

# Relationship between leadership styles and ages



## RESEARCHING &amp; REPORTING CO301/401 END OF TERM ASSESSMENT

## PROJECT: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGES AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

\*\*\*\*\*O\*\*\*\*\* Prepared for: Mrs. Ewa Maciejewski Prepared by: Le Hang Nguyen 3HE2 Thi Luu Nguyen 3HE2 Date of submission: 11/01/2012 Abstract

The research explores the relationship between Ages and Leadership styles, by using a questionnaire survey to collect data from 100 managers from different Hospitality organizations and at different organizational level in Montreux, Switzerland. The research question is identified as “ what role does Age play in the perception of leadership style”.

There have been some research publications focusing on influences of age on the leadership style (for example, Kabacoff and Stoffey, 2011; Mitchell, 2000; Vinnicombe and Kakabadse, 1999). The authors found that the older managers were mature, saw challenges and had long-term perspectives in managing people, in contrast, younger managers were competitive, and result oriented and adopted an open style of management. Since some people have asked what relevant age has to do with leadership, we do a research on 100 managers in Montreux to explore those theories.

The findings suggest that the younger and older manager have different profile in their autocratic and democratic leadership style (consultative and participative). Older manager is more autocratic in decision-making process, more consultative in employees' opinion and more participative in employees' performance in comparison with younger manager. However, the two groups of manager both apply laissez-faire leadership style at the same level. Key words: Age group, Leadership, Managers, Autocratic Leadership

style, Democratic Leadership style, Consultative Leadership style, Participative Leadership style, Delegate Leadership style.

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Additionally, we would like to thank our friends from Swiss Hotel Management School, who help us in discussing, creating the questionnaire survey and understanding the project. Table of Contents Abstract2 Acknowledgements3 List of Tables4 List of Illustrations5 List of Appendices6 Literature Review8 Methodology10 Chapter 1: Autocratic leadership style11 Chapter 2: Democratic leadership style13

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Review As the difference in ages of workers, managers in today's organization, different leadership styles may be applied in a same organization. Base on a leadership study of Kurt Elwin (1939), he identified that there are three different styles of leadership: Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-Faire.

Autocratic style is about taking decisions without consulting with others, providing what, when and how things need to be done. Democratic style is

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usually the most effective one that allows group member's input in making decision, while Laissez-Faire style offer little or no guidance to group members and leave decision-making up to them. Kakabadse et al. (1998) concluded in their investigation of senior federal-government Australian civil servants and top directors in the UK National Health Service Trust organization that gender is not a significant demographic factor in defining leadership perspective and performance.

They recommended that organizational demographic factor such as the age of individuals is considerably influential in shaping the philosophy, attitudes and behavior of leaders in organization. Kabacoff and Stoffey (2001) examined multigenerational differences in leader style and behavior and their impact on individual performance of two age groups: younger (25-35) and older (45-55). The research showed that compared with older workers, younger workers are more likely to seek out opportunities to take charge and push competitively to achieve a high level of results.

Similarly, compared to younger workers, older workers cooperate and delegate more, and show a greater degree of empathy and concern for other workers. From an understanding of these theories, three main key themes are generated, which are about the analyzing of three different leadership styles with its rating from different group of ages: less than 30, from 30 to less than 40, from 40 to less than 50, from 50 to overs base on a questionnaire survey. These key themes will be expanded in corresponding chapters. The study of this research may bring in new insights about the influences of ages on the leadership styles.

Particularly, the research may carry out the understanding of worker and manager's behavior through the answer choices that affects both individual and organizational outcomes. Methodology Base on the understanding of three different leadership styles, a survey questionnaire is established with 3 different answers, which indicates the correspondent leadership styles. The questions and answers are generated in the way to determine the characteristics of different leadership styles, which are responded by a specific age group. The research is undertaken by interpretivism philosophical perspective.

This research emphasizes the difference between conducting research among people. Particularly, research involves the study of specific phenomenology, which is the behavior of different people with different ages in a working condition as they are leaders. Moreover, the research seek to interpret and understand the social life as well uncover multiple layers of meaning represented by human action (Vrasidas, 2001). The research purpose is Exploratory Study, to explore the role of ages in the perception of leadership styles, to seek a new insight between ages and leadership styles besides other demographic factors.

To investigate the role of ages in the perception of leadership styles, the following single data collection technique or a mono research method was employed in the study. A questionnaire survey was conducted where the population for the study comprised people working in Montreux, Switzerland. A total of 100 questionnaires were sent to potential respondents from various hospitality organizations and at different organizational levels. A total

of 60 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 60 percent.

To gather data on age differences and similarities in the leadership styles of Montreux workers, the questionnaire requested respondents to indicate their age among four age groups specified in the survey, namely: less than 30 years, from 30 to less than 40, from 40 to less than 50 and 50 years and above. Moreover, the questionnaires requested respondents answer questions that implied their leadership styles in their day-to-day working activities. Chapter 1: Autocratic leadership style

In our study, we found that there is a significant difference in autocratic leadership style between the older and younger manager. The older manager rated autocratic leadership style significantly more than the younger manager did. In the questionnaire, autocratic leadership style was explained as how often and at what extent the manager tells group members “ what they are expected to do, how to do it, and when it is to be done” (Hughes, Ginnent, and Curphy 1999, 71). Autocratic leader makes decision without consulting their team.

Staff and team member have little opportunity to make suggestion even if these would be in the team' or organization best interest. The table I showed the difference of percentage among the four age groups specified in the survey, namely: less than 30, 30-39, 40 -49, 50 years and above. The first two age groups (less than 30 and 30-39) has a statistic at the 44 percentage, in contrast, the rate of the last two groups (40-49 and more than 50) was

also significant at 87 percentage. This finding shows an extreme variation for this style of leadership by the two groups.

The older manager demonstrated more autocratic leadership style in comparison with the young manager, whereas, the younger manager favors the style of individual, instead of group performance of their duties (Kabacoff and Stoffey, 2001). Leadership style| Less than 30| 30-39| 40-49| 50 and over| Autocratic| 5 (33%)| 4 (27%)| 5 (33%)| 7 (47%)| Democratic| 6 (40%)| 5 (33%)| 8 (53%)| 5 (33%)| Laissez-faire| 4 (27%)| 6 (40%)| 2 (13%)| 3 (20%)|

Table I: Rating of three Leadership Styles. It is not surprising that the leadership style of older manager is more autocratic than the younger manager.

The autocratic leadership style is seen as an old fashioned technique. There is a fact that the manager with many years of experience tends to have maturity and wisdom that helps them cope with problems and respond to them calmly and confidently. For these reasons, it is felt that the old manager has absolute power over their workers or team and hardly needs the employees' involvement when giving the decision. However, there is an argument that this is considered appropriated when decision needs to be genuinely taken quickly and when the team' s agreement is not necessary for a successful outcome.

Furthermore, autocratic leadership often leads to high level of absenteeism and staff turnover. Nevertheless, for some routine and unskilled job, the style can remain the effective because the advantages of control maybe outweigh the disadvantages. In the contrary with the old managers, our study found

that the younger managers have less favor in autocratic leadership style in comparison with the older manager. In total of 15 people, only 4 managers choose this style. It evidenced that the young manager rarely tell group member what to do, how to do it and when it has to be done.

The employees have the right to determine their own organizational objectives. Besides that, the questionnaire in our survey also found that the young managers, at somehow, allow the group members share their leadership power. Indeed, the earlier researcher has found that nowadays, young managers are more open-minded and more freedom to their employees more than the old managers. They do not drive and force their member to do the task, conversely, the employees are persuaded and motivated to perform the organizational activities.

After the survey, we found that our study has no big difference in comparison with other researchers. The old manager favors more autocratic leadership style than the younger manager. Chapter 2: Democratic leadership style In this study, we investigated that the older manager is more democratic in leadership style than the younger manager. The democratic leadership style, including consultation and participation, were explained in the questionnaire as the extent to which managers consult the employees' opinions and share their decision making process with the subordinates or others to achieve their objectives.

Democratic leaders allow the team to provide input before making a decision, although the degree of input can vary from leader to leader. There are evidences showed in table I. The test of difference showed the first two



groups (less than 30 and 30-39) have a percentage of 60 percent, while, the last two groups (40-49 and more than 50 years) received a result of 75 percent. The evidence suggests that the older managers consulted and participated more widely in comparison with the younger manager.

It demonstrated that although the democratic leaders make the final decision, they invite other members of the team to contribute to the decision-making. On consultation, the table II show the slightly difference between the two groups. The first two age groups had a level at 40 percent; in contrast, the second group had a higher level, at 50 percent. After our questionnaire survey on 40 people among four different age groups, there is a surprise that the young managers were not consultative as often and widely as older manager.

In today' s organization, someone argue that young manager is still not get enough maturity and experience, thus they should consult with subordinates and consider their opinion and suggestion (Yukl 1989). Especially, in the Hospitality Industry, the frontline employees have more customer- contact than the manager; It is better that the decisions should be consulted with employees to give best performance and customer satisfaction. Conger and Kanungo 1988 also supports that although the manager reach a decision, he needs to take time to hear the collective wisdom of his management team and gain the team' s commitment.

However, the result of the questionnaire survey is contrasted. Because nowadays, younger manager feel that they know the decision that is the best for the company and therefore, it is not necessary to have a consultation

from subordinates. This finding is consistent with the Kabacoff and Stoffey's (2001) research state that young managers are more willing to take risks and consider new approaches. Leadership style| Less than 30| 30-39| 40-49| 50 and over| Consultative| 3| 3| 5| 2| Participative| 3| 2| 3| 3| Table II: Rating between two different leadership styles in Democratic Leadership Styles.

On the other hand, older manager appreciate the support of unit member by asking them to involve in the decision making to get the best choice.

Kabacoff and Stoffey (2001) has conclusion that " the older managers study problems in the light of past practices in order to ensure predictability and minimize the risk". The old manager, with the many years of experience, is aware of the relationship between his front line employees and customers. Thus, much of the time, the manager asks the employees' ideas and wants group members to feel involved and relevant in the decision making process.

The same as consultation leadership style, on participation, there is also slight variation between the young and old manager. As the evidence shows in the table III, the younger managers rated (40 percent) participative leadership style less than the older manager did (60 percent). It demonstrated that the old manager is more involved in employees' group work to arrive at reasonable solution. Again, this finding in our study is surprising since the younger manager is supposed to be more participative than the older manager.

The young manager, with less working experience, should be more accompanied with the member to frequently watch members' performance. Indeed Kakabadse (Vinnicombe and Kakabasdse, 1999) also stated that it is

extremely important that the young managers, who are new in the organization have to always check group member to ensure they are performing tasks properly. Moreover, participative leadership is particularly fitted to the hotel industry because the frontline hotel employees are often more cognizant of customer needs than managers. However, our study on 40 managers in Montreux brought to the different result.

It is maybe the trend changes. Nowadays, the younger managers appeared to favor to the style of individual, instead of teamwork. This idea is consistent with the research of Kabacoff and Stoffey (2001) which concluded that younger employees work to develop and promote themselves, whereas, the older employees work to develop and promote others. Also, younger workers feel more comfortable exhibiting individualistic behaviors (Mitchell, 2000). In fact, we explored that the younger and older manager have different profiles in their consultative and participative leadership style.

However, the overall picture shows that the older managers have more favor in democratic leadership style (consultative and participative) more than younger manager in the organizational activities. Chapter 3: Laissez-faire (Delegative) leadership style On the laissez-faire or delegative leadership styles, we investigated that the four groups of managers have slightly different practices. The laissez-faire leadership styles were explained in the questionnaire survey as the extent in which manager allow employees to guide decision-making process as well as share their leadership power with employees.

The table I has shown that the younger groups (less than 30 and from 30 to less than 40) take account of 57 percent, while the older groups (from 40 to less than 50 and from 50 to above) take account of 33 percent. This indicates that younger leaders tend to pass on the jobs of an organization to their lower-level managers and employees more than the older groups.

Delegation is the mean by which leaders are hand-off and allow group members to make the decisions, solve problems on their own. Managers and those to whom they delegate should both appreciate the fact that delegation is not only desirable but also necessary, i. . no organization can really function without it as delegation is the means by which managers get their work done (Oshabemi, 1999). Laissez-faire leadership style contributes to the organizational effectiveness by distributing works to employees.

However, laissez-faire leadership style can only be effective in situations where group members are highly skilled, motivated and capable of working on their own. Therefore this leadership styles might lead to such situations, project can go off-track and deadlines can be missed when employees do not get enough guidance or feedback from leaders.

There is no surprise from our research that both group got a lowest rate in laissez-faire leadership style among three leadership styles, since Lewin and his research team analyzed the results of their study about leadership theory, they also found that delegative (laissez-faire) leadership style was the least effective of the three leadership styles. Figure I shows the result of overall leadership style, which is a summation of autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. The democratic take the most account from both groups, while laissez-faire take the least account from both groups.

The table also indicates differences between older and younger manager. It appeared that younger managers tend to involve in consultative and participate management (democratic) rather than make decision alone without involving or even consulting other members (autocratic). On the other hand, older managers employ both autocratic and democratic about the same level. Figure I: percentage rating of three leadership styles.

Conclusion After a questionnaire survey on a total of 100 Managers, we investigated that the managers at different level of age apply different leadership style.

There is a variation between the two age groups in three leadership styles: Autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. The older manager favors more Autocratic leadership style in comparison with the younger manager, since the older managers, with many years of experience, seem more directive and task- orientated to the unit members than the younger managers. For the Democratic leadership style, we explored that the older manager is also more consultative and participative than the younger manager. The last leadership style, both groups of manager apply this leadership style.

Since our research purpose is exploratory, we do not have enough evidence to formulate the valuable theories. All the evidence we collected is from the fact, and thus in this study, we explore new insights of topic “ The relationship between Age and Leadership style” which is different with the other researchers’ theories. Although the study is completed with an endeavor of all the group members, the research still have limitations during the searching process. Firstly, we studied the survey in Montreux, it means

that the scope of the research is limited and the result is maybe not applicable on other areas.

The information resources available for the topic are limited. Since “ the relationship between Age and Leadership” is not a popular topic, the amount of the article, magazines and other references are little. Secondly, we have limitation in time management. We do this research in a period of 2 months, so that the scale of the research is small and simple. And the final limitation in this study is the support from organization and participants. Since all the people we did question are manager, it is challenged to ask them provide more information beside questionnaire responses. References Conger, Jay A. , and Rabindra N. Kanungo. 998. The empowerment process: Intergrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*. Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 471-482. Hughes, Richard L. , Robert C. Ginnett, and Gordon J. Curphy. 1999. *Leadership*. 3rd ed. Boston: Irwin McGraw Hill. Kabacoff, R. I. 1999. Management level, job function and leadership style: a large sample of study. Paper presented at the 107th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association. Boston, MA. Kabacoff, R. I and Stoffey, R. W. 2001. Age differences in organizational leadership. Paper presented at the 16th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

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