PORTRAIT OF THE ROMANIAN LEADER

Elena Mihaela ILIESCU*

Roxana Alina STAMATI**

Abstract

Leadership, an unquestionable quality of those who succeed in being followed and especially pursued implies a series of common attributes but not necessarily a standard pattern of manifestation, which is exercised differently depending on the personality of the leader, on circumstances and last but not least on the specificity of the involved community.

Based on this hypothesis, the objective of this research is to create a portrait of the leaders of organizations in Romania according to age, gender, seniority and education.

This objective led to the selection of an empirical research method, based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the answers obtained by questioning a sample of 22 managers and decision-makers from companies operating in Romania. The questionnaire used as a working tool[1] was developed by researchers in this field, and it includes 45 essential questions for the analysis and classification of the respondents into a certain leadership model. The answers were collected using the Google Forms platform and detailed, interpreted and summarized using SPSS and Excel (Microsoft Office).

The processed results outline a leader strongly influenced by his culture and social position, who prefers to make spontaneous decisions in the face of events that arise. Moreover, the Romanian leader is not aware of his abilities and assumes that the people under his coordination are inefficient, constantly needing a push.

Certainly, the results of the present study can be improved by considering an alternative research method, by interviewing a larger sample and by going deeper into this topic.

Keywords: *leadership styles, leader, manager, entrepreneur, questionnaire.*

1. Introduction

Throughout the ages, managers, regardless of the size of the entity or the geographic area in which they have operated, have faced complex and often novel problems. In the absence of generally valid prescriptions or a track record of solutions, they have had to look for new ways of tackling challenges, which have the necessary skills to overcome difficult situations. Leaders, innovators with the skills to overcome difficult situations effectively, play a decisive role in such situations. This is why it is necessary to distinguish the major differences between a leader and a manager. As defined by the five functions of management identified by the French engineer Henri Fayol as early as 1916, but still considered relevant today[2], a leader plans, organizes, commands, directs and controls activities within an organization. They create control, help maintain an orderly business strategy. On the other hand, the leader is oriented towards the individual, towards forming close relationships with them and aims to develop an environment conducive to growth. A leader inspires, trains, improves the team, the people around them and has the ability to achieve surprising positive results.

Thus, although there is no unanimously accepted definition, most leadership experts identify a number of common leadership skills: communicativeness, vision, a strong set of values and openness to the new.

Whether we are talking about Gica Hagi, Nadia Comaneci, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Napoleon Bonaparte, Princess Diana or Mahatma Ghandi, the world's most popular and watched leaders had completely different skills and character traits, but also similar qualities that made people listen, follow and respect them. In these

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* Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, „Nicolae Titulescu" University of Bucharest (e-mail: mag_mihaela@yahoo.com, mihaelailiescu@univnt.ro).

** Postgraduate student, Master's program "Entrepreneurship and Business Administration", Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, „Nicolae Titulescu" University of Bucharest (e-mail: roxana.stamati@gmail.com).

[1] Questionnaire developed by B. Avolio and B. Bass, published by Mind Garden, Inc., *www.mindgarden.com*.

[2] V. Van Vliet, *Five Functions of Management (Fayol)*, Retrieved from ToolsHero: *https://www.toolshero.com/management/five-functions-of-management/*, last time consulted on 10.03.2023.

circumstances, the answer to the question "What are the traits of a successful leader and how can they be identified and acquired?" has not yet found its final form, but the question is still of interest from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

What is certain is that the leader is a role model for his or her teams and can be distinguished on the basis of the results he or she achieves in the organization, even if he or she is not identified in the organization chart and is not necessarily a person at the top of the leadership pyramid.

Globally, there are dedicated platforms and questionnaires that help to paint a portrait of the area leader. For Romania, however, there are not many studies or details on the styles approached by local managers or entrepreneurs. In this respect, this paper identifies, with the help of the case study, which are the general traits of Romanian managers, which leadership style they predominantly adopt and which other details should be analyzed in depth.

2. Conceptual clarifications

2.1. Theoretical perspectives

In all definitions and research on leadership and what it entails, the distinction between a manager, executive or boss and a leader is very important. The latter has the ability to train and coordinate people with ease so that the level of satisfaction, contentment and success is equal between leader and team member.

In the search for great leaders, a number of researchers and psychologists have first defined the notion of leadership so that it is clear and easy to spot. Among the most popular definitions are those developed by Bernard Bass, John McCormack and Jacques Clement. Thus, the key words they use repeatedly in their definition of leadership are: *talent, ability, results, inspiration, achieved goals, responsibility, discipline, management, competence.*

In addition to definitions of the concept, the literature identifies the two major leadership styles - autocratic and democratic, clearly differentiates their characteristics and divides decision-making into directive and participative.

Most of the definitions and studies on this concept are relatively new, having been developed after 1840[3]. Early analyses focused on the innate traits of those being analyzed, so that it could be determined why they might be leaders, and in the early part of the 20th century, studies focused on personality traits and characteristics of leaders. The first identified leadership styles, still recognized today by their popularity (**authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire**), were introduced into the literature in 1939 by psychologists Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippitt and Ralph K. White[4].

Later, in 1948, after a series of studies and empirical research, researcher Ralph Stodgill[5] established that "a leader is formed in one social relationship and that people who are leaders in that situation are not automatically leaders in another situation" (for example, a manager who has formed as a good leader for the team he leads in one company may not be as good in another). Therefore, the original model based on leader traits was matched to the type of situation in which the leader operates.

The aim of research undertaken up to the 1950s[6] on this specific title was to identify behavioral, mental, social and practical traits that define an effective leader. From a practical point of view, once this template had been identified, these traits could be sought or replicated within an organization so that it could function better. But this empirical approach has not been perpetuated, and today psychometric methods and models are used, in the form of tests and questionnaires, to help assess personality traits, which are then developed over the course of each subject's work.

A review of the literature has led to a broadening of the view of leadership styles, which are summarised in Table 1.

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[3] G. Ekvall, J. Arvonen,, *Change-Centered Leadership: An Extension of the Two-Dimensional Model*, Scandinavian Journal of Management, Elsevier, vol. 7(1), 1991, pp. 17-26.

[4] K. Lewin, R. Lippitt, R.K. White, *Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created "Social Climates",* The Journal of Social Psychology, Bulletin of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, 10, 1939, pp. 269-299.

[5] E.P. Hollander, *The Impact of Ralph M. Stogdill and the Ohio State Leadership Studies on a Transactional Approach to Leadership*, Journal of Management, 5(2), 1979, pp. 157-165, available online at *https://doi.org/10.1177/014920637900500206*, last time consulted on 10.03.2023.

[6] S. Benmira, M. Agboola, *Evolution of leadership theory*, BMJ Leader, 2021;5:3-5, available online at *http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/leader-2020-000296*, last time consulted on 10.03.2023.

Table 1 Leadership styles identified based on literature review

Transformational leadership	Strategic leadership	Democratic leadership
- help in emergency or critical situations; - aim to transform and improve the functions and capabilities of team members and organizations by motivating and encouraging them.	- adopted by those with a well-defined mission and a clear vision; - aim to get the best out of people or situations and aim for long-term results.	- focus on the employee, make them feel valued.
Transactional leadership	**Autocratic leadership**	**Bureaucratic leadership (the clerk)**
- preferred by those working in sales and on commission; - predominantly based on the concept of action and reward.	- works best and is often encountered at executive level; - team members' opinions are not taken into account when making a decision - they expect others to adhere to their decisions, which is not sustainable in the long term.	- they put others first; - are based on strict adherence to the rules.
Laissez-faire leadership	**Leadership though mentoring**	**Maternal or paternal leadership**
- suitable for creative, arts-related areas of activity; - decision-making authority rests with team members (least intrusive) - improves team creativity and productivity.	- coach-like leader (inspires and helps teams to evolve); - develops strategies that emphasize the success of team members. While this is similar to strategic and democratic leadership styles. the focus here is more on the individual.	Mostly found in family businesses
Charismatic leadership	**Interpersonal leadership**	**Inclusive leadership**
- practical in situations where leaders are looking to motivate and coach their team.	- focuses on building and maintaining relationships within the team to ensure efficiency.	- aims both to maintain relationships within the organization and to listen carefully to all opinions.

Source: personal adaptation based on the literature cited in the bibliography

2.2. Empirical perspectives

Although the concept is relatively new in empirical research, studies on leadership demonstrate theoretical advances made decades ago, and sediment or dismantle certain theories. In the following we describe a number of empirical research methods and analyses their results and their impact on theoretical assumptions about leadership.

Given the complexity of the topic and the plethora of studies to date, papers published over the last seven years at a global level have been chosen and reviewed. They are based on similar hypotheses, identifying leadership models in different organizations or cultures, with a focus on the three most common styles - transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. The findings of the studies converge in a common direction: transformational leadership has potential, is the most analyzed, desired and often shows close correlations with the other two styles in this category.

Table 2 Relevant empirical studies on leadership in the last 7 years

Crt No.	Author name	Year	Location of the research (country/company/organisation)	Scope	Obtained results
1	- Flávia Monize Barbosa - Lillian do Nascimento Gambi - Mateus Cecilio Gerolamo[7]	2015	- **Brazil,** online - December 2014 - March 2015 - 47 managers	- *the correlation between two groups of variables: leadership styles and quality management principles*	- *transformational and transactional styles are positively correlated with quality management principles*; - the data indicate a higher correlation for the transformational style.
2	Massad Awdah Alatawi [8]	2017	- Southern California, **USA** - 14 organisations, 365 employees	- *the relationship between transformational leadership and the intention to change the workplace,* useful for ameliorating the potential effects that can arise from staff turnover.	- only *17% of the variation in turnover intention levels among employees was driven by transformational style;* - *managers who possess only one component of transformational leadership should not be considered transformational[9] leaders;* Recommendation: future research should focus on refining and revisiting the work of Bass and his colleagues.
3	- António Sacavém - Rui Cruz - Maria José Sousa - Albérico Rosário - João Salis Jomes[10]	2019	- **Portugal** - qualitative analysis based on an integrative literature review	- *identifying the most effective type of leadership for innovation* within an organization.	-*leaders who approach leadership in a fatherly, authentic and democratic way are the most effective in supporting the implementation of innovative* processes in organizations; - the relationship between leader and team is positively influenced by ensuring work autonomy.
4	- Brent N. Reed - Abigail M. Klutts - T. Joseph Mattingly[11]	2019	- Baltimore, **USA** - 441 items identified in initial searches	- Identify and *summarize definitions of leadership*, definition of competencies and assessment methods used in pharmacy education based on a systematic literature review.	-the most popular definitions of *leadership involved motivating others to achieve a specific goal and* involved *changes in organizational leadership.*
5	Cătălina Roșca[12]	2015	- Bucharest, **Romania** - different batches of respondents (public managers, students, master students and prisoners)	- Determining a correlation between *the link between emotional intelligence (EQ-i) and transformational leadership variables (MLQ).*	- "in order to bring about change it is necessary that **the core values of the leader are congruent with those of the subordinates."**

Source: personal adaptation based on the literature cited in the bibliography

[7] F.M. Barbosa, L. do Nascimento Gambi, M.C. Gerolamo, *Leadership and quality management - a correlational study between leadership models and quality management principles*, Gestão & Produção, 24 (3), Jul-Sep 2017, pp.438 - 449, available online at *https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-530X2278-16*, last time consulted on 10.02.2023.

[8] M.A. Alatawi, *The Myth of the Additive Effect of The Transformational Leadership Model,* Contemporary Management Research, vol. 13, no. 1, March 2017, pp. 19-30, available online at *https://doi.org/10.7903/cmr.16269*, last time consulted on 25.02.2023.

[9] The four I's: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

[10] A. Sacavém, R. Cruz, M.J. Sousa, A. Rosário, J.S. Gomes, *An Integrative Literature Review on Leadership Models for Innovative Organizations,* Journal of Reviews on Global Economics, 2019, 8, pp. 1741-1751, last time consulted on 25.02.2023.

[11] B.N. Reed, A.M. Klutts, T.J. Mattingly, *A Systematic Review of Leadership Definitions, Competencies, and Assessment Methods in Pharmacy Education,* American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, November 2019, 83 (9) 7520, pp. 1873 - 1885, available online at *https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7520*, last time consulted on 25.02.2023.

[12] C. Roșca, *Liderul transformațional-carismatic*, Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015, pp. 219-286.

The research reviewed in this study also showed that transformational leadership has an effect on the creative process, and relational leadership, in the form of inclusive leadership, is closely related to innovative work behavior[13].

3. Leadership styles of Romanian leaders

3.1. Identifying the leadership style using MLQ questionnaire. Description of the study method

Empirical research on the concept of leadership started to be developed in Romania in the last 10-15 years, based on the idea of identifying the portrait of the Romanian leader. This practical study is a qualitative analysis of a cumulative database using the MLQ questionnaire. The aim of the research was to determine in which of the three leadership models (transformational, transactional or passive-avoidant) the Romanian respondents fit and whether there is a differentiation in their approach according to gender, age, seniority or others.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), published and administered by Mindgarden, consists of 36 questions that refer to leadership styles and 9 questions that refer to leadership outcomes. The instrument was created by Bruce J. Avolio and Bernard M. Bass with the sole purpose to assess a full range of leadership styles: transformational (five levels), transactional (two levels), passive-avoidant (2 levels), and 3 levels measuring overall leadership outcomes. The MLQ can be used to differentiate between effective and ineffective leaders at all organizational levels and has been validated across many cultures and types of organizations through internal and external research.

Thus, the three scales in the MLQ that detail the results obtained are:

- EE (extra effort- which refers to the leader's ability to get subordinates to put in more effort to reach the goal);
- EEF (effectiveness which highlights leaders with optimal results that satisfy the interests of the group);
- SAT (satisfaction associated with leadership style, which shows whether the leader inspires confidence in the group through the results achieved).

A scientific study conducted in Romania in 2010[14] based on the MLQ5X questionnaire applied to a sample of 101 public managers who had previously participated in the Young Professional Scheme (YPS), fourth cycle, reveals the following scores on the three dimensions of leadership behavior: 3.4 for the transformational dimension, 2.93 for the transactional dimension and 0.75 for the passive dimension.

According to the characteristics attributed by the theoretical basis to each leadership style, young people are more flexible, open to change, lean more towards new managerial methods and choose digital management. Mature leaders, aged over 35, choose solutions already in place and are more rigid, and their managerial decision has a wide set of variables (they formulate a medium or long-term strategy, are more sober, make a resilience plan and take into account risks they can manage)[15].

3.2. Interpreted results

The practical part of this study started in February 2023 and generated a series of 22 responses received at the time of writing, therefore the analysis was carried out on these preliminary but relevant responses for the proposed hypothesis.

Next, we analyze how and whether these attributes are met for the segment in Romania analyzed so far.

Although most of the studies based on the MLQ questionnaire (already mentioned) have predominantly identified the transformational style, the current sample analyzed generated results that predominantly categorize respondents as transactional. Thus, 15 of the 22 responses received, were classified according to the MLQ interpretation instructions to the transactional style, with higher results than the other styles, as shown in Table 3.

[13] G. Shuchi, N. Nishad, T. Abhishek, A.C. Shafaq, A. Khushbu, *Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Innovation Performance During Coronavirus Disease*, Frontiers in Psychology, vol. 13, 2022, available online at *URL=https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.811330 DOI=10.3389/fpsyg.2022.811330,* ISSN=1664-1078, last time consulted on 15.03.2023.

[14] D.F. Stanescu, C. Roşca, *Transformational leadership in the public sector - not a bedtime story,* Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations, vol. 12, no. 2 (19) / 2010, pp. 95-106.

[15] T.C. Ţiclău, *Leadership transformaţional în România. O revizuire a studiilor empirice asupra conceptului,,* Revista Transilvană de Ştiinţe Administrative*, 1 (36)/2015, pp. 109-123.

Table 3 Average feedback results for each leadership style. Delimitation by gender and age

Respondent	Average result Transformational style	Average result Transactional style	Mean score style passive-avoidant	Comparative score - highest score	Gender	Age
R1	1,80	1,42	2,75	passive-avoidant	Man	25-30
R2	2,15	2,54	2,50	transactional	Man	25-30
R3	2,30	3,00	2,75	transactional	Woman	25-30
R4	1,85	3,50	1,75	transactional	Woman	25-30
R5	1,29	1,90	1,63	transactional	Woman	25-30
R6	2,60	3,63	3,63	transactional	Woman	25-30
R7	1,90	2,38	3,00	passive-avoidant	Man	31- 40
R8	2,60	2,46	3,00	passive-avoidant	Man	31- 40
R9	2,30	3,00	2,75	transactional	Man	31- 40
R10	2,25	3,17	3,25	passive-avoidant	Man	31- 40
R11	1,70	1,54	2,38	passive-avoidant	Man	31- 40
R12	2,50	3,75	3,38	transactional	Man	31- 40
R13	2,40	3,17	2,63	transactional	Man	31- 40
R14	1,85	3,17	2,63	transactional	Woman	31- 40
R15	2,25	3,33	2,50	transactional	Woman	31- 40
R16	2,35	3,38	3,25	transactional	Woman	31- 40
R17	2,25	3,75	2,20	transactional	Woman	31- 40
R18	2,10	2,33	2,38	passive-avoidant	Man	41-50
R19	2,85	3,13	2,83	transactional	Woman	41-50
R20	2,20	2,88	2,75	transactional	Woman	41-50
R21	1,85	2,21	2,75	passive-avoidant	Man	≥ 51
R22	1,38	2,20	2,00	transactional	Man	≥ 51

Source: own processing in Excel based on responses received

In terms of the age demarcation of the responses, 50% of the respondents are between 31-40 years old, 27.27% are between 25 and 30, and the remaining 22.73% fall into the categories 41-50 years and above.

The gender delineation of respondents is 54.5% male and 45.5% female, with the note that all females were categorized under transactional style as compared to males. As reflected in the data centralized in Table 3, men who were not assigned to the transactional style adopted the passive-exercising style.

Figure 1 Gender breakdown of respondents according to responses received
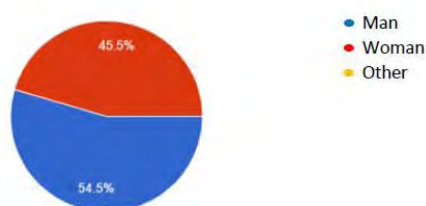
Source: own processing in Excel based on responses received

Also, an analysis of the results according to the participants' education and length of service in the company shows that the majority (10 out of 22) have a university degree at bachelor level and 5-10 years of service (also 10 out of 22 responses). If these preliminary results will have the same weights in the final study, we could make a generalization and assume that the transactional style is characteristic of Romanian leaders with more than 5 years in the company they work for. Also, most of those who participated in the study have the title of Team Manager or Administrator in the company, which can help in the future to draw a conclusion about the title that leaders have, depending on the style they approach.

Table 5 Descriptive analysis based on results

Variable	Mode name	Mode frequency	Categories	Frequency (nr.)	Frequency (%)
Position held within the company	**Team Manager**	6	Administrator	4,00	18,18
			Other title	4,00	18,18
			Analyst & trainer	1,00	4,55
			Executive	2,00	9,09
			Economist	2,00	9,09
			Restaurant Manager	1,00	4,55
			Team Manager	6,00	27,27
			General Manager	2,00	9,09
Education	**Bachelor**	10	Other	2,00	9,09
			PhD	2,00	9,09
			Highschool	1,00	4,55
			Masters	7,00	31,82
			Batchelor Degree	10,00	45,45
Seniority in the company	**5-10 years**	10	1-3 years	2,00	9,09
			3-5 years	3,00	13,64
			5-10 years	10,00	45,45
			> 10 years	5,00	22,73
			< 1 year	2,00	9,09

Source: own processing in Excel, using XLSTAT

The MLQ questionnaire also asked for other parameters relevant for the final analysis of the study (after the aggregation of more than 50 responses), but we do not consider that they present major differences at this stage for the 22 respondents.

4. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the theoretical studies, but also taking into account the results obtained in the analysis of the 22 responses collected, we can draw the conclusion that the practical side in this field is underdeveloped, and that empirical approaches are still needed to justify these leadership styles and to sediment them with greater conceptual clarity.

The overall conclusion is that leadership can be analyzed in detail and attained so that any organization can benefit from the fruits of this process. On close examination, as is evident from the literature discussed in this study, the leadership model applied is often conditioned by culture, education, age or gender and can always be improved or changed to achieve the best possible results. The 22 respondents analyzed support these correlations through their choices.

Preliminary results show that respondents predominantly fit the transactional leadership style, but the available data do not yet allow a clear delineation of styles by company business areas. Future results, obtained by expanding the sample surveyed, may differ from this analysis, but if the preliminary results hold, it means that the leadership style of Romanians is changing and this requires further research.

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