

## LEADERSHIP STYLES, ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS: EVIDENCE FROM THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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(Received 23 February 2023; accepted 24 August 2023)

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### Abstract

This study, in the Republic of North Macedonia (NM), identifies the differences between the Leadership Styles (LS) in the given context of Organizational Learning (OL), Situational Leadership (SL), and Organizational Competitiveness (OC). In addition, the study identifies specific factors which make up these constructs. The research was conducted across several industries, organizational hierarchical levels, and various work experiences. A pre-test survey was conducted on a small scale of respondents (n=79) for Organizational learning questionnaire, while the final questionnaire was administered on a larger scale (n=273), both using the convenient sampling. Results prove that there are no statistically significant differences between LS in OC, nor in the OL, while statistically significant differences existed in SL. This study also explored the existing multiple factors in LS, OL, and OC. These findings shed light on possible future research which can integrate these results and dive into further exploratory studies that can dwell into more comprehensive understanding which in effect can increase managerial implications for companies and researchers alike.

*Keywords:* leadership styles, organizational learning, organizational competitiveness

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The anticipation about the importance of OL toward OC has been deriving for

approximately three decades. OC helps companies create sustainable success which includes performance items as well. In this regard, OL plays a crucial role since

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organizations need to continuously improve their learning methods as well as their ways of doing business. The firm's competitive advantage can be sustained if it learns faster than its competitors (Crossan et al., 1995), and the measure for competitiveness in the long run is the ability of the organization to stay in business, to protect and to provide return on its investments, and to ensure jobs for the future, operating in a free enterprise system (Pace & Stephan, 1996).

In turbulent business environments, the survival and success increasingly depend on competitiveness as it is an ability to compete (Ajitabh & Momaya, 2004), while in parallel, the business performance is influenced by OL (Perez Lopez et al., 2005). Moreover, the relationships of OL and competitive advantage with knowledge sharing are of fundamental significance to organizations because organizations may become more effective and competitive due to mutual reinforcement of knowledge sharing, OL, and competitiveness (Skinnarl & Sharp, 2014). In this respect, there is a clear need for conducting analyses of high-dimensional data (Kalina, 2017) from which companies can gain true genuine knowledge and ensure OL more effectively and efficiently. It is important to emphasize that the managers' behaviors toward subordinates influence the environments for learning and change (Matić, 2022).

This study aims to be a first step in understanding LS, OL, LS, and OC in Macedonian environment and to provide a foundation for future follow up studies. By this initial study, we hope to shed light onto more causality driven research in the future.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Many authors have attempted to tackle LS, OL, and OC reflecting various perspectives. Lopez et al. (2005) identified the relationship between high-performance human resource practices, OL, and business performance, while Xie (2018), investigated the relationship between leadership and OL. Furthermore, OL is found to be a parameter providing safety to organizations according to the "Safety through Organizational Learning" (SOL) methodology, where mobilizing expert knowledge and creativity in a systematic analysis of safety-relevant events identifies the critical human, technical, organizational, and management safety-relevant factors (Fahlbruch & Schöbel, 2011; Jackovics, 2019).

OL is shown to influence the sustainable performance. OL, also, is partly mediating the relationship between sustainable leadership and sustainable performance (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021).

Competitiveness is a multidimensional and relative concept, which means it is changing in time and context (Ajitabh & Momaya, 2004). Thus, a construct was accomplished in an effort to provide a clearer comprehension. This model includes the variables of the competitiveness (Márkus, 2008) based on Porter's model. Yet, competitiveness has been conceptualized and measured at various different levels. Competitiveness is a complex subject which includes a variety of measures such as cost, quality, deliverability of products and services, core competencies, market share, information technology applications, human resources, and technology (Bhawsar & Chattopadhyay, 2015).

OL is defined as a series and a set of

organizational tasks and skills that authorize the organization to use its knowledge, experience, and information. In that regard, it aims to find and correct mistakes, execute in-house routines, fix problems, create information, and idea diversity, and to be renewed continuously (Keçeli & Erdoğan, 2019). Like OC, OL has been determined by a variety of concepts and measures. One of these is suggesting that absorptive capacity (which is a dynamic capability) is a concrete example of OL (Sun & Anderson, 2010).

Our approach is harmonized with Tsang (1997) who states that learning organization is concerned with how an organization should learn, while OL is concerned with how an organization actually learns. In this paper we will use the five disciplines of Senge. As Flood (1998) stated “five disciplines are “necessary to bring about a learning organization-personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. Following the Senge’s approaches, further are briefly explaining the disciplines. Systems thinking emphasizes connectivity and seeing “everything” as “whole” connected by causality. Shared vision highlights the importance of reaching a consensus of a common understanding across the structures, levels, functions and between the organization and individuals. Mental models point to the individual’s mental models and their impacts over the relations with regards to the outside world in general. Team learning ensures that harmonization of the individuals towards achieving a synergy is a major goal within a team. Personal mastery is mostly concerned about the individual’s own proficiency and the power that an individual believes he/she possesses compared to what the individual actually is competent for.

For organizations to adapt a more

learning-oriented approach, whereby they learn from their mistakes, successes, failures, and experiences as well as others’, they need to implement different leadership approaches based on the intricacies of the situation at hand (Arikan, 2020). Leadership behaviors relate to organizational outcomes such as organizational performance and OC (Heiman et al., 2020). Leaders motivate and lead their coworkers and subordinates to maintain a viable environment in which all organizational members steer toward organizational goals. Even though leadership literature has produced many approaches which outline different styles in which leaders engage (Antonakis & House, 2014), a very commonly agreed upon framework is Hersey and Blanchard’s SL Theory.

SL Model states that there are four leadership styles (Hersey et al., 1979). Each of these styles results from a combination of task-oriented behaviours and relationship-oriented behaviours. Relationship-oriented behavior includes supporting subordinates and listening to them. In this way, behaviors high in relationship orientation are mutual. On the other hand, behaviors under task-orientation are more direct and they include telling subordinates what to do and how to execute a particular activity. Thus, according to this categorization, Leadership styles are;

1) Directing Style where leaders define the goals themselves and task these to the subordinates/followers. They also tell them how to complete the particular task.

2) Coaching Style leaders still give directives but here they actually provide more support and help. Leaders under this style build confidence of their subordinates/followers. They also provide help in problem solving throughout the process.

3) Supporting Style leaders provide high

support and offer maximum help on the task. These leaders do not provide too many details on the particular task but rather prepare the subordinates/followers to handle the issues.

4) Delegating Style leaders emerge when the readiness of the subordinates/followers are at a maximum level. In other words, the leader does not need to interfere at all regarding how the task is to be performed. Thus, for this style to work, the subordinates/followers must possess the necessary expertise and knowledge.

Therefore, we posit the following hypotheses and the research question:

H1: There are statistically significant differences between LS in the OL.

H2: There are statistically significant differences between LSs in the SL.

H3: There are statistically significant differences between LS in the OC.

Exploratory Research question: What are the significant factors in the Macedonian business environment with regards to LS, OL, and OC?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Sample and Data Collection

This is quantitative research using Comparative and Correlation designs with primary data collections by utilizing an e-survey. At the same time, we employ exploratory data analysis to identify and summarize the specificities in NM. A pre-test survey was conducted on a small scale of respondents (n=79) for OL questionnaire, while the final test was conducted on a larger scale (n=273), both using the convenient sampling. The pre-test consisted of 51 statements (indicators) while the final test

consisted of 76 items (OC was measured by 9 items, LS with 24 items and the OL with 43 items).

Demographic data were collected as well regarding the 1. Type of enterprise (Micro, Small, Medium, Local government public enterprise, Local government administration, State public enterprise, state legislature or government body (ministry, agency etc.), Public institution (healthcare, education etc.) and Other; 2. Work/Job position or level (Operator-of machine, production line etc., Client services- support or care, Professional services -accounting, project management, legal services etc., Supervisor-foreman, sector chief, section lead, team lead, line manager etc., Operations manager -middle management, sector director, executive etc., Top level manager and Other) and 3. Sum of total professional work experience and work experience within current organization in years.

#### 3.2. Measurement

The respondents were asked to provide their opinion varying from 5-Fully agree (if the respondent considers the statement true for the given condition or the practice of distinct behavior), 4-partially agree (if the respondent considers the statement true for separate and rare cases), 3-No opinion (if the respondent has not enough information or has no insight into the statement), 2-Partially disagree (If the respondent considers the statement untrue in rare cases), 1-Fully disagree (if the respondent considers the statement completely untrue, or the real situation or condition is the exact opposite of the statement).

The respondents were classified across the 4 leadership styles according to the dominant leadership style. One style was

identified extra as the mixed leadership style where there were more than one dominant leadership style. Then, the application of Factor analysis first defined the common basic dimensions (factors) for OL and OC, and then defined the basic latent dimensions (factors) for each LS type (Directing; Coaching; Facilitating; Delegating; Directing/Coach/Facilitator/Delegation-mixed style) individually in each area of SL.

- Organizational Learning (OL) Due to the absence of a unique multilevel theory about the organizational learning as a dynamic phenomenon interacting between individual, group, organizational, inter-organizational levels (Scipioni, 2021), in this paper OL will be conceptualized and measured by an adapted approach that was previously used by Smilevski et al. (2021).

- Leadership Styles (LS) In Leadership Styles (LS), the widely accepted scale of Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership scale was adopted according to the local language.

- Organizational Competitiveness (OC) We are operationalizing OC by adapted concepts and measures previously used by Mellat-Parast & Spillan, (2014) and by Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2016).

### 3.3. Statistical data processing

Data processing was carried out by applying procedures and steps of comparative statistics. Furthermore, multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA), establishes the differences between LS with regards to OL, SL, and OC. Multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA) is commonly applied in various studies including social topics and issues (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2013; Warne, 2014). Frequently, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) is a

statistical method used to understand more deeply the group differences on various outcomes (Smith, Lamb, & Henson, 2020). In our case, the specific differences between LS with regards to OL, SL, and OC were determined.

In addition, by the application of Factor analysis the main components were extracted, and Oblique solutions defined the common factors for each of the LS, OL, and OC. Factor analysis is used to determine the fundamental factors which explain the major correlations among the variables. In this study, a factor analysis is applied in order to group the explored variables by similar correlation patterns (Isabel Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2016). In order to outline the main factors for the constructs where factors can be correlated, oblique rotation method is used (Norris and Lecavalier, 2010). Excel and SPSS application program packages were used to process the data.

## 4. RESULTS

Due to the large number of the indicators (51 items of the survey related to the Organizational learning only), in the pre-test research the reduction of indicators (items of the questionnaire) of less factor weight and common variance involved in explaining common factors resulted with reduction of 8 indicators out of the 51 indicators. The following items are reduced (deleted):

- Personal mastery: The potential of employees develops by using resources in the organization.

- Team learning: At meetings, we strive to understand everyone's point of view.

- Team learning: In the group work personal experiences are shared (do not hide).

- Mental models: We believe it is important that some people doubt the way things are done and challenge existing practices.

- Shared vision: Employees' representatives participate in defining the vision of the organization.

- Shared vision: Employees are informed and understand the vision of the organization.

- Systems thinking: Workers expect their constructive feedback to be heard and processed by management.

- Systems thinking: Teams know and understand what and how much they contribute to the outputs of organizations.

#### 4.1. Demographic data

Demographic data regarding the entities and number of respondents includes Micro entity (up to 10 employees) with 52, Small entity (11 to 50 employees) with 49, Medium entity (51 to 250 employees) with 49, State public enterprise with 18, Local government public enterprise with 3, Local government administration with 6, Government body (ministry, agency etc.) with 11, Public institution (healthcare, education etc.) with 40 and all Others with 45 respondents.

Demographic data regarding the Work/Job position or level includes Operator-of machine, production line etc. with 11, Client services- support or care with 46, Professional services -accounting, project management, legal services etc. with 42, Supervisor-foreman, sector chief, section lead, team lead, line manager etc. with 31, Top level manager with 57, Operations manager -middle management, sector director, executive etc. with 55 and all others with 31 respondents. Demographic data regarding the Total professional work

experience includes 0-5 years with 26, 6-10 years with 47, 11-20 years with 93, 21+ years with 107 respondents, while the work experience within current surveyed organization in years includes 0-5 years with 79, 6-10 years with 62, 11-20 years with 82 and 21+ years with 50 respondents.

#### 4.2. Comparative statistics

##### *Differences between LS in indicators of SL*

Of the results obtained (Table 1. SL-differences between styles) using multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA), we found that there are statistically significant differences between LS in SL. According to Wilk's Lambda values, approximation F, degree of freedom Df1,2 and  $p=0.000$  significant differences were established (Wilks' Lambda=0.095;  $F=5.52$ ;  $Df1,2=96, 652$ ;  $Sig.=0.000$ ). Partial Eta Squared (0.445) indicates the size and impact of a 45% connection of the multivariate variance of dependent variables with the group factor, i.e. LS. The results indicate that we recognized groups/dimensions of different leadership styles among the respondents. We have groups of respondents practicing different leadership styles.

##### *Differences between LS in OL*

The results obtained (Table 2. Differences between LS in OL) using multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA) found that there are no statistically significant differences between LS in OL. According to Wilk's Lambda values, approximation F, degree of freedom Df1,2 and  $p=0.170$  no significant differences were established

(Wilks' Lambda=0.319; F=1.120; Df1,2=172, 581; Sig.=0.170). The partial Eta Squared (0.248) indicates the size and impact of a connection of about 25% of the multivariation variance of dependent variables with the group factor, i.e. leadership styles. The results indicate that organizational learning is not different despite having different leadership styles. Regardless, the groups of respondents practice different leadership styles yet have not different organizational learning practices.

*Differences between LS in OC*

Of the results obtained (Table 3. Differences between LS in OC) using multivariant variance analysis (MANOVA), we found that there are no statistically significant differences between LS in OC. According to Wilk's Lambda values, approximation F, the degree of freedom Df1,2 and p=0.791 did not establish significant differences (Wilks' Lambda=0.854; F=0.802; Df1,2=36, 672; Sig.=0.791). The Partial Eta

Table 1. SL-differences between styles

| Multivariate Tests           |                      |             |                      |               |                |             |                     |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Effect                       | Tests                | Value       | F                    | Hypothesis df | Error df       | Sig.        | Partial Eta Squared |
| Intercept                    | Pillai's Trace       | .987        | 530.169 <sup>b</sup> | 24.000        | 164.000        | .000        | .987                |
|                              | Wilks' Lambda        | .013        | 530.169 <sup>b</sup> | 24.000        | 164.000        | .000        | .987                |
|                              | Hotelling's Trace    | 77.586      | 530.169 <sup>b</sup> | 24.000        | 164.000        | .000        | .987                |
|                              | Roy's Largest Root   | 77.586      | 530.169 <sup>b</sup> | 24.000        | 164.000        | .000        | .987                |
| Var25<br>(Leadership styles) | Pillai's Trace       | 1.676       | 5.019                | 96.000        | 668.000        | .000        | .419                |
|                              | <b>Wilks' Lambda</b> | <b>.095</b> | <b>5.520</b>         | <b>96.000</b> | <b>652.202</b> | <b>.000</b> | <b>.445</b>         |
|                              | Hotelling's Trace    | 3.489       | 5.906                | 96.000        | 650.000        | .000        | .466                |
|                              | Roy's Largest Root   | 1.356       | 9.434 <sup>c</sup>   | 24.000        | 167.000        | .000        | .576                |

Table 2. Differences between LS in OL

| Multivariate Tests           |                      |             |                      |                |                |             |                     |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Effect                       | Tests                | Value       | F                    | Hypothesis df  | Error df       | Sig.        | Partial Eta Squared |
| Intercept                    | Pillai's Trace       | .988        | 281.437 <sup>b</sup> | 43.000         | 145.000        | .000        | .988                |
|                              | Wilks' Lambda        | .012        | 281.437 <sup>b</sup> | 43.000         | 145.000        | .000        | .988                |
|                              | Hotelling's Trace    | 83.461      | 281.437 <sup>b</sup> | 43.000         | 145.000        | .000        | .988                |
|                              | Roy's Largest Root   | 83.461      | 281.437 <sup>b</sup> | 43.000         | 145.000        | .000        | .988                |
| Var44<br>(Leadership styles) | Pillai's Trace       | .987        | 1.127                | 172.000        | 592.000        | .156        | .247                |
|                              | <b>Wilks' Lambda</b> | <b>.319</b> | <b>1.120</b>         | <b>172.000</b> | <b>580.977</b> | <b>.170</b> | <b>.248</b>         |
|                              | Hotelling's Trace    | 1.333       | 1.112                | 172.000        | 574.000        | .186        | .250                |
|                              | Roy's Largest Root   | .450        | 1.548 <sup>c</sup>   | 43.000         | 148.000        | .029        | .310                |

Squared (0.039) indicates a low connectivity impact of about 4% of the multivariation variance of dependent variables with the group factor, i.e. LS. The results indicate that organizational competitiveness is not different despite having different leadership styles. Regardless, the groups of respondents practice different leadership styles yet have not demonstrate different organizational competitiveness.

#### *Factor Analysis and correlation between factors*

We employed exploratory data analysis to identify and summarize the specificities in NM. More specifically, the application of factor analysis reduced the spaces explored and the main components were extracted, and Oblique solutions defined the common factors in the three variables; OL, SL, and OC. The application of the Pearson correlation coefficient established the correlation between the extracted factors.

According to the statistical results of the analysis, for each of the variables (and their categories respectfully) there are higher number of relationships between the

respective indicators whose coefficient values are higher than 0.3. All of the values of the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklen indicator are above the recommended value of 0.6 excluding for Directing=0.585, Facilitating=0.463 and Delegating=0.460. However, the Bartlett test has reached statistical importance, indicating the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Analyzing the size of communalities that define the common component, the highest saturations have recorded the variables indicated with the sign (\*) in Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 reflecting the factors in OL, LS, and OC accordingly.

Factors are extracted by Oblique rotation and according to the Kazer-Gutman criterion for retaining significant main components with characteristic roots above one, the following components (factors) are designed to participate in the explanation with appropriate percentages i.e. factor loadings. Below are the given indicators that have better/clear/higher saturation in the respective factors and as such participate in the nomenclature and identification of the factors. The relationship between the factors is depicted as well.

*Table 3. Differences between LS in OC*

| Multivariate Tests           |                    |             |                      |               |                |             |                     |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Effect                       | Tests              | Value       | F                    | Hypothesis df | Error df       | Sig.        | Partial Eta Squared |
| Intercept                    | Pillai's Trace     | .965        | 552.809 <sup>b</sup> | 9.000         | 179.000        | .000        | .965                |
|                              | Wilks' Lambda      | .035        | 552.809 <sup>b</sup> | 9.000         | 179.000        | .000        | .965                |
|                              | Hotelling's Trace  | 27.795      | 552.809 <sup>b</sup> | 9.000         | 179.000        | .000        | .965                |
|                              | Roy's Largest Root | 27.795      | 552.809 <sup>b</sup> | 9.000         | 179.000        | .000        | .965                |
| Var10<br>(Leadership styles) | Pillai's Trace     | .153        | .805                 | 36.000        | 728.000        | .786        | .038                |
|                              | Wilks' Lambda      | <b>.854</b> | <b>.802</b>          | <b>36.000</b> | <b>672.533</b> | <b>.791</b> | <b>.039</b>         |
|                              | Hotelling's Trace  | .162        | .798                 | 36.000        | 710.000        | .796        | .039                |
|                              | Roy's Largest Root | .085        | 1.715 <sup>c</sup>   | 9.000         | 182.000        | .088        | .078                |



Table 4. Factors in OL (1/2)

| <i>Organizational Learning<br/>Variable Number - Associated statement<br/>*Communalities highest saturations</i>                              | <i>Factors extracted by<br/>Oblique rotation and<br/>Factors % loadings</i>  | <i>Comments<br/>and<br/>correlation<br/>coefficient</i>  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>2Organizational learning discipline-Personal mastery</b>   |  |  |
| 1-I have personal vision and I can share that freely within my organization   | Five variables with very high and high saturations participate in the definition of the first factor (F1).   |  |
| 4-* h=0.758-My organization is safe surrounding to find new ways of learning or conducting new practices                                      |  |  |
| 5-Personal development is supported in my organization and the experiences of it are shared   | F1-With new practices and ways of learning to continuous development. 47.62%   | Between the two factors there is moderate positive relationship. <b>0.344</b>                            |
| 6-Continuous learning inside and outside the organization are beneficial to my personal responsibility  |  |  |
| 7-I have the opportunity to continually develop my capacities and potentials  | Three high-saturation variables participate in the definition of the second factor (F2).   |  |
| 8-Personal development results in increase of my emotional tension tolerance  |  |  |
| 9-The discovery of personal beliefs (from which I feel comes my ineptitude) is providing the opportunity for personal and professional change | F2-Personal and professional change in the direction of increased tolerance. 15.53%  |  |
| 2-Through my creative tension and excitement, I pull the vision to reality  |  |  |
| <b>Organizational learning discipline-Team learning</b>   |  |  |
| 1-Group (and team) work in our organization is considered valuable  | Four variables with very high and high saturations participate in the definition of the first factor (F1).   | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators participate in the definition of both factors. |
| 2-During meetings we try to understand each member perspective  |  |  |
| 7-During meetings we are prepared to reanalyze our decision when provided with new information  | F1-Team decisions with feedback for the lessons learned. 48.54%  |  |
| 8-At the end of each meeting a feedback is provided on the learned lessons  |  |  |
| 3-While working in a group, ideas emerge that no one individually have thought of.  | Two high-saturation variables and one variable with certain lower saturations in the first indicator participate in the definition of the second factor. | Between the two factors there is a moderate positive relationship. <b>0.445</b>                          |
| 5-*h=0.726-We share our success with others   |  |  |
| 6-We share our failures with others   | F2-Sharing successes and failures. 12.84%  |  |
| <b>Organizational learning discipline-Mental Models</b>   |  |  |
| 4-When we oppose others perspectives, we use rational dialogue  | Five variables with very high and high saturations participate in the definition of the first factor.  | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators participate in the definition of both          |
| 5-When making decisions we talk openly and ask challenging questions  |  |  |
| 6-When discussing we really try to understand what is being said instead of jumping to conclusions on what others are trying to say           | F1-Consensual decisions and conclusion. 48.02%   |  |
| 7-We are prepared to reinvestigate decisions when new information emerges   |  |  |
| 8-While discussing we try to understand others perspectives   | 2-*h=0.776-It is important to have an open mind  |  |
|   |  |  |

Table 4. Factors in OL (2/2)

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 3-Diversity is important  | Two variables with many high saturations participate in the definition of the second factor (F2), with the contribution of indicators with medium saturations.<br><br>F2 -The importance and meaning of diversity/ diversity and mind.<br>13.36% | factors.<br><br>Between the two factors there is a moderate positive relationship.<br><b>0.419</b> |
| 1-Employees are able to overcome standard models of thinking and look at things in new and different ways                               | Less saturation in F2  |  |
| 9-Yesterday solutions oftentimes do not solve todays problems   | Less saturation in F2  |  |
| <b>Organizational learning discipline-Shared Vision</b>   |  |  |
| 1-We have realistic and predictable organizational vision   |  |  |
| 2-We have strategy which well positioned towards the future   |  |  |
| 3-Organizational structure is coherent with our organizational aims   |  |  |
| 4-*h=0.679-Employees identify and recognize the organizational values, vision and mission as their own                                  |  |  |
| 5-Employees recognize inspiration within the vision of the organization   | F1-Shared and achieved vision. 62.90%  |  |
| 6-Employees show dedication to the vision and strategy of the organization  |  |  |
| 7-Employees believe that their work contributes to achieving the organizational vision  |  |  |
| 8-Current manager activities support the strategy and lead to vision achievement  |  |  |
| <b>Organizational learning discipline-Systems thinking</b>  |  |  |
| 1-Employees understand how and in what ways they contribute to the operations in their organization                                     |  |  |
| 2-Employees are encouraged to provide constructive feedback or criticism for the operations   |  |  |
| 3-Employees or teams are self-initiating in providing feedback or participating in strategic or operational decision making             |  |  |
| 4-Employees know and understand how their work contributes to team or operational goals achievement                                     | F1-Teamwork and responsible attitude of employees and management, the basis for creating positive feedback effects. 59.34%   |  |
| 5-Employees refer to past job feedback and modify their behavior or increase their knowledge for the job and understanding of the tasks |  |  |
| 6-Teams have understanding and knowledge on how their work contributes to the achievement of strategic goals                            |  |  |
| 7-The management has a system in place to collect and process feedback  |  |  |
| 8-The management disseminates and refreshes the vision and strategic goals with the teams and employees                                 |  |  |
| 9-*h=0.667-The management monitors the organizational behavior and modifies and changes operations or goals based on feedback received  |  |  |

Table 5. Factors in LS (1/4)

| <i>Leadership Styles</i><br><i>Variable Number - Associated statement</i><br><i>*Communalities highest saturations</i> | <i>Factors extracted by</i><br><i>Oblique rotation and</i><br><i>Factors % loadings</i>  | <i>Comments</i><br><i>and</i><br><i>correlation</i><br><i>coefficient</i>   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Leadership style-DIRECTING</b>  |  |   |
| 4-I provide staff with clear responsibilities and allow them to decide how to accomplish them.                         | The definition of the first factor (F1) involves several variables, better or with cleaner and higher saturation of the 4 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> indicator.    | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators saturated in the definition of all three factors.   |
| 6-I recognize staff's achievements with encouragement and support.   |  |   |
| 8-I discuss the organization's strategic mission with staff.   |  |   |
| 14-I explain the benefits of achieving their work goals to staff.  | F1-Responsibilities, needs, decisions and goals of the subordinates.<br>37.65%   | Between the tree factors there is a weak positive and moderate positive relationship.<br><b>F1 &amp; F2</b><br><b>0.296</b><br><b>F2 &amp; F3</b><br><b>0.204</b><br><b>F1 &amp; F3</b><br><b>0.319</b> |
| 17-*h=0.714-I have staff report back to me after completing each step of their work.                                   | Several indicators are also involved in defining the second factor (F2), of which with higher saturations the 17 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> , and 24 <sup>th</sup> indicator.                            |   |
| 19-I provide staff with the time and resources to pursue their own developmental objectives.                           | F2-Awareness, respect and overcome problems and misunderstandings.<br>9.38%  |   |
| 24-I ensure that information systems are timely and accurate and that information is fed directly to staff.            | In defining the third factor (F3), there are several indicators, of which higher saturations separate the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> indicator.                                   |   |
| 1-I check staff's work on a regular basis to assess their progress and learning.                                       | F3-Verification and creation of working standards and information topics. 7.57%  |   |
| 13-I set down performance standards for each aspect of my staff's job.   |  |   |
| 23-I ensure that information systems are timely and accurate, and that information is fed directly to staff.           |  |   |
| <b>Leadership style-COACHING</b>   |  |   |
| 1-I check staff's work on a regular basis to assess their progress and learning.                                       | Several variables participate in the definition of the first factor (F1), of which the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , and 11 <sup>th</sup> indicators are better or higher saturations. | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators saturated in the definition of all three factors.   |
| 5-I make sure staff are aware of, and understand, all organization policies and procedures.                            |  |   |
| 6-I recognize staff's achievements with encouragement and support.   |  |   |
| 11-I avoid making judgements or premature evaluation of ideas or suggestions.  | F1-Check, security and support for the arranged.<br>34.99%   | Among the three factors, there is a   |
| 7-I discuss any organizational or policy changes with staff prior to taking action.                                    | Several indicators are also involved in defining the second factor (F2), including higher  |   |
| 8-I discuss the organization's strategic mission with staff.   |  |   |
| 9-I demonstrate each task involved in doing the job.   |  |   |

Table 5. Factors in LS (2/4)

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 10 *h=0.807-I meet with staff regularly to discuss their needs.                                    | saturations of the 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> .<br><br>F2-Cooperation on the needs of the arranged and contracted work tasks and organizational strategies. 9.12% | weak positive and weak negative and moderate negative relationship   |
| 15-I rotate the role of team briefer among the staff.  | In defining the third factor (F3), there are several indicators, of which higher saturations separate the 15 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>th</sup> indicator.                                   | <b>F1 &amp; F2 - 0.380</b><br><b>F2 &amp; F3 - 0.209</b><br><b>F1 &amp; F3 0.112</b>   |
| 17-I have staff report back to me after completing each step of their work.                        |   |  |
| 21-I try to assign work in small, easily controlled units.   | F3-Awareness and notification of the activities taken and control in the transferred work competences. 9.04%  |  |
| <b>Leadership style-FACILITATING</b>   |   |  |
| 6-*h=0.852-I recognize staff's achievements with encouragement and support.                        | Several variables participate in the definition of the first factor (F1), of which the 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup> indicator are better or higher.                                   | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators saturated in the definition of several factors.                              |
| 7-I discuss any organizational or policy changes with staff prior to taking action.                |   |  |
| 21-I try to assign work in small, easily controlled units.   | F1-Recognition in achievements, support for rule-making and control in work activists. 32.53%   |  |
| 2-I hold periodic meetings to show support for organization policy and mission.                    | Several indicators are also involved in defining the second factor (F2), of which with higher saturations the 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> indicators.                               | Between the five factors there is a weak positive and weak negative relationship.  |
| 10-I meet with staff regularly to discuss their needs.   |   |  |
| 20-I expect staff to create their own goals and objectives and submit them to me in finished form. | F2-Transparency towards organizational policy and organizational strategy and mission and creation of goals and tasks with the supported. 11.91%  | <b>F1 &amp; F2 0.161</b><br><b>F1 &amp; F3 0.119</b>   |
| 12-I ask staff to think ahead and develop long-term plans for their areas.                         | In defining the third factor (F3), there are several indicators, of which higher saturations separate the 12 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> indicators.                                  | <b>F1 &amp; F4 - 0.076</b><br><b>F1 &amp; F5 0.217</b><br><b>F2 &amp; F4 0.157</b><br><b>F2 &amp; F4 - 0.256</b><br><b>F2 &amp; F5</b> |
| 14-I explain the benefits of achieving their work goals to staff.                                  |   |  |
| 16-I emphasize the importance of quality but I allow my staff to establish the control standards.  | F3-Development of long-term plans, fulfillment of   |  |

Table 5. Factors in LS (3/4)

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | work goals and importance of quality. 9.52%   | <b>0.197</b><br><b>F3 &amp; F4 - 0.157</b>   |
| 4-I provide staff with clear responsibilities and allow them to decide how to accomplish them.               | In defining the fourth factor (F4), there are several indicators, of which higher saturations separate the 19 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> indicators.            | <b>F3 7 F5 0.215</b><br><b>F4 &amp; F5 - 0.145</b>   |
| 5-I make sure staff are aware of, and understand, all organization policies and procedures.                  |   |  |
| 11-I avoid making judgements or premature evaluation of ideas or suggestions.                                |   |  |
| 19-I provide staff with the time and resources to pursue their own developmental objectives.                 | F4-Responsibility and caution in making decisions and conclusions. 7.64%  |  |
| 22-I focus on opportunities and not problems.  | In defining the fifth factor (F5) with the highest saturations, the 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup> indicators.  |  |
| 23-I ensure that information systems are timely and accurate, and that information is fed directly to staff. |   |  |
| 24-I avoid evaluating problems and concerns as they are discussed.   | F5-Awareness, focus and avoidance of problems. 6.80%  |  |
| <b>Leadership style-DELEGATING</b>   |   |  |
| 4-I provide staff with clear responsibilities and allow them to decide how to accomplish them.               | The definition of the first factor (F1) involves several variables, better or with cleaner and higher saturation of the 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> indicator. | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators participate in the definition of the 2 or the 3 factors. |
| 5-I make sure staff are aware of, and understand, all organization policies and procedures.                  |   |  |
| 6-I recognize staff's achievements with encouragement and support.   |   |  |
| 12-I ask staff to think ahead and develop long-term plans for their areas.                                   | F1-Support, responsibility, trust and creativity in planning in the orderly. 41.53%   | Between the tree factors there is a weak positive and moderate positive relationship.                              |
| 13-*h=0.812-I set down performance standards for each aspect of my staff's job.                              | Several indicators are also involved in defining the second factor (F2), of which with higher saturations the 13 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> indicator.        |  |
| 14-I explain the benefits of achieving their work goals to staff.  |   |  |
| 17-I have staff report back to me after completing each step of their work.                                  |   |  |
| 18-I hold regular meetings to discuss work status.   | F2-Awareness, teamwork and creation of standards and work goals with the subordinates. 11.50%   |  |
| 8-I discuss the organization's strategic mission with staff.   |   |  |
| 22-I focus on opportunities and not problems.  | The definition of the third factor (F3) with the highest saturations are the 8 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> , and 23 <sup>rd</sup> indicator.   | <b>F1 &amp; F2 0.312</b><br><b>F1 &amp; F3 0.209</b><br><b>F2 &amp; F3 0.186</b>                                   |
| 23-I ensure that information systems are timely and accurate, and that information is fed directly to staff. | F3-Awareness, focus and co-operation with the subordinates. 8.40%   |  |

Table 5. Factors in LS (4/4)

| <i>Leadership style-MIXED LEADERSHIP STYLE</i>   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1-I check staff's work on a regular basis to assess their progress and learning.                             | The definition of the first factor (F1) involves several variables, better or with cleaner and higher saturation of the 9 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> indicator. | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators participate in the definition of both factors (including the 8). |
| 2-I hold periodic meetings to show support for organization policy and mission.                              |   |  |
| 7-I discuss any organizational or policy changes with staff prior to taking action.                          |   |  |
| 9-I demonstrate each task involved in doing the job.   |   |  |
| 14-I explain the benefits of achieving their work goals to staff.  | F1-Explanation, demonstration and verification of work goals and tasks, in support of organisational policies. 58.77%   |  |
| 15-I rotate the role of team briefer among the staff.  | Several indicators are also involved in defining the second factor (F2), of which with higher saturations the 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> indicator.   | Between the two factors there is a strong positive relationship. <b>0.585</b>  |
| 23-I ensure that information systems are timely and accurate, and that information is fed directly to staff. |   |  |
| 24-I avoid evaluating problems and concerns as they are discussed.   | F2-Awareness and support of information systems and avoid problems. 6.33%   |  |
| 8- <sup>*h</sup> =0.824-I discuss the organization's strategic mission with staff.                           |   |  |

Table 6. Factors in OC

| <i>Organizational Competitiveness<br/>Variable Number - Associated statement<br/>*Communalities highest saturations</i> | <i>Factors extracted by<br/>Oblique rotation and<br/>Factors % loadings</i>  | <i>Comments<br/>and<br/>correlation<br/>coefficient</i>  |
|---|--|--|
| <i>Organizational competitiveness</i>   |  |  |
| 6-Provides better opportunity for training and development  | Several variables participate in the definition of the first factor (F1), i.e. from the 5 <sup>th</sup> to 9 <sup>th</sup> indicators, of which better or with cleaner and higher saturations the 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> indicator. | At the same time, it can be noted that certain indicators participate in the definition of both factors. |
| 7-Is more effective in technology and information systems   |  |  |
| 8-Has stronger financial position   | F1-Efficiency in the foreground. 51.77%  |  |
| 1-Responds quicker and more effective on client or supplier changes of needs  | Several indicators are also involved in defining the second factor (F2), i.e. from the 1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> indicators, of which with higher saturations the 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> indicator.                          | There is a strong positive relationship between the two factors. <b>0.537</b>                            |
| 2- <sup>*h</sup> =0.753-Responds quicker and more effective on competitor strategy changes                              |  |  |
| 4-Significantly leads the competition in the industry   | F2-Quick and effective adjustment of changes. 13.42%   |  |
| 3-Develops new product quicker and more effective   | Less saturation to F2  |  |
| 9-Has firmer corporative values and culture   | Less saturation to F1  |  |
| 5-Is more successful in HR management practices   | Less saturation to F1  |  |

## 5. DISCUSSION

In order to confirm our original assumption on the nature of different LS in NM, we ran a MANOVA which showed evidence on the existence of different styles in leadership. Subsequently, the results pointed out to the fact that there are no significant differences between LS in OL nor in OC. This suggested that we dig more into the nature of the factors for each variable. Upon identifying the factors, the following insights are reached. For the personal mastery, which is a discipline within OL, findings suggest that there are two factors. The first factor highlights the importance of commitment to new practices and ways of learning leading to continuous development. The second factor emphasizes that when employees undergo personal or professional change, they tend to become more tolerant. The positive relationship between these two factors means that if companies invest in continuous development of their employees, this is expected to bring about a positive change and increase in tolerance levels of their human capital. This can benefit the companies by providing more flexibility and adaptability to cope with ad hoc challenges which may arise.

With regards to team learning, there are two factors. The first factor highlights taking decisions considering the feedback and learning lessons from the past experiences. The second factor is about communicating within the team the lessons from the failures as well as achievements. The positive relationship between these two factors accentuates the importance of effective communication skills among all employees.

Mental models possess two factors. The first one is about reaching common understanding and decisions based on

participative techniques. The second factor is about appreciating the contribution from various mindsets and mental models. Thus, paying attention to diversity seems to be a critical constituent of successful companies. These two factors have a positive relationship which suggests that companies should be valuing diversity and uniformity at the same time. In other words, employees should be given the freedom to express different ideas which will create a work environment where acceptance of various opinions are welcome. This understanding can foster consensual decisions which can harmonize multiple aspects into optimized decision-making processes.

Regarding shared vision, our findings point to a single factor which connects the need to share the vision of the company with all the employees across various hierarchies, business functions, and organizational structures. If the vision is shared, then we expect the accomplishment of the organizational goals to be more effective. This will ultimately lead to the achievement of the company mission and vision in a smoother manner. Another dimension of the OL discipline is systems thinking. Here, the findings highlight the importance of teamwork and responsible attitudes of both employees and managers in leading to positive and beneficial effects.

A major construct in this study was OC. OC was found to have two factors, which are strongly and positively related with each other. The first factor indicates the importance of ensuring efficiency in the workplace. This emerges as a significant element of achieving a competitive company environment. The second factor emphasizes the need for agility and goal orientation. These will enable the company to be quick in response when change is inevitable.

Considering the relationships between these factors, we can say that companies can survive if they engage and accomplish quick, effective, and efficient activities.

In LS, we have directing, coaching, facilitating, delegating, and mixed leadership styles. The mixed style was not evident in the literature to the best of our knowledge. Our specific study contributes to the existing literature on this aspect as well. The mixed style means the leaders have more than one dominant style of leading their team. Attributes of directing style leaders possess three factors. The first factor points to the importance of the leader's role to continuously know the employees' responsibilities, needs, decisions, and goals. The second factor highlights the need of the leader to show respect and necessary attitudes to overcome any issues and difficulties. The third factor points to the importance of having informational and working standards. These will improve the communication flow during the work execution and avoid any inefficiencies. Our findings show that coaching style leaders have three major factors associated with them. Firstly, they help their employees by checking and supporting them. By doing so, they equip their followers with the necessary information. Secondly, they integrate the different work tasks and provide cooperation among team members. These help employees be more aligned with organizational strategies. Thirdly, coaching style leaders provide awareness among their teams by assigning work more reasonably. They also give necessary feedback regarding the progress of the tasks. Facilitating style leaders have the most comprehensive factors. The first factor is that managers recognize the need to appreciate achievements of the subordinates and it

involves employees in rulemaking. The second factor emphasizes the leader's role in providing transparency in the work environment. The third factor states the importance of quality within short term and long-term goals. The fourth factor suggests that leaders ought to be careful in drawing conclusions and making decisions. The fifth factor points to the need for reaching effective and efficient problem resolutions. Delegating leaders have three major factors. The first factor suggests that leaders should not just delegate tasks and wait for the employees to fulfill them, but instead they should also provide the necessary support. In addition, they should exhibit genuine trust which will help employees overcome obstacles. Leaders should allow their followers to decide on how to complete the given tasks. So, in this way leaders enable their followers to make their own planning. The second factor highlights the leader's role in enhancing the employees' awareness in achieving the necessary tasks, goals, reporting requirements, and standards. This refers to both individual and team tasks. The third factor is mostly concerned with the communication and cooperation skills of the leader. The delegating leaders seem to emphasize the opportunities and solutions rather than the problems. The mixed style of leadership has two factors. The first is about integrating the goals and tasks with the organizational systems and policies. The second factor is mostly about ensuring effective communication and information sharing in order to avoid problems. The strong relationship between these two factors suggests that leaders with mixed styles should be able to harmonize the goals and tasks with systems and policies and ensure effective communication.



## 6. CONCLUSION

As stated earlier, the existing literature is limited in exploring OL, LS, and OC in an integrative manner in NM. Therefore, improved and enriched insight and attention in such contexts are required and this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of achieving OC for both theory and practical application. The management of the companies may apply the gained knowledge and adjust their contemporary management practices considering different LS and OL. Also, we assert that our approach is consistent with Mary Crossan stating in an interview that “Organizational learning is a physiology and learning organization is all about how to train an athlete” and she emphasizes that learning organizations are determined by the strength of individual character of the leader and the organizational process concerning OL (Mishra & Reddy, 2021).

As for managerial implications, our findings suggest several benefits from this research. First, professional managers may utilize the survey for their company to find what specific disciplines of learning and styles of leadership are existing in their company. Based on these, professionals may encounter a more thorough understanding of the relationships between the factors which affect the management of the employees. Second, based on the findings company professionals may design more suitable projects for various improvements in the company. They can also design more effective training and development programs for the employees which will be more successful in facilitating better communication and synergy. Third, in today’s highly competitive business

environment in the context of Industry 4.0 that requires big data and advanced information systems and technologies, cyber-physical systems require ready employees and management to be more skillful and capable. Analyzing the employees will allow managers to better focus the human capital with the requirements of such ongoing projects. Fourth, for Macedonian companies delegating style leadership emerges as an important phenomenon due to three identified factors. Here, the delegating managers seem to provide more of a free environment in the workplace where employees feel the mutual trust and open communication channels in which they can express their ideas and opinions. Fifth, facilitating leaders also seem to possess complex skills. They should be paying attention to the recognition of the successes of the subordinates to create a more supporting work environment where employees will be more involved. They should also emphasize effective, efficient, and high-quality outputs in a transparent workplace. Sixth, directing style leaders should ensure that proper standards are set and are correctly internalized among the employees in respectful work environment. Seventh, coaching style leaders should be supportive to their respective subordinates in terms of providing cooperation, integration, feedback, alignment, and relevant information. This way, subordinates can be more harmonized between the operational tasks and strategic goals. Lastly, mixed style leadership is one of the significant contributions of this particular research as it was not covered in the previous literature. Through a mixed style, NM seems to host a unique style of leadership which incorporates various aspects of different LS.

Further studies can look into this and try to understand how this affects OC.

As for the limitations of this research, we can say that even though the sample size was quite considerable, the study was conducted only in the Macedonian business setting. If further studies are repeated with more territories, clearer and more insightful findings can be reached. Another limitation is that our respondents were reached by convenience sampling. This provided very rich findings and described the specific characteristics of the Macedonian managers and employees. However, this is also a shortcoming in the sense that if several industries were targeted in terms of quota/strata sampling, it might have provided us with more industry-specific findings in Macedonia. Therefore, considering the above, for future research, we can suggest that even more insightful findings of the predefined factors can be reached if causality is studied through correlation and regression analyses. Especially a correlation between the factors of OC with those of OL and SL might give us very valuable and relevant insight into Macedonian business environment.

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## СТИЛОВИ РУКОВОЂЕЊА, ОРГАНИЗАЦИОНО УЧЕЊЕ И ОРГАНИЗАЦИОНА КОНКУРЕНТНОСТ: ДОКАЗИ ИЗ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СЕВЕРНЕ МАКЕДОНИЈЕ

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### Извод

Ова студија, у Републици Северној Македонији (НМ), идентификује разлике између стилова руковођења (LS) у датом контексту организационог учења (OL), ситуационог лидерства (SL) и организационе конкурентности (OC). Поред тога, студија идентификује специфичне факторе који чине ове конструкције. Истраживање је спроведено у неколико индустрија, организационих хијерархијских нивоа и различитих радних искустава. Анкета пре тестирања спроведена је на малој скали испитаника (n=79) за упитник за организационо учење, док је коначни упитник администриран на већој скали (n=273), оба користећи погодно узорковање. Резултати показују да нема статистички значајних разлика између LS у OC, нити у OL, док су статистички значајне разлике постојале у SL. Ова студија је такође истраживала постојеће вишеструке факторе у LS, OL и OC. Ови налази бацају светло на могућа будућа истраживања која могу да интегришу ове резултате и зароне у даље истраживачке студије које се могу задржати на свеобухватнијем разумевању које у ствари може повећати импликације на управљање како за компаније тако и за истраживаче.

*Кључне речи:* стилови руковођења, организационо учење, организациона конкурентност

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