

SOURCES OF CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES IN HEALTHCARE IN BULGARIA DURING COVID 19 CRISIS

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to identify the content components of the leadership styles in healthcare during COVID 19 crisis. Another goal of the study is to examine the relationship between value preferences and various demographic indicators, such as gender, age, education, position in the hierarchy, length of service and place of residence. The study was conducted among 376 people between February and March 2021 during the COVID 19 crisis. The methodology of B. Bass and B. Avolio - "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" was applied. The instrument was standardized for Bulgarian conditions by S. Karabelyova (Karabelyova S., 2011) and it described the transforming (charismatic) leadership style, the transactional leadership style, and the avoiding (liberal) leadership style. The data was processed via the software programme SPSS - 21 and for the purpose of the analysis descriptive statistics and dispersion analysis have been made. The study assumes that if the sources of changes in leadership styles are known, activities of an organization could be optimized, and the results of their joint activities could be maximized. The data show that demographic indicators differentiate leadership styles to varying degrees.

Keywords: *Leadership styles, healthcare organizations, COVID 19, Bulgaria.*

1. Introduction

Leadership in the present study is perceived as dynamic and open, emerging and functioning spontaneously; applying creative methods of organization in order to use innovative resources and achieve success in future; it is strongly influenced by group moods. Leaders are seen as "meaning leaders", emphasizing "symbolic leadership behavior", inspiring message, intellectual stimulation of followers through leadership ability to trust themselves and their followers, self-sacrifice and performance "beyond honor" by followers (Alimo- Metcalfe, 2002). Leadership is charismatic and it can bring about significant organizational change because it "changes" employees to pursue organizational goals and the overall vision for the future of the organization (Shamir, 1995). Thus, the derived leadership specifics fit into the characteristics of the transformational and charismatic style of management within the "New Paradigm" - leadership with mission and skills, motivation and consistency.

In this sense, B. Bass and B. Avolio (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire - Bass & Avolio, 2004) identify four types of leadership styles and build a multifactor questionnaire for their study:

(1) Idealized influence - transforming leaders whose behavior leads to admiration, trust and respect to them; their followers want to emulate them;

(2) Inspirational motivation - the leader who encourages and inspires people with enthusiasm and optimism for the vision of future development;

(3) Intellectual stimulation - transformative leaders who encourage their followers to express doubts, to rethink problems and approaches to old solutions, to look for new ways, to be creative and innovative and

4) Individual consideration (respect) or individualized attention - the leader who actively develops the potential of its employees by creating new opportunities.

2. Methods

2.1. Procedure

The methods in the current study give the opportunity to assess specific factors that determine the degree of influence of the studied leadership styles in the field of healthcare.

The statistic programs are expected to bring out the leadership styles with the strongest impact in the work environment.

2.2. Participants

376 people from two health institutions in the country are covered: one public and one private - for the period from February to April 2021, of which men - 157, women - 219; under the age of 30 - 65 people, from 30 to 50 - 188 and over 50 - 123 people; living in the capital - 29, in a big city - 213, in a small town and village - 134; public hospital - 177 and private hospital - 199; doctors - 231 people, nurses - 55; administration - 48 and other staff - 42 people; in management positions - 106; executives - 270. The studied nests are two with a composition of 147 people and 229 people, respectively.

2.3. Measures

The "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" of B. Bass and B. Avolio has been used in the present study. The methodology is standardized for Bulgarian conditions by S. Karabeliova (Karabeliova, 2011). The instrument shows high construct validity ($\alpha = 0.74$) and content validity ($\alpha = 0.94$). The internal consistency of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire is also very good - $\alpha = 0.70$ for all scales (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The sub-scales are free of social desirability. The individual sub-scales show good reliability according to the Cronbach's coefficient. The results for the reliability of the different scales are similar to those of other researchers who have applied it. This gives grounds to claim that the questionnaire can be used in Bulgarian conditions to register the different leadership styles. With this methodology one can study the possible change of this type of leadership styles and find trends in their development related to the dynamic changes in the external environment. It is assumed that personal, situational and positional factors will determine leadership styles. The aim is to find trends in their development in response to future requirements of the external environment.

3. Results

The results shown in Table 1 express the manifestations of the different leadership styles in the studied health organizations. The respondents believe that the dominant characteristics of their managers are most fully described by the way they achieve pre-agreed standards.

Table 1. Differences in leadership style types by demographic variables.

Leadership styles/sources of variations	Idealized influence, charisma	Inspirational motivation	Intellectual motivation	Individualized attention	Conditional rewards	Management of exceptions	Liberal leadership
Gender	F=4.031; p=0.045	F=0.001; p=0.977	F=0.157; p=0.692	F=1.198; p=0.274	F=0.368; p=0.544	F=0.592; p=0.442	F=0.297; p=0.586
Age	F=4.578; p=0.011	F=8.010; p=0.000	F=5.176; p=0.006	F=8.458 ; p=0.000	F=3.630; p=0.027	F=14.723; p=0.000	F=4.513; p=0.012
Location	F=0.096; p=0.909	F=0.073; p=0.93	F=2.117; p=0.122	F=0.322; p=0.725	F=1.481; p=0.229	F=1.957; p=0.143	F=1.194; p=1.194
Property	F=0.062; p=0.804	F=2.412; p=0.121	F=0.059; p=0.808	F=0.018; p=0.892	F=0.026; p=0.871	F=4.033; p=0.856	F=0.426; p=0.514
Position	F=5.868; p=0.001	F=11.707; p=0.000	F=10.764; p=0.047	F=8.745; p=0.000	F=4.754; p=0.003	F=11.721; p=0.000	F=4.868; p=0.002
Total length of service	F=1.812; p=0.165	F=2.692; p=0.055	F=1.198; p=0.303	F=0.64; p=0.528	F=0.586; p=0.557	F=7.526; p=0.001	F=4.868; p=0.003
Length of service in the organization	F=6.242; p=0.002	F=3.705; p=0.026	F=1.687; p=0.186	F=1.238; p=0.291	F=1.998; p=0.137	F=8.371; p=0.000	F=1.903; p=0.151
Length of service at the position	F=9.852; p=0.000	F=6.18; p=0.002	F=5.422; p=0.005	F=4.663; p=0.025	F=3.745; p=0.025	F=8.576; p=0.000	F=5.033; p=0.007
Studied nest	F=0.027; p=0.869	F=0.048; p=0.827	F=0.007; p=0.935	F=0.004; p=0.950	F=0.192; p=0.662	F=0.024; p=0.877	F=0.291; p=0.590
Hierarchical position	F=41.372; p=0.000	F=50.786; p=0.000	F=54.699; p=0.000	F=72.835; p=0.000	F=35.294; p=0.000	F=53.235; p=0.000	F=9.954; p=0.002

Note: Scores which are significantly different are displayed in bold

The management of exceptions fits into the understanding of transforming leadership, “which refers to the process of change by embracing emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals, and includes assessment of motives of followers, meeting their needs and treating them as full-blooded human beings. “(Karabeliova, 2011). At the same time, the leader takes actions only when there are problems without taking risks. In the active management of exceptions, the leader actively strives to control and monitor for potential deviations of his subordinates from the standards, errors and inaccuracies that are allowed in the consistent implementation of tasks and takes corrective actions, if necessary (Bass, 1998).

The way leaders influence their self-esteem through interpersonal communication is highly appreciated, as well as the ways they motivate and inspire them to work and help them find meaning in their job, increasing the awareness of their followers about what is good for the whole group by applying proactive measures. Followers, on the other hand, are motivated to perform tasks beyond their own expectations, which is useful for them. The idealized influence occurs when the leaders act as role models for their followers.

The individualized attention, when the leaders pay special attention to the needs of each follower, to his expectations and desire for development is, so called, an auxiliary characteristic of leaders according to the respondents. The leader gives the followers many opportunities to learn new things, discusses with each follower his individual ideas and plans for personal growth. At the same time, the leader tries to exchange rewards for effort or good performance. He determines the tasks that need to be performed and offers remuneration only in cases of a result commensurate with the set standard.

It is assumed that leadership styles find their expression in different ways, depending on environmental factors. Therefore, the leadership styles would have different manifestations depending on demographic variables, such as: gender, age, location, type of organization, position, total length of service, length of service in the organization, position and place of residence. The hypotheses are tested by analysis of variance, the results of which are shown in the tables below. The multiple comparison tests are applied when it is established after one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) that the F-ratio is significant and the "p" is a significance level, not bigger than 0.05.

The hypothesis of a differentiating role of gender regarding the leadership styles, was partially confirmed - there are significant gender differences, related to the charismatic leadership ($F = 4.031$; $p = 0.045$). This result shows that there are no qualitative differences in the leadership effectiveness of male and female leaders. However, it should be taken into account that men are perceived as showing more leadership oriented towards the whole and the task and are more likely to use an autocratic or directive style than women. In contrary, women are perceived as showing more socially oriented leadership, more often using a democratic or participatory style than men, and that is confirmed by the results of the present study (Eagly, Kakau, Makhijani, 1995).

The results from statistical procedures show that age significantly differentiates the seven leadership styles: idealized influence ($F = 4.578$; $p = 0.011$), inspirational motivation ($F = 8.010$; $p = 0.000$), intellectual motivation ($F = 5.176$; $p = 0.006$), individualized attention ($F = 8,458$; $p = 0,000$), conditional rewards ($F = 3,630$; $p = 0.027$), management of impressions ($F = 14,723$; $p = 0,000$) and liberal leadership ($F = 4,513$; $p = 0.012$). There is a tendency to increase the grades and self-assessments of these leadership styles with age. It could be a logical explanation for the obtained results that with increasing age, more and more expectations are expressed regarding the leadership contribution to the organization and its development.

The hypothesis about the differentiating significance of the settlement type was not confirmed. According to the data from the analysis of variance, no statistically significant differences are derived. The participation of individuals in an organization can be described as motivated; the employees expect the leader to perform his role of competent and concerned manager about their development, regardless of location.

On the grounds of understanding that the differences in styles in the organization are significantly differentiated by the type of property - private and state, a variance analysis was made. The results of the analysis show that there are no statistically significant differences according to this demographic variable. In general, the manifestations of coherence between manager and employee are highly appreciated. In addition, it can be noted that attention is paid to the work sense. These values can also be interpreted in terms of avoiding conflict behavior and the perception of friendly relations.

The position is an indicator that distinguishes leadership style. Of interest is the result of descriptive statistics, where there is the highest data in the administration, regardless of style. It is reasonable to believe, however, that the emphasis is on coordination within the organization and proactive behavior for stability. It can also be stated that in order to meet workplace goals, the team members strive to strictly follow the rules, instructions and procedures in the implementation.

The total length of service has statistically significant impact on leadership styles without being associated with critical thinking, making urgent changes ($F = 2.692$; $p = 0.055$) and achieving the preliminary agreed standards ($F = 7.526$; $p = 0.001$).

The length of service in the specific organization also significantly differentiates the leadership styles of idealized influence ($F = 6.242$; $p = 0.002$), inspirational motivation ($F = 3.705$; $p = 0.026$) and management of impressions ($F = 8.371$; $p = 0.000$). There is tendency to increase the grades and self-assessments of the respondents in the specific organization with the increase of the length of service in the specific organization, again. However, the data shows that there is a link between the assessments of the people with the longest length of service in the specific organization and those with the shortest one. The first few years of the individual's career are usually devoted to testing different work roles, behaviors and work strategies, and over time the best approaches are established and implemented. Newcomers feel motivated and inspired to recognize the goals of the organization as their own and they find sense and challenges in their job. The line manager identifies the tasks on the agenda and informs others how they will be rewarded if they meet these goals. The accumulated length of service allows the leader to assess the negative effects of non-compliance with these conditions for him and his followers.

The length of service at the specific position significantly differentiates each leadership style. The successful organizational behavior is important to match the skills of opposite leadership styles for interpersonal interactions and orientation to the requirements of the environment, combined with the skills to manage the control system and changes introduction, dictated by greater professional experience.

Preferred leadership styles are not found according to the studied nests in Plovdiv and Stara Zagora. It turns out that the leadership style depends on the location, where it is practiced.

The position held in the organization significantly differentiates the self-assessments and assessments of each leadership style. There were registered higher self-assessments of the managers in the sample than the assessments of the performers. The assumptions about higher self-assessments of managers than those of performers are confirmed by the results of the study, which can be explained by the lack of sufficiently frequent and clear communication "from top to bottom" in the organization. It is also possible that the difference in assessments is due to an existing difference in the perception of leaders and the way their followers perceive them.

The study of leadership styles leads to the conclusion that the most varied are the styles described as charismatic in the New Paradigm theory: "inspirational motivation" and "intellectual stimulation", as well as "conditional rewards" and "individualized attention", "idealized influence" (charisma)". The styles of "management of exceptions" and "liberal leadership" are relatively steady. Differences in the studied demographic indicators were registered for each style. According to the results, it can be stated that the qualities of the leader are appreciated, related to the creative and entrepreneurial attitudes and orientations towards innovation and ingenuity.

4. Discussion

The results show that demographic indicators differentiate leadership styles to various degrees. The gender, the studied nests / Plovdiv and Stara Zagora /, the total length of service and the types of property / state or private / are not sources of variation and do not differentiate the four dimensions. The most varied is the charismatic leadership style, which is influenced by age, location, position, length of service in the organization and position, as well as the hierarchical level, followed by styles of inspirational motivation and management of exceptions, influenced by age, total length of service and the length of service in the organization. The styles of intellectual motivation, individual attention, and conditional rewards are influenced equally by age. The logic of such an arrangement can be sought in the desire to maintain stability and develop opportunities for adequate rapid actions, if necessary.

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