

## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE CASE OF HUNGARIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

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**Abstract:** The current study provides a deeper insight into the factors of effective leadership of organizations. In order to verify the hypothesis, the authors have used questionnaire methods to examine the leadership style of the analyzed companies. The data obtained from this are subjected to statistical analysis. This research investigates the relationship between organizational performance and style of leadership in Hungarian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises by quantitative analysis of 637 participants. The results indicate that leadership style has a significant effect on organizational performance in the studied enterprises. Based on the survey, it is found that organizational performance is higher for leaders who adopt an autocratic leadership style. This research uses empirical data that supports the development of practices directed at improving leadership and reducing the gap between leaders and followers.

**Key words:** effectiveness, leadership, organization, motivation

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2020.22.2.14

*Article history:*

*Received July 30, 2020; Revised August 26, 2020; Accepted September 9, 2020*

### Introduction

Effective leadership is one of the essential tools for an organization to sustain its business in the face of problems caused by the global economic environment. Successful leaders can influence their employees and motivate them for strengthening organizational performance. Effective leadership has a unique way of integrating employees with the organization to achieve its vision or goals.

At almost every moment of our lives, we are in contact with any number of organizations. Our daily actions are greatly influenced by these organizations around us, from school to workplaces. Leadership is becoming increasingly popular all over the world. The organizations realize that the effectiveness and success of their activities depend on the strength of their leadership potential.

According to Andjarwati et al. (2019), organizations fundamentally operate under two premises: the first is to make profits, and the second is to provide social services without generating profits.

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Kotter (1990) makes a distinction between a manager and a leader by stating that modern management deals mainly with planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and monitoring. A leader, on the other hand, deals with establishing a sense of direction by developing a vision of the future. A leader also has to communicate with the employees, support cooperation, and motivate and inspire the employees in order to generate a stronger commitment to established goals.

According to Avolio et al. (1999), leaders, as the key decision-makers, determine the acquisition, development, and deployment of organizational resources, the conversion of these resources into valuable products and services, and the delivery of value to organizational stakeholders.

The purpose of this study is to complement the existing management researches and analyze the correlation between leadership style and organizational performance.

### **Literature background**

To analyze the impact of managerial behavior on employees and organizational performance, we need to look at the fundamentals of management theory. Already after World War I, it was noticed that productivity was affected by managerial influences.

Leadership is when the leader guides their employees towards the organizational goals, all the while trying to communicate and motivate their employees in order to make sure their employees are in the right position to use their talents and commit to their jobs (Johnson, 2002).

Leadership can be described as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of an organization of which they are members (Svendsen and Joensson, 2016).

The essence of leadership style is, in fact, that the leader can recognize and connect his or her values and needs with those of the employees (Jing, 2017). The specific leadership style used depends on several factors, such as the personality of the leader and the subordinates (Edelman and van Knippenberg, 2018), the behavior of the organization and the environment, and the overall goals and needs of the leader, the group, and the organization (Lentner et al., 2019).

According to Karácsony (2019), when some organizations seek efficient ways to enable them to perform, they focus on the effects of leadership. This is because team leaders are believed to play a pivotal role in shaping collective norms, helping teams cope with their environments, and coordinating action. Weiss (2004) states that effective leadership helps groups of workers define their goals and find ways of achieving them.

According to Drucker (1993), effective leadership is sometimes more than power, in that it entails some degree of voluntary compliance by the followers.

Organizational leadership has been defined as an interpersonal process for influencing individuals and groups to achieve organizational goals (Varney, 2008).

Leadership is a kind of power where one person can influence or change the values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes of another person (Guluta and Rusu, 2016). Researchers are paying increasing attention to questions of leadership and organizational effectiveness. The widespread belief is that leadership can affect the performance of organizations (Rowe et al., 2005).

Leadership style can influence organizational strategic priorities and innovation or creativity, and organizational performance as well (Keller, 2006).

According to Burney et al. (2007), the level of performance of employees relies not only on their actual skills but also on the level of motivation of each person. Modern theories of leadership have tended to focus more on the interaction between leaders and followers, as well as the situational context. For example, Fiedler's (1967) contingency theory suggests that the success of a leader depends on a given situation's favorability.

The two leadership theories that have dominated the New Leadership Theories are transactional and transformational. According to Yammarino et al. (1998), transactional leaders determine the goals and work that workers need to achieve, and suggest how to execute their tasks and provide feedback. Transactional leadership behavior refers to a "series of exchanges between the leader and the subordinate such that the leader provides rewards" (MacKenzie et al., 2001).

Bass first proposed transformational leadership in 1985. A transformational leader is a person who stimulates and inspires transformation within followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. The image of the transformational leader who builds and promotes a unique and appealing vision, and inspires employees to believe in his/her leadership, seems an especially appropriate picture of the entrepreneur.

Summarizing the above-described theories, we can state that leadership is one of the key driving forces for improving organizational performance.

### **Method**

In scientific literature, democratic leadership mostly characterizes the leadership of non-profit organizations, while an autocratic leadership style characterizes the leadership of for-profit organizations. This is reflected in the basic hypothesis of our research: *There is a positive effect between leadership and organizational performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Hungary.*

For the present study, the researchers determined that a quantitative survey methodology was the most appropriate. The study used the questionnaire method for data collection between 2019 and 2020. During the survey, the authors of the present study approached 147 Hungarian organizations. The questionnaires were made available in both offline and online versions. In the collection of data, the researchers worked using the snowball technique. The method belongs to the group of non-probability sampling procedures. As a result, data collected using the snowball technique is not considered definitely representative, i.e. they do not

accurately map the population. A total of 750 questionnaires were sent out, from which 637 were fully answered and involved in the research.

The questionnaires were used to learn about the examined leaders dimensions of autocratic (task-focused; T) and democratic (person-centered; P) behavior. While constructing the questionnaire, the authors formulated simple and clear questions. It was important that answering a datasheet requires only a short period, so that each survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire contained both closed (mostly Likert-scale) and open questions. The questionnaires were completed with the help of assistants. The first part of the questionnaire asks about the general data of the respondents (gender, age, educational level, etc.), and the second part of the questionnaire deals with questions such as leadership style, decision making, motivation systems and employee satisfaction.

Collected data were processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 21.0 software. To describe the relationship between variables, the authors used a special type of table called a cross-tabulation. Cross tabulation is a quantitative research method appropriate for evaluating the relationship between two or more variables.

### **Results and Discussion**

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of leadership on organizational performance.

Table 1 contains the main characteristics of the respondents, and shows that 291 leadership and 346 employee questionnaires (a total of 637 questionnaires) are analyzed during the research. 56% of respondents are male, and 44% are female. In terms of educational level, the highest number of respondents (63%) had a secondary school education, while only 22% of respondents had a university degree.

**Table 1. Descriptive information from respondents**

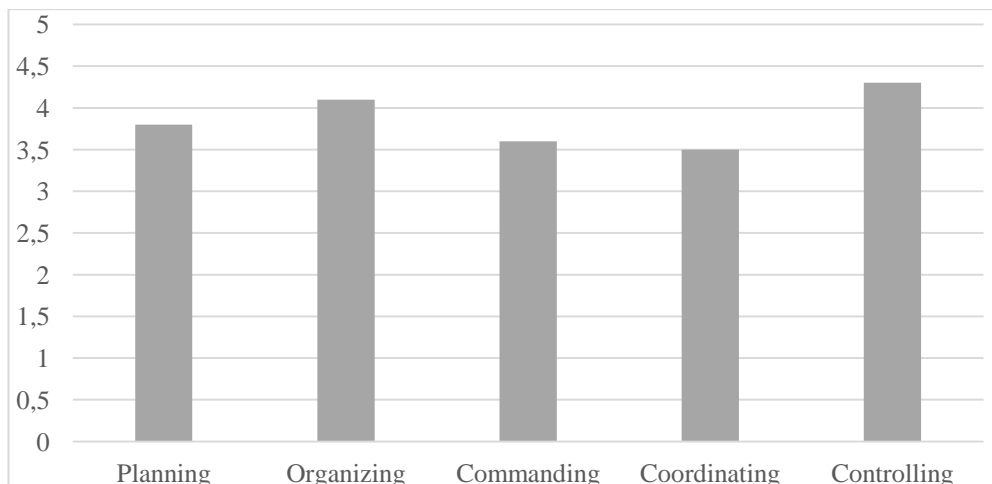
Evaluated questionnaire	Frequency	Percent
Leadership questionnaire	291	46
Employee questionnaire	346	54
Total	637	100
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	95	15
25-34	154	24
35-44	274	43
45+	114	18
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	354	56
Female	283	44
<b>Education</b>		
Elementary school	97	15
Secondary school	398	63
University degree	142	22
<b>Work experience</b>		
less than 1 year	94	15
1-5 year	198	30
6-10 year	278	44
more than 10 year	67	11

*Source: Derived from own research, 2020*

In our survey, a total of 15% of respondents are under 25 years of age, while the percentage of middle-aged and older people (35+) is 61%. In the case of gender, the examined organizations have a majority of male workers (56%).

Henri Fayol (1949) identified functions of management in his book *Administration Industrielle et Generale*. Fayol defined five elements of management: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. In Figure 1, based on Fayol, the authors investigated leaders' views on each management task. The study used Likert's scale in posing the question using five variation fields: 1-not important, to 5-very important.

In Figure 1, it can be seen that there are differences in the ranking of management tasks. The leaders of organizations consider controlling (4.3) the most important management task. The most important goal of profit-oriented organizations is to achieve higher profits; it follows that control is important for profit-oriented organizations because of the high organizational performance they must achieve by strict controlling. Organizing (4.1) plays a big role for organizations in fulfilling everyday tasks because they must often conduct a wide range of activities simultaneously.

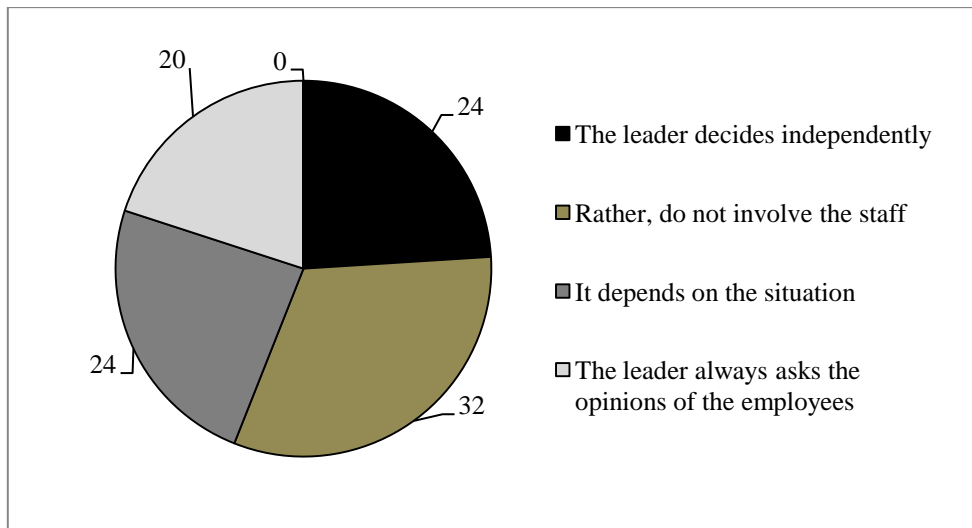


*Source: Derived from own research, 2020*

**Figure 1: Assessing the importance of management tasks among leaders, Likert-scale (1-not important, 5-very important)**

In considering leadership decision making, it can be concluded that leaders of examined organizations are characterized mostly by an autocratic leadership style. Autocratic leaders are classic and bossy. The autocratic leaders want their subordinates to work according to their desires (Bhatti et al., 2012). The autocratic leaders are less creative and only promote one-sided conversation (Van Vugt et al., 2004). This severely affects the motivation and satisfaction level of the employees (Chang, 2017). However, autocratic leadership is still recognized as an effective leadership style (Dyczkowska and Dyczkowski, 2018).

24% of respondents to the questionnaire said that leaders make decisions alone, and another 24% of respondents said that in some situations, the leader consults with them before decision-making. Only 20% of respondents said that the leader solicits their opinion before making a decision (Figure 2).



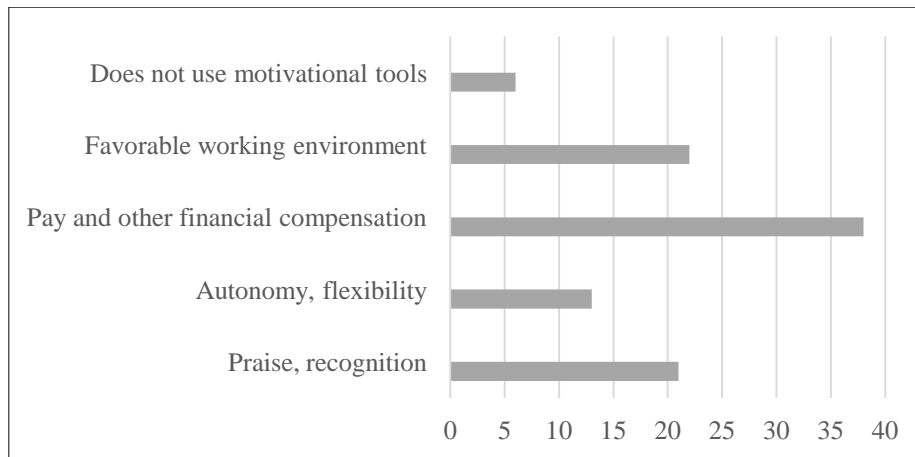
Source: Derived from own research, 2020

**Figure 2: Decision-making process among the leaders, percentage**

Leadership style is based on the understanding of what motivates people. We can also say that it acts as a bridge in achieving organizational goals and in meeting individual goals, expectations, and needs. In the present survey, the researchers also examined the employee motivational systems in place. The motivational tools play an important role in creating an atmosphere of enthusiasm and productivity among the employees (Thahier et al., 2014; Guillen et al., 2014). Leaders must, however, recognize that employees have different motivations. Therefore, leaders should implement different strategies that are customized to individuals. For example, on the one hand, some employees are simply motivated by their pay and compensation, others by a favorable working environment, power and recognition, and on the other hand, there is a category of employees who are intrinsically motivated by the fact that they are merely enjoying their work.

According to Figure 3, it can be concluded that the motivational tools used by organizations vary widely. Motivation has the power to energize people not only by pushing them in the right direction but also by meeting their basic human needs. The foremost motivational tools are financial rewards (38%) and favorable working environment (22%). In the case of some organizations, recognition and praise (21%) for a job are highly ranked as motivating factors. From this viewpoint, it can be concluded that the leader influences methods of motivation for organizations.

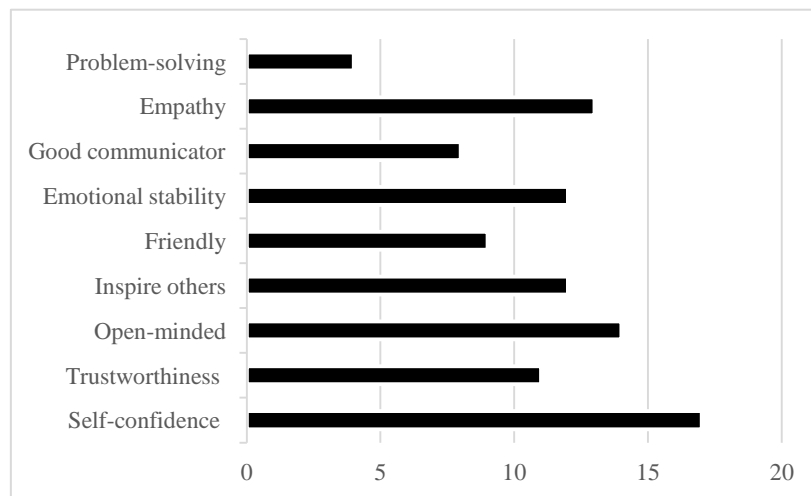
Interestingly, some of the questioned leaders (6%) do not use motivational methods to encourage employee performance.



Source: Derived from own research, 2020

**Figure 3: Motivational tools used by evaluated organizations, percentage**

In this survey, the authors were interested in how employees think about the personal characteristics of their leaders (Figure 4). While processing the questionnaires, we became aware of interesting differences in this regard. According to employees of the surveyed organizations, the self-confidence of their leaders is high (17%), as is their open-mindedness (14%), followed by emotional stability (12%) and inspiration to others (12%). The least important trait is problem-solving (4%).



Source: Derived from own research, 2020

**Figure 4: Main characteristics of leaders, percentage**



Based on the above and on the data obtained from processing the employee questionnaires, the authors have tried to position the style of the leaders of the examined organizations. In summary, it can be concluded that the leaders of evaluated organizations belong mainly to the autocratic leadership style.

The study has conducted crosstabs analyses of the relationship between leadership style and organizational performance, the results of which are briefly described below. The study has also examined the relationship between leadership style and organizational performance, in which it has found a strong correlation (.574) between the style of the organization's leaders and the performance of the organizational members (Table 2). A lot of scientific research (Bohn, 2002, Felfe and Schyns, 2004, De Waal and Sivro, 2012) demonstrates that one of the most important parts of organizational performance is the leader of the organization (Bulut et al., 2019, Ding and Yu, 2020). This conclusion is also supported by the presentsurvey, as those organizations where leaders were autocratic had higher organizational performance due to the strict controls and continuous performance measurements they implemented.

**Table 2. Correlations between Leadership style and Organizational performance**

		Leadership style	Organizational performance
Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	1	.574**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	637	637
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	.574**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	637	637

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

*Source: Derived from own research, 2020*

In the case of profit-oriented Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, leadership style has a large impact on organizational performance due to centralized management and strict control (Afshari and Gibson, 2016). In Hungary, in many cases, we still see a leadership style in practice that shows an autocratic style, due to the fact that there are still many leaders in practice, especially in the older age groups, who have actually lived and worked in a centrally planned and managed economy. One of the strengths of autocratic leadership is accurate work. This ensures that employees manage their time well (Héder et al., 2018). This leadership style is suited to well-structured work environments, such as the manufacturing sector, in which well-defined repeating processes result in high levels of productivity and quality (Fiedler, 1967).

The practical implications of this study are as follows: Today's leaders need to recognize that leadership style has an impact on how an organization operates. In connection with the success of the operation of the organization, the most common keywords in our time are such as the ability to adapt quickly to market changes, the ability to innovate, the commitment and satisfaction of employees and the ability of leaders to manage.

In our view, managers, in addition to being consistent in their work, should also strive to create conditions in the workplace that act as motivators for employees, because motivated employees increase organizational performance.

It follows that one of the most important questions of today is how satisfied our employees are. To answer this, the authors examined the relationships between leadership style and employee satisfaction. According to Table 3, there is a positive correlation between the two factors, which means that leadership style has a slight impact (.207) on employee satisfaction. In our opinion, to increase employee satisfaction, the leaders of the examined organizations should pay more attention to creating a better workplace atmosphere, in which the creation of a favorable organizational culture can be of great help.

**Table 3. Correlations between Leadership style and Employee satisfaction**

		Leadership style	Employee satisfaction
Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	1	.207**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	637	637
Employee satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.207**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	637	637

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

*Source: Derived from own research, 2020*

One of the most important suggestions in the research is that leadership style has been shown to play a role in organizational performance, but at the same time, employee satisfaction should not be overlooked. Therefore, managers should strive to increase employee performance during management work, but at the same time, they should create conditions in which employees feel comfortable.

### Summary

Leadership style plays a decisive role in the life of every organization. For leaders to be able to drive people efficiently requires a person with high qualifications and countless positive qualities. The results derived from the research show that there is a strong impact of leadership behavior on organizational performance.

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the leadership styles used by Hungarian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. The results of this study have established that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership and organizational performance. This trend is supported by O'Reilly et al. (2010), and by Peterson et al. (2003), where leaders' effectiveness is significant, their organizational performance is also prominent.

The results of the study not only present some characteristics and relationships between leadership styles and work performance but also provide new evidence for autocratic leadership styles as an effective style of organizational performance.

The authors have identified that the leaders of the examined organizations show mostly autocratic leadership styles.

Finding the approaches and methods to develop the performance of the employees is an important duty for today's leaders. The autocratic leadership style probably is significant in the survey because the SMEs surveyed are profit-oriented organizations, where it is important for leadership to be consistent and where control over employees is stricter than in non-profit organizations.

From this finding, the authors opine that changes will soon take place in the style of the leaders of the organizations surveyed, as employees demand more and more attention, so classic autocratic leadership is already being transformed and replaced by a more efficient, performance-oriented style, in which the employee will also gain importance.

In this research focused on leadership style, the authors would propose the following recommendations to increase organizational performance:

- The leadership style of profit-oriented Small and Medium-sized Enterprises should be task-oriented so that they can achieve an appropriate level of performance.
- In the leadership of enterprises, managers must cooperate continuously with employees.
- In addition to efficiency, management tools should be geared towards improving employee satisfaction.

#### **Limitations and future studies**

The current study is mainly limited to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Hungary. Therefore, the future study should be extended to other countries and company types in order to validate the possible reasons for the outcome of the present study. Furthermore, the current study is limited to the two basic classical styles of leadership: democratic and autocratic. Complementing additional leadership styles in new research can show different outcomes and results in future studies.

Overall, it can be said that Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are important and necessary in the Hungarian economy, so it is worthwhile to continue researching other elements of their leadership styles in the future.

### Acknowledgement

The publication was prepared with the financial support of the program Pallas Athéné Foundations.

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## RELACJE MIĘDZY STYLEM PRZYWÓDZTWA A SKUTECZNOŚCIĄ ORGANIZACYJNĄ W PRZYPADKU MAŁYCH I ŚREDNICH PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW WĘGIERSKICH

**Streszczenie:** Bieżące badanie zapewnia głębszy wgląd w czynniki skutecznego przywództwa w organizacjach. W celu weryfikacji hipotezy autorzy posłużyli się metodami kwestionariuszowymi do zbadania stylu przywództwa analizowanych firm. Uzyskane w ten sposób dane poddawane są analizie statystycznej. Niniejsze badanie bada związek między wydajnością organizacyjną a stylem przywództwa w węgierskich małych i średnich przedsiębiorstwach poprzez analizę ilościową 637 uczestników. Wyniki wskazują, że styl przywództwa ma istotny wpływ na wyniki organizacyjne badanych przedsiębiorstw. Na podstawie ankiety stwierdzono, że wydajność organizacyjna jest wyższa w przypadku liderów, którzy przyjmują autokratyczny styl przywództwa. W badaniu tym wykorzystano dane empiryczne, które wspierają rozwój praktyk ukierunkowanych na poprawę przywództwa i zmniejszenie przepaści między liderami a naśladowcami.

**Słowa kluczowe:** skuteczność, przywództwo, organizacja, motywacja

### 匈牙利中小型企业领导风格与组织绩效之间的关系

**摘要:** 本研究为组织有效领导的因素提供了更深入的见解。为了验证该假设，作者使用了问卷调查法来检验被分析公司的领导风格。由此获得的数据进行统计分析。本研究通过对637名参与者的定量分析，研究了匈牙利中小企业的组织绩效与领导风格之间的关系。结果表明，领导风格对所研究企业的组织绩效有着显著影响。根据调查，发现采用专制领导风格的领导者的组织绩效较高。这项研究使用的经验数据支持旨在提高领导能力和缩小领导者与追随者之间差距的实践的发展。

**关键词:** 有效性, 领导力, 组织, 动力