Classification:** M12, M54, M2

### **1. Introduction**

In leadership dedicated literature, an increasing trend addresses the topic of gender leadership and especially female leadership style and argues that it is much closer to the main characteristics of an ideal leader (Mumford *et al.*, 2015). Other scholars concluded, after analysing the qualities of what is considered an effective leader, that female rather than men leaders are needed to achieve results (Cook *et al.*, 2014). To better analyse the differences between the leadership styles of the

two genders, scholars have studied both their characteristics and behaviors (Eagly *et al.*, 2000).

Various studies have shown that women have both advantages and disadvantages as leaders (Eagly *et al.*, 2000). Many of the difficulties and challenges faced by them are generated by incongruity in adapting their traditional role with sometimes unfamiliar leadership roles (Eagly *et al.*, 2000). This lack of consistency creates vulnerabilities (i.e. restricted access to some traditionally “masculine” leadership roles) and negative polarization of their performance as leaders (i.e. massive gap between best and worst female leadership performance).

The different behaviour of men and women in leadership roles is widely debated in literature (Jerez-Gomez *et al.*, 2005). Although there is general agreement that women has to cope with more challenges than men in reaching top managerial positions, there is no consensus on the behaviour of both women and men once they reach such positions (Goh, 2003). This problem is usually discussed in the context of leadership styles when this is considered as a relatively stable pattern of behaviour manifested by leaders. Other scholars point out that differences in leadership styles have consequences on promotion (Lievens *et al.*, 2000).

For instance, despite the increased attention given to the analysis of female leadership, there is no consensus on how women effectively use their leadership (Jung *et al.*, 2003). Feminist approach regarding gender differences in leadership style and management practices provide a reasonable justification to justify why women are excluded from similar promotion and career path like men (Osborn *et al.*, 2009).

## **2. Theoretical background**

Analysis of the problems faced by both women and men as leaders provides a basis for discussion regarding differences and similarities in their leadership styles. The theory of differentiation and similarities by gender (Eagly *et al.*, 2000) argue that leadership roles, like other organizational roles, influence the behaviour of leaders. In addition, the leaders have different expectations based on the classification of individuals by gender (Boemer *et al.*, 2007).

Some scholars argue that gender provides a background identity (Sarros *et al.*, 2008). Leadership roles are important in the organization because they provide legitimacy to managers for authority, are governed by clear rules and require appropriate organizational behaviour (Sarros *et al.*, 2008). Some research suggests that although some gender differences of the type stereotype diminish the influence of organizational roles, others are maintained ((Boemer *et al.*, 2007).

Although there is little research that takes into account the impact of gender roles in common organizational roles (Eagly *et al.*, 2002), these studies generalize increased similarity behaviour of men and women sharing the same organizational role. Thus, it is likely that leadership roles, like any other organizational role, modify organizational rules and governing tasks, regardless of

their gender occupants (Eagly *et al.*, 2000). Despite the pressures to comply with these rules, managers have some leeway on how they carry out these activities. Managers can therefore be friendly or not, cannot see or employees in decision making etc. In addition, a wide range of actions with a strong informal, not covered by organizational roles (Elenkov *et al.*, 2005). These issues at the border of organizational and organizational behaviour are most likely to vary by gender (Bass *et al.*, 2003).

As a result of their different social identities, men and women have different expectations for their own behaviour in the organization and people share similar beliefs about leaders and men, but dissimilar beliefs about leaders and women (Hetland *et al.*, 2008). Some managers believe that they have fulfilled mixed actions based on organizational and gender rules creating a self-regulatory processes established by their own criteria (Groves, 2005).

In conclusion, it is assumed that the roles of leadership cause a change in managers' behaviour because of the social role it performs in the company so that gender differences are minimal amongst the same leadership role and it have to take into account a number of internal and external factors who influence the process. Not only gender roles affect organizational management but gender identity also may constrain leaders to modify their behaviour in a direction consistent with their gender role (de Hoogh *et al.*, 2005; Radu *et al.*, 2017).

### 3. Research model

We constructed a model and we consider a leader level  $j$ , using  $k$  replications of two randomly generated groups: group  $j_1$  and group  $j_2$ . We used  $\bar{x}_{ij}$  independent variable aggregated at the leader level to predict  $\bar{y}_{j2}$  dependent variable aggregated at the leader level. Similarly, we used  $\bar{x}_{j2}$  independent variable to predict  $\bar{y}_{j1}$  dependent variable.

We corrected standard errors, using the following model:

$$\bar{y}_{ig} = \beta_0 + \sum_{z=1}^{72} \beta \bar{x}_z \bar{x}_{zj} + \sum_{p=1}^{72} \beta \bar{f}_p \bar{f}_{pj} + \sum_{q=1}^{72} \beta \bar{c}_q \bar{c}_{qj} + \sum_{t=1}^{72} \beta_t t_j + e_{jg} \quad (1)$$

We used data from  $i_j$  on both the independent and dependent variables. Doing so may create the undesirable situation where the independent variable is endogenous- correlates with the error term- because of common method variance or other validity threats. We modelled the fixed- effects of leader  $j$ ,  $\bar{x}_{ij}$ , which capture mostly true variance on the leader, as an instrument to predict leader style rating  $x_{ij}$  of  $i_j$ . Thereafter, we used the predicted value of  $x_{ij}$ , this is  $\hat{x}_{ij}$  to predict  $y_{ij}$  as rated by  $i_j$ . We estimated the following:

$$\bar{x}_{zij} = \bar{y}_{z0} + \bar{y}_{z1}woman + \bar{y}_{z2}man + \sum_{r=1}^{72} y_{z\bar{x}r}\bar{x}_{zrj} + \sum_{p=1}^{72} y_{z\bar{f}p}\bar{f}_{pF} + \sum_{q=1}^{72} y_{z\bar{c}q}\bar{c}_{qC} + \sum_{t=1}^{72} y_{zt}t_j + \sum_{l=1}^{72} y_{zl}l_j + e_{jg} \quad (2)$$

$$\bar{x}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \sum_{z=1}^{72} \beta_{\hat{x}_z}\hat{x}_{zij} + \sum_{p=1}^{72} \beta_{\bar{f}p}\bar{f}_{pF} + \sum_{q=1}^{72} \beta_{\bar{c}q}\bar{c}_{qC} + \sum_{t=1}^{72} \beta_t t_j + \sum_{l=1}^{72} \beta_l l_j + u_{ij} \quad (3)$$

Fixed effect are represented with a bar (e.g.  $\bar{x}$ ).  $\hat{x}$  refers to the predicted value of the dependent variable  $X$  from Eq. 2. We estimated the above for each  $y$  dependent variable. In addition to the leader fixed- effect, which were instruments that we excluded for the  $y$  equations, we also used the gender of the leader as an instrument, given that women are usually rated higher on effective leadership, which is probably due to selection effects;

We combine specifications above. Given that the independent variables  $\bar{x}_{11}$  and  $\bar{x}_{12}$  are aggregated measures of half the rates of the leader  $j$ , their coefficients will suffer attenuation due to reduced reliability. We corrected the estimation by using the following equations:

$$\bar{x}_{zij} = \bar{y}_{z0} + \bar{y}_{z1}woman + \bar{y}_{z2}man + \sum_{r=1}^{72} y_{z\bar{x}r}\bar{x}_{zrj} + \sum_{p=1}^{72} y_{z\bar{f}p}\bar{f}_{pF} + \sum_{q=1}^{13} y_{z\bar{c}q}\bar{c}_{qC} + \sum_{t=1}^5 y_{zt}t_j + \sum_{l=1}^2 y_{zl}l_j + e_{jg} \quad (4)$$

$$\bar{y}_{ig} = \beta_0 + \sum_{z=1}^{72} \beta_{\hat{x}_z}\hat{x}_{zij} + \sum_{p=1}^{72} \beta_{\bar{f}p}\bar{f}_{pF} + \sum_{q=1}^{72} \beta_{\bar{c}q}\bar{c}_{qC} + \sum_{t=1}^{72} \beta_t t_j + u_{jg} \quad (5)$$

#### 4. Analysis and results

We analysed leadership styles by using two approaches. The first one involved subordinates and their views regarding the managers' leadership styles. This was done using LBD (Leadership Behaviour Description) questionnaire. The second was a self-assessment approach, where managers were asked to complete a ML (MultifactorLeadership)questionnaire.

The questionnaires were filled by 72 respondents, with a total of 12 managers assessed(6 women and 6 men).We use Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to analyse the behaviour of a leader in terms of the factors related to transformational leadership.

##### 3.1. Analysis of the behavioural characteristics of managers using LBDQuestionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to describe behaviour of a leader according to his/her subordinates (See Appendix 1).The questionnaire consists of 40 Likert type questions ranging from A to E, where A corresponds to always, B to often, C to occasionally, D to rare and E to never. The score was then calculated by

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assigning a numerical index to each letter of 5-1, as follows: A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, E = 1. Each question in the survey helped to identify ten specific behavioural characteristics of team leaders (see Table 1).

**Table 1. LBDQ results**

Wom en/ Men	Joviality in communication	Tolerance to uncertainty	Team proximity	Struct ural thinkin g	Team representativ eness	Role assumption	Highligh ting personal perform ance	Orienta tion to improve results	Level of proced ural actions	Resp ect worn by team	Total
F1	67	67	69	69	71	63	59	62	61	59	647
F2	66	55	61	57	48	66	53	70	62	60	598
F3	65	66	63	60	62	67	61	72	57	65	638
F4	65	70	58	63	69	53	66	53	67	54	618
F5	62	63	68	64	69	60	67	56	59	63	631
F6	64	65	57	57	66	67	55	49	62	61	603
<b>Total F</b>	389	386	376	370	385	376	361	362	368	362	
B1	61	63	58	60	70	66	68	69	61	63	639
B2	63	63	51	64	59	65	61	58	67	68	619
B3	65	64	59	70	69	52	62	63	67	57	628
B4	64	55	68	66	63	56	78	58	72	64	644
B5	61	67	55	75	71	64	65	58	55	66	637
B6	66	72	57	69	62	72	66	61	67	60	652
<b>Total B</b>	380	384	348	404	394	375	400	367	389	378	

3.2. The analysis of the behaviour of managers using Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire(MLQ)

The second approach addressed managers' self-evaluation. Team managers were given a questionnaire with which to be defined within the research qualities they see in themselves. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was developed in order to analyse the behaviour of a leader in terms of the seven factors related to transformational leadership. The concept of transformational leadership is used to emphasize more strongly the result while practicing an efficient driving style in an organization. It is composed of 21 questions, whose answers are graded from 0 to 4, where:0 – never; 1 – rare; 2 – sometimes; 3 – quite often; 4 – frequent. For questions, see Appendix. No. 2

The final score is determined by adding the responses to each of the three questions for each of the items as follows:

**Table2. MLQ questionnaire factors**

No.	Factor	Questions
1	Others regard him as an idol	1, 8, 15
2	It has the ability to motivate team	2, 9, 16
3	It capable to stimulate intellectually	3, 10, 17
4	Show respect for each individual	4, 11, 18
5	Offers collective reward	5, 12, 19
6	Practice management by exceptions	6, 13, 20
7	Predominant leadership style based on trust	7, 14, 21

Each of the above factors helped determine the way leaders are seen by members of the teams they lead. This analysis is done in connection with LBDQ analysis.

**Table 3. MLQ results**

Women/ Men	Others regard him as an idol	It has the ability to motivate the team	It stimulates intellectually the others	Show respect for each individual	Give collective reward	Practice management by exceptions	Predominant leadership style based on trust	Total
F1	8	7	9	8	5	8	6	51
F2	6	8	9	5	7	10	5	50
F3	6	7	8	9	5	10	8	53
F4	9	8	5	10	8	7	6	53
F5	5	9	2	7	8	5	5	41
F6	6	7	4	6	8	7	5	43
<b>Total</b>	40	46	37	45	41	47	35	
B1	6	4	8	4	6	5	4	37
B2	5	5	8	3	6	5	8	40
B3	6	4	8	8	9	6	8	49
B4	8	8	7	4	9	5	4	45
B5	8	3	6	2	6	8	4	37
B6	6	7	10	6	10	7	7	53
<b>Total</b>	39	31	47	27	46	36	35	

We examined the most important factors in our study.

The first factor analysed was the subject's power to make others look to him as an idol. In any team members who want to increase their level of performance and strive for continuous personal development is necessary a leader (idol). This will be the one that will be reported when they will set the standards they want to achieve. Through his professional experience and expertise, a manager can easily become an idol if he knows how to interact with each individual and how to solve problems in every situation. In our study both women and men believe that they are idols for those they lead almost equally, receiving a score of 39 points for males and 40 points for women.

The second factor analysed was the degree to which the *team leaders have the power to motivate subordinates*. From this point of view female managers achieve a total score of 46 points compared to males who got only 31 points. This difference may arise from the fact that most often men do not believe they can make a major effort to change the way in which an individual (in this case a team member) manifests towards the work they do, and motivation should be an intrinsic factor which depend on clear performance criteria and personal wishes. On the other side, women tend to examine closely the needs of each individual and give advice to each team member in order to carry out tasks and increase efficiency.

With a total of 47 points (compared with 37 by women), *intellectual motivation of the team* represents an important factor of the analysis because

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emphasize increased desire of employees for learning by sharing their knowledge to their colleagues.

Regarding *respect* factor, males not show as much respect for each individual, compared to females (27 points vs 45 points). However, in teams mostly made up of males level of respect between members is much higher, in case they feel that there is room for improvement in their activities.

Regarding *collective reward* factor, male managers considers they offer higher collective reward to team members compared to female managers (46 points vs 41 points). The analysis of this factor shows that most times both men and women believe that it is important that the whole team to enjoy the results of their work because this type of approach will avoid conflicting situations (i.e. competition between members to achieve individual results).

Regarding *management by exceptions* factor, we found out that female managers use more frequently than males this managerial method (47 points vs 36 points). The practical managerial effect is that female managers use more often delegation to subordinates, having only a consultative role for them and increase time allocated to decision making and strategic thinking. This leads to the empowerment of subordinates and also makes the work more organized.

To analyse the results obtained from the questionnaires, we used econometrics methods. The first method used was correlation, with which we could observe how each factor is influenced by others. The results were as follows:

**Table 4. Correlation factor- women**

	<i>Others regard him as an idol</i>	<i>It has the ability to motivate the team</i>	<i>It stimulates intellectually the others</i>	<i>Show respect for each individual</i>	<i>Give collective reward</i>	<i>Practice management by exceptions</i>	<i>Predominant leadership style based on trust</i>	<i>T O TA L</i>
Others regard him as an idol	1							
It has the ability to motivate the team	-0.27116	1						
It intellectually stimulates the others	0.28745	-0.55793	1					
Show respect for each individual	0.639064	-0.13093	-0.01826	1				
Give collective reward	-0.12033	0.61017	-0.78144	-0.2542	1			
Practice management by exceptions	0.045632	-0.54691	0.886076	-0.08262	-0.64175	1		
Predominant leadership style based on trust	0.189389	-0.4889	0.4189	0.685845	-0.71673	0.514206	1	
TOTAL	0.663475	-0.42348	0.754757	0.564734	-0.58726	0.702741	0.673702	1

**Table 5. Correlation factors- men**

	<i>Others regard him as an idol</i>	<i>It has the ability to motivate the team</i>	<i>It stimulates intellectually the others</i>	<i>Show respect for each individual</i>	<i>Give collective reward</i>	<i>Practice management by exceptions</i>	<i>Predominant leadership style based on trust</i>	<i>T O TA L</i>
Others regard him as an idol	1							
It has the ability to motivate the team	0.126211	1						
It intellectually stimulates the others	-0.67572	0.400576	1					
Show respect for each individual	-0.33896	0.166368	0.58996	1				
Give collective reward	0.087706	0.682615	0.538772	0.743218	1			
Practice management by exceptions	0.387298	-0.32588	-0.11896	-0.07293	0.08492 1	1		
Predominant leadership style based on trust	-0.76	0.008414	0.577437	0.564933	0.2982 0.95651	-0.07746	1	
TOTAL	-0.1602	0.583244	0.69266	0.800602	9	0.119318	0.539754	1

The table above emphasize how each of the analysed factors influences each other. Where the results are above 0.25 influence is high and the data can be considered relevant.

From the table analysing the performance of managers according to gender we can draw the following conclusions:

- The total score is heavily influenced by all seven factors, each having a role in the final results. Items that had the highest intake were that others concern the manager as a leader, the degree of intellectual stimulation that it provides individuals, respect shown to them, practicing management by exceptions and not finally a leadership style based on trust.
- The *power to intellectually stimulate the team* increases with the ability to make others look to him as an idol, but decreases if the manager loses his ability to motivate the team.
- The *respect shown towards the individuals* is greater if the manager is seen as an idol and decreases when it will no longer stimulate intellectual or if team members will no longer motivate.
- *Provide collective rewards* is closely related to the degree of motivation that gives him the leader of the team members, but decreases exponentially along with the intellectual stimulation, the ability to motivate and respect shown to individuals.
- *Practicing management by exceptions* is directly influenced by how subordinates are stimulated intellectual leadership.



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- *Leadership style based on trust* is rooted in the degree of intellectual stimulation that is part of the team, which provide its members respect and lead to management by exceptions.

Regarding male leaders, how the factors influence each other is different and can be interpreted as follows:

- The total score was strongly influenced by the ability to motivate the team, the intellectual stimulation of others, respect shown towards individuals practicing a leadership style based on trust and offering the strongest collective reward.
- The *power to intellectually stimulate the team* is under the influence of ability to motivate the team, as opposed to female entrepreneurship, where this factor was influenced by how these intellectually stimulates others.
- The *respect shown towards the individuals* increases with the desire to stimulate him intellectually on it, but decreases when the leader is seen as an idol.
- *Collective reward* is based on a strong degree of motivation of the team and the leader display a strong respect for his subordinates.
- *Leadership style based on trust* is employed when the intellectual stimulation, respect shown towards the individual and the desire to provide a collective reward are growing.

**Table 6. Summary output from analysis**

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>F Total</i>	<i>B Total</i>
Mean	63.45455	59
Variance	34.67273	47.4
Observations	11	11
Pearson Correlation	0.056734	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	10	
t Stat	1.678515	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.062086	
t Critical one-tail	1.812461	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.124173	
t Critical two-tail	2.228139	

From the analysis above we concluded that although total scores of the two genders seem to be different as the level, the factors that influenced them are completely different and vary by gender and behavioural characteristics thereof.

## **5. Discussion and conclusions**

Differences between behaviours of women and men in management are an extensively debated topic in leadership literature. Following the analysis in this paper, we compare the characteristics of leadership styles of the two genders from two different approaches. First, opinions of subordinates were taken into account, given that they are the ones who define whether it leads is considered a leader or manager has only one role.

In our research we demonstrate that both genders can successfully lead teams. Women possess qualities focused on friendship and closeness with their subordinates, based on a desire to help the development of every individual, confirming other studies (Martell *et al.*, 2012), while for male leaders, rules and focus on results are key elements when it comes to shaping and coordinating teams.

One of the practical implications of our study regards leadership in SMEs from IT sector. If the style of leadership exhibited by IT SMEs' team leaders has a significant role in explaining organizational variables, then small and medium firms need to encourage leadership differentiated by gender in order to generate results (Jung *et al.* 2003; Ling *et al.*, 2008).

Concerning limitations, we have to consider that the behaviour, results and conclusions are only valid for IT SMEs and so should be interpreted in this context. Secondly, all the companies involved are located in the same geographical area, and so in the future it would be interesting to study more cases of SMEs from various industries and across various geographical regions.

In order to validate the conclusions of the study, further research could be conducted by adopting a quantitative approach to organizations of various sizes so as to allow a comparative analysis and consequently the possibility of generalizing the results.

Despite these limitations, we nevertheless believe the results and the conclusions drawn from this study can form a valuable contribution towards understanding the subject of leadership styles in SMEs as a whole.

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