The Attitudes and Actions of the Superior and the Participative Management Style

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the article is to analyse the characteristics of participative management style in the context of open attitudes and actions of a leader.
Design/Methodology/Approach: The assessment of specific measures implemented by the superior was grouped using factor analysis. The principal component analysis was used to identify factors. Factor rotation was conducted using the Oblimin method, and the significance of the analysis was confirmed by the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests. Using the proportion of variance explained criterion, 2 variants (factor loadings) were distinguished participative style, and communication and feedback. The chi-square tests and Pearson's C (contingency) coefficient were used to analyse the relations between the variants and the superior's management style.
Findings: The article presents the relationship between the value of variables "participative style" and "communication and information" and management styles. We demonstrated that elements of participative leadership style in the behaviour of the superior result in a more open approach in interactions with employees. When a task is unstructured, the leader's participatory behaviour can stimulate subordinates, as the task is explained in more detail.
Practical Implications: The analysis of the data shows that effective leadership requires mobilisation of the talents of subordinates, so it is extremely important to recognise the potential of employees. In practice, this means that participation stimulates the development of innovative solutions and fosters creativity in employees.
Originality/Value: Demonstrating the importance of using participation as a tool to improve the decision-making skills of subordinates contributes to the present understanding of the role of leadership in strengthening intra-organisational relations.

Keywords: Participative management style, leadership, intra-organisational relations.
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1. Introduction

To enable collaboration, organisations need to create proper socio-organisational and material conditions. The former includes a participative leadership style. In entails not only extensive use of employee's knowledge, but also moving away from the autocratic management style. The participative style focuses on involving the team in problem-solving and decision-making. It also emphasises the importance of proper conditions for professional development, and preference on group engagement. This management style concentrates on the significance of co-operation in organisations, and the facilitative role of communication in the process. In other words, collaboration and communication are the means to achieve the principal goal of the organisation, as well as its intermediate, strategic, and operational targets.

With certain simplification, the managerial behaviours that promote co-operation and mutual assistance may be referred to as leadership. Thus, characteristic traits of a leader include reliance on the knowledge of employees and creation of a team supporting the leader is various activities contributing to the achievement of company goals (Budd *et al.,* 2010). Based on the leading role of communication and teamwork in leadership, Kouzes and Posner (2018) derived "the five practices of exemplary leadership": model the way, inspire a shared vision, change the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Leadership is also based on the participation that inspires employees to work for the implementation of vision and achievement of goals of the organisation (Constantin and Baias, 2015). Facing a problem, the leader needs to assess whether he/she solve it without assistance, or if team collaboration is required. Doubtlessly, teamwork offers endless ideas, synergy resulting from analysis of many concepts, and constructive criticism based on the experience and knowledge of employees (Drewniak, 2016). Due to these attributes, modern leadership should be considered as a process of co-operation with groups of change leaders in the organisation, and the executives need specialised teams providing information, consultation, co-ordination, and decision-making.

Therefore, the effectiveness of leaders is determined by the engagement of employees in achieving company's goals. Its degree can be increased by mobilisation of employees, and their involvement in the decision-making process (Drewniak and Drewniak, 2020). In participative management style, leadership involves social impact resulting in voluntary contribution of subordinates to the achievement of the company's goals. The effect of employee voice, i.e. their opinions, suggestions, ideas regarding improvements in the organisation (decision-making processes) on participation and its results gains a new meaning (Rees *et al.,* 2013).

Leadership is a function of numerous interacting elements, such as individual characteristics, forces in the environment, strategic potential, quality of relationships with subordinates, match between the organisation and the specificity of the leader, tasks, and followers. The aim of this article is to analyse the characteristics of

participative management style in the context of open attitudes and actions of a leader towards subordinates. The analysis is based on the review of the literature on leadership, and the results of empirical research conducted among 185 employees from 10 enterprises operating internationally in various sectors.

2. Theoretical Framework

The skills of leaders in terms of creating external and internal relationships demonstrate a significant effect on the creative and innovation processes (Drewniak, *et al.,* 2020; Baker and Dutton, 2007; Słupska *et al.*, 2019; Drewniak, 2020). Engagement in co-operation, based on the established value system and trust, seems to play an important role. Leadership understood as a non-repressive impact on the members on an organised group, applied to co-ordinate and direct their activities towards the achievement of planned goals, certainly contributes to these processes. (Jago, 1982).

Due to numerous studies and extensive subject literature, our understanding of leadership and its essence has been greatly enhanced (Berkley, 2008; Colquitt *et al.*, 2015). Many authors demonstrate that the leadership style affects the readiness of employees for change (Drewniak, R. *et al.,* 2020; Nordin, 2011). This line of thought follows the results of research by McKey *et al*. (2013), who confirmed a significant correlation between employee participation in management and their adaptability to change. Since no real change is possible without the support of employees, many studies focus on the attitudes of employees towards their leaders (Wright *et al.,* 2013; Van der Voet, 2014). Supporting and participative leadership styles demonstrate positive impact on effectiveness in SMEs, whereas instrumental leadership adversely affects the effectiveness in small organisations (Pedraja-Rejas, 2006). Based on the literature, employees included in the decision-making process are less likely to give up their tasks or change the employer (Kaliannana and Adjovu, 2015; Barrick, 2005).

Therefore, managers should focus on inspiring loyalty and attachment to the organisation and ensuring satisfaction in employees. This requires of a specific leadership and company management style, promoting participation of employees in various processes. Sökmen (2014) argues that when employees feel engaged in the decision-making process, they are less likely to seek another job. Considering the determinants of direct employee participation, we must also consider the role of situational factors. In this context, Drewniak (2017) pointed out the importance of the superior/subordinate relationship, the role of employees in the decision-making process, their expectations and the leadership style adopted in the company. Gollan and Xu (2015) also emphasise the significance of internal regulations, character of the organisation and its employees, motivation, and goal of the members of the organisation, and the power of labour unions. The effects of these factors vary, depending on the specific conditions (situational context). However, as researchers point out, organisations should focus on shaping these factors in a manner that will

ensure better performance. Participation-oriented management style (participative or consultative) is of key importance for building positive relations (Chi *et al.,* 2006; Dehaghi and Rouhani, 2014), and the main benefit of the participative leadership is the resulting fulfilment of employee aspirations (Tsai, 2011; Raetzer *et al.,* 2019).

Participation-oriented measures increase employee satisfaction. Moreover, inclusion of the members of an enterprise in the decision-making process, and inspiring in them co-responsibility for the organisation is one of the methods to reduce the willingness to seek new employment (Goswami and Jha, 2012; Dundon *et al.,* 2004). The subject literature presents the best communication practices; however, one notices a certain lack of studies analysing the characteristics of participative management style and focusing on open attitudes and practices of the leader towards the subordinates. Therefore, we adopted the following hypothesis:

H1: The characteristics of participative management style are found in the behaviour of leaders adopting an open management style.

The effect of the size and character of relationships between the individual-oriented leadership (i.e. participative and consultative style) and the activities of leaders or results achieved by employees has not been discussed in detail in the literature (Lythreatis *et al.,* 2019; Drewniak *et al.,* 2020; Jong and Hartog, 2007; Yukl, 2005). As a result, the studies generated unconvincing results, and they do not explain sufficiently the complexity of relationships between the co-operative leadership and organisational engagement or job satisfaction. The participative style is broadly defined as the willingness of leaders to co-operate closely with their subordinates, and to engage them in the decision-making process so that they can achieve their everyday professional goals (Amabile *et al.,* 2004; Yukl, 2005; Jong and Hartog, 2007).

Leaders who adopt this style manage the organisation through collective decision-making and consultations. They are ready to ask their employees for ideas or opinions in the process of setting goals and the ways to achieve them (Berson and Avolio, 2004; Jong and Hartog, 2007). The analysis of the literature on leadership revealed that the leaders able to plan and manage everyday professional operations using participative and consultative management style had a significant impact on the employee engagement in the organisation (Drewniak, 2017; Tabbodi, 2009; Yousef, 2000) and their satisfaction with work (Sinani 2016; Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006).

There is a common consensus that the participative style, consultative style, satisfaction with work and organisational engagement are correlated (Drewniak *et al.,* 2020) the leaders who can properly introduce the participative management style can increase job satisfaction (Yiing and Ahmad, 2009; Ismail *et al.,* 2010; Gharibvand *et al.,* 2013) and organisational engagement (Wei *et al.,* 2018;

Drewniak, 2017; Tabbodi, 2009; Yousef, 2000; Ismail *et al.,* 2010) of their employees.

Organisation of teamwork is evaluated based on the achieved results. Therefore, in the theory of leadership, considering the team aspect, special attention is paid to the determinants of team's effectiveness and constant improvement of the quality of teamwork. Without having understood the full spectrum of factors affecting the results, the leader cannot constantly analyse information and make decisions improving the work of the team. Studies focusing on this problem helped to enumerate the most important characteristics and criteria affecting the effectiveness of a team. Based on their studies, Hackman and Walton (1986) found that the effectiveness of group work is determined by setting clear and encouraging directions for development, providing conditions for building a structure stimulating to work, providing support and promoting excellence, and facilitating access to expert assistance and material assets. Similarly, LaFasto and Larson (2001) identified the factors affecting the excellence of teamwork, largely resembling the determinants suggested by Hackman and Walton. They include clear and constructive goals, performance-oriented structure, competent team members, similar levels of engagement, co-operative environment, standards of excellence, external support and leadership based on strong principles. The role of the modern leader, be it a challenging one, is to combine these elements (Northouse, 2003, 212-215).

3. Methodology

Presented below are the results and conclusions based on the empirical research conducted in 2019. The study involved employees from large companies operating internationally. The choice of individual companies was dictated by their high potential for the development of relational competencies. The analysed enterprises comprised primarily production and service companies representing internationally promising sectors. The study sample was large; in all but one of the studied companies the headcount was significantly over 250 employees. The data was collected through an on-line survey questionnaire. 185 completed questionnaires were obtained (including 105 from men and 80 from women). The respondents were mainly production workers, administration employees, managers, and sales representatives.

The aim of this empirical study was to analyse the characteristics of participative management style in the context of open attitudes and actions of a leader towards subordinates. Based on the collected data, the practices of leaders with regard to active employee engagement in the process of establishing goals and ways of achieving them were analysed. The assessment of specific measures taken by the superior was grouped with the use of factor analysis. The method used to identify factors was the principal component analysis. Oblimin rotation was applied. The KMO test confirmed the significance of the factor analysis (Table 1). Using the

proportion of variance explained criterion, 2 variants (factor loadings) were distinguished. They explain 64% of the differences between the assessments of actions/attitudes of the superior (Table 2). Detailed analysis of the factor structure is presented in the structure matrix (Table 3).

Table 1. *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test and Bartlett's test*

KMO sampling adequacy measure		**.822**
Bartlett's sphericity test	Estimated chi-square	800.961
	df	36
	Significance	.000

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 2. *The analysed variable structure*

Component	Initial eigenvalues			Sums of squared loadings after selection			Sums of squared loadings after rotation[a]
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	4.580	50.894	50.894	4.580	50.894	50.894	4.075
2	1.181	13.120	64.014	1.181	13.120	64.014	3.168
3	.802	8.912	72.925				
4	.662	7.360	80.285				
5	.531	5.904	86.189				
6	.452	5.021	91.210				
7	.327	3.635	94.845				
8	.275	3.054	97.900				
9	.189	2.100	100.000				

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 3. *Structure matrix*

	Component	
	1	2
My superior encourages me to express opinions and comment on the work-related issues	**.862**	.504
I can co-participate in establishment of goals relative to my work	**.848**	
My superior engages in the problems of employees; conflicts are openly discussed and solved	**.817**	.379
My superior shows understanding and empathy for the needs and problems of employees	**.792**	.406
During decision making, my superior discusses everything with employees	**.621**	.521
I receive in due time the information about organisational changes affecting the scope of my work		**.855**
The dispositions of my superior are always formulated in a clear, unambiguous and easy to understand manner	.487	**.801**
The statutory reward system is used by the superior and has a positive effect on my attitude to work	.665	**.722**
The system of penalties adopted in the company has a positive effect on performance of tasks	.448	**.618**

Source: Authors' calculations.

The chi-square test confirmed the validity of examination of the correlation between new variables: participative style ($\chi^2 = 92.62$; $p < 0.001$) and communication and feedback ($\chi^2 = 55.45$; $p = 0.009$) and the management style adopted by the superior. Pearson's contingency coefficients indicate a strong correlation ($C = 0.58$) for the participative style, and moderately strong correlation for communication and feedback ($C = 0.48$). Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the correlation between the value of "participative style" and "communication and feedback" variables and management styles.

4. Findings

The results of the analysis demonstrated a correlation between the value of "participative style" and "communication and feedback" variables and management styles was established. Based on the factor analysis, the first variant of factors includes the following behaviours of the superior:

1. My superior encourages me to express opinions and comment on the work-related issues.
2. I can co-participate in establishment of goals relative to my work.
3. My superior engages in the problems of employees; conflicts are openly discussed and solved.
4. My superior shows understanding and empathy for the needs and problems of employees.
5. During decision making, my superior discusses everything with employees.

The second variant includes the following behaviours:

1. I receive in due time the information about organisational changes affecting the scope of my work.
2. The dispositions of my superior are always formulated in a clear, unambiguous and easy to understand manner.
3. The statutory reward system is used by the superior and has a positive effect on my attitude to work.
4. The system of penalties adopted in the company has a positive effect on performance of tasks.

Based on the analysis of factor structure, the first variant represents the characteristics of the participative management style. Employees can freely express their opinions and comments related to work, they are included in the decision-making process, and decisions taken by the superior are discussed with employees. In the second variant we can see the characteristics associated with communication and feedback for employees. They refer rather to procedural and formal issues. In the next stage, using the variables grouped in individual variants, we determined new factors. This resulted in two new variables: the participative style, and communication and feedback. The correlations between these variables and the management style represented by the superior were analysed. The management styles adopted by the superior include autocratic, open, bureaucratic, and directing.

Figure 1. *A graph illustrating the correlation between the "participative style" variable and management styles*
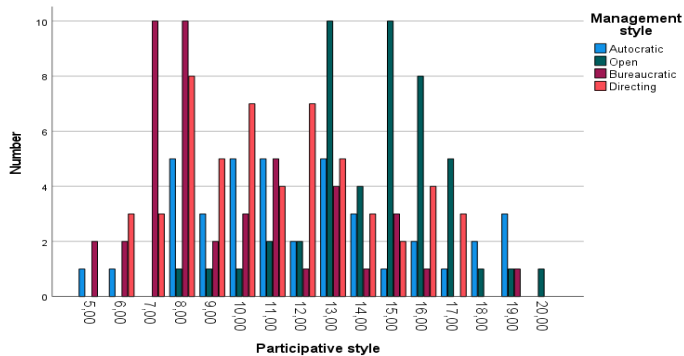
Source: Authors' calculations.

Figure 2. *A graph illustrating the correlation between "communication and feedback" variable and management styles*
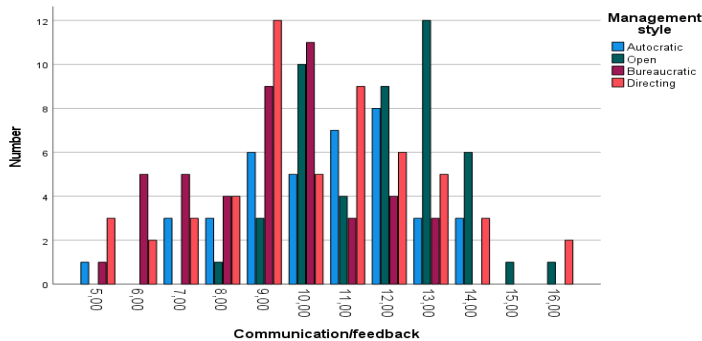
Source: Authors' calculations.

Based on Figure 1, we can conclude that higher values of the "participative style" variable correspond to a significant increase in the number of indications for the open management style. Moreover, with lower values of this variable, the bureaucratic management style dominates. It appears that elements of participative leadership style in the behaviour of the superior result in a more open approach in interactions with employees. When a task is unstructured, the leader's participatory behaviour can stimulate subordinates, as the task is explained in more detail. In this situation, achievement-oriented leaders can stimulate the process of changes in their subordinates by increasing their self-confidence and satisfaction with work.

5. Discussion

The measurement of internal architecture consists in the assessment of relationships between employees and the management. It applies to the issues related to employee

engagement, degree of approval for the goals of the enterprise and identification with them, satisfaction with work, and loyalty towards the company, as well as to the effect of the management style and leadership characteristics represented by the management on the attitudes of employees (Słupska *et al.,* 2020). The presented data demonstrate that the leaders in the studied companies developed broad relationships with their employees. It should be emphasised that the analysed characteristics of the participative style are primarily based on trust. The concept of leadership involving team integration is also largely based on trust. Gobillot (2008) presented three fundamental principles of thus understood leadership process: ensuring one's credibility and trust in others; reinforcing the importance of relationships by integrating stakeholders around the collectively determined goals; promoting dialogue and constructive communication, which stimulates engagement.

The determinant of employee participation in decision-making should also be analysed with the regard to the situational context (Gollan, Xu, 2015). This context determines the factors that in certain conditions have a greater or lesser impact, the direction and force of their effects, and the changes they undergo. The results of our research demonstrate that relation-oriented style is characterised as more democratic, encouraging to participation in decision-making processes, fostering two-sided communication (as opposed to giving commands and evaluating), and as more individualised, i.e. taking into account the needs of individual team members. Consideration for the needs of employees entails inspiration, motivation, and support for their professional and personal development (Meyer, Allen, 1997; Drewniak and Posadzińska, 2020).

More importantly, as the name suggests, this management style is focused on the quality of mutual relationships. Employees engaged in the decision-making process take responsibility for the quality of their work, demonstrate initiative and creativity (Drewniak *et al.,* 2020). In increases their satisfaction and motivation for performance of tasks, which may reduce the willingness to change the employer. Therefore, the organisations implementing participative management should have a competitive advantage due to a highly qualified, loyal workforce. Men (2015) demonstrates that in contacts with the leaders in the organisation employees prefer direct communication or e-mail. Due to technological progress, electronic mail became an indispensable element of daily routine at workplace, although it is an asynchronous communication channel. Other issues pointed out by Vercica *et al.* (2012) included the importance of leader's credibility, engagement and loyalty of employees, motivation, social media, cultural differences and interpretation of messages, social networks in the Internet, informing about changes, communication in the time of social crisis, and problem management.

The analysis of the data shows that effective leadership requires mobilisation of the talents of subordinates, so it is extremely important to recognise the potential of employees. In practice, this means that participation stimulates the development of innovative solutions and fosters creativity in employees. It is crucial that companies

build employee engagement based on the factors associated with career development, and create favourable conditions for learning and gaining new competencies, which should result in increased potential for introducing innovations related to products, organisation and processes (Drewniak and Karaszewski, 2020). Based on the findings of Hassan *et al*. (2018) and Khuong and Hoang (2015), employees will be highly motivated to perform the assigned tasks, will reach their full potential, and will work well under the supervision of the leader if he/she can attract their attention.

Therefore, a charismatic leader is perceived as demonstrating the right attitude or behaviour, self-confident and good at communication, especially in direct communication with the employees (Richter 2018; Khuong and Hoang, 2015). It is also worth remembering that leaders motivate their subordinates by creating a clear and easy path to achieve the goal. This is based on coaching and constant assistance in choosing the right directions. However, leaders should also realise that using a certain management style or degree of participation is not always justified or desired. Moreover, the reactions and needs of employees need to be identified and considered in the decision-making process (Nahavandi, 2006).

Achieving his/her own goals, a real leader achieves the goals of the entire team and organisation. He/she identifies with the company and tries to assist employees at every stage of the company's activity. At present, considering important economic, social, and political changes, numerous opportunities for the development of interpersonal relations (including virtual, holographic, or Internet-based ones), organisations can develop and build their social potential only in the environment of trust. Other studies also demonstrate that not only proper external motivation, but creation of conditions that stimulate internal engagement of employees play the crucial role in the management of modern enterprises (Drewniak, 2017).

6. Conclusions

Relationships, especially between organisations, create the relational potential of an organisation, i.e. the sum of all relations (bonds) between the organisation and the entities in its environment (clients, suppliers, competitors, universities, communities and local authorities etc.), as well as their combinations, available to the organisation and contributing to its success and long-term development (Drewniak *et al.,* 2020).

An effective leader who can engage employees in the establishment and achievement of common company goals plays the key role in building and maintaining this relationship. Leaders should focus not only on the results, effectiveness parameters and permanent improvement, but also concentrate on encouraging employees to find new, better methods of functioning. A creative leader is an architect of modernisation and focuses on inspiring creativity and innovation in people. He/she should analyse the dynamics of organisational changes and understand the motivation and competencies of the organisation. This includes

accurate profiling of employees, with regard to their entire potential for engagement and the ability to work in teams. The level of insight of a leader plays a considerable role in improving the results of teams working on novel solutions, as it allows to process information effectively and solve problems in a creative way. Flexibility and dynamic balance between continuation and change seem to be indispensable. To survive, an enterprise must develop, i.e. organise its functions at different moments in time in a manner that ensures the increase of the resources that guarantee the growth of the company's value. It is associated with increased complexity of the system; however, proper plan of action should stem from a detailed analysis of competencies and engagement of employees.

Based on the results of this evaluation, the leader decides on the extent to which his/her actions should be determined by participative or directive factors. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the list of factors affecting employee participation should not be a closed one. The process of engagement development is continuous, systematic, and situation dependent. Due to its specificity, it may incorporate new elements that could increase the level of employee engagement and provide positive emotions with relation to the workplace. This study was significantly limited by a low potential for generalisation of findings, due to a limited demographic variability of the respondents and studied enterprises. The results of this study describe and can be applied to the respondents in the studied organisations. The geographical, cultural, or industry-specific factor may certainly affect the assessment of the implementation of the participative management style by leaders. Therefore, these findings cannot be extrapolated to other organisations or environments.

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