

SOCIAL COMPETENCES AND LEADERSHIP IN THE WORK OF MANAGERS

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Introduction. The term *managers* represents the employees of business entities or professional managing workers who, in the name of the business or corporation owners, perform managing functions which, from the viewpoint of the business, they consider successful. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction of their employees as well as clients and all involved groups of the business entity depends on their behavior (Schelle et al., 2010). The notion of *personality* is understood as a certain unity (integrity) of the whole set of biological, mental and social qualities of a person. The term structure of a personality is understood as a set of abilities, temperament, interests, needs, nature and will. An important role is played by the extent to which heredity or innateness, individual internal factors and the influence of social environment participate in their formation (Frankovsky, Stefko, Baumgartner, 2006).

According to Suler (2002), the most important aspects of the control work of a manager are motivation, decision-making and leadership. Motivation is one of the most fundamental factors affecting the successfulness of life of a working person. The meaning of *leadership* is not to make the life of own followers harder but, contrarily, to give them direction and lead them in the way that would minimize the excessive effort. The personality of a leader orientates their co-workers towards success, tries not to hinder the team and provides them with the room for their own judgements and that represents a great contribution to the life of an organization (Owen, 2006).

Managerial *competences* may be defined as a set of such skills which enable improvement of managerial practice. Effective socially intelligent managers have a wide range of skills which support and complete each other and thus enable flexibility in managing and coping with various situations (Mesarosova 2006). Besides social intelligence, delegating tasks, coaching, and others, the key social competences are empathy, communication, conflict-solving and motivation.

Research. The objective of this report is to point out the significance of applying social competences in leading employees in

order for a contemporary manager to be successful. The research is aimed to confirm this fact by detecting the degree of applying these competences by managers of various corporations and institutions in Slovakia and it should also detect the differences in applying social competences between men and women as well as managers with various degrees of education.

Hypotheses.

H1: We assume statistically significant correlations between the individual researched social competences (motivation, empathy, conflict-solving, communication).

H2: We assume statistically significant gender differences in applying social competences in favor of women.

Research sample. The research file consisted of 101 managers from various corporations and institutions in Slovakia. The file included 37 men and 64 women, 14 of them were 20-30 years old, 32 were 31-40 years old, 35 were 41-50 years old, and 20 of the participants were 51 and more years old. The first managerial level included 60 managers, the middle level consisted of 38 managers, and the top level involved 3 managers.

Research method. In order to collect information and apply social competences by managers we used a questionnaire by means of which we were detecting opinions of managers on applying these competences. The questionnaire consists of 60 questions with the answer scale of 1 to 6 (1 - absolutely agree, 6 - absolutely disagree), which are thematically divided into three parts according to the individual competences (motivation, empathy and communication). We evaluated the statistical data by means of the SPSS program for statistics.

Results. In this research we were detecting the degree of applying social competences in managing subordinates by managers. We tried to point out the significance of applying these competences in leading employees as well as their mutual correlations and gender differences of managers.

Verification of H1: We studied the correlational connection between the individual social competences which we consider important for successful leading of employees. For the purposes of comparison we used correlation analysis, namely Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (Table 1).

Table 1 - Correlation of social competences of managers

Social competences	Motivation	Empathy	Communication
Motivation		.718**	.675**
Empathy	.718**		.743**
Communication	.675**	.743**	

** Correlation is significant on the level of significance of 0.01 (1%)

Table 1 shows that a particularly great correlation exists among all three social competences. This is significant on the level of significance of $p < 0.01$ (1%) in all researched competences. Motivation positively correlates with empathy ($r = .718$) and communication ($r = .615$). Empathy positively correlates with communication ($r = .743$), which means that the individual selected social competences are very closely related to each other. These calculations serve as an evidence for the correctness of Hypothesis 1, which was confirmed.

Verification of H2: A comparison of the differences in applying the selected social competences between men and women was carried out by means of the T-test (Table 2).

Statistically significant difference on the level of significance up to 0.05 (5%) occurred in six questions from the area of empathy and conflict-solving in favor of women. This confirmed Hypothesis 2.

Women are more sympathetic, they positively affect the feelings of others, are better in detecting the mood from non-verbal feelings, do not ignore the feelings of subordinates, in conflicts they search for more solutions to the problem, and they believe that conflicts are part of life and their solving makes us move forward. In perception of conflicts which take our lives to another level, the biggest difference in the average answers was detected among women, which means women take a more positive approach in solving conflicts.

The biggest average value in the answers of women (5.42) and men (4.95) was equal in their ability to feel empathy for the subordinates, and the lowest value of women (4.63) and men (4.22) was detected again equally in the ability to positively affect their subordinates. On the basis of these results it can be stated that although all managers try to

sympathize with their subordinates, they are unable to positively influence their feelings.

Table 2 - Significant statistical differences in applying social competences according to gender

Question	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Test criterion	Sig. (2-tailed)
23. I have compassion for others.	male	37	4.95	.848	-2.973	.004
	female	64	5.42	.730		
24. I positively influence the feelings of others.	male	37	4.22	.672	-2.619	.010
	female	64	4.63	.882		
26. I can sense a mood from non-verbal feelings.	male	37	4.43	1.015	-1.824	.041
	female	64	4.81	1.006		
36. I do not ignore the feelings of subordinates.	male	37	4.43	1.042	-1.797	.045
	female	64	4.80	.946		
56. In conflict I search for more solutions.	male	37	4.81	.811	-2.284	.025
	female	64	5.22	.951		
57. Conflicts are part of life and solving them pushes us forward.	male	37	4.81	.995	-2.767	.007
	female	64	5.34	.895		

Conclusion. The main objective of our research was to detect, study and evaluate the significance and extent of applying social competences by managers. In the first hypothesis, we assumed statistical correlations between the individual studied social competences and it was confirmed with a high correlational connection. In the second hypothesis we assumed significant statistical gender differences in applying social competences in favor of women, which was also confirmed, particularly in empathy and

conflict-solving in favor of women. We may state that the results of this research confirmed our assumptions and the high average value of all answers in the questionnaire proves that managers give much importance to applying social competences in leading their employees. Our findings are also confirmed by various researches carried out in the given area of study (Frankovsky, Stefko, Baumgartner 2006; Droppa 2008; Vavrova 2009; Frankovsky, Kentos 2008; Hrbackova 2010; Lelkova, 2012 and others). Social skills help managers to be realistic or to modify their requirements from others who work with them. It is a method by means of which it is possible to effectively manage professional relationships. Managers must realize that it is impossible to maintain permanent success in relationships with subordinates, and they also should not expect to be liked by everyone. Fontana (1994) claims that social skills may be learned but it is a lifelong process.

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