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Sokolic, Danijela; Croitoru, Gabriel; Florea, Nicoleta Valentina; Robescu, Valentina Ofelia; Cosac, Alexandru

Source / Izvornik: **Valahian Journal of Economic Studies, 2024, 15, 53 - 72**

Journal article, Published version

Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)

<https://doi.org/10.2478/vjes-2024-0005>

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:192:170933>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-03-12**



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The Effect of Leadership Styles on Employee Motivation and Organizational Performance in Public Sector Organizations

Danijela SOKOLIC

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Economics and Business, Croatia

Gabriel CROITORU

Nicoleta Valentina FLOREA

Valentina Ofelia ROBESCU

Alexandru COSAC

University of Valahia, Targoviste, Romania

danijela.sokolic@efri.uniri.hr

Abstract

The present study explores the impact of different leadership styles on the effective motivation of employees and hence on increasing organizational performance. Starting from the premise that a leadership style can play a crucial role in determining the level of employee motivation engagement and satisfaction, this research focuses on identifying the link between leadership style and employees work outcomes. In the specialized literature, leadership styles are frequently discussed in the context of employee motivation. By applying a mixed methodology, which combines quantitative analysis of survey data with qualitative case studies, the research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how these leadership styles directly influence employee motivation and, indirectly, their performance. The results are expected to show a significant correlation between employee-oriented leadership styles and high levels of motivation, suggesting that leaders who adopt a more involved and supportive approach can significantly improve organizational performance. This research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence that underscores the importance of adopting appropriate leadership styles to maximize employee potential and optimize organizational outcomes. The findings provide valuable insights for organizational leaders and HR practitioners in developing effective leadership strategies to promote a motivating and high-performing work environment.

Keywords: *Leadership, motivation, performance, satisfaction*

JEL Classification: L25, P17

Introduction

In an era of rapid transitions and fierce global competition, efficient management and leadership are crucial for organizational success (Dugan & Dugan, 2016).

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Identifying the need for change is vital, with a focus on proactive changes that lead to superior results (Roiban, 2011). The development of human resource management has shifted the focus to workforce planning, recruitment, and performance evaluation (Mazilu (Alexandrescu, 2021).

Shifting workforce demographics continued technological advancements, and evolving employee expectations require leadership approaches that address and anticipate these challenges. Research has shown that new ways of working, such as remote work and online work, have emerged and strengthened during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring effective leadership in these contexts (Pogan, 2022). Furthermore, as technology evolves, managers have to use digital information systems to support leadership (Maren, 2021). Additionally, in many sectors, the Covid-19 pandemic has intensified workplace stress and burnout among employees, highlighting the need for organizational and leadership approaches to support workforce well-being (Smallwood et al., 2023). Overall, leadership development needs to consider the changing landscape of work and the importance of employee empowerment, organizational change and mental health support for a successful approach to leadership in the digital age and during crises (Gomeniuk et al., 2023).

A range of studies have underscored the importance of leadership style in addressing the complex challenges (Edwards et al., 2010; Susilo, 2018; Thompson, 2012). Leadership style, characterized by its ability to inspire and motivate employees, has been found to reduce job stress among employee (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2013), improve workforce competencies (Thompson, 2012), and enhance employees' good governance characteristics (Mohd Hamran et al., 2014). It can also significantly impact employee productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment (McNeese-Smith, 1993), and improve performance through self-leadership (Manz, 1983). Furthermore, leadership style has been linked to job satisfaction during organizational change, mediated by staff collective efficacy (Albion & Gagliardi, 2007). These findings highlight the critical role of leadership styles in shaping organizational culture, fostering a positive work environment, and motivating staff to meet the distinctive challenges of the work environment.

A range of studies have explored the role of leadership in the Romanian public sector, focusing on program evaluation (Mora & Antonie, 2012), leadership styles (Filip, 2015), and the impact of employee motivation on organizational performance (Oncioiu et al., 2018). These studies emphasize the need for a deep understanding of internal dynamics and staff needs, as well as the application of motivational strategies to improve performance.

Other studies have explored the impact of leadership on staff motivation and performance in various sectors, providing valuable insights for the Romanian organizations. Filip (2015) and Hinteă (2015) both found that leadership style is positively correlated with organizational performance. Oncioiu et al., 2018 and Buchdadi et al., 2020 further explored this findings, with proposing a model linking employee motivation to organizational performance (as an add on to the the former study) and by demonstrating a significant influence of leadership style on job satisfaction and performance (related to the the latter research). Hersona & Sidharta, 2017 and Ispas Andreia & Băbăiță C, 2012 emphasize the importance of leadership function and style, with the latter specifically identifying a positive relationship between leadership styles and employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Haile, 2015 and Permadi et al., 2018 both underscore the role of leadership and motivation in enhancing work discipline and performance, with the latter also highlighting the mediating role of work discipline. These findings collectively

suggest that a focus on leadership styles and employee motivation, can significantly improve staff motivation and performance in the Romanian sector public.

The impact of leadership styles on performance has been extensively explored in the literature in management and organizational psychology. However, there are still significant discrepancies between the proposed theories and their applicability in various organizational contexts. Hidayatulloh, 2023 points out that leadership style has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction, and that job satisfaction can mediate the effect of leadership style on performance. Albert (2023) concluded in her research paper that a leadership style can enhance organizational performance when it is aligned with organizational culture and values. A study on private and public sector banks revealed significant differences in the impact of leadership style on organizational performance (Jumady Edy, 2023). These findings highlight the need for further research to empower theoretical framework with empirical evidence from different organizational settings.

The article is structured as follows: In section one is presented the Literature review in the proposed field and are established the research hypothesis; in section two is made the Research methodology, are established the objectives and the sample for research. Section three is presenting the Results section, where are presented a few models and tests in order to show their significance for the research. In section four is developed the Confirmatory factor analysis and are presented the results for fulfillment of the established hypothesis. Then, in the final part of the article are presented the Conclusions and future research directions.

1. Literature review and research hypothesis

1.1. How do perceived practices of leadership styles influence staff motivation levels?

Many studies have explored the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation in various Romanian work environments. (Ispas, 2012) found that autocratic and leadership styles were perceived differently by managers and employees, with the latter being associated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, (Get, 2018) and (Cristina Hințea, 2015; Hințea Cristina, 2015) both identified positive correlations between leadership styles and employee performance. However, (Guluta & Rusu, 2016) highlighted the prevalence of dictatorial decision-making and compromised conflict resolution in Romanian companies, suggesting a potential mismatch between perceived and actual leadership practices. (Dimitrios Belias & A. Koustelios, 2014) emphasized the importance of considering individual and demographic characteristics when analyzing the impact of leadership styles on job satisfaction. Lastly, (Oncioiu et al., 2018) proposed a relationship between employee motivation and organizational performance, underscoring the need for effective leadership in this process.

A body of literature supports the positive impact of leadership styles on employee motivation, particularly in challenging work environments ((Hanaysha R. M. et al., 2012); (Udin, 2020); (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2013); (Toufaily B., 2017); (Herminingsih, 2020); (Rawat, 2015); (Bronkhorst et al., 2013)). A leadership style characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration has been found to increase job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement while reducing job stress and improving performance.

The literature underscores the significance of situational leadership, particularly in high-stress work environments. This approach emphasizes the need for leaders to adapt their style to the maturity level and needs of their subordinates (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974; Walter et al., 1980; Blanchard et al., 1993). However, the effectiveness of this theory has been questioned, with some studies finding limited empirical support (Blank et al., 1990). Despite this, the situational leadership model has been successfully applied in various contexts, including leadership and construction projects (Hammuda & Dulaimi, 2006). The key takeaway is that while situational leadership is important, its application and effectiveness may vary across different settings.

Research in the public sector has identified several key factors that influence staff motivation, including perceptions of safety, level of decision-making autonomy, and role clarity (Lambert et al., 2009); (Molleman & van der Broek, 2014); (Hogan et al., 2009); (Jiang et al., 2017)). Leadership practices play a crucial role in shaping these factors, with supervisory consideration, job variety, and perceptions of training being particularly important. The impact of leadership practices on staff motivation is further underscored by the finding that job stress, supervision, and job variety are more influential than personal characteristics in determining job satisfaction and organizational commitment ((Hogan et al., 2009); (Jiang et al., 2017)).

A range of studies have explored the impact of leadership practices on organizational performance and employee motivation in the Romanian public sector. (Hințea Cristina, 2015)) and (Filip A., 2015)) both found positive correlations between leadership styles and performance, with the latter also noting a mix of leadership styles in public institutions. (Mora & Antonie, 2012) and (Oncioiu et al., 2018)) highlighted the role of leadership in developing evaluation culture and capacity, and in improving organizational performance through employee motivation. (Bibu & Moș, 2012)) and (Popa, 2012)) emphasized the need for leadership development and the influence of personality dimensions on leadership styles. (Mactavish, 1995)) and (García-Solarte, 2015)) provided broader perspectives on effective leadership practices, including the need for leaders to transcend traditional cultures and the importance of considering various factors in a leadership model. These studies collectively suggest that leadership styles, leadership development, and the consideration of various factors in leadership models are key to improving performance and motivation in the Romanian public sector.

Previous research in organizational management and work psychology has highlighted the importance of leadership styles in determining levels of employee satisfaction, commitment, and motivation ((Bass & Bass, 2008); (Judge & Piccolo, 2004)). In particular, studies have shown that leadership styles, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, is strongly correlated with high levels of employee motivation and performance (Avolio et al., 2009). Thus we can develop the following research hypotheses. By verifying these hypotheses, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between leadership styles and motivation, providing possible directions for improving management strategies.

1.2. What are the most significant elements of implementing effective methods of motivating staff?

Motivating workforce and managing performance in the Romanian public sector is complex due to various factors. These factors include the stressful nature of the work, the impact on the mental health of staff (Iuliia Paskevskaja, 2022b, 2022a), and the need for

strategic management and administrative support (Sirenko et al., 2022). Additionally, the study highlights the importance of understanding the motivational factors that affect employee performance (Constantinescu & Stegaroiu, 2023). Overall, the adoption and implementation of effective staff motivation strategies in the public sector in Romania require consideration of structural, organizational, cultural, and individual factors that influence employee motivation and performance.

Individual aspects such as occupational stress, burnout, and job satisfaction can significantly impact how staff respond to motivational efforts (Dizgah et al., 2018; Sedat, 2017). When employees experience high levels of stress and burnout, their job satisfaction tends to decrease, which can hinder their motivation (Maina, 2012). Additionally, discrepancies between employee perceptions and expectations regarding leadership and rewards can act as barriers to motivation (Vishnevskaya, 2019). It is important for organizations to address these individual factors and ensure that employees feel supported and valued in order to enhance their motivation and overall performance (Vishnevskaya, 2019). By understanding and addressing these individual aspects, organizations can create a more motivating work environment and improve employee engagement and productivity.

The complex task of motivating and managing performance is influenced by various factors. These include the dangerous and stressful nature of the work, the impact on the mental health of staff, and the need for strategic management and administrative support (Gard, 2001; Molleman & van der Broek, 2014; Rowley, 1996). Understanding the motivational factors that influence employee performance is crucial, with individual, job, and organizational factors playing a significant role (Lubis et al., 2019). The impact of motivation on employee performance has been studied in various contexts, including the banking sector (Uzonna, 2013) and Romanian SMEs (Marin, 2012), and its link to organizational performance (Oncioiu et al., 2018). These studies highlight the importance of addressing aggression towards staff, identifying prevention and intervention methods, and implementing effective staff motivation strategies (Morar & Iovu, 2019). Based on the context and literature review, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive correlation between the perception of leadership and employees' intrinsic motivation level.

1.3. To what extent can leadership strategies improve staff performance?

Adaptive leadership is crucial in the unique and challenging environment, as it can significantly impact employee performance and satisfaction (Atkin-Plunk, 2013). This form of leadership involves the ability to adjust styles and approaches according to the situation, the needs of employees, and changes in the internal and external environment (Highsmith, 2011). Effective leaders in this context understand and transcend the traditional culture, embracing risk-taking, providing a vision of the future, and fostering cooperation (Mactavish, 1995). They also play a crucial role in fostering a corporate culture conducive to organizational adaptation (Raguž & Zekan, 2015). The application of Boyd's OODA loop can help leaders be prepared and ready for operating in complex environments ((Lubitz & Wickramasinghe, 2006). In the context, the role of leadership is particularly crucial in times of institutional instability (McDonald & Chenoweth, 2009). Flexible and adaptive leadership is essential in today's organizations (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010a).

Adaptive leadership, as emphasized by Heifetz et al. (2009), is crucial in high-stress and uncertain work contexts, enabling organizations to cope with complex changes and challenges. This type of leadership encourages innovation, flexibility, and effective crisis

management ((Yukl, 2008); Highsmith 2011). In the sector context, it can also improve communication and promote a positive organizational climate (Atkin-Plunk 2013). The importance of adaptive leadership is further underscored by its role in motivating and engaging individuals during change (Mensah & Zimmerman, 2017), and in enabling organizational adaptability. However, there is a need for further research to fully understand the concept and its implications (Cojocar, 2009).

Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of adaptive leadership on employee performance and job satisfaction ((Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2018); Klein & Kozlowski, 2008; Rousseau & Aubé, 2019; Godoy & Mendonça, 2020; (Yukl, 2008); Schulze & Pinkow, 2020; Saleh, 2022; (Raguž & Zekan, 2015)). This is particularly crucial in dynamic and uncertain work environments. Adaptive leadership can enhance team learning, coordination, and performance (Klein & Kozlowski, 2008), and is associated with empowering leader behaviors, shared leadership, and access to resources (Rousseau & Aubé, 2020). It is also linked to self-determination and leadership styles, which can influence adaptive expertise (Godoy & Mendonça, 2020). Furthermore, adaptive leadership can create "adaptive spaces" in organizations, promoting innovation and adaptability (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020). Empowering leadership has been found to enhance adaptive performance (Saleh, 2022), and executive leadership plays a key role in fostering a culture conducive to organizational adaptation (Raguž & Zekan, 2015).

The implementation of adaptive leadership in the public sector is crucial, but it faces challenges such as resistance to change and a lack of leadership training (Mactavish, 1995). This type of leadership, which goes beyond traditional managerial tasks and embraces risk-taking and cooperation, is essential in today's organizations (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010b). To develop adaptive leadership skills, leaders need to be trained in cognitive frame-switching and flexibility (Nelson et al., 2010). Adaptive leaders anticipate change, make small bets, and utilize mavericks and change agents within their organizations (Govindarajan, 2016). They also enhance team adaptability in dynamic settings (Klein & Kozlowski, 2008) and have the ability to challenge people's familiar reality (Heifetz et al., 2009). The armed services provide valuable lessons in adaptive leadership, including creating a personal link, making decisions, focusing on common purpose, and conveying strategic intent (Useem, 2010). Based on the context and literature review, the following specific research hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Adequate recognition and reward of performance by leaders are key factors in improving employee performance.

Hypothesis 3: Leadership styles mediate the relationship between employees' motivation and their performance at work.

The impact of adaptive leadership on employee performance in the public sector is a complex and multifaceted issue. Wilson (1968) and Mactavish (1995) both highlight the importance of participative and adaptive management practices in improving employee relations and performance. This is further supported by Bednall & Henricks (2021), who emphasize the need for adaptive performance in the face of unpredictable challenges. However, the unique challenges of the public sector, such as leadership transitions and the need for a structured support network, as discussed by Gilmore & McCann (1982), must also be considered. The role of adaptive leadership in addressing complex challenges, as proposed by Nelson & Squires (2017) and Schwella (2008), is particularly relevant in this context. Aagaard (2012) and Heifetz & Laurie (1997) further underscore the importance of adaptive capability and the work of leadership in navigating these challenges. Therefore,

while the proposal provides a strong foundation for exploring the impact of adaptive leadership on employee performance in the sector public, it should also consider the specific challenges and needs of researched environment.

2. Research Methodology

The study explores the effect of leadership styles on the motivation of employees and, consequently, on organizational performance.

To carry out this study, the opinion poll was used as a research method, and the questionnaire as an instrument. The research was designed with the leadership styles representing a dependent variable and employee motivation and performance serving as two independent variables. The survey was conducted online through the Google Forms platform. Its application period was October 2023 - February 2024 and it was conducted on the respondents from South region of Muntenia, Romania. A total of 383 responses were gathered in 55 public institutions. The survey was distributed to the leaders of each institution and on average 6 subordinates, so the total number of 56 leaders and 327 subordinates were questioned. There were two different questionnaires, the one presented to the leader and the one presented to their subordinates, these questionnaires being validated following the analysis carried out through a focus group with 10 companies: 15 leaders and 30 subordinates.

The data obtained were initially added into Microsoft Excel 2023 for preprocessing of information related to demographic data, data cleaning and determination of limestone composites. IBM SPSS Version 26 was then used for statistical analyses and SmartPLS 4.1 was used for confirmatory factor analyses. Through Smart PLS 4.1 were performed on all scales and subscales. All tests were two-tailed and the significance level was set at 0.05, so p-values $\alpha=0.05$ were reported as statistically significant, unless otherwise specified. We tested to determine 1) the psychometric properties of the leadership styles construct and 2) whether the 5-factor structure of the construct fits the data collected from the participants. To establish this, we conducted interitem correlations, reliability tests, and both convergent and discriminant validity analyses of the Transformation scale and leadership subscales.

The demographic data showed that 383 respondents participated in the research, of which 57.7% (n=221) were men and 42.3% (n=162) were women.

Table 1.

| | | Gender | | | |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Men | 221 | 57.7 | 57.7 | 57.7 |
| | Women | 162 | 42.3 | 42.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 383 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: made by the authors

In terms of age distribution, 23.8% (n=91) were aged 18-25, 22.5% (n=86) aged 26-35, 26.6% (n=102) aged between 35-45 years, 27.2% (n=104) were over 46 years old.

Table 2.

| | | Age | | | |
|-------|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | 18-25 years | 91 | 23.8 | 23.8 | 23.8 |
| | 26-35 years | 86 | 22.5 | 22.5 | 46.2 |
| | 35-45 years | 102 | 26.6 | 26.6 | 72.8 |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| over 46 years | 104 | 27.2 | 27.2 | 100.0 |
| Total | 383 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: made by the authors

Regarding the distribution related to the respondents' education, there was a higher participation of those with Higher education (33.2%), and Master's studies (44.6%). 6.3% of respondents have Secondary education, 12.8% have Postgraduate studies, and only 3.1% have Doctorate studies.

Table 3.

| | | Educational level | | | |
|-------|----------------------|-------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Secondary education | 24 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Higher education | 127 | 33.2 | 33.2 | 39.4 |
| | Master studies | 171 | 44.6 | 44.6 | 84.1 |
| | Postgraduate studies | 49 | 12.8 | 12.8 | 96.9 |
| | Doctoral studies | 12 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 383 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: made by the authors

In order to explore the impact of different leadership styles on the effective motivation of employees and, consequently, on the increase in organizational performance, the ratio of 14.6% (n=56) managers to 85.4% (n=327) of subordinates was analyzed.

Table 4.

| | | Position held | | | |
|-------|--------------|---------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Leaders | 56 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 14.6 |
| | Subordinates | 327 | 85.4 | 85.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 383 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: made by the authors

Regarding the workplace experience of all 383 respondents, the sample was distributed as follows: between 0 and 10 years 9.1% (n=35); 11-15 years 11% (n=42); 16-20 years 27.2% (n=104); 21-25 years 47.5% (n=182) and 26+ years 5.2% (n=20).

Table 5.

| | | The experience | | | |
|-------|-------------|----------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | 0-10 years | 35 | 9.1 | 9.1 | 9.1 |
| | 11-15 years | 42 | 11.0 | 11.0 | 20.1 |
| | 16-20 years | 104 | 27.2 | 27.2 | 47.3 |
| | 21-25 years | 182 | 47.5 | 47.5 | 94.8 |
| | 26+ years | 20 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 383 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: made by the authors

According to the analysis, the mean of Leadership Style from a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 on the Likert scale is $\bar{x} = 3.98$ and $SD=0.520$, which means that the

respondents acknowledge vision and inspiration, support and encouragement, constructive feedback, the delegation of authority as well as the recognition of merit at the level of the organization both by management and by the execution staff. Also, according to the same scale, motivation is $\bar{x} = 3.81$ and $SD=0.555$, which means that on average the respondents find themselves satisfied with the job they are performing, feel intrinsic motivation and commitment to the organization, and react to recognition and reward system in place, as well as to positive work environment. The mean result of the respondents' self-perceived performance on a Likert scale is $\bar{x} = 4.02$ and $SD=0.786$, which means that respondents evaluate themselves highly on work efficiency, work quality, attitude towards change, contribution to the organization's goals, initiative, and innovation scale.

Table 6.

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|--------|----------------|----------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
| Leadership Style | 383 | 2.60 | 5.00 | 1525.80 | 3.9838 | .52082 | .271 |
| Motivation | 383 | 1.60 | 5.00 | 1459.40 | 3.8104 | .55550 | .309 |
| Performance | 383 | 1.40 | 5.00 | 1542.20 | 4.0266 | .78668 | .619 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 383 | | | | | | |

Source: made by the authors

3. Results

Before hypothesis validity tests, normality tests such as Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk were performed to check the normal distribution of the data (Avram & Marusteri, 2022). The p-value obtained from these tests is compared to a significance level (usually 0.05) to determine if the data follows a normal distribution. If the p-value is greater than the significance level, it indicates that the data is normally distributed (Sevda & Yildirim, 2023). However, it is important to note that the choice of normality test can affect the results. In a comparison of different normality tests, it was found that the Shapiro-Wilk test gives better results for both standard and non-normal distributions (Clinciu, 2018). Therefore, if the p-value obtained from the Shapiro-Wilk test is less than the significance level, it suggests that the data does not follow a normal distribution (Table 7).

Table 7.

| Tests of Normality | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----|------|--------------|-----|------|
| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
| | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | Df | Sig. |
| SL | .189 | 383 | .000 | .931 | 383 | .000 |

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The correlation coefficient between the two variables, Motivation and Leadership Style, is $r = 0.524$, which means a strong positive linear relationship exists between Leadership Style and Motivation. Also, the correlation coefficient between Performance and Leadership Style is $r=0.633$, and we say there is a strong positive linear relationship between Performance and Leadership Style. Since $p<0.01$, we conclude that the results are significant (Table 8).

Table 8.

| Correlations leadership style | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|--------|
| Leadership Style | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .524** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | N | 383 | 383 | 383 |
| Motivation | Pearson Correlation | .524** | 1 | .691** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 383 | 383 | 383 |
| Performance | Pearson Correlation | .633** | .691** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 383 | 383 | 383 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The value of R² in Table 8 tells us what percentage of the dependent variable, i.e. Leadership Style, is explained by independent variables, such as motivation and performance. Thus, 61.5% of the dependent variable or Leadership Style is explained by motivation and performance, while the remaining 38.5% is explained by variables that are not included in the model. Another important test besides this is the Durbin Watson test which shows whether or not there is autocorrelation in the model. The autocorrelation problem does not exist in the present case because the Durbin Watson test value is 1.69.

Table 9.

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .644 ^a | .615 | .412 | .39944 | 1.695 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Performance, Motivation

b. Dependent Variable: Leadership Style

ANOVA test indicates the signification of the model proposed. Because the value of F = 134,727 and the value of p is p = <0,05, these are indicating that the used model is significant at each level (F_(2,380) = 134,727, p = <0,05 – F > F_(2,380), 134,727 > 3.84) (Table 10).

Table 10.

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 42.991 | 2 | 21.496 | 134.727 | .000 ^b |
| Residual | 60.629 | 380 | .160 | | |
| Total | 103.620 | 382 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership Style

b. Predictors: (Constant), Performance, Motivation

4. Analysis and discussion

The data were analyzed using the approach based on: the measurement model (to establish the reliability and validity of the operationalized measures) and the validation of the relationships between the latent constructs. Scale reliability was developed to check the reliability and validity of the measured items (Table 11). Measurement of questionnaire reliability was possible based on Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values for each category of questionnaire sessions. According to Table 10, the total reliability of the instrument for all

Chro alpha categories is LS = 0.720, EM= 0.740, EP = 0.802 so Chro alpha > 0.70; for composite reliability: LS = 0.748, EM = 0.798, EP = 0.833 therefore and CR > 0.70; for the average Variance extracted: LS = 0.655, EM= 0.536, EP = 0.588 so AVE >0.5 and the condition CR > AVE is met, which indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire is reliable, as it appears from Figure 1.

Table 11.

Confirmatory factor analysis and descriptive statistics

| Const ruct | Item | Measure | Mean | VIF | Loading (St.Est.) | Chro alpha | AVE | CR |
|----------------------------------|------|---|-------|-------|-------------------|------------|-------|-------|
| 1.1. Leadership Style | | | | | | 0.720 | 0.655 | 0.748 |
| | SL6 | My leader shares an inspiring vision that motivates me to contribute to common goals | 4.128 | 1.194 | 0.766 | | | |
| | SL7 | My leader provides constant support and encouragement, improving my morale and commitment to work | 3.896 | 1.309 | 0.837 | | | |
| | SL8 | I receive constructive and regular feedback from my leader, which helps me develop professionally | 4.081 | 2.527 | 0.754 | | | |
| | SL9 | My leader delegates authority and responsibilities, giving me the opportunity to demonstrate and develop new skills | 3.992 | 2.534 | 0.794 | | | |
| | SL10 | My merit and achievements are recognized and appreciated by my leader, which increases my motivation | 3.822 | 1.194 | 0.753 | | | |
| 1.2. Employee Motivation | | | | | | 0.740 | 0.536 | 0.798 |
| | EM11 | I am deeply satisfied with the work I do within the organization | 3.658 | 1.372 | 0.817 | | | |
| | EM12 | I feel motivated by personal achievement and the opportunity to learn and grow within the organization | 4.000 | 1.879 | 0.711 | | | |
| | EM13 | The organization's recognition and rewards system motivates me to improve my performance | 3.501 | 1.061 | 0.732 | | | |
| | EM14 | I feel committed to the mission and values of the organization, which positively influences my work | 3.804 | 1.805 | 0.818 | | | |
| | EM15 | The positive and supportive work environment helps motivate me to work efficiently | 4.089 | 1.996 | 0.792 | | | |
| 1.3. Employee Performance | | | | | | 0.802 | 0.558 | 0.833 |

| | | | | |
|------|--|-------|-------|-------|
| EP16 | My performance at work has improved because of leadership style | 4.439 | 1.375 | 0.744 |
| EP17 | The quality of my work reflects the high standards encouraged by my leader | 4.065 | 1.652 | 0.714 |
| EP18 | I am open and adaptable to changes in the organization, thus contributing to continuous improvement | 3.909 | 2.362 | 0.829 |
| EP19 | My contribution to the workplace directly supports the achievement of the organization's goals | 3.608 | 2.538 | 0.851 |
| EP20 | I take the initiative to propose and implement innovative solutions, thus improving organizational performance | 4.112 | 1.522 | 0.876 |

Notes: composite reliability (^aCR); average variance extracted (^bAVE); *** p < 0.000 Removed items: indicator items are below 0.5: All items Loading >0.7 indicates indicator reliability; All average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.5, as indicated by convergent reliability; All-composite reliability (CR) >0.7 indicates internal consistency; All Cronbach's Alpha >0.7 indicate the reliability of the indicator; All VIF values > 0.5 indicate multicollinearity
 Source: made by the author with the help of SMARTPLs 4.1 program

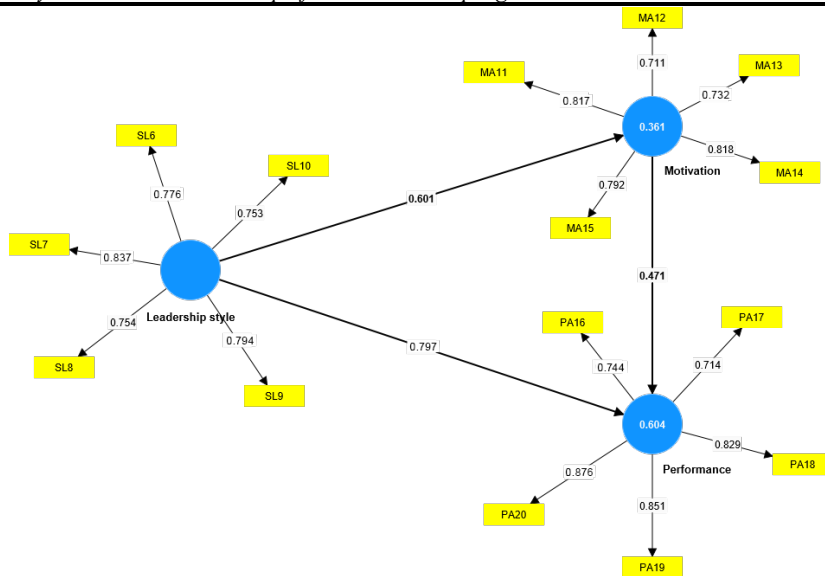


Figure 1. The results of the structural model

Source: made by the author with the help of SMARTPLs 4.1 program

Analyses indicate that the validity and reliability of the model are achieved: according to internal consistency (Table 11), all item loadings are above 0.7; Cronbach's alpha is also around and above 0.7 (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013); all AVE (average variance extracted) values are above 0.5 (Hair, 2014); and CR (composite reliability) values are higher of 0.7, ranging from 0.748 to 0.833 (Nemţeanu et al., 2022), VIF values for all analyzed variables (as calculated in Table 17) were found to be greater than 0.5, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem for the study. The correlation coefficients of the 3

constructs in this study are shown below (Table 17). According to the Fornell- Larcker (1981), the lowest value obtained for AVE was obtained for the latent variable EM (0.536) and EP (0.558), being higher than the minimum allowed limit of 0.5. The values obtained for AVE are more higher than the correlation coefficient between the competent variables and all distict variables and it can be added that the reflective model meets the criteria of discriminant validity (Table 12).

Table 12.

Discriminant validity analysis Fornell- Larcker

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | Leadership style | Motivation | Performance |
| Leadership style | 0.674 | | |
| Motivation | 0.601 | 0.660 | |
| Performance | 0.680 | 0.709 | 0.747 |

Note: ^a Diagonal elements (bold) are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE);

^b Diagonal elements are correlations between constructs, **p < 0.01;

^c The diagonal elements are the square of the correlations.

Source: made by the author with the help of SMARTPLS 4.1 program

Table 13 presents the standardized coefficients Path (β) that indicate the intensity of the links between the structural model variables. Their values vary between -1 and 1. The correlation of latent variables is significant if the “t-value” levels are greater than 1.96 and the “p-value” less than 0.05 (Mara Del Baldo, 2023; Xuefeng Cao, 2023).

Table 13.

Testing hypothesis

| Testing hypothesis | Beta (β) | T – Value (>1.96) | P Values (<0.05) | Results |
|--|------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| H₁ - SL -> EM | 0.601 | 18.749 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H₂ - SL -> EP | 0.397 | 11.229 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H₃ - EM-> SL -> EP | 0.239 | 11.200 | 0.000 | Accepted |

A mediation analysis was conducted to assess the mediating role of SL in the link between EM and EP. The results (see Table 14) showed that the total effect of EM on EP was significant (H3: $\beta=0.709$ $t=33.440$, $p < 0.000$). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (SL), the impact of EM on EP became insignificant ($\beta = 0.471$, $t=13.765$, $p < 0.000$). The indirect effect of EM on EP through SL proved to be significant ($\beta = 0.239$, $t=11.200$, $p < 0.000$). This shows that the relationship between EM and EP is entirely mediated by SL.

Table 14.

Mediator analysis of SL on the link between EM and EP

| Total effect (EM-> EP) | | Direct effect (EM-> EP) | | | Indirect Effects of EM on EP | | | | |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|--|------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------------|
| Coeff | P-value | Coeff. | P-value | | Coeff | SD | T value | P Values | BI [2.5%; 97,5%] |
| 0.709 | 0.000 | 0.471 | 0.000 | H₃ - EM-> SL -> EP | 0.239 | 0.021 | 11.200 | 0.00 | 0.198;0.281 |

The analysis's results accepted all three hypotheses, which showed that leadership styles can significantly impact motivation and implicitly lead to better employee performance in an organization.

5. Conclusions and future research directions

Our study highlights the importance of leadership in driving employee engagement and satisfaction, pointing out once again that leaders who adopt employee-oriented management styles can significantly improve work and organizational performance. By providing empirical evidence, our research emphasizes the importance of appropriate leadership styles in maximizing employee potential and optimizing organizational outcomes. The practical implications also emphasize the relevance of effective leadership strategies in creating motivating and performing work environments.

Given the rapidly evolving work environments, the study recognizes the critical role of effective management and leadership in organizational success. As global competition intensifies, proactive leadership changes are essential for superior performance results. With workforce dynamics, technological advances, and changing employee expectations, leadership approaches must evolve to perhaps support remote work and foster adaptive leadership in response to external and internal challenges (Maren, 2021; Pogan, 2022).

As limits we can add that from 383 respondents, there were only 56 leaders, and can be considered as being a reduced number, face to the subordinates, but in future studies, this number can be improved. And as we may observe, the respondents were from South region of Romania, the most economic developed area of the country, so this limit could be reduced from this point of view. Furthermore, another limitation of the study can be characterized as the most common challenge in social science research: the empirical evidence is based on the respondents' subjective perception, including the perception of their own performance, for which the results can be marked by the biased human nature. For the future reference, the performance indicators could be linked to the more objective measurement system, such as KPI fulfilment, even though the further research still has to acknowledge the specificities of measuring achievements in public sector compared to the more precise instruments available in the private sector (sales, ROE, etc.).

The study findings demonstrate a strong positive correlation between leadership styles, employee motivation, and organizational performance. The results indicate that leaders who adopt a more involved and supportive approach, as described in the implemented methodology, can significantly improve organizational performance by fostering a motivating and high-performing work environment. This empirical evidence further underscores the importance of adopting appropriate leadership styles to maximize employee potential, optimize organizational outcomes, and ultimately drive success in the organizational setting.

The findings are aligned with insights of numerous leadership studies that emphasize the impact of leadership styles on tackling complex challenges, promoting employee engagement, reducing workplace stress, improving skills and improving overall job satisfaction and engagement. Additionally, the study reflects on the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational performance, fostering a positive work environment, and motivating staff to meet work demands, ultimately linking leadership to organizational performance.

In addition, the article explores the impact of adaptive leadership in challenging work environments, highlighting the need for leaders to adapt to employee needs and changes in internal and external contexts. Evidence supports that adaptive leadership

positively influences employee job satisfaction, engagement, innovation, effective crisis management, and organizational adaptability, crucial for organizations navigating institutional instability and today's dynamic settings.

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