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**“Leadership styles and performance
outcomes: the effectiveness of leaders’
behaviors in organizations”**

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Introduction

Why leadership is important in organizations?

Leadership can bring many advantages inside an organization, both from a financial and human resources perspective. According to Yukl (2005), leadership effectiveness refers to the ability of the leader of setting goals for the organization and supporting people in reaching them. This can bring positive outcomes for the entire organization and everyone benefits from it.

From a financial point of view, organizations that have invested in leadership programs and have formed effective leaders, are 2.3 times more likely to have a greater financial performance than their competitors (Deloitte, 2020). Indeed, while effective leaders generate a +15.7% equity premium, leadership ineffectiveness can cause a discount on equity of about -19.8% (Deloitte, 2014).

According to a survey conducted by Boston Consulting Group in 2022, the best way to retain talents in organizations is to invest in great leaders (Dhar et al., 2023). Good leaders are the ones that inspire people, can give them a direction, and create a good relationship with the employees. The emotional factors are the ones that determine whether an employee is satisfied or not and whether they will remain inside the organization.

Nowadays, 80% of the organizations are facing urgent leadership issues (Deloitte, 2019), which means that despite the annual global spent in leadership programs, some executives still fail in achieving goals and strategy in their work.

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate through a quantitative analysis whether leadership outcomes, identified through the level of satisfaction of the employees, depend on how leaders behave inside the organization. Starting from the presentation of Blake and

Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964), which organizes leaders' behaviors into two clusters, namely *concern for people* and *concern for production*, it will be analyzed the direct relationship among these behaviors and the employees' satisfaction. The goal is to demonstrate whether high levels of *concern for people* and high level of *concern for production* lead to high levels of leadership effectiveness.

Moreover, according to the model of Blanchard et al. (1985), it exists a direct relationship between the behaviors of the leaders and the levels of *competence* and *commitment* of the employees. Namely, when the employees do not have the basis to perform their tasks, thus showing low competence, a good leader should exhibit high levels of concern for production. While when an employee does not feel part of the organization and is not motivated in working in it, thus showing low levels of commitment, a good leader should exhibit high level of concern for people. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate, through a quantitative analysis, the relationship among these components, with the aim to investigate their effects on employees' development levels.

This dissertation is organized in three parts as follows:

The first chapter of the thesis is composed of an evaluation of past research about leadership. After having defined what leadership is and how its meaning has changed over the past decades, the chapter proceeds with the presentation of different perspectives that exist in literature.

The first approach analyzed is the trait perspective, which claims that people who possess particular personality traits are the ones that can become effective leaders. According to the OCEAN model, effective leaders should be curious and open to new opportunities, diligent and ambitious, confident and prone to create strong relationships with people, should be

kind with the others, and should show low levels of neuroticism, thus not being anxious and insecure.

The second approach discussed in the chapter is the skills perspective. Conversely to the approach described above, this perspective is not based on personality traits but on abilities that a leader can develop in order to achieve greater performance outcomes. According to this approach, leadership is not something innate (as described in the trait perspective) but is something that everyone can learn and develop in their career. In the paragraph *Skill perspective* are presented two models, which define how skills and other attributes can lead to a greater performance.

The third approach is the style perspective, which claims that leadership is not something intrinsic, but is based on behaviors that can be developed over time. These styles can be organized into two clusters: behaviors oriented to the *production* and behaviors oriented to the *human* side. In paragraph *Style perspective* are discussed different theories which describe the relationship between leaders' styles and leadership effectiveness. In particular, according to Blake and Mouton (1964), high levels of *concern for people* and high levels of *concern for production* lead to high levels of leadership effectiveness. Theory fails in describing how this relationship works and is not clear whether it exists a universal style that can be adopted in every situation. Moreover, according to Blanchard et al. (1985), leaders should adapt their styles according to the levels of competence and commitment of the employees. This theory does not have empirical support and is not clear the match between the styles and the development levels of the workers.

The second part of the dissertation starts from the gaps present in literature and describes how the quantitative research will be conducted. The research question derived from the

evaluation of the past theories is: “Which is the leadership style that can lead to high organizational outcomes?”. From this inquiry, two hypotheses have been developed:

H1: *The most effective leadership style is Team Management (high level of concern for people and high level of concern for production) according to Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid.*

H2: *High levels of concern for production are associated with low employees’ competence, while high levels of concern for people are associated with low employees’ commitment.*

In order to test these assumptions, a questionnaire based on scales validated in literature has been developed through QualtricsXM, and then distributed through social networks and Prolific platform.

In the last part of the dissertation, the results of the analysis are illustrated and discussed. This thesis enriches past theories about the style approach and presents possible solutions to improve the organizational outcomes. Regardless the positive implications that this study can bring from a theoretical and managerial point of view, there are some limitations that give room to future research about the topic.

1. Literature review

In the last century, leadership has been at the center of attention of many researchers worldwide. The concept of leadership has been investigated from different point of views: some have interpreted leadership as a trait (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1974; Lord, DeVader & Alliger, 1986; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004), others as a skill that can be learned over time (Katz, 1955; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding et al., 2000),

and others as a set of behaviors (Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978, 1985; Hemphill & Coons, 1957).

The main point of investigation in literature is on what makes people good leaders and how individuals can reach effectiveness in organizations. The importance of leadership resides in the ability to create a vision and a climate of trust among the followers, who collaborate to achieve the superior goals set by the leader (Zhang et al., 2011).

1.1. Leadership definition

The definition of leadership has evolved over the years, being affected by several factors such as worldwide politics and affairs. Rost (1991) has identified many different definitions of leadership by analyzing materials over the XX century, providing a timeline of the evolution of the word. In the early 20th century, leadership was defined as the ability of a person to exercise power and domination over another individual (Moore, 1927). Later in the 1930s, the focus was on personality traits and on the interaction between an individual with a group. Leadership was intended as an innate quality of an individual, something that cannot be learned or taught, and that belongs to few people. In the next decade, leadership was defined based on the behaviors of an individual involved in a group (Hemphill, 1949). In the 50s three themes have influenced the definition of leadership: group theory (as a continuance of the past decade theory), leadership as a relationship (based on the development of shared goals) and effectiveness of the group influenced by the leader. In the 1960s, the main definition was based on the influence of an individual toward a group in order to develop a shared goal (Seeman, 1960). In the 70s, the most important definition was made by Burns (1978), who described leadership as a collaboration between leaders and followers to achieve a common goal. In the 1980s, different themes were developed

around the concept of leadership: *Do as the leader wishes*, which implies that followers must do what the leader wants; *Influence*, meant as the impact that the leader can carry on the followers, intended as noncoercive influence; *Traits*, based on the personal traits of an individual (Peters & Waterman, 1982); *Transformational leadership*, which defines leadership as a transformational process, where leaders and followers engage with each other to increase their levels of morality and motivation (Burns, 1978). Nowadays there are still different definitions of leadership, and the evolution continues focusing on traits, behaviors, and skills of an individual.

1.2. Leadership as a process

Among the different definitions of leadership, according to Northouse (2012), leadership is composed as follows:

- It is a process
- It involves influence
- It develops in a group of individuals
- It is focused on a common goal.

Thus, it is possible to define leadership as a process, in which leaders and followers can influence each other in the context of a group, with the objective to achieve a common goal. Based on these characteristics, leadership is described as something that can be developed by everyone, is not based on personal behaviors nor traits. The basis of leadership is the influence, the way in which the leaders affect the followers and vice versa.

This definition creates a difference between leadership as a trait and leadership as a process. The trait approach implies that leadership is something innate, that belongs to specific individuals and is based on physical, psychological, or other characteristics (Bryman, 1992;

Jago, 1982). Conversely, leadership as a process is intended as something that can be learned by everyone and is not connected to personal characteristics of special individuals (Jago, 1982). It is based on the influence and interaction between leaders and followers in order to achieve a common goal. Figure 1 shows the difference between the two perspectives.

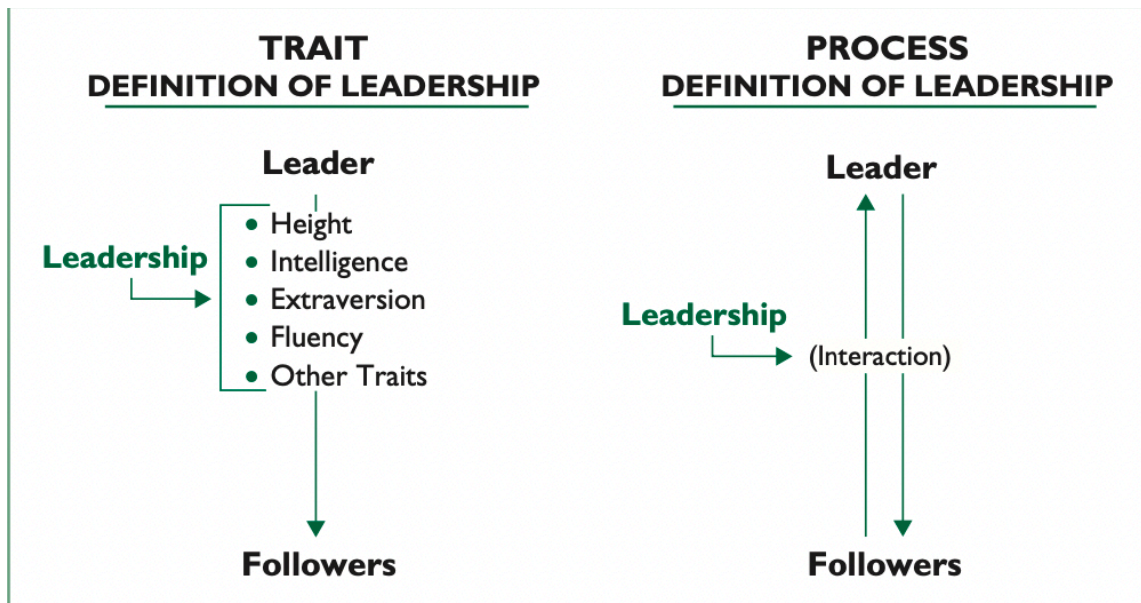


Figure 1: Trait vs. Process in the definition of leadership. Source: Northouse P. (2012). Leadership: Theory and Practice (p. 7). 6th edition, SAGE publications.

1.3. Assigned and emergent leadership

Leadership can be classified in two different forms: assigned and emergent. The former is given by a specific position that an individual has in an organization (director, manager, administrator); the latter is given by the acceptance and support of the other group members to an individual.

In certain contexts, when a member of a group is perceived as the most influential (exhibiting emergent leadership), the person assigned to a leadership role could not be recognized as

the real leader. Emergent leadership is not based on assigned titles but on communication behaviors that emerge over time (Fisher, 1974).

According to Smith and Foti (1998), besides the communication behaviors, leadership emergence is built on personality traits. They conducted a study on a sample of 160 male college students, and they asked to the group members to identify one of their colleagues as leader of the task group. The results were that the individuals identified as leaders from the other group members were the ones who appeared more intelligent, more confident, and more controlling.

Watson and Hoffman (2004) analyzed whether there was a gender-biased perception in leadership emergence and conducted a study on a sample formed by 40 college students, male and female. The results showed that although women had an equal outcome than men, they were rated as less likable and less influential by the other group members. This highlights the existence of obstacles in women's leadership emergence.

A different perspective is based on social identity theory (Hogg, 2001), according to which a person is identified as a leader from the other group members if he/she fits the identity of the entire group. Thus, a person emerges as a leader when respects the characteristics of the group prototype, which can change over time.

1.4. Leadership vs. Management: main differences

The difference between leadership and management has been discussed for a long time in literature. According to Kotter (1990), even though leadership and management have some aspects in common, they are almost opposite. Management is meant to produce order and consistency, while leadership produces changes and movement in organizations. Kotter

argued that, in order to succeed, changes in organizations are vital, and leaders should adapt continuously to survive in the external environment.

Fayol (1916) identified some functions that belong to managers, such as planning, controlling, organizing, and staffing. These responsibilities make it possible to run the organization in an efficient and effective way, thus reducing chaos. Katz (1955) argued that managers' functions are more task-oriented, involving direction of groups, staff developing, and conflicts resolution. Therefore, management is a process that is focused on directing people toward the achievement of a goal. According to Rost (1991), leadership is about the involvement of leaders and followers to reach a mutual purpose, while management is a unidirectional relationship that aims at getting the job done. The type of relationship between managers and employees is transactional: employees follow the manager's direction in exchange of a salary (Kotter, 2001).

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, leadership has many definitions and from different studies in the literature is possible to define it as an array of traits, skills, behaviors, influence, and interactions (Yukl, 2002). Fiedler (1967) stated that leadership is about the relationship and collaboration between leaders and followers to achieve a common purpose.

Consequently, managers are controlling, they plan and organize the job to be done, and they set a direction for the employees to achieve the organizational goals; at the same time, leaders align and inspire people, they motivate, and they set a direction toward the achievement of a common purpose (Kotter, 2001). Although the differences mentioned above, leadership and management are constructs that overlap, influencing and interchanging each other in the organizations. Figure 2 summarizes the main differences between the two concepts.

Process	Management	Leadership
Vision Establishment	Plans and budgets Develops process steps and sets timelines Displays impersonal attitude about the vision and goals	Sets direction and develop the vision Develops strategic plans and achieve the vision Displays very passionate attitude about the vision and goals
Human Development and Networking	Organizes and staffs Maintains structure Delegate responsibility Delegates authority Implements the vision Establishes policy and procedures to implement vision Displays low emotion Limits employee choices	Align organization Communicates the vision, mission and direction Influences creation of coalitions, teams and partnerships that understand and accept the vision Displays driven, high emotion Increases choices
Vision Execution	Controls processes Identifies problems Solves problems Monitor results Takes low risk approach to problem solving	Motivates and inspires Energizes employees to overcome barriers to change Satisfies basic human needs Takes high risk approach to problem solving
Vision Outcome	Managers vision order and predictability Provides expected results consistently to leadership and other stakeholders	Promotes useful and dramatic changes, such as new products or approaches to improving labor relations

Figure 2: Differences between management and leadership. Source: Bârgău M. (2015).

Leadership versus Management. Romanian Economic Business Review, 10(2).

1.5. Trait Perspective

The trait approach is considered the first perspective of leadership studies throughout the XX century and is focused on observing which are the personal characteristics that define a leader. All the theories around the trait approach are defined as ‘Great Man Theories’, because they were focused on finding the innate characteristics that made some people great leaders. The main assumption was that some people were born with innate qualities that made them ‘great’, e.g., Gandhi, Napoleon, or Adolf Hitler. From this point of view,

leadership is something that cannot be developed over time, but is something intrinsic in specific individuals. This creates a differentiation between people that are considered leaders and others that are followers (Jago, 1982; Bass 1990).

In subsequent years, researchers started questioning the universality of leadership traits. Stogdill (1948) argued that a person that is a leader in one context, could not be a leader in a different situation. There is not a fixed array of traits that allows to differentiate leaders and followers in every situation. This is connected to the fact that leadership depends on the relationship of people in a specific situation and is not just a quality that individuals possess. Afterwards, studies were made around the topic of charismatic leadership. The name comes from the word 'charisma', which is a personal characteristic that creates loyalty and enthusiasm among people toward a public figure. The origin of the word is Greek, it means gift, and today it is intended as social grace, something innate that some people have and make them obtain others' support.¹ According to Jung and Sosik (2006), there are some specific traits that distinguish charismatic leaders from the others, such as self-monitoring, self-actualization, and motivation to acquire social power.

1.5.1. Previous studies

Stogdill (1948, 1974) summarized several studies about the relationship between leadership and personal traits over the 20th century. He noticed that individuals in leadership roles had different traits from the other members of the group, namely sociability, self-confidence, intelligence, and initiative. Besides the traits that Stogdill identified, to become a leader is important to take into consideration the situation in which the individual is operating. As

¹ See Charisma definition, Merriam-Webster dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charisma>

stated before, a person that is a leader in a situation could not be a leader in another context.

Leadership is based on the relationship between leader and followers.

Similarly, to Stogdill, Mann (1959) conducted a study on leadership and personality, with a focus on traits neglecting the situational factors. He identified some personality characteristics analogous to the ones analyzed by Stogdill, such as intelligence, dominance, and masculinity. Lord et al. (1986), starting from these three traits identified by Mann, argued that people personality can create a differentiation between leaders and non-leaders in specific situations.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) identified six traits that distinguish leaders from non-leaders: integrity, drive, motivation, task knowledge, cognitive ability, and confidence. These personal characteristics can be innate or can be something that people learn and develop. Leaders are not like the others, they are different, and they have some qualities that make them do the right thing.

In the last decade of the XX century, the construct of social intelligence started to spread in the context of leadership. According to Marlowe (1986), social intelligence is the ability to understand the others - including oneself - their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It is a set of skills and abilities that people should use in their interpersonal relationships and problems in order to create a social product. Once the individual has understood the others, they can properly act in the social environment. Zaccaro (2002), argues that social intelligence is the ability to respond in the best way to different contingencies in social contexts. This is one of the key traits that leaders should possess to be effective (Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader, 2004).

1.5.2. Major traits

Theories about the trait perspective can be summarized into a list of major characteristics that individuals should possess if they want to be perceived as leaders (Northouse, 2012).

The five major traits are as follows:

Intelligence. According to Zaccaro et al. (2004), intellectual ability is one of the major characteristics that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. This variable is positively related to leadership. Intelligence refers to the array of verbal abilities, reasoning, and perceptual skills that contribute to make an individual a better leader.

An important aspect about intelligence is the difference between the leader's intellectual ability and the followers' one. Indeed, if the level of intelligence of the leader is higher than the one of the followers, it could be difficult for them to establish a relationship and build acceptance (Zaccaro et al., 2004).

Self-Confidence. According to the definition of Axelord (2017), self-confidence can be divided into two constructs: general self-confidence, considered as a stable trait developed during childhood, and specific self-confidence, considered as a mental state that a person develops confronting specific situations. Both aspects grow internally and automatically when individuals make judgements about themselves and is based on people's knowledge and experiences. The general part affects thoughts and emotions in unusual and unknown situations, while the specific part affects emotions and behaviors in habitual tasks. A high degree of self-confidence is necessary for effective leadership and helps individuals to be certain about their skills and competencies. This trait can help leaders in influencing their followers effectively and increasing their job performance.

Self-Determination. Self-determination is the ability of an individual to initiate and regulate their own actions (Deci et al., 1989). This aspect is related to important characteristics that a leader should possess, namely autonomy (Deci et al., 1989), motivation (Baard et al., 2004), dominance, persistence, and drive (Northouse, 2012). People that are determined are proactive, are motivated to achieve a goal and persist when facing obstacles (Solansky, 2014).

Integrity. For what concern the word integrity, and the relationship between integrity and leadership, there is a lack of theoretical basis. Palanski and Yammarino (2009), described integrity as the consistency of an individual's words and actions. At the basis of integrity there are honesty and trustworthiness, and a good leader has integrity when they take the responsibility for their actions (Palansky and Yammarino, 2007). Integrity means having an ethical and moral behavior, be true with oneself, and have consistency in case of adversity. Individuals that have a great sense of integrity, inspire loyalty and dependency, and they are trusted easily from the others (Palansky and Yammarino, 2007).

Sociability. According to Stricker and Rock (1998), there is a consistent relationship between sociability and leadership performance. Sociability is the inclination of individuals to engage in social relationships, being friendly, sensitive, and diplomatic. To build the sociability scale, Stricker and Rock investigated the degree of popularity of an individual, the number of social activities in which they were involved, the number of friends and the number of amusement occasions attended. People with a high degree of sociability were the ones with higher leadership performance. Therefore, sociability is a personality trait that is positively correlated to leadership in individuals.

Besides these five major traits mentioned above, this list is not exhaustive. Indeed, there are other personal characteristics that can be associated with effective leadership and contribute to differentiate leaders from non-leaders. These traits will be analyzed in the next paragraph of this dissertation.

1.5.3. OCEAN model

Goldberg (1990) stated in his research the existence of five basic factors that build people's personality. These factors take the name of *Big Five*, or also called OCEAN, which is the acronym for Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Judge et al. (2002), starting from these constructs that define personality, conducted an analysis on the relationship between these factors and leadership. The results showed that people who exhibit these traits in a more or less pronounced way, depending on the type of trait, are more likely to be effective leaders. In particular, Extraversion was the most relevant factor in the research, followed by Conscientiousness, Openness, and Neuroticism. To achieve effectiveness, the degree of Neuroticism should necessary be low. Conversely, agreeableness had a low influence on leadership. Agreeableness can be described as the intersection between integrity (Palansky & Yammarino, 2007) and sociability (Stricker & Rock 1998), which are considered among the five major traits that an individual should possess to be considered an effective leader. This creates an inconsistency in literature, generating contradictions between theories about the trait approach. Goldberg (1990) described these five factors as follows:

Openness: the degree of an individual to be open to new things, be curious, creative, and perceptive.

Conscientiousness: the inclination of an individual to be meticulous, precise, and decisive. It is the tendency to organize and control tasks at hand.

Extraversion: connected to the concept of sociability (Stricker & Rock, 1998), is the inclination of an individual to be friendly and engage in social relationships.

Agreeableness: a person that exhibits this trait is perceived as more obedient, supportive, and trustful.

Neuroticism: can be defined as emotional instability and the proneness to experience negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, anger, frustration etc.); indeed, it is associated to some mental disorders, including depression, anxiety, vulnerability, and insecurity.

To be an effective leader, is not necessary to engage with all these traits and individuals can present different levels for each of them. Moreover, as stated before, Neuroticism is negatively correlated with leadership, while the others, even if with different degrees, positively contribute to effective leadership (Judge et al., 2002).

1.5.4. Emotional intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence has been widely investigated from a psychological point of view throughout the XX century, and many practitioners had shed a light on the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1995; Mayer et al., 2012).

According to Mayer and Salovey (1995), emotional intelligence can be described as the ability of an individual to effectively deal with emotional information. This includes

understand and control over one's own emotions, as well as in the understanding of those of others in order to facilitate reasoning. Emotional intelligence can be divided into two constructs, the emotional part and the intellectual one, and it is the interplay of the cognitive and affective domains. Thus, it can be defined as the ability of an individual to understand and express emotions, transform these emotions in thoughts, reason with them and manage the emotions in oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2012).

Emotional intelligence can be measured according to different methods; one of these methods is the MSCEIT, namely the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer et al., 2000). According to this model, emotional intelligence is a set of mental abilities that an individual possesses, which includes understand, perceive, and manage emotions.

Another method is the one proposed by Goleman (1995), which defines emotional intelligence as an array of personal and social competencies. Self-regulation, self-confidence, self-awareness, conscientiousness, and motivation are part of the personal competencies, while the social ones consist of social skills and empathy.

A different perspective is presented by Shankman and Allen (2008), according to which leaders should consider emotional intelligence on three different facets of leadership: the context, the self, and the others. Indeed, based on these three aspects, individuals should develop some competencies to understand and manage emotions, including teamwork, optimism, and dynamism.

In the context of the trait approach, theories about emotional intelligence show that an effective leader is the one that can understand and control his/her own emotions and is able to use them to face everyday tasks. Emotional intelligence as a leadership trait can help individuals to reason with emotions and understand the others.

1.5.5. Conclusions

The trait perspective sets an exclusive focus on the leader, highlighting a series of personality traits that an individual should possess to be considered an effective leader. This approach does not take into consideration the different contexts in which leadership can be exerted, thus not specifying which types of traits should be developed by the leaders in different situations. To determine whether a leader has specific traits that could lead to leadership effectiveness, organizations use personality assessment instruments, with the purpose of selecting the right candidate that can increase the organizational performance. Personality assessment tests can be used by individuals to have a picture of their qualities and characteristics, in order to understand their areas of strength and weakness.

1.6. Skills perspective

For what concern the skills perspective, the focus of the theory is on the abilities and skills that an individual possesses, which contribute to thrive a more effective leadership. The approach is leader-centered, as the trait approach analyzed in the previous paragraph, but the main difference is that while personality traits are described as something innate that cannot be developed over time, skills can be learned and strengthen by leaders.

One of the most important study about skills and leadership is the one of Katz (1955). Katz started his research from the main weakness of the trait approach, which presents leadership as something reserved for the few that possess particular traits. Vice versa, Katz addressed leadership as an array of abilities that people can thrive and improve over time.

According to this theory, effective leadership depends on three types of skills that are distributed in an unequal way among the management levels inside the organization. These skills are technical, human, and conceptual.

Mumford et al. (2000), proposed a skill-based model which connects an individual's capabilities to their performance. According to this view, a leader effectiveness depends on their abilities in solving organizational problems.

1.6.1. Definition

Katz (1955), in his work 'Skills of an Effective Administrator', argued that effective leadership is based on three main skills that an individual should possess: technical, human, and conceptual. As stated before, the difference between skills and traits is that the former can be developed over time and can be learned by people, the latter are intrinsic characteristics. Starting from the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, the focus of the theory was on the relationship between problem-solving skills and leadership effectiveness. From this point of view, Mumford et al. (2000) developed the skills model, which argued that effective problem-solving and performance are the results of specific competencies that people own.

1.6.2. Three-Skill theory (Katz, 1955)

Skills can be defined as the competencies that an individual holds in order to achieve specific goals in an organization. The three skills identified by Katz are technical, human, and conceptual, which can vary according to the position that a person has in the organizational pyramid. Three management levels are recognized in this theory: Supervisory management, Middle management, and Top management.

Technical Skill.

Technical skills concern the specialization of an individual in a particular area of the organization, are diagnostic abilities that allow to select and use the appropriate tools to work on a determined activity. Inside a company, technical skills are necessary to produce the final product and involve hands-on activities. The responsible person should possess these skills to accomplish their work. Thus, these competencies are essential at the bottom of the organizational pyramid, for the supervisory management, while are less important at the top management level. Indeed, CEOs and senior figures of the organization rely on specialized subordinate that deal with the operation system and technical activities.

Human Skill.

Human skills concern people in the organization. As compared to the technical ones, which are more production oriented, human skills help leaders to engage with others inside and outside the organization, e.g., employees, stakeholders, suppliers. These competencies create harmony inside the group and allow to achieve the common goals. A person that possesses human skills can easily understand others and the self, adapting their own thoughts to the ones of the colleagues, thus creating a trusting and enjoyable climate. These skills are necessary in the decision-making process, in order to understand the motivations and needs of others and take them into account while making choices.

Human skills should be present in all the three management levels of the organization, being important to communicate inside and outside the organization with several actors.

Conceptual Skill.

Compared to the previous ones, conceptual skills constitute a more abstract concept. Indeed, according to Katz's theory (1955), conceptual skills represent the ability of a person to manage concepts and ideas. Inside the organization, these skills are important to create a mission, a vision, and translate in concrete words the selected objectives. A good leader that possesses these capabilities, should be able to work with hypothetical assumptions and explain them to the others. Conceptual skills are necessary to create the purpose of the organization and to plan the future path that all the members of the company should follow. Thus, these capabilities are more relevant at the top management level, while are less important at the supervisory management level. If there is a lack of conceptual skills at the top management level, the whole organization could be exposed to risks. Moreover, the middle management level should possess these capabilities as well, in order to create a bridge between the upper- and lower-level managers. Figure 3 represents how the three skills are distributed among the management levels.

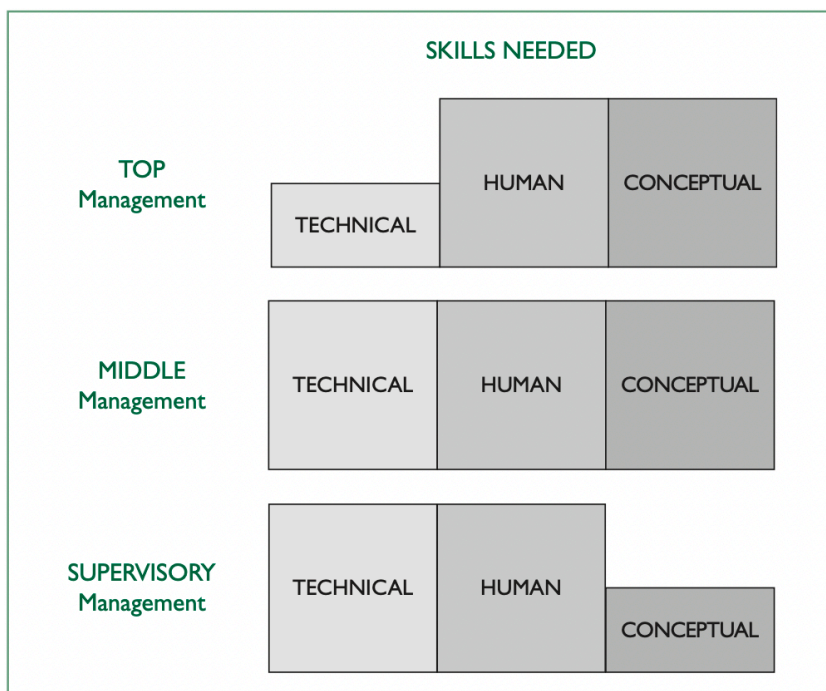


Figure 3: Skills needed at different management levels in an organization. Source: Northouse, P.G. (2012). *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (p. 45), 6th edition, SAGE Publications.

1.6.3. Skills model (Mumford et al., 2000)

Starting from the 1990s, researchers began to investigate which elements lead people to effective leadership. The focus, as mentioned above, was on the relationship between people's problem-solving skills and leadership effectiveness. Mumford et al. (2000), on the basis of these previous studies, developed a skill-based model which explains the links between individual attributes, competencies, and leadership outcomes.

According to the model, leadership effectiveness is a direct outcome of the leader's capabilities, which can be learned from the experience and the career path of an individual. In this model, as well as in the previous theory (Katz, 1955), the focus is on a type of leadership available to everyone, that can be developed and strengthened over time, which is not an innate quality as defined in the trait perspective.

The skills model is composed of five elements:

Individual Attributes. In the model are identified four types of individual attributes, which have an important impact on the development of the leader's skills.

The first attribute is the *general cognitive ability*, which can be defined as the intelligence of a person. This ability is intrinsic in an individual, it includes the general analysis skills, and it develops over time. Indeed, it tends to increase when an individual grows and starts declining in old age. This attribute has a positive impact on the leader's competencies development.

The second attribute is the *crystallized cognitive ability*, which is acquired over time through experience, differently from the general one. This type of intelligence does not decline in old age and tends to increase over a lifetime, positively affecting the leader's competencies. According to Connelly et al. (2000), this type of intelligence allows people to understand and assimilate complex data and master new abilities, thus increasing the leader's problem-solving skills.

Motivation is the third attribute that positively affects a leader's competencies. According to Mumford et al. (2000), motivation consists of three aspects: the willingness of the leader to solve problems in an organization, which is the most important aspect of motivation because it is about the eagerness to lead; dominance, which is the prerequisite for a person to exert influence on others; commitment to social good, which is about the interest of the leader in people's welfare in an organization.

The last individual attribute is *personality*. As stated in the trait perspective, personality can have an impact on leadership performance, thus affecting the skills development of an individual. Indeed, according to Mumford and colleagues (2000), different traits can emerge when coping with organizational problems, including self-confidence, adaptability, curiosity. These traits affect the leader's skills and shape consequently the leadership outcome.

Competencies. Competencies are the central part of the model and include problem-solving skills, social judgement skills and knowledge. Competencies, affected by the individual attributes, contribute to the creation of the leadership outcomes.

Problem-solving skills are described as the capabilities of an individual to resolve unknown problems that affect an organization. These skills, developed in an organizational context,

allow leaders to understand the problems, the causes behind them, and the possible existing solutions. Solutions to complex problems are influenced by organizational goals, leader's capabilities, and external dynamics (Mumford et al, 2000). To this extent, problem-solving skills are crucial in the model.

Social judgement skills are connected to the human part of the organization, and concern to the ability of the leader to understand other people (Zaccaro et al., 2000). By developing these skills, leaders can solve specific problems in the organization collaborating with others. According to Zaccaro et al. (2000), social judgement skills are composed of the following constructs: *perspective taking*, which means 'put yourself in the other's shoes' confronting a specific problem, being aware of the other's point of view and goals; *social perceptiveness*, which implies understanding others, their needs and wishes, what is really important for them (Zaccaro et al., 1991); *behavioral flexibility* is the ability of the leader to adapt their behavior to others' viewpoints as circumstances change; *social performance* is about communication skills, namely, the ability to resolve conflicts in the organization and supporting the followers in reaching the organizational goals.

Knowledge is the pool of information that an individual possesses about a particular situation and is the ability to create a schemata to solve organizational problems (Mumford et al., 2000). Thus, knowledge is crucial for the pursuit of problem-solving skills, it allows the leader to understand the problem, collect and organize the information, and find a solution. Through schemata, information become clearer and facilitate the solving process. People that retain this knowledge are called experts (Mumford et al., 2000). Knowledge comes from past cases and facts, which allow leaders to predict what could happen in determined contexts and make plans for future resolutions.

Leadership outcomes. Leadership outcomes are strongly affected by competencies which, in turn, are influenced by individual attributes. Leadership outcomes can be declined into two concepts: effective problem-solving and performance.

Effective problem-solving is a direct consequence of the problem-solving skills that an individual possesses. In the Skills model proposed by Mumford et al. (2000), problem-solving is the central part, and the theory attempts to explain what makes a person a good problem-solver and thus an effective leader. Goodness in problem-solving is defined by the quality and the inventiveness of the solution proposed, including the logic behind it and its uniqueness.

Performance is connected to the results of the leader's job. Evaluations of the performance are made through external standards and define whether a leader has been successful or not in their office. Performance and effective problem-solving are strictly connected and they constitute together the outcomes of leadership.

Career Experiences. Career experiences are considered as an external factor in the model that can directly influence the individual attributes and competencies of the leader. Truly, the know-how acquired during the career path of an individual, affects their learnings and capabilities in settling problems. The reason behind it is that through specific duties and responsibilities people can learn how to solve organizational issues and can reinforce their personality traits, including perspicacity, motivation, and self-confidence. According to Mumford et al. (2000), the more the complexity of the tasks that individuals confront in their careers, the more the development of their knowledge and competencies. It is a continuous process that tends to increase over time. This can be linked to Katz's theory (1955), which argues that top management leaders should possess more conceptual skills

than the supervisory management levels, because they need to confront unknown situations that requires more abstraction and inventiveness. Hence, the higher the level that a person holds in the organization, the higher the individual attributes and competencies they should possess (Mumford and Connelly, 1991). This highlights one of the most important consideration of the skills approach, *id est* leadership is something that comes from the experience and is not something innate.

Environmental influences. Environmental influences are another external factor of the model which affects individual attributes, competencies, and leadership outcomes. This component of the model, differently from the others analyzed above, cannot be controlled by the leader, and lies outside their range of action. Environmental influences can be distinguished into two categories: internal and external (to the organization).

Internal influences include technologies, furnishings, tangible and intangible assets of the organization, which can positively or negatively affect leadership performance. An example can be the presence of particular technologies used in the operational process of an organization: if there is a lack of machinery, problem-solving actions could not be taken and the overall performance declines. Vice versa, the presence of high-quality equipment can speed up the decision-making process and provide better results.

External influences are exogenous events regarding economy, politics, nature, society, which inevitably affects the organizational order and the leader decisions. An example may be the COVID-19 pandemic, which has altered the organizational dynamics and decision-making processes. Figure 4 summarizes the five components of the Skills Model described above.

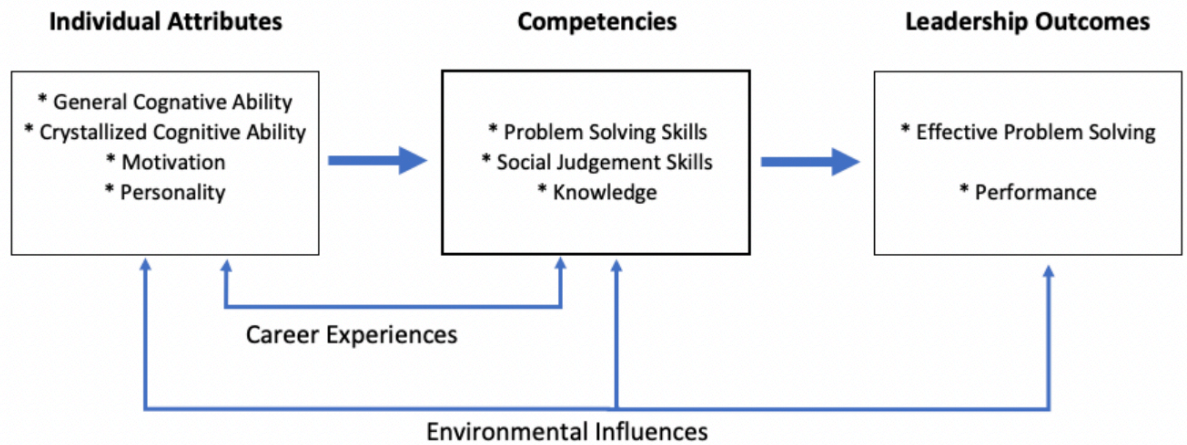


Figure 4: Five components of the Skills Model. Source: Adapted from Mumford, M.D., Zaccaro, S.J., Harding, F.D., Jacobs, T.O., Fleishman, E.A. (2000). Leadership Skills for A Changing World: Solving Complex Social Problems. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 11–35. ISSN: 1048-9843.

1.6.4. Conclusions

The skills perspective, as compared to the trait approach, describes leadership as something available to everyone, that can be developed over time, and not as something reserved for selected few that are born with specific qualities.

In the previous paragraphs have been presented two important works of the skills approach: the one of Katz (1955), which organizes leadership skills into three categories, and the one of Mumford et al. (2000), which analyzes the relationship between a leader’s skills and leadership effectiveness. The main strength of this approach relies on the importance of developing abilities that can lead to effective leadership at all management levels.

Moreover, there is a change of perspective about leadership, which is described as a set of variables that are intertwined with each other in a complementary and complex way, differently from other models. For these reasons, the skills approach is widely used in leadership development programs.

Being a very complex model, one of its weaknesses is that it extends beyond the boundaries of leadership. In particular, with regard to the focus on intelligence, the theme is extensively discussed in cognitive psychology, but it is sporadically addressed in leadership research. This diverts attention from the definition of leadership performance. Moreover, the model fails in describing the prescriptive value of the relationship between skills and performance. Indeed, it states the existence of an association between problem-solving skills and leadership effectiveness, but it does not explain how skills affect outcomes.

1.7. Style perspective

The style perspective focuses on the different behaviors that a leader can engage with inside a group or an organization. Indeed, in contrast with the trait perspective and the skill one, this approach focuses the attention to what leaders actually do and how they behave. Leaders can engage two types of *macro*-behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors. The difference between the two is that the former is focused on the accomplishment of the organizational goals, the latter is aimed at creating a good environment in the organization and between the employees. Leaders can combine these two behaviors in several ways creating different styles.

In the next paragraphs will be presented three different theories about the style approach: the Ohio State study, the University of Michigan study, and the research of Blake and Mouton (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Although these studies have created a clear picture of the style perspective, there are still some limitations in the theory, which will be explored later.

1.7.1. Ohio State Study

The main point of the Ohio State study was to analyze how leaders act inside an organization starting from the consideration that the trait perspective is pointless, and leadership depends on how leaders behave. Researchers asked subordinates to complete questionnaires about their leaders, asking what type of behaviors they engaged in their work. The questionnaire was called Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) and was composed of about 150 questions about different aspects of the leader's style (Hemphill & Coons, 1957). The questionnaire was administered to different people in several industries and the results showed patterns in leaders' behaviors. Years later, Stogdill (1963) created a shorter version of the questionnaire, called LBDQ-XII.

According to Stogdill (1974), the results of the questionnaire showed that subordinates identified two clusters of leaders' behaviors: consideration and initiating structure. Consideration comprehends relationship behaviors, including the creation of a good organizational climate, intimacy, connections between leaders and followers, recognition, and assurance. Initiating structure comprehends task behaviors, including how to perform a specific task, define the roles in the organization, give a structure for the work to be done, and schedule the activities.

These two types of behaviors are central in the style perspective and define the job of the leaders inside the organization, namely give structure to the work and create a good environment among the employees. According to the Ohio State Study, initiating structure and consideration are independent from one another and constitute two different continua. This means that an individual can be high on initiating structure and be simultaneously low or high on consideration, and vice versa. Leaders can decide which degree of the two behaviors exhibit, thus creating their own style. Studies were made to determine which is

the best combination of the two behaviors: some argued that effective leadership comes from a high degree of consideration, others argued that it comes from a high level of initiating structure, while some researchers showed that the most effective outcome is given by a high degree of both behaviors.

1.7.2. University of Michigan Study

Similar to the Ohio State study, the University of Michigan conducted a program of research on how leaders' behaviors can impact the organizational performance. They identified two clusters of behaviors: employee orientation and production orientation. Employee orientation refers to the attention that the leader poses on the human beings inside the organization, how they feel, and what their needs are. It can be equated to the construct of consideration of the Ohio State study. Production orientation focuses on the technical aspect of the job to be done; hence it is mostly task oriented and consequently people are considered as a means to accomplish a specific function. It can be paired with the concept of initiating structure of the Ohio State study.

Different to the Ohio State study, in this research the two clusters of behaviors are considered as opposite ends of the same continuum. This means that leaders can engage either a more employee-oriented style or a more production-oriented style. Later, Khan (1956) developed a more precise conceptualization of the leaders' orientation, defining the two clusters as independent between them, as in the Ohio State study. According to this view, the leader can be able to be both oriented on people and production with different degrees.

In the second half of the XX century, were conducted several studies to determine which combination of behaviors was the most effective in an organization. Some researchers tried

to identify one single style that could maximize the leadership performance and increase the employees' satisfaction, but results were ambiguous and unprecise (Yukl, 1994). According to Misumi & Peterson (1985), the highest level of leadership effectiveness in the organization is reached through high degrees of both behaviors, task oriented and relationship oriented, but the results were inconclusive.

1.7.3. Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964)

In 1964, Blake and Mouton developed a model called Managerial Grid to analyze the managers' behaviors inside the organizations. Later, the name was changed in Leadership Grid and the main objective was to describe how leaders behave based on two orientations: concern for people and concern for production. The former can be generally digest to the relationship behaviors of the style perspective, the latter to the task behaviors.

Concern for people is about how leaders behave with the people that operate inside an organization. Leaders should guarantee a good environment among the employees, provide assurance, manage social relations, and help individuals in reaching the organizational goals from a human point of view.

Concern for production is about the achievement of the organizational duties, including how to perform a specific task, how to develop the process, and organize the work among the employees.

The Grid is articulated on two axes: the vertical one is concern for people, the horizontal one is concern for production. The two components are described on a 1 to 9-point scale, where 1 is the minimum level of concern and 9 is the maximum. By joining the different points of the axes is possible to delineate five styles: impoverished management (1; 1), team management (9; 9), authority-compliance (9; 1), country-club management (1; 9), and

middle-of-the-road management (5; 5)². Blake and McCanse (1991), identified two other styles that the leader can engage: maternalism/paternalism, which combines the styles of authority-compliance and country-club management, and opportunism, which is a combination of the five styles (Blake & McCanse, 1991). Figure 5 represents the Managerial (Leadership) Grid with the five styles named above.

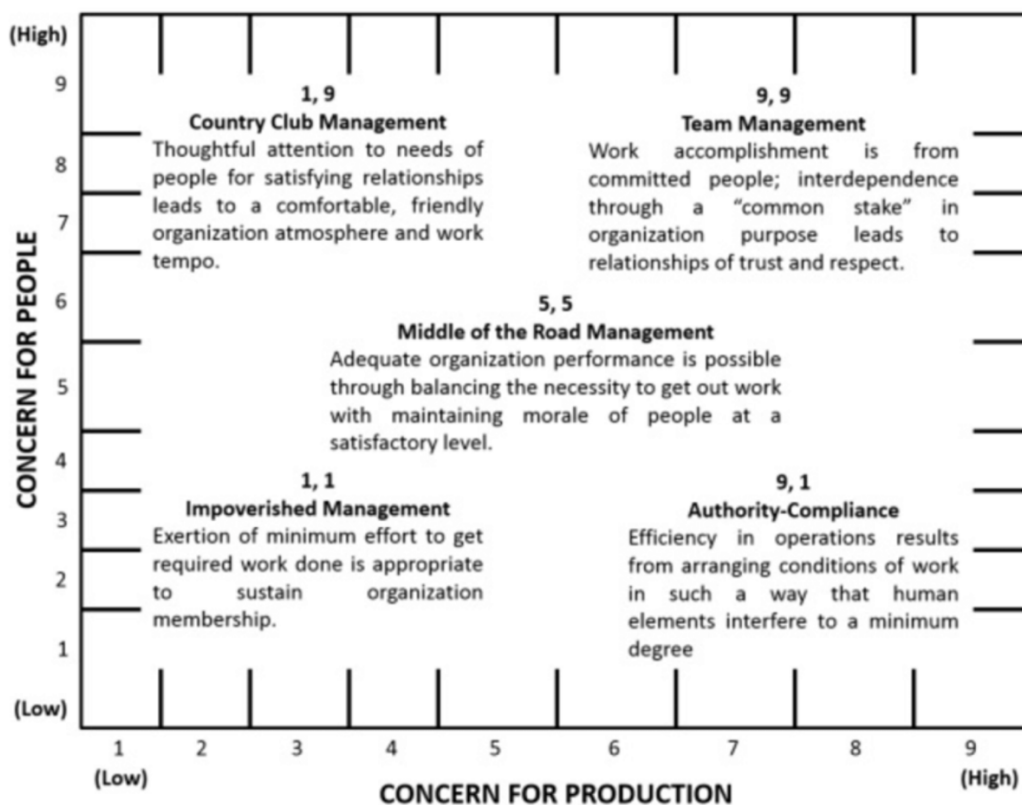


Figure 5: Managerial (Leadership) Grid, Blake & Mouton (1964). Source: Blake, R., McCanse, A. (1991). Leadership dilemmas-grid solutions. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, p. 29.

Impoverished Management (1; 1). The impoverished management style is the combination of level 1 of concern for production and level 1 of concern for people. This means that the leader has the minimum regard for both task and relationship behaviors and is described as

² The first digit corresponds to the level-points of *concern for production*, the second to *concern for people*.

uncaring, disinterested, subdued, and evasive. In the Grid is represented on the bottom-left, where the two components are low.

Team Management (9; 9). The team management style is the opposite of the previous one, the impoverished management. Indeed, the leader that engage this behavior presents a high concern for both production and people. The individual aims at creating participation among the employees, stimulating cooperation and teamwork, and providing a structure for the job to be done. The leader is completely involved in the organization from the task and relationship point of view and is described as faithful.

Authority-Compliance (9; 1). The authority-compliance style presents a high emphasis on the task behavior and less priority on the relationship component, considering employees as means to get the job done. The type of communication between leader and followers is one-way, with the aim of convey instructions about the duties to carry out. The individual that engages this behavior is described as governing, critical, and zealous.

Country-Club Management (1; 9). The country-club management style is the contrary of the authority-compliance one. Indeed, the leader that engages in this behavior poses a heavy emphasis on the relationship component and less attention to the task behaviors. The focus is on how people feel inside the organization and the main objective is to satisfy the social needs of the employees, by promoting human contacts and understating the production part. The individual tries to set up a friendly environment, is pleasant, reassuring, and encouraging.

Middle-of-the-Road Management (5; 5). The middle-of-the-road management style presents a mid-level of both task and relationship behaviors. The leader poses the same level of attention to the work to be done and the needs of the employees that perform the tasks. They try to find a harmony between these two components, by creating a climate of no-conflict and affirming intermediate levels of production and social relations. The individual that adopts this style is described as someone that prefers to stay in the middle, is prudent, and aims at reaching an equilibrium between the concern for production and for people.

Maternalism/Paternalism. The maternalism/paternalism style results from the combination of the authority-compliance and country-club management style. Indeed, the leader that engages this behavior is also called '*benevolent dictator*', because they act convivial but with the aim of accomplishing the organizational goals. Employees are considered as detached from their tasks. The term of 'father' or 'mother' comes from the point that the leader treats their followers as a family, by compensating loyalty with rewards while discouraging refusal through punishments. Figure 6 represents the above-mentioned style.

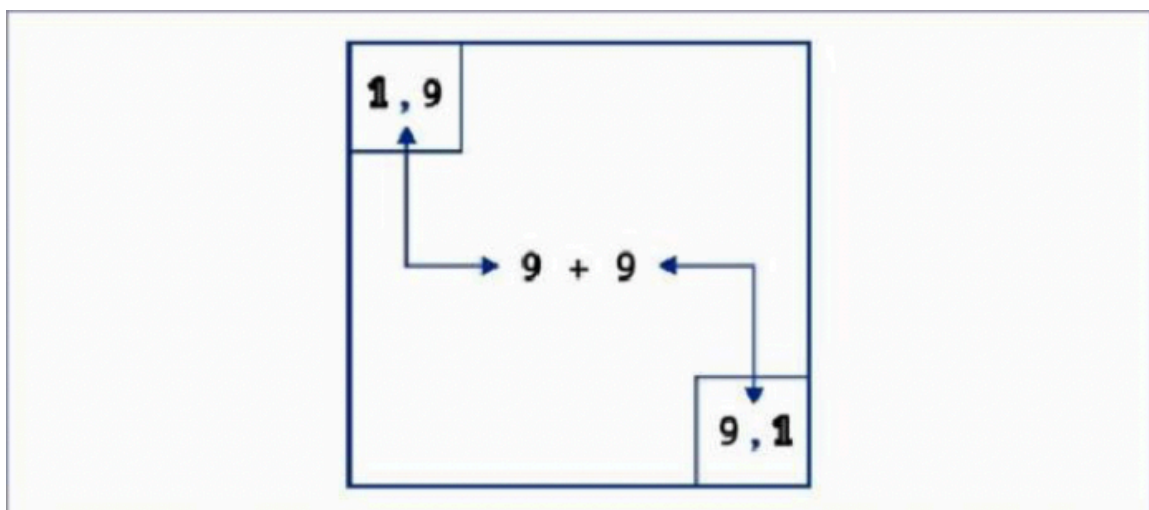


Figure 6: Maternalism/Paternalism style. Source: Blake, R., McCanse, A. (1991). Leadership dilemmas-grid solutions. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, p. 30.

Opportunism. The opportunism style comes from a combination of the five styles described in the Managerial (Leadership) Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964). The leader that attends this behavior, switches between the styles for personal purposes, aiming at increasing their own gains. The opportunistic individual is described as egocentric, Machiavellian, which uses their efforts to achieve personal objectives. Figure 7 represents the opportunistic style.

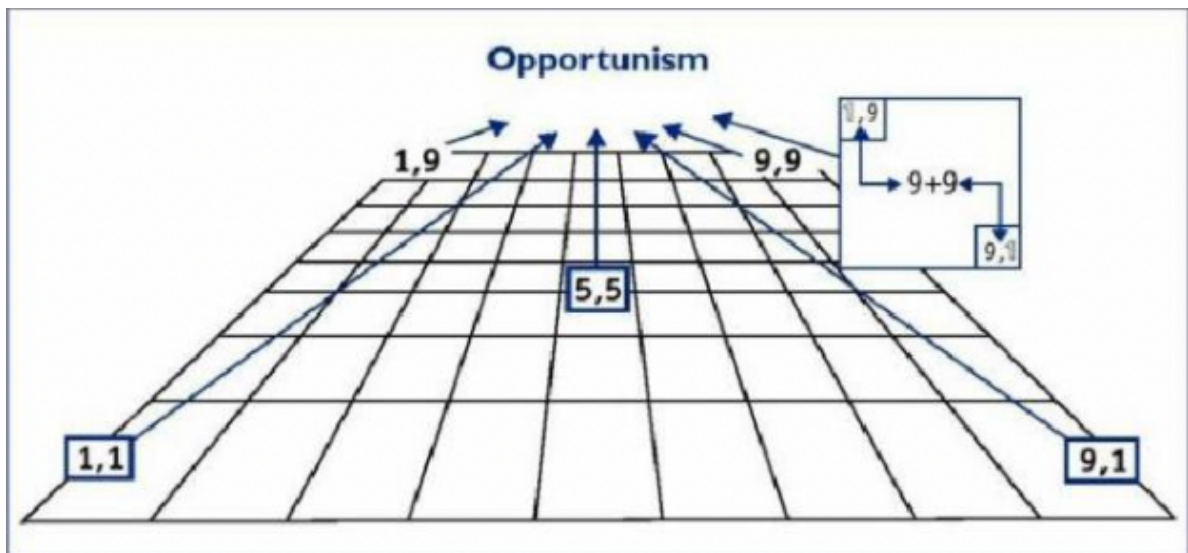


Figure 7: Opportunism style. Source: Blake, R., McCanse, A. (1991). Leadership dilemmas-grid solutions. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, p. 31.

1.7.4. Limitations

According to Blake and Mouton (1985), leaders usually have a dominant style, used in everyday situations, and a backup style, used when they face unusual circumstances, when under duress, or when there are problems in the ordinary management.

The style perspective is a descriptive approach, which defines leadership as a behavior based on two dimensions – task and relationship. Indeed, theory does not prescribe what leaders should do in every situation but defines different behaviors that leaders can engage with. Individuals can be oriented more toward people or more toward the production process and the frameworks can help them to have a clear picture of their lead, defining their styles.

This approach had a positive impact in research, first by defining leadership as '*what leaders do*' – how they behave – and not '*who leaders are*' – based on their personal characteristics. Second, the styles described in theories are developed on two behaviors – task and relationship – which are used together by leaders when exercising leadership. Individuals should be able to find a balance between the two forces in order to reach effective leadership. Thus, through this approach leaders can understand where to act to modify their behaviors and reach a better performance (Northouse, 2012).

Besides the strengths of the approach, the style perspective has its weaknesses. First of all, has not been identified an association between leaders' behaviors and leadership outcome, including job satisfaction, morale, and productivity of the employees (Yukl, 1994). Moreover, researchers failed in finding a universal leadership style that could be used in every situation in order to reach an effective result, which was originally one of the main goals of the theory. Finally, studies about the style approach suggest that the most effective leadership behavior is the combination of high levels of both task and relationship dimension (Misumi, 1985; Blake and McCause, 1991). This result finds weak support in research and remains unclear whether this combination is the most effective or not.

2. The Current Study

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze which leadership style is the most effective inside an organization according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Each style has different results in the organization, and the theory fails in determining which one is the most effective and whether exists a universal style. As stated before, researchers (Misumi, 1985; Blake and McCause, 1991) suggest that the combination of high levels of both behavioral dimensions would allow the achievement of great organizational performance, but the results are inconclusive.

Blanchard et al. (1985), in their research, presented a model called Situational Leadership II (SLII), based on a previous version developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) sixteen years before. According to the model, leaders should adjust their styles to the development levels of the employees, which are based on competence and commitment. Theory fails in giving a clear definition of '*competence*' and '*commitment*', which can be described respectively as the level of skills developed by the employee and the attitude of the employee toward the work to be done. This implies that when the levels of competence or commitment are low, the levels of *concern for production* or *concern for people* should be high. To better disclose: if a subordinate is at the beginning of their career, thus showing low levels of skills in the work but high levels of motivation, the leader should exhibit a high level of concern for production and a low level of concern for people, in order to provide the structure to get the job done without focusing on the human part. Vice versa, if the employee does not have motivation in the work but is highly skilled, the leader should focus more on supporting the subordinate while granting autonomy in carrying out the tasks. The theory lacks empirical support and fails in defining the match between leader's styles and subordinate's levels of development.

2.1. Research question

The limitations highlighted in the previous paragraph generate a gap in literature concerning the style approach. This dissertation focuses on covering this lack of information by questioning which leadership style is the most effective inside an organization, thus investigating the relationship between leaders' behaviors and performance outcome.

Consequently, the following research question has been developed:

RQ: Which is the leadership style that can lead to high organizational outcomes?

Misumi (1985) and Blake & McCanse (1991), stated that high values of *concern for people* and *concern for production* in Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid can lead to high levels of performance outcomes in organizations. As their results were inconsistent, the first hypothesis of the analysis is formulated as follows:

H1: The most effective leadership style is Team Management (high level of concern for people and high level of concern for production) according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid.

Conversely, Blanchard et al. (1985), suggested that leaders' behaviors should match subordinates' levels of competence and commitment. As their theory fails in defining the aforementioned match and presents a lack of evidence, the second hypothesis is described as follows:

H2: High levels of concern for production are associated with low employees' competence, while high levels of concern for people are associated with low employees' commitment.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Research design and variables

In order to investigate the above-mentioned hypotheses, in the second part of this dissertation a quantitative analysis will be conducted with the aim to provide an empirical result to the research question ingenerated by the gap in literature.

The research design selected for this inquiry is the causal research design. Indeed, the intention of the study is to understand the causal relationship between two constructs: the *styles of the leaders*, as described in the Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton (1964), and the *performance outcomes* of these behaviors.

For what concern the investigation of the first hypothesis, the dependent variable will be defined as '*leadership satisfaction*', while the independent will be defined as '*leadership styles*', divided into two subscales for '*concern for people*' and '*concern for production*'.

In the second hypothesis, albeit the independent variables linger the same as in the first hypothesis, the dependent variables will be described as '*competence*' and '*commitment*', where the commitment part will be analyzed into its three dimensions of affective, continuance and normative.

Figure 8 represents the research model of the first hypothesis (H1).

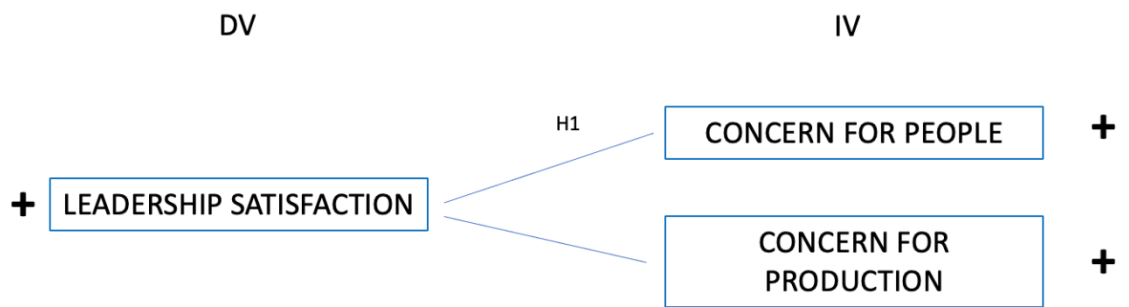


Figure 8: Research Model, first hypothesis.

Figure 9 represents the research model of the second hypothesis (H2.1 and H2.2).

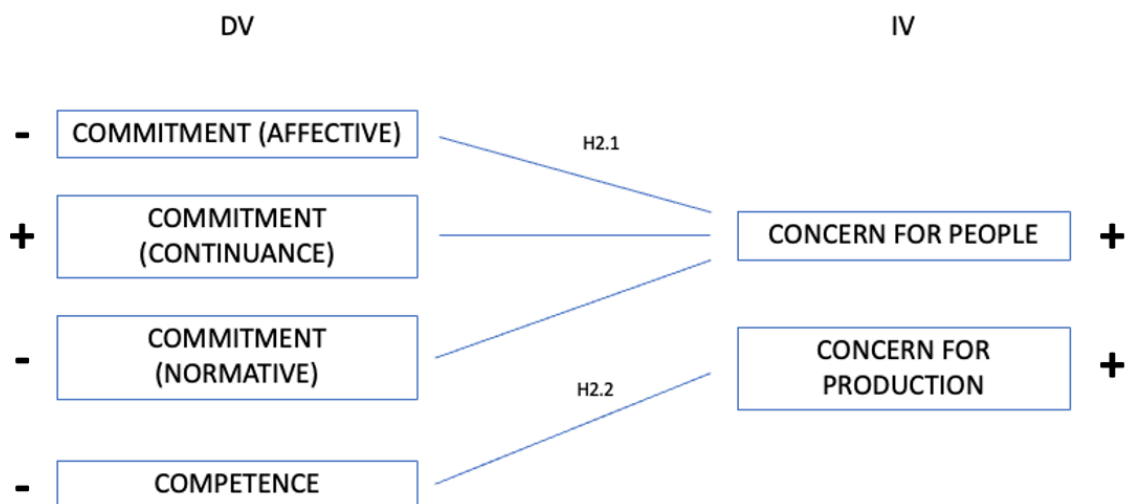


Figure 9: Research Model, second hypothesis.

The independent variable of the two hypotheses is defined as '*leadership styles*', as regards the different behaviors that leaders can engage in the organizations according to the Managerial Grid of Blake and Mouton (1964). Indeed, supervisors can engage in two main

clusters of behaviors, described as *concern for people* and *concern for production*. According to the first hypothesis, the nature of the leaders influences the degree of satisfaction of the subordinates. In the analysis, the leadership styles will be divided into two subscales, namely 'concern for people' and 'concern for production', in order to investigate the different effects that the components have on the employees' satisfaction.

According to the second hypothesis, the two components of the leadership styles affect the levels of competence and commitment of the employees. These components are described respectively as the skills achieved by the employees in the tasks that they perform in their work and the headset that they have in working inside the organization (Blanchard et al., 1985).

Hence, low levels of competence and commitment should be associated respectively with high levels of concern for production and concern for people.

The dependent variable set for the first hypothesis of this study is defined as '*leadership satisfaction*'. For leadership satisfaction is meant the degree of well-being of the employees who work inside an organization under the guide of their leaders (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). Indeed, the purpose of this examination is to determine whether the satisfaction of the employees, representing the outcome of leadership, is influenced in different manners depending on the behaviors of the leaders. The first hypothesis implies that different leaders' styles drive to various outcomes, suggesting in particular that a high level of *concern for people* and a high level of *concern for production* lead to high performance results.

In the second hypothesis, the dependent variables are '*competence*' and '*commitment*'. Concerning the commitment component, this would be analyzed in its three constituents, namely 'affective', 'continuance', and 'normative'. The second hypothesis implies that the

levels of competence are directly influenced by the concern for production of the leader, while the levels of commitment are directly influenced by the concern for people. In particular, low levels of competence necessitate a high level of concern for production on the beside of the leader, while low levels of commitment require a high level of concern for people, and vice versa.

2.2.2. Measures

To test the hypotheses described in the antecedent paragraphs, has been developed a questionnaire based on scales validated in literature. The survey has been created through the program Qualtrics XM and is presented in two languages: Italian and English. In the introduction part, it is explained to the participants the purpose of the study and is displayed the request of informed consent. Subsequently, the respondents are asked to select the language they prefer to complete the survey. The body is articulated as follows:

The first part concerns questions regarding the styles of the leaders and is based on *The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire* (Blake & Mouton, 2010) (Annex 1), which has been adapted to be dispensed to the employees who are asked to evaluate their supervisors. The questions are organized into two sub-scales: one regarding the *concern for people* and the second about the *concern for production*. This scale has been selected in order to create a clear picture of the different styles that the leaders can engage in the organizations according to the Managerial Grid presented by Blake & Mouton. The mentioned measure is based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “Little to no extent” and 5 corresponds to “To a great extent”, according to how much the respondents relate to the sentences presented.

The second part regards the satisfaction of the employees and is based on the *six-item Scale of Ehtart and Klein* (2001) (see Annex 2). The scale is composed of six questions about how the subordinate feels working with their supervisor. This measure has been selected in order to gain information about the degree of satisfaction of the employees in relation to the behaviors of their leaders. The assessment scale is based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “Not at all” and 5 corresponds to “Completely”, according to how much the respondents relate to the statements presented.

The third part is composed of a scale of 18 questions based on a study of Meyer et al. (1993) (Annex 3). In their analysis, they have developed a six-factor scale to measure the degree of commitment of the employees inside an organization. The first three factors describe the affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the occupation, while the last three concern the commitment to the organization. Here, only the commitment factors have been employed (i.e., factors 4, 5 and 6). The 18 questions are presented in three different sections, discriminating among affective, continuance, and normative commitment. *Affective commitment* is the desire of the employee to remain inside the organization because the employee *wants to*; *continuance commitment* is the necessity to remain inside the organization because the employee *needs to*; *normative commitment* is the sense of obligation that the employee feels to remain inside the organization because they *ought to*. Continuance commitment is considered as a negative aspect, compared to the other two dimensions, as the employee perceives it as a necessity. The mentioned measure is based on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “Strongly disagree” and 7 corresponds to

“Strongly agree”, according to how much the respondents relate to the statements proposed.

The fourth part is composed of four questions to evaluate the level of competence of the employees. The questions are based on a four-item scale proposed by Li, Y. (2016) (Annex 4). The measure has been selected in order to analyze the self-assessed level of knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees in their work field. This method is based on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “Strongly disagree” and 7 corresponds to “Strongly agree”, according to how much the respondents relate to the affirmations presented.

The fifth part is composed of *The Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES)* developed by Judge et al. (2006) (Annex 5). The scale is composed of 12 questions that have been proposed to the employees in order to evaluate their personal values and personality traits. The measure is based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “Strongly disagree” and 5 corresponds to “Strongly agree”, according to how much the respondents relate to the personal characteristics described in the survey. This scale represents a control variable for the analysis.

The last part of the questionnaire is composed of four questions about demographic information of the respondents. The first question is about the age, the second about the gender (where the possible answers are Male, Female and Non-binary), and the last two are about the work condition, respectively the position that they retain in the organization and the type of contract that they hold (open-ended, fixed-term, part-time, apprenticeship, internship, intermittent work, and staff leasing).

The distribution of the survey has been made through anonymous link, which has been shared through social networks and personal contacts, and through the platform Prolific.

2.2.3 Sample characteristics

The total number of people reached through the distribution of the questionnaire described in the previous paragraph was 209. All the participants were workers and older than 18-years-old, set as necessary requisites to answer the questions of the survey. The first requisite was in need because the questions were settled for an evaluation of the leader inside the organization, the satisfaction in the workplace, and the levels competence and commitment in the job position.

Among the 209 responses, only 147 were considered as valid. Indeed, 62 participants did not complete the survey and the results could not be used for the analysis. Amidst the 147 viable responses, 10 participants omitted their personal information, which were considered valid either way for the analysis.

In order to obtain information about the composition of the sample, it has been conducted an analysis on descriptive statistics through IBM SPSS Statistics® software (Version 28.0.1.0 (142)).

The questionnaire was proposed in two languages: Italian and English. 144 participants selected 'Italian', accounting for 98% of the total population, while 3 people selected 'English', accounting for 2%. The results are presented in Table 1.

Statistics

Language

N	Valid	147
	Missing	0

Language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	3	2,0	2,0	2,0
	Italian	144	98,0	98,0	100,0
	Total	147	100,0	100,0	

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (Frequency), Language.

The age of the sample was between 20 and 60-years-old, with a mean of 35 and a standard deviation of 12.32. As stated before, the valid number of respondents who completed the questions about personal information was 137, thus counting 10 missing. The results are shown in Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	137	20	60	34,66	12,319
Valid N (listwise)	137				

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (Descriptive), Age.

The 65% of the sample was 'female', counting a frequency of 89, the 34.3% of the sample was 'male', counting a total of 47, while 1 participant selected the option 'Non-binary' as gender, representing the 0.7% of the sample. The results are shown in Table 3.

Statistics					
Gender					
N	Valid		137		
	Missing		10		

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	1	,7	,7	,7
	1	89	60,5	65,0	65,7
	2	47	32,0	34,3	100,0
	Total	137	93,2	100,0	
Missing	System	10	6,8		
Total		147	100,0		

Table 3. Descriptive statistics (Frequency), Gender. Legend: 0 = 'Non-binary', 1 = 'Female', and 2 = 'Male'.

Respondents were asked to select the type of job contract that they had. The 27% stated to have a fixed-term contract, 49.6% an open-ended contract, 6.6% were part-time, 4.4% had an apprenticeship contract, 10.2% were under an internship contract, 1.5% had an intermittent work contract, and the 0.7% had a staff leasing contract. The results are shown in Table 4.

Statistics					
Contract_A					
N	Valid	137			
	Missing	10			
Contract_A					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	37	25,2	27,0	27,0
	1	68	46,3	49,6	76,6
	2	9	6,1	6,6	83,2
	3	6	4,1	4,4	87,6
	4	14	9,5	10,2	97,8
	5	2	1,4	1,5	99,3
	6	1	,7	,7	100,0
	Total	137	93,2	100,0	
Missing	System	10	6,8		
Total		147	100,0		

Table 4. Descriptive statistics (Frequency), Employment contract. Legend: 0 = 'Fixed-term contract', 1 = 'Open-ended contract', 2 = 'Part-time contract', 3 = 'Apprenticeship contract', 4 = 'Internship', 5 = 'Intermittent work contract', and 6 = 'Staff leasing contract'.

Regarding the job position of the respondents of the survey, 68.6% of the people were employees, 19.7% declared to be in a senior position in their organization, 7.3% were interns, and 4.4% were freelancers (Table 5).

Statistics

Job_Position		
N	Valid	137
	Missing	10

Job_Position					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	94	63,9	68,6	68,6
	1	27	18,4	19,7	88,3
	2	10	6,8	7,3	95,6
	3	6	4,1	4,4	100,0
	Total	137	93,2	100,0	
Missing	System	10	6,8		
Total		147	100,0		

Table 5. Descriptive statistics (Frequency), Job position. Legend: 0= 'Employee', 1= 'Senior', 2= 'Intern', and 3= 'Freelancer'.

2.2.4. Analyses

Upon the data collection, information has been organized in an Excel file and all the analyses have been conducted with the software IBM SPSS Statistics. The raw data have been cleaned from the non-valid responses and descriptive statistics analyses have been run for the demographic information of the participants.

Regarding the leadership styles, scores have been extracted for the two subscales, namely concern for people and concern for production. Moreover, a nominal scale indicating the type of style of the leader according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid has been developed. Scores inferior to '5' for each question indicated a low level of concern for people or concern for production, values above '5' indicated a high level, and values equal to '5' were considered as a middle level. From the conjunction of the results, it was possible to determine which type of style could be attributable to each leader.

Individual scores were also extracted for the other variables under investigation, namely Leadership Satisfaction, Commitment and its subscales – affective, continuance, and normative -, Competence and Core Self Evaluation Scale (hereafter, CSES)

Prior to statistical analysis all raw scores have been z-transformed.

In order to comprehend how the data interact with each other, a correlation analysis has been run taking into consideration all the variables of the study. Subsequently, linear regression analyses have been run to test the two hypotheses described above in the chapter.

In order to test the first hypothesis, a regression analysis has been run using the variables concern for people and concern for tasks as independent variables, and leadership satisfaction as dependent variable. 'Age' and 'Gender' have been included in the analyses as covariates.

For what concern the second hypothesis, a regression analysis has been run to test the relation between the levels of competence and commitment of the employees and the degrees of concern for people and concern for production of the leaders. Hence, the variables competence, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment have been used as dependent variables in separate analyses, while concern for people and concern for tasks have been used as independent variables. 'Age' and 'Gender' have been included as covariates. Hence, a first set of linear regressions has been run to test the relation between 'Commitment', 'Concern for people', and 'Concern for production', considering 'Commitment' in its three different dimensions of 'Affective', 'Continuance', and 'Normative'. A second linear regression has been made to test the relation between 'Competence', 'Concern for people', and 'Concern for production', using 'Age', 'Gender', and 'CSES' as covariates.

2.3. Results

2.3.1. Results of the analysis

Having described the procedure of the analysis, in this chapter are exposed the results of the study. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables taken into consideration for the analysis.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Style_People	147	1	9	5,53	1,768
Style_Task	147	1	9	5,73	1,741
LeaderSatisfaction	147	1	5	3,39	1,155
Affective	147	1	7	4,27	1,577
Continuance	147	1	7	4,07	1,415
Normative	147	1	7	3,58	1,579
Competence	147	1	7	5,03	1,263
CSES	147	1	5	3,58	,730
Valid N (listwise)	147				

Table 6. *Descriptive statistics.*

Considering the two dimensions of the leadership styles, the means and standard deviations do not differ much between them, being around a middle level of the scale. Overall, the satisfaction of the employees is medium-high. For what concern the three dimensions of commitment, 'Normative' presents an average score which is lower than the other two dimensions.

In Table 7 are presented the results about frequency and percentage of the different styles that have been identified by the respondents of the questionnaire.

Style		Statistics	
N	Valid	147	
	Missing	0	

		Style			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Authoritarian	10	6,8	6,8	6,8
	Country Club	5	3,4	3,4	10,2
	Impoverished	32	21,8	21,8	32,0
	Middle	14	9,5	9,5	41,5
	Team Leader	86	58,5	58,5	100,0
	Total	147	100,0	100,0	

Table 7. Descriptive statistics (Frequency), Leadership styles.

Results show that the majority of people who participated to the survey identified in their leader a 'Team Management' style (58.5%), which indicates the presence of high levels in both dimensions; while few respondents identified the style of their leader as 'Country-Club Management' (3.4%), which implies low levels of concern for production and high levels of concern for people. 21.8% resulted in 'Impoverished Management', which implies low levels in both dimensions, 6.8% presented an 'Authority-Compliance' style, and 9.5% indicated a 'Middle-of-the-road Management' style, which presents medium levels of both dimensions. A first exploratory correlation analysis has been run across all the variables of interest, and the results are shown in Table 8.

Correlations

	Zstyle_People	Zstyle_Task	ZLeaderSatisfaction	ZAffective	ZContinuance	ZNormative	ZCompetence	ZCSES
Zstyle_People	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 <,001 147	,746** <,001 147	,530** <,001 147	,016 ,849 147	,560** <,001 147	,157 ,057 147	,152 ,066 147
Zstyle_Task	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,872** <,001 147	,695** <,001 147	,481** <,001 147	,109 ,187 147	,462** <,001 147	,155 ,061 147	,128 ,124 147
ZLeaderSatisfaction	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,746** <,001 147	1 <,001 147	,509** <,001 147	-,118 ,156 147	,529** <,001 147	,127 ,125 147	,227** ,006 147
ZAffective	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,530** <,001 147	,509** <,001 147	1 <,001 147	-,076 ,357 147	,647** <,001 147	,129 ,118 147	,288** <,001 147
ZContinuance	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,016 ,849 147	-,118 ,156 147	-,076 ,357 147	1 ,067 147	,422 ,030 147	,179* ,179* 147	-,105 ,207 147
ZNormative	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,560** <,001 147	,529** <,001 147	,647** <,001 147	,067 ,422 147	1 ,090 147	,090 ,280 147	,201* ,015 147
ZCompetence	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,157 ,057 147	,127 ,125 147	,129 ,118 147	,179* ,030 147	,090 ,280 147	1 <,001 147	,356** <,001 147
ZCSES	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,152 ,066 147	,227** ,006 147	,288** <,001 147	-,105 ,207 147	,201* ,015 147	,356** <,001 147	1 <,001 147

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8. Correlations.

Table 9 shows the results of the regression analysis for H1.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,235	,223		1,055	,294
	ZStyle_People	,633	,123	,626	5,156	<,001
	ZStyle_Task	,092	,124	,091	,745	,458
	Age	-,011	,005	-,136	-2,264	,025
	Gender	,100	,122	,049	,817	,415

a. Dependent Variable: ZLeaderSatisfaction

Table 9. Regression analysis, H1: effect of Concern for People and concern for Task on Leadership Effectiveness.

The results of the regression analysis show significant and positive effect of Concern for People on the variable Leadership Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.63$, $t = 5.16$, $p < 0.001$), while the effect of Concern for Task was found non-significant ($\beta = 0.09$, $t = 0.75$, $p = 0.46$). Because such relationship was actually found significant in the correlation analyses, it is possible that the regression suffered from a problem of statistical power, as the regression includes both variables along with two covariates. For this reason, two separates regression analyses have been conducted, in order to analyze separately the relations between Leadership

Satisfaction, Concern for People, and Concern for Task. Table 10 and 11 show the results of the analyses.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,238	,222		1,072	,285
	ZStyle_People	,713	,060	,705	11,907	<,001
	Age	-,011	,005	-,141	-2,355	,020
	Gender	,108	,122	,053	,889	,375

a. Dependent Variable: ZLeaderSatisfaction

Table 10. Regression analysis, H1 People.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,247	,243		1,015	,312
	ZStyle_Task	,648	,066	,641	9,826	<,001
	Age	-,010	,005	-,132	-2,007	,047
	Gender	,067	,134	,033	,502	,617

a. Dependent Variable: ZLeaderSatisfaction

Table 11. Regression analysis, H1 Task.

As hypothesized, when conducting the analyses separately, hence reducing the problem of statistical power, both effects of Concern for People ($\beta = 0.71$, $t = 11.90$, $p < 0.001$) and Concern for Task ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 9.83$, $p < 0.001$) appear to be significant, thus confirming the first hypothesis of the study.

The covariate Gender was found non-significant, while Age shows a significant and negative effect on the levels of Leadership Satisfaction ($\beta = -0.011$, $t = -2.26$, $p = 0.025$), indicating that older people are less satisfied of their leaders.

Table 12, 13, and 14 show the results of the regression analyses conducted to test H2, wherein 'Commitment' was used as dependent variable, divided in its three dimensions 'Affective', 'Continuance', and 'Normative', in three separate analyses.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-,339	,280		-1,209	,229
	ZStyle_People	,526	,075	,524	6,966	<,001
	Age	,012	,006	,154	2,031	,044
	Gender	-,048	,153	-,024	-,314	,754

a. Dependent Variable: ZAffective

Table 12. Regression analysis, Affective and People.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-,399	,328		-1,216	,226
	ZStyle_People	,033	,088	,033	,377	,707
	Age	,016	,007	,198	2,275	,025
	Gender	-,091	,180	-,044	-,506	,614

a. Dependent Variable: ZContinuance

Table 13. Regression analysis, Continuance and People.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-,217	,275		-,786	,433
	ZStyle_People	,550	,074	,548	7,402	<,001
	Age	,009	,006	,109	1,458	,147
	Gender	-,083	,151	-,040	-,548	,585

a. Dependent Variable: ZNormative

Table 14. Regression analysis, Normative and People.

The regression model run using Concern for People as independent variable and Affective Commitment as dependent variable was found significant. In particular, Concern for People appear to exert a positive effect on the level of affective commitment, hence contradicting

the second hypothesis ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 6.97$, $p < 0.001$). In this analysis also the covariate Age was found significant ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.03$, $p = 0.044$), indicating that older participants scored higher on the Affective Commitment scale, hence, were on average more committed to the organization. The covariate Gender was found non-significant ($\beta = -0.48$, $t = -0.31$, $p = 0.754$). The results of the regression conducted using the Continuance Commitment, defined in the previous chapters as a negative aspect of commitment, was found non-significant ($\beta = 0.03$, $t = 0.38$, $p = 0.707$). As in the previous analyses, the effect of the covariate Age was found significant ($\beta = 0.02$, $t = 2.28$, $p = 0.025$), while the gender was non-significant ($\beta = -0.091$, $t = -0.51$, $p = 0.614$).

Finally, the regression conducted using the Normative Commitment as dependent variable was found significant, indicating that concern for people yield a positive effect on the normative commitment ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 7.40$, $p < 0.001$). In the case of this analysis the effect of both Age ($\beta = 0.009$, $t = 1.46$, $p = 0.147$) and Gender ($\beta = -0.083$, $t = -0.55$, $p = 0.585$) was found non-significant.

Table 15 shows the results of the regression analysis for H2 using 'Competence' as dependent variable.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,168	,300		,558	,578
	ZStyle_Task	,071	,081	,073	,879	,381
	ZCSES	,349	,080	,369	4,373	<,001
	Age	-,008	,007	-,103	-1,200	,232
	Gender	,076	,161	,038	,470	,639

a. Dependent Variable: ZCompetence

Table 15. Regression analysis, H2 Competence and Task.

The results of this analysis showed that the effect of Concern for Task on the employees' competence was non-significant ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 0.88$, $p = 0.381$). On the other hand, the effect of the covariate CSES was found significant ($\beta = 0.37$, $t = 4.4$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a positive relationship between employees' competence and their personal values.

Overall, based on the results presented above, H2 is rejected, presenting a positive relation between Commitment and Concern for People, conversely to what was stated in the hypothesis, and showing non-significant relationship between Competence and Concern for Task.

2.4. Discussion

From the results presented in the previous paragraph it appears that employees are more satisfied of their leaders when the latter pay more attention to both productivity and human side. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study can be confirmed:

H1: *The most effective leadership style is Team Management (high level of concern for people and high level of concern for production) according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid.*

Moreover, the correlation analysis shows a positive and significant relation between the styles of the leaders and the commitment of the employees, particularly for the Affective and Normative dimensions, described as the positive aspects of commitment conversely to the Continuance dimension. This implies that when the style of the leader is closer to 'Team Management', employees are more satisfied and more prone to work in the organization because they *want* to, and they *ought* to. Vice versa, Continuance commitment appeared

not to be related to employee's satisfaction, meaning that if people are satisfied of their leaders, they are committed to the organization not for the fear of lose their job position but for an emotional attachment and a sense of obligation.

The second hypothesis presented in this dissertation states that the leaders should adapt their behaviors to the levels of competence and commitment of the employees, trying to fill in the gaps that people have from the human side or the production side. Results show that this hypothesis is rejected. Indeed, the analyses have shown that there exists a positive relationship between Concern for People and Commitment, rather than a negative one. Additionally, the effect of Concern for Tasks over the employees' level of competence appeared non-significant. Overall, these results contradict the predictions formulated in hypothesis 2:

H2: High levels of concern for production are associated with low competence, whether high levels of concern for people are associated with low commitment.

A possible explanation for these results resides in the idea that the levels of competence and commitment should be detected at the beginning of the work relationship of employees with their leaders, meaning that their styles could already have influenced the employees' behaviors, thus modifying their degrees of competence and commitment. Hence, showing a positive relationship rather than negative. In other words, in order to disentangle these relationships, it would be necessary to study the evolution of the dependent and independent variables over time, in order to test whether changes in one component affect the other dimension.

In the light of what has been said so far, it is possible to state that the style that leads to better organizational outcomes is Team Management, thus answering the research question: *Which is the leadership style that can lead to high organizational outcomes?*

3. General Discussion

3.1. Theoretical implications

This dissertation contributes to the theories presented in the first chapter in different ways. Concerning the theory of Blake and Mouton (1964), research failed in finding an association between leaders' behaviors and leadership outcome, including job satisfaction, morale, and productivity of the employees. Moreover, researchers failed in finding a universal leadership style that could be used in every situation in order to reach an effective result, suggesting that the most successful combination was high levels of both task and relationship dimension, but research found weak support (Misumi, 1985; Blake and McCauley, 1991).

This paper contributes by identifying a significant and positive relationship between the leaders' styles, the job satisfaction, and the commitment of the employees in remaining inside the organization. Indeed, results show that high levels of both style's dimensions, namely people and task, can increase the motivation of the employees in working for the organization and the satisfaction in collaborating with their leaders. Thus, this dissertation confirms the assumptions of Misumi (1985) and Blake & McCauley (1991) demonstrating that the Team Management style is the most successful in reaching effective results. This could be considered as a universal style that can be virtually adopted in every organization.

Moreover, this paper contributes to the theory of Blanchard et al. (1985) about Situational Leadership which argues that levels of concern for people and concern for production should be inversely related to the levels of competence and commitment of the employees. This

theory found weak empirical support and failed in defining the match between leader's styles and subordinate's levels of development.

The analysis presented in the previous paragraphs shows instead a positive relation between the two style's dimensions and the degrees of competence and commitment, thus not supporting the assumptions of Blanchard et al. (1985) and defining a positive match among the variables. However, as highlighted in the previous section, this result may be also due to the methodological approach that has been used in the current design, which prevented to observe the changes over time between the concern for People and Tasks on the one hand, and Commitment and Competence on the other.

3.2. Managerial implications

This study also presents useful understandings for managerial decisions and strategies that could be implemented in organizations. As results of the study exhibit, leaders that are capable of establishing an emotional connection with their subordinates while still focusing on the production side are the ones that could increase the organizational performance. Indeed, investing in great leaders brings to a higher retention of human resources. A good leader should motivate the subordinates, settling goals, and help the employees in reaching them. Moreover, results show that the emotional factors have a major impact on employees' satisfaction ($r = 0.746$) than the production factors ($r = 0.695$). This suggests that when leaders build strong relationships with their subordinates, the job satisfaction, and the willingness to remain inside the organization tend to increase.

From a financial point of view, leadership effectiveness can bring positive results for the organization, by helping it in retaining resources and increasing the productivity. Indeed,

effective leaders are those who ensure and enable the achievement of company goals through their teams, by inspiring and motivating them.

Despite the large investments made by companies in leadership programs, 80% of the organizations are still facing leadership issues, thus risking compromising the organizational performance. Leaders should be able to set goals and motivate the employees in reaching them, so to achieve greater outcomes.

According to Northouse (2012), leadership is a process where leaders and followers influence each other in the context of the group with the aim of achieving common goals. Consequently, leaders should collaborate with their subordinates for the achievement of the common good, by giving directions and supporting the others.

3.3. Limitations of the work and future research

Notwithstanding the implications that the study has from a theoretical and managerial point of view, the analysis presents some limitations. First, the sample resulted to be too small, thus leading to problems of statistical power in the regression analysis while testing the first hypothesis. Indeed, the linear regressions that present Concern for Task and Concern for People simultaneously, show a non-significant value for the variable 'Concern for Task'. Moreover, concerning the second hypothesis, the levels of competence and commitment of the employees have been investigated only in one point in time. This could imply that the dimensions of development of the subordinates have already been affected by the leaders' styles, thus resulting in a positive correlation between the two, despite what stated in the second hypothesis. Hence, future research could be conducted by investigating changes affecting these two dimensions over time, in order to study whether they do adjust to the employees' levels of commitment and competence.

Furthermore, it has been assumed that effective leadership could generate positive results from a human and financial point of view in organizations. In this dissertation, it has not been analyzed the economic aspect, which could be an index of leadership effectiveness together with the levels of commitment of the employees in working in their organizations. Future research could be conducted by analyzing both aspects, thus providing a complete sight about the organizational outcomes.

Conclusions

Studies about leadership started in the early 90s and the concept has developed over the years presenting different definitions. Leadership programs are becoming an important investment for organizations and leadership training has been recognized as a \$366 billion global industry (Westfall, 2019). Good leaders can bring positive results in the organization from a financial and human perspective, thus increasing the equity premium and the employee retention. Despite this, the majority of the organizations are still facing leadership issues.

This dissertation demonstrates how leaders that pay close attention to both production and people manage to create an environment where employees are satisfied with their job, have high morale, and want to remain in the organization. Indeed, the Team Management style identified by Blake and Mouton in their study (1964), resulted to be the most effective among the others.

From a theoretical point of view, have been covered those literature gaps about the style perspective which questioned the relationship between leaders' behaviors and performance outcomes, and the existence of a universal style that could be used in every organization. Furthermore, theoretical implications about situational leadership, as described by

Blanchard et al. (1985), have been developed. In particular, it has been described the match between leaders' styles and employees' development levels which were considered as missing in the cited theory.

Hence, the results of the study showed that high levels of *concern for people* and high levels of *concern for production* are positively related to employees' satisfaction and commitment, in particular with the *affective* and *normative* dimensions of it. From a managerial point of view, this suggests that leaders who exhibit a Team Management style can increase their organizational performance by making their employees happier and make them want to stay inside the organization, thus retaining human resources who are motivated in their job. Furthermore, research could not confirm theory about situational leadership, according to which high levels of concern for people are associated with low commitment and high levels of concern for production are associated with low competence. Nevertheless, results described a positive and significant relation between employees' commitment – in particular the affective and normative dimensions – and concern for people.

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Annex

Annex 1: The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire (2010).

1. They encourage the team to participate when it comes decision-making time, and they try to implement the team's ideas and suggestions.
2. For my leader nothing is more important than accomplishing a goal or task.
3. They closely monitor the schedule to ensure a task or project will be completed in time.
4. They enjoy coaching people on new tasks and procedures.
5. The more challenging a task is, the more they enjoy it.
6. They encourage the employees to be creative about the job.
7. When seeing a complex task through to completion, my leader ensures that every detail is accounted for.
8. They find it easy to carry out several complicated tasks at the same time.
9. They enjoy reading articles, books, and journals about training, leadership, and psychology; and then putting what they have read into action.
10. When correcting mistakes, my leader does not worry about jeopardizing relationships.
11. They manage my time very efficiently.
12. They enjoy explaining the intricacies and details of a complex task or project to the employees.
13. Breaking large projects into small manageable tasks is second nature to my leader.
14. For my leader, nothing is more important than building a great team.
15. They enjoy analyzing problems.
16. They honor other people's boundaries.
17. Counseling they employees to improve their performance or behavior is second nature to my leader.
18. They enjoy reading articles, books, and trade journals about their profession; and then implementing the new procedures they have learned.

Annex 2: Six-item Scale of Ehtart and Klein (2001).

- a) I work at a high level of performance under the lead of my supervisor
- b) I do enjoy working with my supervisor
- c) I get along with my supervisor
- d) I admire my supervisor
- e) I find my supervisor's work style compatible with my own
- f) I find that my supervisor was similar to my ideal manager

Annex 3: Six-factor solution of Meyer et al. (1993).

Item	Parameter estimate	Item	Parameter estimate
Factor 1		Factor 4	
Nursing is important to my self-image.	.406	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.645
I regret having entered the nursing profession. (R)	.736	I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	.410
I am proud to be in the nursing profession.	.709	I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)	.735
I dislike being a nurse. (R)	.819	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)	.680
I do not identify with the nursing profession. (R)	.639	I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)	.735
I am enthusiastic about nursing.	.733	This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	.749
Factor 2		Factor 5	
I have put too much into the nursing profession to consider changing now.	.469	Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	.504
Changing professions now would be difficult for me to do.	.693	It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.	.592
Too much of my life would be disrupted if I were to change my profession.	.754	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.	.678
It would be costly for me to change my profession now.	.590	I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.	.700
There are no pressures to keep me from changing professions. (R)	.347	If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.	.454
Changing professions now would require considerable personal sacrifice.	.631	One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	.483
Factor 3		Factor 6	
I believe people who have been trained in a profession have a responsibility to stay in that profession for a reasonable period of time.	.561	I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer. (R)	.580
I do not feel any obligation to remain in the nursing profession. (R)	.596	Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.	.638
I feel a responsibility to the nursing profession to continue in it.	.792	I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.	.658
Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel that it would be right to leave nursing now.	.647	This organization deserves my loyalty.	.718
I would feel guilty if I left nursing.	.580	I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.	.735
I am in nursing because of a sense of loyalty to it.	.645	I owe a great deal to my organization.	.691

Annex 4: Four-item scale of Li, Y. (2016).

1. I have a comprehensive grasp of the knowledge used in the work
2. I have mastered the essential skills of the position
3. I have strong business abilities
4. I have strong learning abilities and I can quickly accept and master new knowledge and new technology

Annex 5: The Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES) of Judge et al. (2006).

1. I am confident I get the success I deserve in life

2. Sometimes I feel depressed
3. When I try, I generally succeed
4. Sometimes when I fail, I feel worthless
5. I complete tasks successfully
6. Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work
7. Overall, I am satisfied with myself
8. I am filled with doubts about my competence
9. I determine what will happen in my life
10. I do not feel in control of my success in my career
11. I am capable of coping with most of my problems
12. There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me

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Summary

The aim of this thesis is to analyze which leadership style is the most effective inside an organization according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Leaders can be engaged in different types of behaviors and can adopt different levels of concern for people and concern for production. The combination of these two dimensions creates five different styles: authority-compliance, country club management, middle of the road management, impoverished management, and team management. Each style has different results in the organization, and the theory fails in determining which one is the most effective and if exists a universal style. Furthermore, Blanchard et al. (1985) stated that there is not a single style that can lead to great performance outcomes, because leaders should adapt their behaviors to the levels of competence and commitment of the employees. Theory fails in clearly defining the concepts of *competence* and *commitment*, which are described respectively as the skills achieved by the employees in the tasks that they perform in their work, and the mindset that they have in working inside the organization (Blanchard et al., 1985). Moreover, theory lacks empirical support and fails in defining the match between leaders' styles and employees' development levels.

Starting from these limitations, the following hypotheses and research question have been developed:

RQ: Which is the leadership style that can lead to high organizational outcomes?

H1: The most effective leadership style is Team Management (high level of concern for people and high level of concern for production) according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid.

H2: High levels of concern for production are associated with low employees' competence, while high levels of concern for people are associated with low employees' commitment.

The paper is organized in three parts:

The first part is composed of a review of past studies, starting with the definition of what leadership is and its evolution during the years. The first chapter introduces various perspectives presented in literature, in particular the trait approach, the skill approach, and the style approach. Focusing on the style, the limitations of the aforementioned studies are subsequently presented.

The second part explains the methods used to conduct the investigation of the hypotheses. A questionnaire has been set up with the aim of collecting data from the population, which have been subsequently analyzed through IBM SPSS Software. The sample reached with the distribution of the survey is made up of 209 people, counting only 147 valid responses. The results of the analysis are shown at the end of the second chapter.

The third part presents a discussion of the results, focusing on the theoretical and managerial implications that this thesis has brought. Indeed, the analyses show a positive interaction between concern for people and leadership satisfaction ($\beta = 0.71$, $t = 11.90$, $p < 0.001$), as well as concern for production and leadership satisfaction ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 9.83$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the first hypothesis could be confirmed, stating that the most effective leadership style is the *team management* (high levels of concern for people and concern for production), according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964), which can be adopted as universal style inside the organizations. Conversely, the second hypothesis is rejected, presenting positive association between affective commitment and concern for people ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 6.97$, $p < 0.001$), non-significant results between continuance commitment and concern for people ($\beta = 0.03$, $t = 0.38$, $p = 0.707$), and again positive association between normative commitment and concern for people ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 7.40$, $p < 0.001$). Competence and concern for production

shown a non-significant relation ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 0.88$, $p = 0.381$). Thus, the second hypothesis is rejected.

To conclude, the findings of this study confirm the theory of Blake and Mouton (1964), according to which the *team management* style can lead to higher organizational outcomes, while it is not possible to confirm the theory of Blanchard et al. (1985) which states that the leaders' behaviors should match the development levels of the employees. Future research could be conducted on the basis of this study, in order to gain further information on the financial results of the organizations and better investigate the outcomes of the second hypothesis.