
The Application of the "Leadership Grid" Model: Case Study of Human Resources Sector in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia

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Abstract

The effective leadership is very important for the public sector functioning. The effectiveness of the leadership process is influenced by many factors. One of them relates to the behaviour of leaders and managers. The leadership grid is a practical model for training managers, supervisors, and leaders. This model has a particular importance from the aspect of increasing productivity and commitment to the work of employees. To apply the model, it is necessary to identify the behavioural orientation of the leader or manager. Empirical research was conducted in July 2021, within the organizational units of the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Republic of Serbia using an anonymous survey questionnaire on a sample of 50 respondents. Descriptive statistical indicators were applied in hypothesis testing. The research findings indicate that employees believe that direct managers are more focused on the implementation of tasks. Based on the "leadership grid" model, the leadership style – Compromise Management is represented. Furthermore, the results of this research can contribute to the development of professional capacities to make the processes more effective and improve the work of the public sector.

Keywords: leadership grid, manager's behavior, process effectiveness, human resources, ministry of internal affairs

The Application of the "Leadership Grid" Model: Case Study of Human Resources Sector in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia

In recent decades, leadership has become the subject of research not only in the private sector, but also in the public sector, as evidenced by the scientific literature (Fernandez et al., 2010; Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2003; Van der Voet, 2016; Murphy et al., 2017; Orazi et al., 2013; Tizard, 2012; Wright & Pandey, 2010; Drumaux & Joyce, 2018). The fact that a small number of researchers from the Republic of Serbia were engaged in the study of this topic was one of the reasons for designing the empirical research presented in the paper.

In theory and practice, management and leadership are often equated, even though they are not terms of the same meaning, but two separate concepts with specific activities and processes. Management is a broader term than leadership and consists of activities such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Therefore, leadership is an integral part of the management process. Managing means making people productive, maintaining optimal working conditions, and using resources in the best possible way. Management refers to preventive action and problem-solving, but also to maintain the existing state. The holders of management functions are most often related to leaders and top management, but also to other management bodies such as company capital owners, shareholders, founders, the board of directors, the supervisory board, executives, and others, depending on the roles they have in the organization as well as the characteristics of the company. Leadership is unthinkable without a clear vision and an adequate strategy for the realization of defined goals. It implies activities aimed at ensuring a favourable working environment and nurturing positive interpersonal relations in the organization, initiating actions, and taking risks.

The essential difference between leaders and managers is in the exercise of influence, that is, in the type of power they have and use, as well as in the potential they possess. While the manager's power is based on a formally defined role in the hierarchical structure, the leader has the power to mobilize the attention of followers based on his ability, knowledge, and charisma, especially in crisis situations (Janovac & Virijević Jovanović, 2022,

p. 163). Leadership is a relationship of influence, while management is a relationship of authority (Janovac, 2020, p. 21). Managerial skills form a good foundation for successful leadership. In other words, you cannot become a good leader if you have not previously been a good manager. For this reason, management is the basic starting point for leadership.

Public sector reform is one of the priorities of the government in the Republic of Serbia, but also one of the conditions for accession to the European Union. The main goals of the reform are oriented towards better organization, strengthening the process of public policy management, as well as the development of a modern and professional official system through the digitalization process. In addition, the reform should make traditional, hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations become oriented towards success and goal achievement (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020), which represents a challenge for organizations in the public sector (Mattei et al, 2021). The strategy of the reform envisages the improvement of human resources management system, which implies the development of professional capacities that indicates a good direction of the reform, since the success of the process itself depends on human resources. For public sector reform to achieve its contribution, it is necessary to develop effective leadership at all levels. Effective leadership is particularly important for public sector organisations that involve security management. In addition to the functioning of public sector, effective leadership is also significant for the quality of services that are delivered to citizens as well as for security. According to Matjie (2018), effectiveness and efficiency can only be achieved if managers apply the appropriate style, which can be realized with appropriate training. Effective leadership can contribute to greater work efficiency and service quality in the organization (Zhihong et al., 2013).

Authoritarian management has traditionally dominated the work of public organizations. This style is characterized by a strong emphasis on the task and job requirements, and a weaker emphasis on the role of people, except to the extent that people are a means of performing work. Communication with employees is not represented to a large extent, except to give instructions regarding tasks. This style is driven by results, and people are seen as a means to achieve them (Northouse, 2008, p. 50). Authoritarian management is also defined as "a style that combines authority and control" (Khuwaja et al., 2020). The management control system is used to improve

the organisation's performance (Felicio et al., 2021). Regarding that the public sector faces particular challenges when implementing reforms, behavioural styles based on control and hierarchy are not the best solution since they are difficult to adapt to changes (Martin et al., 2017).

As effective leadership depends on numerous factors, the goal of this paper is to analyse the orientation of the managers' behaviour, as well as to identify the dominant leadership style based on the "leadership grid" model. Empirical research was conducted in July 2021 within the organizational units of the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Republic of Serbia using an anonymous survey questionnaire on a sample of 50 respondents. Data processing and hypothesis testing were performed using IBM SPSS version 23 Statistical Software.

The "Leadership Grid" Model

The studies dealing with the effects of leadership from the perspective of leader's behaviour were conducted at the universities of Ohio (Stogdill, 1974; Stogdill & Coons, 1957) and Michigan (Likert & Bowers, 1969; Likert, 1979; Katz et al., 1950) in fifties and sixties during the last century. The results of these studies have indicated that leaders basically exhibit two types of behaviour: behaviour that is focused on performing tasks and realizing goals and behaviour that is focused on building good interpersonal relationships (Northouse, 2008, p. 48). Leaders who orient their behaviour towards the realization of tasks and goals are focused on structure and operational procedures, while leaders who are aimed at building relations with employees are focused on their development, meeting the needs of employees and good communication (Warrick, 1981; Janovac, 2020, p.87). Such leaders achieve results due to the creation of a good organizational climate based on mutual appreciation and respect. In terms of effectiveness, the best leaders are those who combine both types of behaviour.

Authors Robert Blake and Jane Mouton used the studies conducted at the universities of Ohio and Michigan in 1964 for constructing a "leadership grid" as a graphic representation of possible leadership styles shown through a matrix. In the foundation of leadership grid there are two basic leadership behaviours. They include focus on results or tasks, represented as concern for production on the x-axis, and concern for people, i.e. orientation towards

creating better interpersonal relationships, good working conditions, employee motivation, which is represented on the y-axis. Each axis consists of nine points, consequently, point 1 indicates low leader activity, while point 9 indicates high activity (Figure 1). Combining the results of each axis, five leadership styles can be identified (Blake & Mouton, 1979): Impoverished Management (1.1) – Represents a leader who does not consider either the realization of tasks or interpersonal relationships. It is a disinterested and uncommitted type of leader. In this case, the tasks are not performed according to the prescribed standards, and the team members are dissatisfied and unmotivated with this leadership style. Authority Compliance Management (9.1) – This style is characterized by a strong emphasis on the task, and a weaker orientation on employees. A leader is more focused on meeting goals, and less oriented on building the quality of interpersonal relationships, on employees and their needs. Middle of the Road Management or Compromise Management (5.5) – It is characteristic of leaders who are ready to compromise. A leader is moderately interested in both tasks and people. To achieve balance, the leader avoids conflict and promotes intermediate levels of goal orientation and building interpersonal relationships. At first glance, it may seem that this style is appropriate in most situations, however, due to the leader's compromising attitude, neither the results nor interpersonal relations will be at an enviable level. Country Club Management (1.9) - Characterized by insufficient concern for the fulfilment of tasks or goals but expressed concern for building good interpersonal relationships. The leader is more focused on employees and their satisfaction, on building good relationships, than showing orientation towards the realization of tasks. Team Management (9.9) – In team management, the focus of the leader on both tasks and interpersonal relationships is emphasized. A high level of participation and teamwork in the organization is promoted and the basic needs of employees are met. The best option is if leaders manage to achieve a high position in the leadership grid on both dimensions, since it means that they maintain a balance between high satisfaction of work needs and people's needs.

The leadership grid represents a practical model for the training of managers and leaders, and it has undergone several changes since the original design was made by mentioned authors (1964, 1978, 1985 and 1991).

Regardless of the changes, the leadership grid has been applied for nearly six decades for development programs in various fields. This model has a special importance from the aspect of increasing productivity and commitment to the work of employees. Based on several situations, a leader, manager, or executive can identify his style in a simple way. After identification, he can create a personal development plan to progress in leading his team and realizing goals. However, the disadvantage of this model is that there are many more aspects of leadership that are not included. The model is focused on leadership styles, but not on the level of motivation of employees and their development.

Research Methodology

The empirical research included a sample of 50 respondents of different gender, age, level of education and work experience. The survey was conducted in July 2021 with the aim of examining the attitudes of employees regarding the behaviour orientation of the immediate managers in organizational units within the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Interior in The Republic of Serbia and to identify the dominant leadership style based on the application of the "leadership grid" model. The human resources sector performs tasks that ensure the conditions for the smooth functioning of the organizational units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the country, to realize the expressed needs for employee competencies. The Department for Human Resources includes the Police Training Centre and eight departments. The Police Training Centre, after obtaining the consent of the Human Resources Sector, and at the request of the author of this paper, conducted a survey of employees through the e-classroom of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The research sample was determined by including employees from different organizational units of the Human Resources Sector. It was distributed in proportion to the number of employees in the organizational units of the Sector, of which 50 employees filled out the questionnaire. 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 (Kotrlík & Higgins, 2001).

For the purposes of this research, an anonymous survey questionnaire was constructed. The first part of the questionnaire referred to respondents'

particulars. The second part of the survey included eighteen statements aimed at examining respondents' views on the behaviours of immediate managers. The design of the second part of the questionnaire was made according to selected items from the Leadership Style Questionnaire (Northouse, 2008, p.59). Using a Likert scale, respondents expressed their agreement with each statement that measured managers' behaviours by giving a rating on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – completely disagree, 2 – partially disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – partially agree, 5 – totally agree). The orientation of leadership behaviour was determined on the basis of two subscales: focus on the realization of tasks and focus on building interpersonal relationships. The task-oriented subscale was obtained as the sum of the results of seven individual statements (gives clear instructions to employees regarding the implementation of tasks and defining roles; requires employees to respect standards, procedures, rules; in most cases, makes decisions independently; makes it clear to employees what rewards are received for the achieved result; keeps records of all employee mistakes; controls employee behaviour through punishments and rewards; is oriented towards the realization of tasks and goals), and the total result is divided by the number of claims. The subscale of focus on building interpersonal relationships was obtained as the sum of the results of eleven individual statements (consults with employees about solving problems and in relation to other issues; delegates authority to employees and records the results achieved; the manager provides support to employees to overcome the problem and solve the task; allows employees freedom in the implementation of tasks; provides employees with feedback on achieved results; is oriented towards building good interpersonal relationships; motivates employees in the realization of goals; accepts responsibility for poor results; shows expertise in crisis situations; encourages employees to develop and progress; the manager often introduces changes for the purpose of process efficiency), and the total result is divided by the number of claims.

Based on the theoretical background and the research goal, the following hypothesis was defined

H0: Managers are more oriented towards the realization of tasks than towards employees.

H1: Based on the leadership grid model, it is assumed that Authoritarian Management is dominant for managers.

Hypothesis testing was based on descriptive statistical indicators, by applying software IBM SPSS.

Research Results and Discussion

The presentation of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is given in Table 1. Regarding the structure of the sample, it can be noted that female respondents predominate (68%). A significant share of respondents included in the sample is between 35 and 44 years old (44%), while the least number of those who belong to the age group over 55 years old (4%). Most respondents have higher education (70%). In the organizational units in the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the most employees have up to 5 years of service (50%), while the least number of employees have over 20 years of service (14%).

Descriptive statistical indicators, normality test and reliability check of leadership behaviour orientation are shown in Table 2. The range of obtained results is from 1 to 5, while the range of average values of the used subscales ranges from 3.46 to 3.55. The examination of normality based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicates that the assumption of normality of subscale distribution is not confirmed, i.e. that, in analysing the hypothesis related to individual subscales, non-parametric statistical techniques will be used. Reliability testing based on Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indicates that all subscales have very good reliability and internal consistency.

By observing the orientation of the leadership behaviour for the immediate managers of the operational management level, it can be seen that the managers are slightly more focused on the implementation of the task (Mean=3.55) in relation to building interpersonal relationships (Mean=3.46). Considering the small difference in average values, according to the "leadership grid" model, it can be concluded that the dominant leadership style is "Middle of the Road Management" or Compromise Management. Compromise management is characterized by leaders, managers and executives who are willing to compromise and who find a

balance by caring about people but still taking into account the demands of the job. With a compromise style, managers provide an incentive for production, and at the same time pay attention to employees. This style gives priority to "middle solutions", alleviates disagreements with employees, all in the interest of "progress" (Northouse, 2008, p. 51).

The advantage of this research is that the analysis of the results has identified the manager's behavioural orientation and indicated the style that can give a better result, which is extremely important for the effectiveness of leadership in the process of implementing reforms. In addition, the leadership grid model can be easily applied in ongoing leadership situations at all levels. By assessing their own style, managers can determine how they treat others and how they can change their behaviour to be more effective.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that employees in the organizational units of the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Interior of Serbia believe that the immediate managers are slightly more focused on the realization of tasks and goals, oriented toward the structure and operational procedures due to the nature of the work and activities of the Sector. Based on the research results, and according to the leadership grid model, it can be concluded that the dominant leadership style is "Middle of the Road Management" or Compromise Management.

However, bearing in mind numerous projects that are based on teamwork and involve a great number of employees and managers of the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Interior, it is necessary to develop „Team Management“. Team Management is characterized by the leader's emphasis on both tasks and interpersonal relationships. This style promotes a high level of employee participation, which is extremely important for increasing the level of employee motivation.

The limiting factor of this research is that, due to the anonymous nature of the survey, it was not determined in which positions the respondents were assigned. Further research will be directed at measuring the effectiveness of leadership style between female and male leaders.

To implement public sector reforms and achieve the effectiveness of processes, it is necessary to develop leadership through the continuous implementation of training for managers at all levels. In this regard, the "leadership grid" model can be used for practical training of managers. This type of training is important for managers in terms of behavioral change and leadership effectiveness.

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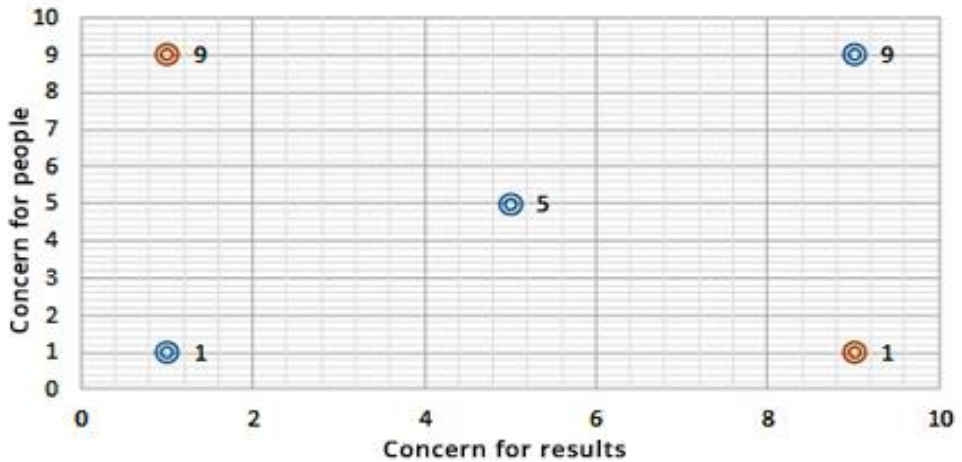
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Appendix

Figure 1

Leadership grid



Impoverished Management (1.1)

Authority Management (9.1)

Middle of the Road Management (5.5)

Country Club Management (1.9)

Team Management (9.9)

Note. Adapted by Blake & Mouton, 1979, p. 44.

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

Note. Author's calculations

Table 2.

Descriptive statistics, normality and reliability of subscales

		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk	Cronbach's Alpha
The orientation of leaders' behaviours	Tasks	50	2.00	5.00	3.55	.822	.677	.000	.001	.783
	Interpersonal relations	50	1.18	5.00	3.46	1.056	1.116	.031	.029	.950

Note. Author's calculations

Table 3.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Sex	1. Female 2. Male
Age	1. Up to 25 2. 25-34 3. 35-44 4. 45-55 5. Over 55
Education	1. Secondary school 2. High education 3. Master studies 4. Phd
Work experience	1. Up to 5 years 2. 5-10 years 3. 10-20 years 4. Over 20 years

Note. Survey questions about behaviour of managers.

Table 4.

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

Note. Survey questions about 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“

Primena modela „liderska mreža“: Studija slučaja Sektor za ljudske resurse MUP-a Srbije

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Sažetak

Efektivno liderstvo je veoma važno za rad javnog sektora. Na efektivnost procesa liderstva utiču mnogobrojni faktori. Jedan od tih faktora odnosi se na ponašanje lidera i rukovodioca. Liderska mreža predstavlja praktičan model za obuku menadžera, rukovodioca i lidera. Ovaj model ima poseban značaj sa aspekta povećanja produktivnosti i posvećenosti poslu zaposlenih. Da bi se primenio model, potrebno je identifikovati orijentaciju ponašanja lidera, rukovodioca ili menadžera. Empirijsko istraživanje sprovedeno je u organizacionim jedinicama Sektora za ljudske resurse MUP-a Republike Srbije primenom anonimnog anketnog upitnika u julu 2021. god. na uzorku od 50 ispitanika. Testiranje hipoteze omogućeno je primenom opisnih statističkih pokazatelja. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju da zaposleni smatraju da su neposredni rukovodioci više usmereni na realizaciju zadataka. Na osnovu modela "liderska mreža" zastupljen je liderski stil-Kompromisni menadžment. Rezultati ovog istraživanja mogu doprineti razvoju profesionalnih kapaciteta u cilju efektivnosti procesa i unapređenja rada javnog sektora.

Ključne reči: liderska mreža, ponašanje rukovodioca, efektivnost procesa, ljudski resursi, MUP