

## SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

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**Abstract:** *According to the generally accepted behavioral leadership theories, effective leaders need to have high-profile competencies as well as relationships. In almost every specification of these competencies, one encounters, to a greater or lesser extent, the characteristics that are related to the social sphere of work and may also be related to social intelligence. The presented contribution, therefore, addresses the issue of leadership and social intelligence in the work process. It presents research the main objective of which was to analyze the prerequisites and qualities that can lead to successful leadership. Part of this objective was to reveal the links between the perceptions of an individual's ability to become a successful leader and social intelligence. The research results acquired from the sample of 115 respondents by means of an own leadership perception questionnaire and the social intelligence methodology TSIS [1] prove that socially intelligent leaders are more future-oriented and work hard to improve their leadership skills.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, social intelligence, TSIS methodology, competency, work environment*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Successful managers are convinced that their own strengths are the greatest prerequisite for success, and they rely solely on themselves [2]. By contrast, support from the organization ranks first among common managers, which shows that their success or failure is more in the hands of others [3]. Every manager wants to be successful in their role and they also want to be respected by others. How this recognition is achieved in the contemporary organizations is unclear [4].

According to [5], being a successful manager is much more challenging than being a good expert. If there is any secret to success, it is the ability to accept an external viewpoint and see things from the perspective of the other person. Although, according to [6], the qualities of leaders can change in different situations, most of the studies on leadership issues and assumptions consider important attributes such as social and emotional intelligence, charisma, and humor.

The main objective of the following report is, thus, to address the issue of leadership and social intelligence in the work process by means of an analysis of the prerequisites and qualities that can lead to successful leadership. Part of this objective is to reveal the links between the perceptions of an individual's ability to become a successful leader and social intelligence.

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## **2. LEADERSHIP**

Leadership is an aspect explored from many angles. It is often regarded as something extraordinary, something that requires special tools and abilities. Authors [7] have proposed redefining the leadership theory with respect to the worldly, almost trivial aspects of what managers and leaders actually do.

Generally speaking, leader is any person who is able to mobilize others to voluntarily follow a direction. This is an essential ability of managers, who become formal leaders of organizations [8]. Leaders, leadership, and the innovative nature of human resource management are some of the decisive factors in the competitive advantage [9]. True leaders are able to sacrifice themselves for leadership and their business goals, which is something that makes them unambiguously different from ordinary people who have the same good or even better disposition for different abilities and techniques [10].

Leaders should be characterized by energy, optimism, determination, ideas, trust, susceptibility, command and endurance [11]. Author [12] adds that creativity, intuition, purposefulness, responsibility, self-confidence, self-esteem, decisiveness, principle, discipline, and fantasy are also important qualities which determine managers' successfulness. Author [13] states that current management is interested in personality traits such as honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, drive, and knowledge of the world of business.

## **3. SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Social intelligence is manifested especially in interpersonal, personal and social relationships. The concept of social intelligence has emerged in the 1920s. A pioneer of the study of social intelligence was [14], who defined it as the ability to understand and direct men and women, boys and girls – to act reasonably in interpersonal relationships. This definition became the basis for further theoretical concepts, and it includes the ability to understand other people, knowledge of standards, understanding of social situations or social communication [15], acting in accordance with social requirements, and flexibility in different social situations. In defining social intelligence, therefore, its various components are emphasized. Authors [16] outlined the following components of social intelligence: perception of mental states and moods of other people; general ability to get along with other people; knowledge of social rules; insight in and perception of complex social situations; use of social techniques for manipulation of others; taking over the perspective of others; and social adaptation.

In the earlier studies of social intelligence, two basic approaches were distinguished by [17] as the psychometric (defined by performance aimed at social sphere) and the personality approach. Social behavior is intelligent and is governed primarily by cognitive processes of perception, memory, reasoning, and problem solving. Individual differences in social behavior stem from differences in the knowledge that people have gained in social interactions.

## **4. SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP**

According to [18], the secret of leadership lies in power and influence. It is the art of becoming an expert on social intelligence. It is about understanding the effects that individuals have on other people when dealing with them. They are capable of influencing the positive consequences for both sides through active involvement of social intelligence as a catalyst for responses.

Conditions of the current global market represent new demands on managers. According to [19], the economic recession, the global crisis, and other external influences bring managers daily into new situations in which they have to make strategic decisions. Multiple variables enter the decision itself, with social skills being most prominent. Socially intelligent leaders monitor the way in which they respond in different situations, and they continually perceive their role and their position. Successful are those leaders who understand the context of the situation and actively respond to changes in the social environment.

Managers cannot make decisions without taking into account the social context. Their management is effective only if they are familiar with the opinions and needs of their co-workers, and if they can subsequently influence them in an appropriate way [20]. According to [21], this is also reflected in the fact that almost every specification of managerial competences is more or less confronted with characteristics related to the social sphere of managerial work, and may also be related to social intelligence.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to analyze the prerequisites and qualities that lead to successful leadership. Another goal was to find the connection between perception of own abilities to become a successful leader and social intelligence.

The research sample consisted of 115 respondents, including 46 men and 69 women aged from 18 to 51. The analyses were carried out using the TSIS – Tromso Social Intelligence Scale [1], which contains 21 self-evaluation items to which the respondents reacted by means of a 7-point agreement scale (1 = Describes me extremely poorly, 7 = Describes me extremely well). The questionnaire is divided into three sub-scales and enables specification of 3 factors: Social Information Processing, Social Skills, and Social Awareness. To study the perception of qualities, our own original questionnaire items were formulated.

## 6. RESEARCH RESULTS

To find the links between the perception of one's own leadership prerequisites and the opinions on their acquisition and improvement, the p-values, correlation strength and size, and the direction of the linear relationship of this test were calculated (Table 1) by means of the SPSS statistical software.

Table 1: Inter-correlations of the studied variables (\*\*p<0.01)

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6
Item 1			.194**			
Item 2				.271**	.415**	.287**
Item 3	.194**					
Item 4		.271**				
Item 5		.415**				
Item 6		.287**				

*Legend:*

Item 1: I consider myself a leader.

Item 2: I improve my leadership skills by work.

- Item 3: My leadership skills are innate.
- Item 4: I see contribution in education in the area of leadership skills.
- Item 5: I have the prerequisites to be a leader.
- Item 6: I have a leader-idol in the family/among my acquaintances.

Those respondents, who consider themselves leaders, perceive leadership abilities as innate. On the contrary, respondents who think they need to work on themselves say that they need further education and training to develop their leadership skills. They perceive themselves as having good prerequisites for the work of the leader. The addressed respondents see a sense in gaining and improving their leadership abilities.

Based on the response to the item „What do you think is the basis of leadership?“, it was found that authority, social intelligence, motivation and talent are among the most important. These values are recorded in Table 2.

Table 2: Basic attributes of leadership

Importance	Talent	Social intelligence	Power	Influence	Motivation	Authority	Education
1 – most important	27%	28%	13%	21%	25%	44%	19%
2	18%	35%	22%	31%	27%	20%	20%
3	20%	14%	24%	18%	18%	11%	17%
4	13%	15%	16%	11%	9%	7%	11%
5	10%	5%	7%	8%	11%	6%	14%
6	10%	2%	14%	4%	6%	8%	8%
7 – least important	2%	1%	4%	7%	4%	4%	11%

The links between the perceptions of one’s ability to become a successful leader and social intelligence were studied and verified by means of the Pearson correlation coefficient. The statistically significant links that were recorded are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlations between social intelligence attributes (TSIS) and leadership skills (\*\*p<0.01)

TSIS Leadership	Social Information Processing	Social Skills	Social Awareness
Item 1	.169**	.220**	.393**
Item 2	.256**	.270**	.238**
Item 5	.168**	.221**	.394**
Item 7	.328**	.340**	.175**
Item 8	.326**	.344**	.177**

Legend:

- Item 1: I consider myself a leader.
- Item 2: I improve my leadership skills by work.

Item 5: I have the prerequisites to be a leader.

Item 7: I want to become a good leader in the future.

Item 8: I like to cooperate with other leaders.

Within all the analyzed items, positive statistically significant correlations between the studied phenomena were recorded. Socially intelligent leaders (according to the TSIS methodology) are future-oriented and work to improve their leadership capabilities. It is positive that they do not refuse to cooperate with other leaders and have enough self-confidence in their own leadership abilities.

## 7. CONCLUSION

A capable leader who can stand at the forefront and lead their team to success is irreplaceable [22]. As leadership is linked to a character that is not innate, we can shape it, improve it, and thus reach equilibrium [23]. Through regular practice, leadership prerequisites and skills can be significantly improved [24]. The role of leaders is to ensure that the organization operates and performs its tasks through other people. In the first place, it is necessary to respect the needs of co-workers, to understand the motives of behavior and behavior of people, to give them a sense of quality self-realization, and a sense of pride [25]. It is an art to persuade, direct and stimulate subordinates to perform quality work and thus achieve corporate goals [26]. All managers should be leaders and should spend more time with people, lead them well and motivate them towards achieving realistic strategic goals and long-term visions. Socially intelligent leaders are irreplaceable in managerial practice.

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