THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON ACCEPTANCE LEVEL OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to investigate the influence of leadership styles on employees' acceptance level of new technologies in companies. The research is based on the questionnaire method, where 250 managers and employees from Romanian industrial companies were questioned. The collected data have been analyzed using specific statistical methods in order to take into consideration 6 perceive dimensions which affects directly the employees' level of acceptance of new technologies. Additionally, it presented the interaction between leadership styles and employees' gender, pointing a different impact on certain perceive dimensions when acceptance level is considered. The results showed that managers should involve employees more in decision making process and use an assertive approach on problems solving, in order to get higher levels of acceptance of new technologies in companies.
KEYWORDS: technology, use, acceptance, perception, leadership style, implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

The article continues two previous studies: one applied for identifying the general level of acceptance of new technologies implemented in Romanian companies [8]. The results aimed at 2 aspects:

a. the employees' perception assessment on new implemented technologies, namely:

- the low scores (within the disagreement – strong disagreement scale) obtained by the employees, especially for the perceptive dimensions *compatibility with work and ease of use*, indicate a low level of acceptance as far as the personal comfort and adequacy to the specific of their work are concerned;

- *older* employees score a lower level of new technologies acceptance compared to the younger ones, especially on the dimensions *ease of use and control;*

- the employees that *interacted* directly with the new technologies within longer periods of time hold a higher degree of acceptance on five perceptive dimensions, except for attitude (what suggests that the changes in perception do not necessarily lead to a more favourable personal assessment of these new technologies).

b. the managers' assessment of the new technologies acceptance level by the employees, namely:

- taking into account the group, the managers tend to overestimate the acceptance degree of the new technologies by employees;

- taking into account each manager, the assessment of only 2 out of the 6 employees' perceptive dimensions is erroneous: the dimension *ease of use* and *compatibility with work.*

The second study investigated decisional and resolutive leadership styles used by managers for implementing new technologies in the same companies [9]. The results highlighted the following:

- the usage of a simulated *dictatorial* decisional style within a decisional *implicative* style, against the *consultative* or even *negociator* participatory styles;

- the usage of the weak or aggressive resolutive styles, namely the *compromise*, respectively the *active-aggressive*, against the assertive styles – *problem solving* and *passive-aggressive* (a conclusion backed up too, by the strong correlation between the *compromise* and the *active-aggressive* styles);

- the existence of a significant positive and high level correlation between the frequency of using the *dictatorial* decisional style and that of the resolutive style of the *compromise* type.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The acceptance behavior of using the new technologies has been operationalized by prior research in a variety of different ways, including the theory of reasoned action [7], the theory of innovation diffusion [18], the theory of planned behavior [2] and the technology acceptance model [5].

Despite divergences in the hypothesized relationships, a common theme underlying the various streams of research in technology adoption was the inclusion of perceptions of an innovation as key independent variables. Therefore, individuals' perceptions about using an innovation are posited to be significant influences on users' acceptance [16].

Understanding what perceptions are relevant from the employees' point of view upon new technologies, might allow management to focus its attention on decision taking and resolution, in order to improve each damaged perceived dimension.

Ideally, managers should be able to predict if a new technology will be accepted by the employees users, in order to enhance the chances regarding the time and money investments [5]. In reality, "implementing a new technology into an organization is one of the issues caused by the management inability to prepare the employees for the future changes, being most of the time focused on purchasing and introducing technology to staff, ignoring the communication process and debates within the working team. The so called beneficiaries are forced to accept tacitly and use the new technologies mandatorily." [8]

In order to be successful, the manager must harmonize the perspective with what happens and get acceptance from the employees. If a manager does not do such a thing, practically, "gives off" the influence under the "retrospective definition of reality". Therefore, the management can be included in a larger sphere of social influence.

McGregor [15] considers the management as being a "dynamic form of behavior" that involves the coming into action of four chief variables: the leader's characteristics, attitudes, needs and other subordinates' personal characteristics; the type of the organization, the social, economic, and political environment. Therefore, the management is, in his opinion, not only a simple leader's individual behavior but a complex of relationships between variables that are different as nature and structure (objective and subjective, both psycho-individual and psycho-organizational).

According to Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik [20], the leadership is "the interpersonal influence carried out in the frame of a certain and guided circumstance, due to communication processes in order to accomplish an aim or specific aims". The definition places clearly the concept of leadership within the area of social influence, but it also indicates the means used to carry out the influence, namely the communication process.

The research relies on the classical model of approaching the leadership styles, as follows:

1. the decisional leadership style (how the managers communicate the decision – in this instance, of introducing the new technologies in organizations), suggested for the first time by Lewin, Lippit and White in 1939 [13], then, later developed by Tannenbaum and Schmidt [19], that blends the two major directions of the management behaviour – focused on the leader's authority versus leadership focused on the employees' freedom of decision and

action. These imagine a continuum with two extremes (the authoritative leadership; the democratic leadership) with seven behaviours and four styles of leadership available for a leader:

Table 1. The managers' behaviour according to the decisional leadership style [19]

Leadership style	Items of questionnaire Associated behaviors
Dictatorial	I make the decision on my own and I communicate it to employees.
Negotiator	I make the decision and then I try to convince the employees to accept it.
Consultative	I share with employees the basic reasons of my decision and I answer every question they ask. I suggest to employees a variety of decisions that can be adjusted to their needs. I share the issue with employees, I am open to any suggestion they have and then I make the final decision.
Implication (cooperative	I set the limits for my decision and then I ask the employees to take the final decision. I allow my group of employees to decide freely.

2. the resolutive leadership style (how the managers interfere in solving the conflicts with employees caused by implementing the new technologies), suggested by Koza and Dant [11], who describe four resolutive styles that the managers often use in settling conflicts with employees:

Table 2. The managers' behavior according to the resolutive leadership style [11]

Leadership style	Items of questionnaire Associated behaviors
Problem solving	I am inclined to have a straight discussion of the issue with employees. I try to demonstrate the logic and benefits of my position. I make myself clear regarding the priorities of the case, the way I see them. I try to share my reasons and arguments of my position as frankly as possible.
Compromise	I try to find the middle way between my position and theirs. I try to spare their feelings and to protect the relationship with them by finding a middle way of resolution. I try to find a fair combination of costs and benefits, for me and for them. I satisfy certain requirements if there is an opportunity to me to impose my demands, this way.
Passive-aggressive	I build up arguments, as convincing as possible, in order to achieve my objectives. I stick to my initial position along the conflict. I try to dissemble that they have no chance to convince me of the reasonableness of their position. I insist that my position is the best of all I heard.
Active-aggressive	I threaten them that our relationship will go from bad to worse if they refuse to accept my position. I make elusive threats of bad effects if they decline to accept my position. I clearly express my negative feelings concerning their resistance behavior. I try to make them accept my position by all means.

The low level of acceptance of the new technologies does not represent the employees' refuse to use them, but rather their constrained use. According to the studies carried out in this field, if the employees felt the management pressure then the results of implementing the new informational technology would lead to a weak performance [5]. In this context, the weaker individual performances caused by the *constrained* use of the new technologies affects directly the performance/productivity of the organization.

The implementation model of the new technologies in organizations, suggested in the current work, is made up of four stages:

- ***The introduction of*** a new technology – communicating the decision to adopt a new technology within the organization;

- *The adoption* of a new technology by the organization – taking over the technology by the relevant adopting organization and making it available for the employees to assimilate and use;

- *The assimilation* of the new technology by the organization – accepting the adopted technology individually by voluntary use of the technology (the actual behavior of use);

- *The integration* of the new technology within the organization – the technology adopted by the organization and assimilated (accepted) individually by the employees, became an essential part leading to the anticipated productivity benefits;

The conflicting situation generated by the communication of the decision to introduce the new technologies (**the introduction stage**) starts from the very stage of disagreement and is felt as an internal conflict (interpersonal), because they perceive it as a restriction of the freedom to act (turning into the *psychological reactance* phenomenon, described by Brehm in 1963 [3].

The emergence of the troublesome situation caused as a result of making the new technologies available by the management (the adoption stage) identifies with a task conflict (it is also called cognitive conflict in Priem and Price's sense, [17], being perceived by the employees as an intra-psychic tension expressed under the umbrella of the cognitive dissonance [6], these being determined to achieve a task contrary to their beliefs.

The constrained use of the technology by the employees (based on the fear of losing their jobs or of the received threats), against a voluntary use based on an intrinsic motivation (that, ideally, describes the assimilation stage) leads the objection phenomenon to the stage of interpersonal conflict – that develops by means of the causality assignment [10], where the individual assigns the causes of an event or of a behavior to some people or situations, with harmful consequences as far as the individual, the group or the organization are concerned. In other words, "the conflict starts form the other participants' perception as being the cause of the rejection, assigning them, therefore, negative intentions." [14]. These affect their performance and the company's productivity.

The management's intervention in settling down the conflicts caused by the constrained use of the new technologies by the employees adjusts and ends the implementation process, the technology adopted by the organization and assimilated (accepted) by the employees, becoming an integrant (the integration stage), carrying out the anticipated productivity earnings.

To schematize, we reproduce in the table below the dynamic of the conflicts among the employees, users of the new technologies, according to the implementation stage carried out by the management:

Table 3. The dynamic of the conflicts among the employees users of the new technologies, according to the implementation stage

Implementation stage	Operationalizing	Conflict stage	Cognitive process	Personal reaction
Technology introduction	Decision communication	Unease » disagreement	Psychological reactance	Internal conflict
Technology adoption	Making available	Problem » tension	Cognitive dissonance	Task conflict
Technology assimilation	Acceptance/ rejection	Dispute » conflict	Causality assignment	Interpersonal conflict
Technology integration	Productivity/ intervention	Resolution » extinction	Cognitive consonance	Individual performance

The necessity to use the new technologies voluntarily by the employees is essential to avoid a false assimilation of the technology, as well as to reduce the resultant costs, within organizations.

3. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research was grounded on a sociological investigation based on a questionnaire (filled in by 1 manager and 4 employees under his command). The questionnaires were applied to a representative of 50 managers and 200 employees from small and medium-sized industrial enterprises belonging to North-Eastern Romania.

In order to assess the influence that the managerial decisional and resolutive styles have on each of the six perceptive dimensions regarding the use of the new implemented technologies by the employees (that pictures the general level of acceptance of the new technologies by the employees), there were corroborated the data offered by the 3 instruments described below, as follows:

1. The questionnaire – Acceptance level of the new technologies – aimed at the employees' answers so as to operationalize 6 dimensions with conflictive potential, as follows:

- the first four dimensions – the perception of the new technologies use, perceived ease of use, compatibility with work and current use – were investigated by means of the scales designed by Agarval and Prasad [1], in their study regarding accepting the internet (information technology) by the students in managing business.

- the dimension of the perceived control was investigated by means of the scale designed by Kowitlawakul [12], in his study over accepting the new information technologies within the banking environment;

- the attitudinal dimension, of personal assessment of the new technologies, was investigated by means of a scale designed by Brown and collaborators [4], in their study on accepting the new tele-medicine technologies by nurses.

2. The questionnaire – Decision communication managerial style – inquiries into the decision communication managerial ways and was designed based on Tannenbaum and Schmidt's typology [19], operationalizing the four decisional styles (dictatorial, negotiator, consultative, implicative) from this classification by means of relevant behaviors, the way they are described by these authors.

3. The questionnaire – conflicts resolution managerial style – brings about the conflicts resolution styles generated by the implementation of the new technologies, being adjusted according to the instrument designed by Koza and Dant [11] and aiming at one resolutive style of the four ones: problem solving, compromise, passive-aggressive and active-aggressive.

The precision analysis of these instruments over the answers given by the subjects from the investigated lot through the alpha Cronbach internal consistency factor indicated satisfactory levels of precision of over 0,70.

4. THE OBTAINED RESULTS

For the analysis of the influence of the decision communication style over the perceptive dimensions that indicate the level of the new implemented technologies, there were compared the employees from the four groups defined by the decisional style specific to their managers, regarding each of the six perceptive dimensions with conflictive potential. The comparisons of the groups were carried out by means of the ANOVA One Way test, followed by comparisons in pair between groups through the post-hoc Tukey test:

a. the perceived usability – the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 11,79$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees' group with managers possessing the implicative decision

communication style (3,63), at the assessment subscale of the new technology usability perception is significantly higher than that of the employees' from the other three groups (p ≤ 0,05). As well, the difference between the dictatorial style and the consultative one draws nearer, it too, to the significance threshold (p = 0,06), the ones from the first category (average = 2,94) perceiving a lower usability of the new technologies than the employees whose manager practices a consultative style (average = 3,27).

b. ease of use – the results indicate significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 9,59$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the implicative decision communication style (3,15) and of those with managers characterized by the consultative style (average = 3,13) at the assessment subscale of the new technologies ease of use is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style group (average = 2,57), respectively, of those belonging to the negotiator style group (average = 2,58).

c. compatibility with work: the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups $F(3,196) = 8,11$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by implicative decision communication style (3,23) and that of the managers characterized by the consultative style (average = 3,07) at the assessment subscale of compatibility with work of the new technologies is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style (average = 2,64), respectively of those from the negotiator groups style (average = 2,65) the difference between the consultative style and the negotiator one being marginally significant, statistically (p = 0,06).

d. current use – the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 10,27$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups revealed that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the implicative decision communication style (3,55) at the current use of the new technologies assessment subscale is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style group (average = 2,88), respectively of those from the negotiator style group (average = 3,13). As well, the average of the employees with managers characterized by the consultative style (average = 3,43) is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style group.

e. perceived control - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 6,62$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups revealed that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the implicative decision communication style (3,25) and of those with managers characterized by the consultative style (average = 3,28) at the assessment scale of perceived control over the new technology is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style group (average = 2,82), respectively of those from the negotiator style group (average = 2,75).

f. attitude - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 8,57$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups revealed that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the implicative style (3,41) at the assessment subscale of attitude to the new technologies is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style group (average = 2,88) respectively of those from the negotiator style group (average = 2,97). As well, the average of the employees with managers characterized by the consultative style (average = 3,28) is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the dictatorial style group.

g. total score - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 12,19$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups revealed that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the implicative style (3,37) and of those with managers characterized by the consultative style (average = 3,24) at the total score of the instrument is significantly higher than that of the employees belonging to the

dictatorial style group (average = 2,79), respectively of those from the negotiator style group (average = 2,87).

The analysis between the decision communication style and gender revealed the existence of two significant differences between feminine gender employees and the masculine ones, namely:

- within the group with a manager characterized by the negotiator decision communication style, the ease of use of the new technologies is perceived as being significantly higher as far as the men are concerned (average = 2,88) than as far as the women are concerned (average = 2,32; p = 0,03 < 0,05).

- as well, within the group of employees with a manager characterized by the negotiator style, the control over the new technologies is perceived as being significantly higher as far as the men are concerned (average = 3,03) than as far as the women are concerned (average = 2,51; p = 0,05).

In order to analyze the influence of the *conflict resolution style* over the perceptive dimensions that indicate the acceptance level of the new implemented technologies, there were compared the employees from the four groups defined by the resolutive style practiced by their manager, regarding each of the six perceptive dimensions with conflictive potential. The comparisons among the groups were carried out by means of the ANOVA One Way test followed by comparisons in pair among the groups by means of the post-hoc Tukey test:

a. perceived usability - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F_{(3,196)} = 3,14$; $p < 0,05$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the only significant difference was that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,49) at the assessment subscale of the new technologies perceived usability is significantly higher than of those with managers characterized by the compromise style (average = 3,10).

b. ease of use - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups $F_{(3,196)} = 7,53$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,28) at the assessment subscale of the new technologies *ease of use* is significantly higher than of the employees from the other *three groups* ($p \leq 0,05$).

c. compatibility with work - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F_{(3,196)} = 5,91$; $p < 0,05$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,24) at the assessment subscale of the *compatibility with work* of the new technologies is significantly higher than of those with managers characterized by the *compromise* style (average = 2,73) and than those with managers characterized by the *passive-aggressive* style (average = 2,62).

d. current use - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F_{(3,196)} = 3,05$; $p < 0,05$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,49) at the assessment subscale of *current use* of the new technologies is significantly higher than of those with managers characterized by the *compromise* style (average = 3,08) and than those with managers characterized by the *passive-aggressive* style (average = 3,10), the difference between the two groups being marginally significant (p= 0,07).

e. perceived control - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F_{(3,196)} = 7,25$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,43) at the assessment subscale of perceived *control* over the new technologies is significantly higher than of the employees from the other three groups ($p \leq 0,05$).

f. attitude - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 4,63$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,43) at the assessment subscale of *attitude* to the new technologies is significantly higher than of the employees from the other three groups ($p \leq 0,05$).

g. total score - the results indicate the existence of significant differences among the four groups: $F(3,196) = 6,81$; $p < 0,01$. The comparisons among the groups indicated that the average of the employees group with managers characterized by the *problem solving* style (3,40) at the total score of the instrument is significantly higher than of the employees from the other three groups ($p \leq 0,05$) (see the following chart):

The analysis of the interactions between the conflicts resolution styles and the gender indicated the existence of a significant difference between the feminine gender employees and the masculine ones., namely: within the group of the employees with a manager characterized by the *problem solving* style, the current use of the new technologies is significantly higher as far as the women are concerned (average = 3,62) than as far as the men are concerned (average = 3,35; $p = 0,04 < 0,05$).

5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The research of the management styles influence – decisional and resolutive – over the level of acceptance by employees of the new technologies implemented within organizations, brought forward the following: the *implicative* decision communication style regarding the introducing of new technologies within organizations is the one that leads to the highest acceptance level of the new technologies by employees, together with the *consultative* one – whose efficiency diminishes on certain dimensions, drawing closer to that of a style that is less advantageous, all in all – *the negotiator*. At the antipole, there is the *dictatorial* style that predisposes, to the utmost extent to a low acceptance level of the new technologies. It is surprising the fact that the *negotiator* style does not have a significant efficiency because the Romanians, or, better said, the Romanian managers do not possess a culture of negotiation. The employees belonging to managers that communicate the decision in a *dictatorial* style will "score" a lower acceptance level of the new technologies, thus, "forcing" the managers to communicate such kind of decisions in a "more" *implicative* way.

- the *problem solving* style is the one that leads to the highest acceptance levels of the new technologies by employees. On almost all the dimensions, but, (less on the *perceived control*) the *active-aggressive* style has similar consequences regarding this acceptance. In the same time, it is interesting the fact that, at most dimensions (the perceived usability, ease of use, compatibility with work, current use and attitude) the *active-aggressive* style has similar consequences regarding the acceptance level. At the antipole, there are the *compromise* and *passive-aggressive* styles that bring about, to the utmost extent, a low acceptance level of the new technologies by employees. This aspect can be explained in that, an authoritative manager, being master of the situation, asserts more easily his point of view in the professional environment because, in the Romanian cultural specific, the employees obey automatically the authority, they are obedient, less reactive and give greater importance to appearances when assessing workmates and bosses. It seems that the resolutive styles, the *compromise* and the *passive-aggressive* ones, (that is an assertive-manipulative style) do not have effects upon achieving a minimum acceptance level of the new technologies by employees.

- there are significant differences between the feminine gender employees and the masculine ones regarding the perceptive dimensions over the new technologies, when we take into account the managerial decision communication styles to introduce new technologies, namely:

a. within the group of employees with managers characterized by the *negotiator* style, the *ease of use* of the new technologies is perceived as being significantly higher by men than by women;

b. as well, within the group of employees with managers characterized by the *negotiator* style, the control over the new technologies is perceived as being significantly higher by men than by women;

It seems that the men are more sensitive and feel overwhelmed when the management tries to persuade them on the decisions and enterprises regarding the adopting of new technologies by the company.

- there are significant differences between the feminine gender employees and the masculine ones regarding the perceptive dimensions over the new technologies, when we take into account the managerial styles of solving conflicts generated by the *constrained* use of the new technologies: within the group of employees with managers characterized by *problem solving* style, the *current use* of the new technologies is significantly higher as far as women are concerned than as far as the men are concerned. Therefore, the women employees whose managers use the "problem solving" resolutive style used the new technologies subjected to implementation on every occasion than the men employees.

The research highlighted the fact that, within the process of implementing the new technologies in companies, the participatory decisional styles (involving the employees in the decision to introduce a new technology) can prevent scoring a employees' low level of acceptance, and the tensions caused by a low level of acceptance by employees can be overcome by means of using the assertive resolutive styles, that reflect the managerial manner of intervention in managing the conflictive situations with employees.

Although all the prior researches (that revealed the existence of a general low acceptance level of using the new technologies by employees, corroborated with the identification of a managers' simulated behaviour in exercising the resolutive and decisional management styles in the process of the new technologies implementation in their own companies) the managers were initially reluctant when they were asked to fill in the questionnaires, they were interested in finding out the results of the research, information that will subsequently be disseminated in the industrial business environment from the North-East of Moldavia.

The process of dissemination of the results (especially the simulated managerial behaviour) among the companies' managers – respondents of the questionnaires that were applied – represents itself a delicate aspect but a challenging one that can result in a future research.

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