The Characteristics of Effective Leadership on a Selected Sample of the Human Resources Sector in the Serbian Ministry of Interior

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Abstract: One of the main goals of public sector reform in the Republic of Serbia is to develop professional capacity and create effective leadership. In general, effective leadership has a very significant role in public sector functioning. In addition, it is also important for the quality of public services that are delivered to citizens and other stakeholders. The aim of this research was to investigate the association between characteristics and behaviours of managers, which are internal factors influencing the process of effective leadership in the public sector. The research was conducted in the organizational units of the Sector for Human Resources of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia on a sample of 50 respondents. The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to determine the associations. The results of the research indicated that the authoritarian characteristics of managers are mostly related to directive behaviour of managers, i.e., a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and directive behaviour of managers ($r = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that the charismatic characteristics of managers are mostly related to the transformational behaviour of managers, i.e., a very high positive correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and transformational behaviour of managers ($r = 0.913$, $p < 0.001$). The research results can provide guidelines for the development of professional capacity of the public sector and the creation of effective leadership at all levels in order to properly implement reforms.

Keywords: leadership characteristics, leadership behaviour styles, human resources, law enforcement.

Graphical abstract
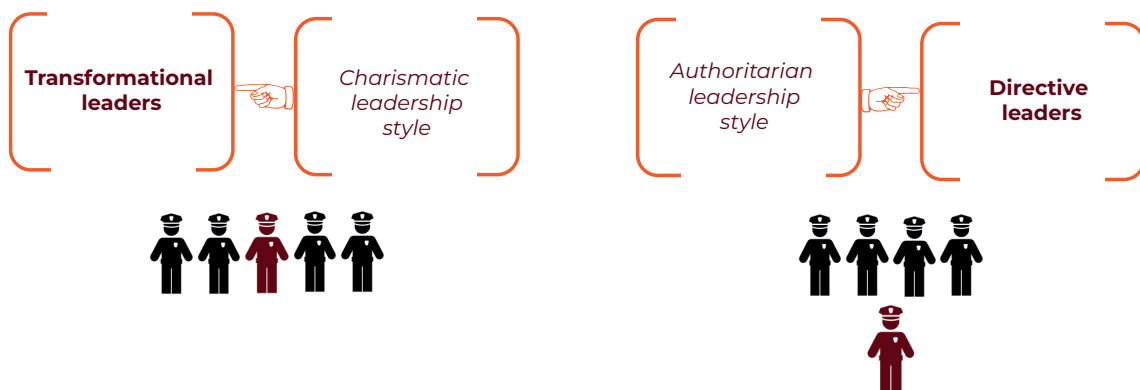
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INTRODUCTION

The leadership has been a phenomenon that has always attracted the attention of both the public and researchers. Earlier in the past, it was considered that leaders are born with their innate talent. Since the beginning of the 20th century, in order to answer the question of what constitutes good leadership researchers have dealt with different approaches to leadership in terms of qualities, skills and behaviour. Eventually, with the economic progress of society, the concept of leadership has received broader context of observing, which required a multidisciplinary approach.

Although leadership as a multidimensional process is formed under the influence of a large number of factors and is determined by the specific situation, a number of researchers remain convinced that the leadership process is conditioned by the characteristics of leaders as key figures (Stojanović-Aleksić, 2016). Ten key traits and skills make leaders effective (Weihrich & Koontz, 1998), which are categorized as follows: physical traits (energy, appearance); personality traits (adaptability, aggression, enthusiasm, self-confidence, honesty, integrity); job-related traits (desire to achieve, motivation, ambition, perseverance and initiative); social characteristics (willingness to cooperate, communication, communication skills, administrative skills) and leader intelligence.

Further development of the leadership theories referred to leader's behaviour as well as the study of the relationship between the leader and his followers, leadership styles, and the leadership in the context of change and organizational processes. Three basic leadership styles that emerge in organizations are autocratic, democratic and *laissez faire* style, while leaders basically demonstrate two types of behaviour: behaviour that is focused on performing tasks and achieving goals, and on the other hand, behaviour oriented towards building good interpersonal relationships.

Behavioural styles that traditionally dominate the work of public organizations are directive or command style, as well as transactional style, which have a lot of similarities. These styles are dominant in large systems where the emphasis is on organisational structure. Particularly, in both the directive (command) and transactional style, the behaviour of employees is strictly controlled through penalties, rewards, guidelines, defined rules, standards, procedures (Bass, 1990). In contrast to directive style, the transactional style can be applied to employees who are motivated exclusively by material rewards, since it is based on a pure transaction, i.e. the exchange of values between leaders and employees (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021; Wahyuni et al., 2020). Furthermore, this style is applicable to jobs that are routinely performed according to pre-set rules and procedures, as is the case of bureaucratic systems. Both styles are difficult to adapt to change. Bearing in mind that the public sector faces certain challenges in implementing reforms, leadership styles based on hierarchy and rank are not the best approach (Martin et al., 2017). Behavioural styles need to change in accordance with the challenges and requirements of certain situations, i.e. they should follow an evolutionary flow. For this reason, when implementing public sector reforms, it should be aware that transformational as well as charismatic leadership are most effective (Javidan & Waldman, 2003; Hanslik, 2018; Tuan & Thao, 2018; Almarshoodi, 2021). Regarding the process of change, i.e. reform, Karim (2016) indicates that responsibility, stability, resilience to stress and determination are the key leadership characteristics in times of crisis management. In addition, Kornør and Nordvik (2004) be-

lieve that dominant leadership characteristics such as conscientiousness, extravertedness, openness and acceptability are needed in the process of change.

Although there are many studies on leadership traits, the effectiveness of leadership styles as well as those that deal with the relations between leadership characteristics and behaviour, there are insufficient studies that examine these issues within the public sector (Fernadez et al., 2010), particularly in the Republic of Serbia. Since the characteristics of managers and behaviours belong to the internal group of factors that affect the leadership process and contribute to the effectiveness of the process, the basis for analysis and research of these factors is justified in terms of implementing reforms and necessary changes in the public sector. Another important aspect of leadership behaviour is that it contributes to the effectiveness of many activities, both personal and employee activities. Having in mind the existence of different models of leadership behaviours, the aim of this research was to find the correlation between characteristics and behaviours of managers, which are internal factors influencing the process of effective leadership in the public sector. Accordingly, it was hypothesized that charismatic and authoritarian characteristics will be associated with the types of leadership behaviours.

METHODS

Sample

With population size of 150 employees, confidence level of 99% which gives a confidence coefficient of 0.99 and a margin error of 0.1, sample size was determined by Cochran's formula (Bartlett et al., 2001) and consulting the G* Power software (Kang, 2021). Sample size of 60 respondents was selected as sufficient for the statistical analyses used in the research. However, 10 respondents did not fill out a questionnaire, which gives a sample of 50 respondents whose socio-demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N=50)*

Socio-demographic characteristics		Number of respondents n)	Structure (%)
Gender	Female	34	68.0
	Male	16	32.0
Age	25-34	15	30.0
	35-44	22	44.0
	45-55	11	22.0
	Over 55	2	4.0
Education	High education	35	70.0
	Master studies	15	30.0
Work experience	Up to 5 years	25	50.0
	5-10 years	8	16.0
	10-20 years	10	20.0
	Over 20 years	7	14.0

Measurement and Procedures

The survey was conducted in July 2021. For the needs of this research, a survey questionnaire was designed (see Appendix for details), which consisted of three parts. The first part examined the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the second part focused on examining the attitudes of employees about the characteristics of managers, while the third part referred to examining the attitudes of employees about the behaviour of managers. The second part of the questionnaire included eighteen claims that were oriented towards determining the characteristics of immediate managers. The design of this part of the questionnaire was based on the LTQ questionnaire on leadership qualities (Northouse, 2008, p. 22). The third part of the questionnaire consisted of eighteen statements that examined the attitudes about the behaviour of managers. Selected items from the Leadership Style Questionnaire (Northouse, 2008, p. 59) as well as from the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), type 5X-short, were used to design this part of the questionnaire (Avolio et al., 1999; Northouse, 2008, p. 138). Using the Likert scale, respondents expressed agreement with each statement that measured the characteristics and behaviours of managers by giving a rating on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – partially disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – partially agree, 5 – completely agree).

The characteristics of managers were measured with two subscales: authoritative and charismatic characteristics. Authoritative characteristics were obtained as the sum of the results of three individual statements (aimed at achieving goals regardless of obstacles; respects regulations, standards; for tasks and goals; plans deadlines and actions for implementation), and the total result is divided by the number of claims. Charismatic characteristics were obtained as the sum of the results of fifteen individual statements (believes in himself and his own values; is consistent with his attitudes and promises; is sociable, open and honest in communication; has a vision; is determined and takes firm attitude; knows the field of work well; likes to deal with new ideas; observes the broader picture of a certain problem; is oriented to the common interest; considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions; is fair in dealing with employees; is focused on moral values; instils trust; respects the needs of employees; has the ability to correctly perceive people, events, opportunities), and the total result is divided by the number of statements.

Leadership behaviour styles of managers were measured with five subscales: directive behaviour, participatory, supportive, charismatic, and transformational. The subscale directive behaviour is obtained as the sum of the results of seven individual statements (gives clear instructions to employees on task performance and defining roles; requires employees to follow standards, procedures, rules; in most cases, makes decisions independently; makes it clear to employees which rewards they get for the achieved result; keeps records of all mistakes of employees; controls the behaviour of employees through penalties and rewards; is oriented towards the realization of tasks and goals), and the total result is divided by the number of claims. Participatory behaviour was obtained as the sum of the results of two individual statements (consults with employees on problem solving and other issues; delegates authority to employees and records the results achieved), and the total result is divided by the number of statements. Supporting behaviour was obtained as the sum of the results of three individual statements (the manager provides support to employees to overcome the problem and solve the task; allows employees freedom in tasks; provides

feedback to employees on results), and the total result is divided by the number of statements). Charismatic behaviour was obtained as the sum of the results of four individual statements (oriented to build good interpersonal relationships; motivates employees to achieve goals; accepts responsibility for bad results; shows expertise in crisis situations), and the total score is divided by the number of claims. Transformational behaviour was obtained as the sum of the results of two individual statements (encourages employees to develop and progress; the manager often introduces changes in order to process efficiency), and the total result is divided by the number of statements.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability and consistency of the measurement scale, and for the items used in this research ranged from 0.698 to 0.962 (see Table 2). The research was conducted using the platform e-classroom of the Ministry of Interior.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical software in which the data processing and testing of the proposed hypotheses were carried out was IBM SPSS version 23. Inferential statistics was applied to test the defined hypotheses. Given that the research examines the relations between the characteristics and behavioural styles of immediate managers, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used. This non-parametric technique was chosen based on the examination of the normality of data distribution of the characteristics and behavioural styles of managers using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. In the case when the significance level is less than 0.05, the normality of the distribution is not confirmed, and in that case, non-parametric techniques are used. The magnitude of the correlation was determined based on Cohen's scale (Cohen, 1988): $0 < r \leq 0.19$ – very low correlation, $0.2 < r \leq 0.39$ – low correlation, $0.4 < r \leq 0.59$ – moderate correlation, $0.6 < r \leq 0.79$ – high correlation, and $0.8 < r \leq 1.0$ – very high correlation.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistical indicators, testing of normality and checking the reliability of behaviour characteristics of managers and leadership styles of managers are shown in Table 2. It could be observed that authoritarian characteristics are more dominant than charismatic characteristics of managers. Examination of normality on the basis of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test indicates that the assumption of normality of subscale distribution has not been confirmed, i.e. that in analysing hypotheses related to individual subscales nonparametric statistical techniques will be used. The reliability of the measuring scale can be observed from several aspects. The internal consistency of the scale is most often shown, i.e. the degree of similarity of the items of which it consists through the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. It is considered ideal when this coefficient is greater than 0.7. Cronbach's Alpha-based reliability testing indicates that all subscales have very good reliability and internal consistency.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistical Indicators, Normality and Reliability of Subscales*

		Mean	Min	Max	Std. deviation	Variance	K-S	Shapiro-Wilk	Cronbach's Alpha
Characteristics of managers	Authoritative	4.14	1.33	5.00	.852	.726	.001	.000	.689
	Charismatic	3.81	1.60	5.00	1.086	1.180	.002	.000	.962
Leadership behaviour styles of managers	Directive	3.59	1.00	5.00	1.256	1.578	.002	.000	.920
	Participatory	3.55	2.00	5.00	.822	.677	.000	.001	.783
	Supportive	3.63	1.00	5.00	1.164	1.357	.001	.001	.861
	Charismatic	3.39	1.00	5.00	1.103	1.217	.003	.013	.730
	Transformational	3.34	1.00	5.00	1.345	1.811	.039	.001	.852

The association of authoritarian and charismatic characteristics with managerial behaviour is shown in Table 3. A high positive correlation occurred between the authoritarian characteristics and directive behaviour of managers, suggesting that more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced directive behaviour of managers. Also, a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and participatory behaviour of managers, suggesting that more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced participatory behaviour of managers. Further, a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and supportive behaviours of managers, implying that the more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers are accompanied by the more pronounced supportive behaviour of managers. Moreover, a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and charismatic behaviour of managers, suggesting that the more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers are accompanied by the more pronounced charismatic behaviour of managers. Furthermore, a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and transformational behaviour of managers, implying that more obvious authoritarian characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced transformational behaviour of managers.

Regarding the charismatic characteristics and directive behaviour of managers, a very high positive correlation was calculated between them, where it is concluded that the more pronounced charismatic characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced directive behaviour of managers. Further, a high positive correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and participatory behaviour of managers, where it is concluded that the more pronounced charismatic characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced participatory behaviour of managers. Moreover, a very high positive correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and supportive behaviours of managers, implying that the more pronounced charismatic characteristics of managers are accompanied by the more pronounced supportive behaviour of managers. Furthermore, a high positive correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and charismatic behaviour of managers, where it is concluded that the more pronounced charismatic characteristics of managers are accompanied by the more pronounced charismatic behaviour of managers. Finally, a very high positive correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and transformational behaviour of managers, where it is concluded that

the more obvious charismatic characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced transformational behaviour of managers.

Table 3. *Correlation Between Authoritarian Characteristics and Managerial Behaviour*

		Directive	Participatory	Supportive	Charismatic behaviour of managers	Transformational
Authoritarian characteristics of managers	Spearman's r	.784**	.637**	.746**	.607**	.678**
Charismatic characteristics of managers	Spearman's r	.889**	.659**	.864**	.643**	.913**

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

DISCUSSION

Research findings indicate that employees in the organizational units of the Sector for Human Resources of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia consider that the authoritarian characteristics of the immediate managers are more dominant than charismatic characteristics of managers. The results show that the authoritarian characteristics of managers are, to the greatest extent, related to the directive behaviour of managers, i.e. that a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and the directive behaviour of managers, whereby it could be concluded that the more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced directive behaviour of managers. Directive behaviour refers to situations when the leader gives clear instructions to employees regarding the task implementation, as well as defining roles. This type of leadership behaviour can improve the performance of employees. In addition, the findings demonstrate that the authoritarian characteristics of managers are mostly related to the directive behaviour of managers, i.e., that a high positive correlation was calculated between authoritarian characteristics and directive behaviour of managers, implying that the more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers are accompanied by the more pronounced directive behaviour of managers. Having in mind the coefficient of determination, i.e. a part of the variance of one variable (leadership styles of managerial behaviour) explained by the variance of another variable (authoritarian characteristics of managers), it can be concluded that the greatest explained variance has directive behaviour, i.e. that the authoritarian characteristics of managers are, to the greatest extent, related to the directive behaviour of managers. Furthermore, high positive correlation was found between authoritarian characteristics and supportive behaviour, whereby it is concluded that the more pronounced authoritarian characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced supportive behaviour of managers, which is effective in conditions of uncertainty that are related to organizational changes. The effectiveness of supportive behaviour results in a higher degree of employee motivation and satisfaction, as well as their commitment, which leads to an increase in individual and organizational performance.

Charismatic characteristics refer to the manager's consistency in his views, open and honest communication with employees, determination, understanding of work issues, orientation to common interest, ethics, etc. The research findings indicate that charismatic characteristics are most closely related to directive and transformational behaviour, that is, a very high correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and directive behaviour. Moreover, very high correlation was calculated between charismatic characteristics and transformational behaviour, whereby it is concluded that the more obvious charismatic characteristics of managers follow the more pronounced transformational behaviour. Having in mind the coefficient of determination, i.e. the amount of common variance shared between the leadership styles of managerial behaviour and charismatic characteristics of managers, it could be argued that managers who tend to have more charismatic characteristics also lean towards the transformational behaviour.

According to literature review, transformational and charismatic leadership are the most effective when implementing reforms in the public sector, which was also indicated in this research. Transformational leaders can encourage, develop, and implement significant organizational change (Northouse, 2008, p. 130). This style contributes the most to the empowerment of employees, i.e. it has the greatest impact on raising the level of their motivation, due to the fact that more attention is paid to the employees' needs. Transformational leadership leads to the creation of new values, as well as the development of culture based on ethical principles (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Charismatic leadership has the greatest contribution when it comes to leadership development. This style has a special significance in crisis situations that are recognised in the work of police and public administration (Tuan & Thao, 2018). When analysing the perception of the UAE police employees, Almarshoodi (2021) indicated that charismatic leaders gain more trust in times of crisis compared to other styles. Furthermore, Javidan and Waldman (2003) conducted a survey on a sample of 203 employees on how charismatic leadership behaviour affects the Canadian public sector. The findings indicated four key characteristics of leaders such as energy and determination, vision, challenges encouragement and risk taking. In accordance with these results the Canadian government, more precisely public service and military within the Professional development in the public service, published a profile of key leadership competencies that should be developed by public service leaders. The Key Leadership Competency profile is aligned with the Clerk's vision for a public service that is collaborative, innovative, streamlined, high performing, adaptable and diverse (Government of Canada, 2015).

In accordance with the studies on public sector leadership, Fernandez et al. (2010) developed the concept of integrated leadership that included five major styles or behavioural orientations of leaders such as: task-oriented leadership that corresponds to an authoritarian style; leadership oriented to interpersonal relationships related to the participatory behaviour of leaders; change-oriented leadership that corresponds to a transformational style, diversity-oriented leadership and integrity-oriented leadership, which implies the leader's orientation to meet legal regulations, standards, fairness to employees and all stakeholders, common interest. The evaluation research on the application of the integrated leadership concept was conducted within the federal government agencies. The findings indicated that the application of the concept had a positive effect on the performance of government agencies that were involved in the research program (Fernadez et al., 2010).

The model of managerial behaviour within the Sector for Human Resources in the Ministry of Interior that was examined in this paper (such as supportive, participatory, directive, charismatic leadership behaviour, as well as transformational behaviour) is more in line with the concept of integrated public sector leadership developed by Fernandez et al. (2010), which is oriented towards the realization of tasks, changes, building interpersonal relationships, diversity and integrity.

Study Limitations

Unlike Fernandez et al. (2010), who conducted the research in several federal agencies, our research was carried out on an appropriate sample in proportion to the number of employees within the organizational units of the Sector for Human Resources in the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, which is one of the limiting factors. Subsequent research should include a larger sample from the public sector in order to measure the effectiveness of the leadership process. The ratio of male and female participants does not reflect the proportion of the Ministry of Interior, where men are more prevalent compared to women. Participants from wider range of directorates and operational units should be recruited as well as officers of different ranks.

CONCLUSIONS

The success of public sector reform depends on the effectiveness of leadership process, which implies a relationship of mutual influence between leaders and employees at all levels. The research results indicate a connection between leadership characteristics and the behaviour of managers, which represent internal factors that influence the process of effective leadership. The research has shown a high positive correlation between authoritarian characteristics and directive behaviour, then a high positive correlation between authoritarian characteristics and supportive behaviour, a very high positive correlation between charismatic characteristics and directive behaviour, as well as a very high positive correlation between charismatic characteristics and transformational behaviour. Based on the research findings it can be concluded that employees in the Human Resources Department consider that their direct managers are focused on task implementation, consistent with their views, determined, oriented to common interests, ethical, and that they understand the problems of work. In addition, employees believe that managers give clear instructions regarding the implementation of tasks, and that in certain circumstances they provide support to employees. All these results in an increased degree of motivation and employee satisfaction, achieving good results when implementing the necessary changes, i.e. reforms, which indicates the effective leadership process of this Sector.

Generally, in order to achieve the effectiveness of all processes, it is necessary to develop professional human potential. This can be achieved through continuous training of managers at all levels. Another recommendation made by the authors of this paper concerns the formal education. It is necessary to include the courses of leadership within the study programs of the faculties that deal with public administration management. The learning

outcomes of leadership course would provide the competencies of future managers who will manage the work and all the processes in the public sector. Combining formal education with permanent training programs and mentoring would give the best effect in terms of human resource development. The results of this research can provide guidelines for the development of professional capacity of the public sector and the creation of effective leadership at all levels in order to properly implement reforms.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOUR OF MANAGERS

For each statement, indicate the degree of agreement, by choosing only one answer:

1. "strongly disagree"
2. "partially disagree"
3. "neutral"
4. "partially agree"
5. "completely agree"

1. Examination of Attitudes About the Characteristics of Managers

Attitude regarding characteristics of managers	Level of agreement				
He/she believes in himself and his own values	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is consistent with his attitudes and promises	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is sociable, open and honest in communication	1	2	3	4	5
He /she has a vision	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is determined and takes firm attitude	1	2	3	4	5
He/she knows the field of work well	1	2	3	4	5
He/she likes to deal with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
He/she observes the broader picture of a certain problem	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is oriented to the common interest	1	2	3	4	5
He/she considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is fair in dealing with employees	1	2	3	4	5
He/she focused on moral values	1	2	3	4	5
He/she instils trust	1	2	3	4	5
He/she respects the needs of employees	1	2	3	4	5
He/she has the ability to correctly perceive people, events, opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is focused on the realization of goals regardless of obstacles	1	2	3	4	5
He /she respects regulations, standards	1	2	3	4	5
For tasks and goals, he/she plans deadlines and actions for implementation	1	2	3	4	5

2. Examining Attitudes About the Managerial Behaviour

Attitudes regarding managerial behaviour	Level of agreement				
He/she provides support to employees to overcome the problem and solve the task	1	2	3	4	5
He/she encourages employees to develop and progress	1	2	3	4	5
He/she accepts responsibility for bad results	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is oriented to build good interpersonal relationships	1	2	3	4	5
He/she consults with employees on problem solving and other issues	1	2	3	4	5
He/she gives clear instructions to employees on task performance and defining roles	1	2	3	4	5
He/she requires employees to follow standards, procedures, rules	1	2	3	4	5
In most cases, he /she makes decisions independently	1	2	3	4	5
He/she makes it clear to employees which rewards they get for the achieved result	1	2	3	4	5
He/she motivates employees to achieve goals	1	2	3	4	5
He/she often introduces changes in order to process efficiency	1	2	3	4	5
He/she allows employees freedom in tasks	1	2	3	4	5
He/she keeps records of all mistakes of employees	1	2	3	4	5
He/she delegates authority to employees and records the achieved results	1	2	3	4	5
He/she controls the behaviour of employees through penalties and rewards	1	2	3	4	5
He/she shows expertise in crisis situations	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is oriented towards the realization of tasks and goals	1	2	3	4	5
He/she provides feedback to employees on results	1	2	3	4	5