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# The Impact of Self-Awareness on Leadership Behavior

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## Summary

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| Research questions: | Does self-awareness influence the effectiveness of leadership with regard to employee motivation and satisfaction or employee productivity? |
| Methods: | Literature research to evaluate current findings on contemporary leadership models, personality traits, emotional intelligence and self-awareness; data for hypothesis testing was collected anonymously via an online version of the Leadership Tasks Survey during May – December 2019 (*N = 255*); examination methods included descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis and correlation analysis. |
| Results: | Very low overall research volume on self-awareness and leadership behavior, 127 existing studies confirm strong positive impact; the default survey data set (*N = 255*) was modified to conform to normality (*N = 102*). Exploratory factor analysis on the modified data set revealed a latent four-factor structure; Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant correlations for the self-awareness constituents morale and self-transparency with other LTS items. |
| Structure of the article: | 1. Introduction; 2. Literature Review; 3. Research Questions & Methods; 4. Empirical Results; 5. Conclusions; 6. About the Author; 7. Bibliography |

## 1 Introduction

According to ancient Eastern wisdom, many answers are not to be found outside but rather inside us. However, the turbulences of our modern, ever-changing world permeate the entire fabric of society, as the human touch is not limited to private life but plays a determining role in business interactions as well. Evolving from mechanistic views of business that matched the industrial era and the autocratic society of the beginning of the last century, the human factor has been granted an expanding role in defining and explaining today's models of corporate intricacies. To ensure competitiveness and efficiency, business endeavors are usually organized as hierarchies, which require the distinct roles of leaders and followers. These roles, which can be overlapping due to different levels of hierarchy, are the prerequisite for groups of people to become an organization and in pursuing a common goal.

Even though organizations according to this definition have been around for at last several centuries, if not a couple of thousand years, scientific interest in mapping out and analyzing them in a structured way only arose in the second half of the last century.

A central element of leadership as a property of psychology is the emotional interplay between leader and follower, with the leader setting the emotional tone of the interaction and being conscious of this (Goleman, 1995).

According to the author's experience, unconscious processes however cannot be addressed and improved, as long as they remain oblique. Thus, a crucial ingredient in revealing our inner workings, usually shrouded by moods and emotions, is self-awareness, which marks the mainstay of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

Despite its seemingly obvious importance, self-awareness has received little credit in leadership research so far, with the author's own research only yielding 127 results. The picture looks even more dire in Germany, aside from a few positive exceptions such as Schrör (2016). Hence, there is a lot of potential in statistically underpinning the stated effect of self-awareness on leadership via emotional intelligence.

To contribute to the growing body of knowledge and to help leaders improve their craft, the goal of this article is to indicate a statistically significant connection between self-awareness and effective leadership. To facilitate this, the framework of the *Leadership Tasks Model* (Desjardins, 2020) with its taxonomy of leadership tasks and levels will serve as the map to explore the territory of leader-follower interaction.

## 2 Literature Review

### Leadership

Similar to the plethora of management theories and styles that have emerged since the term "management" first appeared in the context of business in the form of salaried managers during the second half of the nineteenth century (Khurana, 2010), various approaches to define and explain *leadership* have followed along, always aligned with the prevalent zeitgeist (Goffee & Jones, 2000). Despite the multitude of research, no cohesive framework yet exists to capture this elusive concept (Cole, 1999). Some scholars have remarked that "there are as many definitions as there are people who defined the concept" (Stogdill, 1974, p. 259). Due to many divergent definitions, the scientific utility of leadership as a concept has been questioned by some researchers (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Miner, 1975). Hence, to have a clear understanding, the operational definition must depend on the context and purpose of the study at hand and what is to be examined, e.g. identification of leaders, selection in the context of human resources, effectivity, traits, etc. (Campbell, 1977). In the context of this article, the definition of Burns (1978) shall be adopted, who states that "leaders induce followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 27).

Expanding beyond the bounds of organizational hierarchy, Kotter (1982) stated that leadership as a human interaction in taking proactive responsibility does not only apply vertically between superior and subordinates, but also laterally, without a direct line of command, inside and outside of organizations (e.g. other departments, clients, suppliers). Following this dynamic approach, Covey (2013) proposed that in a modern organization, both managers, who provide stability and tend towards pre-established processes, and leaders, who tackle change in a visionary fashion, are required to succeed.

Accordingly, for *leadership effectiveness* no congruent definition can be stated either. Stogdill (1950) defined *leadership effectiveness* as a leader's performance in

guiding subordinates' activities in the pursuit of organizational objectives. Still, it needs to be operationalized in the context of a specific approach to be measurable, e.g. by standard business KPIs such as revenues, profit, share price, etc. (Bass, 2008), or more subjective ratings such as follower surveys (Goleman, 1995). However, the approach in this article will be to reframe leadership as an organizational role in itself and focus on the emerging *leadership productivity* as a measurable variable (Desjardins, 2012), defined as the personal productivity of the leader and all subordinates due to the leader's task fulfillment of specific leadership tasks, which encapsulates the simultaneous compliance to corporate objectives and ethical norms, resulting in both employee performance and satisfaction (Desjardins & Baker, 2013).

Inquiring about the utility and significance of leadership in the achievement of organizational goals (Porter, Lawler & Hackman, 1975) yields a resounding positive (Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990), especially considering the following examples. As the world is not perfect and human interaction is rife with misunderstandings and inefficiencies, leadership can be framed as an antidote and justification for the existence of managerial positions (Yukl, 2013). The work in these positions can be described as hectic, fast-paced, varied and fragmented, involving long hours scattered with frequent interactions due to mostly reactive activities (i.e. fire-fighting) (Yukl, 2013). These conditions are reflected in statistics such as a very high base rate of managerial incompetence in the U.S. (Hogan, R. & Hoigan, J., 2001; Wagner, 2002), with main deficiencies being either reluctance to exercise authority or habitually tyrannizing subordinates. These findings are corroborated by a German study (Sauer, 2010), which revealed that only 50% of all leaders can ensure a productive work environment and 75% even demotivate their employees. Reasons are found to be a lack of variation of leadership creating a mismatch with the situation at hand and defaulting to a mostly directive style, negative feedback, little delegation, micro-management and a healthy dose of perfectionism.

**Personality Traits**

Despite earlier abandonment of research on the connection between personality traits and leadership behavior (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959) due to alleged inconsistencies and lack of a cohesive framework (Conger, & Kanungo, 1998), a link between the two variables has been observed. Aside from sheer cognitive horsepower (e.g. to form and update accurate mental models (Stamp, 1988)), high-performing executives usually share personality attributes that help them find their way to the top (Peterson, Martorana, Smith, & Owens, 2003).

Matching the demands of managerial jobs (Yukl, 2013), prime attributes of leaders have been identified to be high energy levels and stress tolerance, encompassing both physical virility and emotional resilience (Bass, 1990). Standing daily in focus makes self-confidence a further necessity (Howard & Bray, 1988; Judge, Bono, Illies, & Gerhardt, 2002), this being closely related to the concept of self-efficacy, i.e. one's firm belief in the ability to adequately perform to the demands of a specific situation (Bandura, 1995; Paglis & Green, 2002). It however requires emotional maturity and stability and self-awareness to not become excessive and dysfunctional (Boyatzis, 1982; Pfeffer, 1998). Both qualities also foster consciousness of strengths and weaknesses – often opposite sides of the same coin – reduce self-centeredness and impulsiveness (Toegel, & Barsoux, 2012). This enables leaders to maintain more cooperative relationships with subordinates, peers, and superiors (George, 2000), also boosting trustworthiness (Copper, 1997).

As every leader should be active and seek results, achievement motivation is of huge importance as well. Bass (1990) explained it as a set of interrelated needs and values surrounding the core desire to perform and achieve, assume responsibility, and have a high task orientation.

Equally, corporate ascenders are usually driven by power motivation (Miner, 1985), defined as the intrinsic motivation to actively seek positions of power and derive fulfillment from asserting superiority and succeeding in organizational politics (Howard & Bray, 1988). In many executives this is complemented by a low need for affiliation, i.e. the need to be liked by others, leading to a preference for tasks, engaging in conflicts, and casting unpopular decisions over overly harmonious relationships (Litwin & Stringer, 1966; McClelland & Burnham, 1976). Excessive need to gain personalized power in order to boost self-esteem is usually rooted in narcissism (Yukl, 2013), which under some extreme conditions is conducive to effective leadership, especially through the strong desire to compete (House & Howell, 1992; Maccoby, 2001). For every other situation, however, effective leaders should

possess personal integrity, i.e. the congruence of espoused values and behavior (Bass, 1990; McCauley & Lombardo, 1990; Howard & Bray, 1988; Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

The widespread adoption of a comprehensive taxonomy of personality traits in the shape of the Big Five (Costa & McCrae, 1985) condensed a multitude of personality traits into five broad categories (Yukl, 2013). This effectively solved the "labeling dilemma" of personality traits (Hughes, Ginett, & Curphy, 1996; Judge et al., 2002) and enabled the aggregation and comparison of research findings via meta-analyses. The factors comprising this model (Costa & McCrae, 1985) are neuroticism, which describes the propensity towards poor emotional adjustment and negative affections such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility; extraversion, which marks the inclination towards sociability, assertiveness, activity, positivity, and energy; openness to experience, which encircles attributes like being autonomous, nonconforming, unconventional, and imaginative; agreeableness, which represents the tendency to be caring, compliant, gentle, social, and trusting; and finally, conscientiousness, which is comprised of achievement and dependability.

Most of the factors have been found to be positively related to leader effectiveness (e.g. Bono & Judge, 2004), with varying consistency across different types of organizations (Block, 1995). What stands out foremost, however, are extraversion and low neuroticism displaying the most consistent correlations to leadership effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002; Bono & Judge, 2004). Low neuroticism simultaneously indicated high values for self-confidence and self-esteem (Eysenck, 1990), which by themselves uniformly correlate to leadership effectiveness (Bass, 1990; Hill & Ritchie, 1977). Recent research (Toegel & Barsoux, 2012) found that the relationship between the Big Five and leadership behavior is best described as curvilinear, with the best settings found off the opposite extremes.

**Emotional Intelligence**

Drawing an analogy from engineering, if our personality with its hardwired traits is an electrical network, our emotions represent the currents dynamically oscillating between polar opposites. Originating in evolutionary conserved parts of the brain such as the amygdala and the hypothalamus (Pessoa, 2008), they can be described as short and intense bouts (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) surfacing automatically in the presence of often unconscious triggers (Whalen et al., 2004; Ohman, 2002; Pessoa, 2005). The interplay between emotion and cognition can best be described as circular (Ochsner & Gross, 2005), making acute awareness of emotions a crucial skill in breaking a potentially vicious cycle. The effect of emotions is not limited to the inside, as they are an important facet in the interaction between leader and followers and its effect on productivity (Ashkanasy & Jordan, 2008; Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). Enabling leaders and followers to actively recognize, acknowledge, and eventually control their often-unconscious emotions is a central element of the construct of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

Research on emotional intelligence has evolved over the last century (Thorndike, 1920; Thorndike & Stein, 1937; Wechsler, 1943; Gardner, 1983; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), as distinct from the theory of general intelligence (Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006), and was popularized by Goleman in *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), in which he defined it as "a set of abilities to motivate oneself despite frustrations, to control impulses and delay gratification, regulate one's mood and keep distress at bay, to empathize and hope" (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). This prototype model has been further developed (Goleman, 1998, 2013) and expanded (Boyatzis, 2011; Bar-On, 1997). At the current stage, this field of research is still developing, thus harboring a multitude of views and theories suited for different purposes (Mayer, 1999; Brown & Moshavi, 2005; Edwards, 2001).

In the context of this article, Goleman's model (Goleman, 1998) will suffice due to its simplicity. More recent models (e.g. by Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002b), Boyatzis (2011)) are more granular, but the underlying principles remain.

At the foundation is self-awareness, which is the recognition and acknowledgement of one's moods and emotions, but also the understanding of one's values and goals. This manifests in an honest appraisal of oneself and one's abilities, consequently fostering self-confidence. Alignment to own goals and values also increases satisfaction in work and life (Goleman, 1998).

This foundational understanding enables the next component, self-regulation, which refers to the conscious choice to control emotions. It provides us

with the ability to control and redirect impulses and moods, to pause and contemplate before acting. Engaging in an inner dialogue allows us to fully feel our emotions but liberates us from being rolled over and taken hostage by them. Side effects include integrity, trustworthiness, comfort with ambiguity, and openness to change (Goleman, 1998). Furthermore, besides leaders' emotions themselves, the way in which leaders simultaneously exercise control over their emotions has a trickle-down effect in an organization, creating an environment of trust and fairness (Bono et al., 2007).

Consequently, motivation is a vital trait for all leaders, as it describes the deeply embedded desire and passion to achieve and raise the bar, exceeding monetary or status rewards for work. It manifests in the strong and energetic pursuit of goals, plenty of optimism, and the drive to achieve beyond expectations, even despite setbacks (Goleman, 1998).

With all internal features in place, empathy is the key ingredient to understanding the emotional makeup of others by staying attuned to body language and reading between the lines. This manifests in good relationship management and team building skills as well as enhanced cross-cultural awareness. Thus, it is an antidote to the inevitable misunderstandings emerging from the bubbling cauldron of emotions of a team in search of consensus (Goleman, 1998).

Since leadership can also be defined as an "intrinsically emotional process, in which leaders display emotions to evoke emotional reactions in followers" (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002, p. 615), emotional intelligence becomes the cornerstone of leader performance (Bachman, Stein, Campbell, & Sitarenios, 2000; Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough 2009; Dasborough, 2006; Kumar, 2014), career advancement (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002a; Mayer & Salovey, 1995; Salovey, 2010) and follower performance (Welch, 2003; Bono et al., 2007).

**Self-Awareness**

In the stormy sea of one's own and others' emotions, the person at the helm needs a reliable indication of true north to safely steer their entrusted personnel to their preplanned destination (George, & Sims, 2007). This navigation device is called self-awareness and helps accurately perceive one's emotions in the moment and understand tendencies across situations and certain events (Bradberry, 2009, p. 24), thereby facilitating the evaluation of creative alternative solutions and thinking outside the box (Yukl, 2013). It follows a similar scientific trajectory as emotional intelligence, with various evolving and intermittently stalling constructs over the last century (James, 1891; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). It was later labeled as the foundational dimension of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), underpinning interpersonal effectivity (Yukl, 2013; Goleman, 1998) and thus the ability to have empathy (Richards, 2004), build rapport, and lead others. Shaped by the sense and experience of the self in early infancy (Winnicott, 1960), it encompasses not just the perception of emotions and acute physiological states (Damasio, Everitt, & Bishop, 1996), but also covers an understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses, reactions in typical situations, values and motivations, and purpose in life (Goleman, 2013).

To arrive at an operationally useful definition, self-awareness can be split into three related competencies (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). These are emotional self-awareness, which encapsulates the recognition of feelings, emotions and moods and their impact on performance; accurate self-assessment, which describes the recognition of strength and weaknesses; and self-confidence, which is the grasp of one's own capabilities and efficacy, resulting in a sense of self-worth. The former two will be described in more detail as follows, while self-confidence as an attribute affecting leadership effectiveness has been explained in the section on personality traits (see above).

The first component, emotional self-awareness, has been defined as "being aware of our moods and thoughts about mood" (Goleman, 1995, p. 47). Besides being a pillar of effective and authentic leadership (George & Sims, 2007; Lussier, 2013), it has been found to be an important part of life and work effectiveness and satisfaction (Bar-On, 2000). As emotions are contagious (Yukl, 2013) and a leader's emotions affect subordinates in the subtlest ways, leaders are faced with a conundrum of moral obligations to themselves and other stakeholders (Caldwell, 2012) to create long-term value and help employees fulfill their true potential (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Emotional self-awareness has been found to correlate with high levels of follower trust and loyalty (Gardner et al., 2005), organizational commitment (Sosik, 2001), mentoring behavior (Sosik, Godshalk, & Yammarino, 2004), the use of influence tactics (Berson & Sosik, 2007), impression management (Sosik & Jung, 2003),

and performance (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992). It is especially critical to the success of organizational change, as leaders lacking self-awareness often unconsciously reinforce the organizational issues that make change necessary and thus impair the process unknowingly (Higgs & Rowland, 2010).

The second element is self-assessment and is conceptualized as the degree of congruence between self-description and others' description of behavior (van Velsor, Taylor, & Leslie, 1993; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, & Cox, 2008). It is fostered by the mechanisms of social comparison and self-appraisal (Snyder, 1974; Showry & Manasa, 2014), which is a process of continuous learning and evolution (Schmidt & Hunter, 2000) and should best follow an evidence-based approach to be effective (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016). In the context of leadership, research has found that awareness of one's leadership qualities is likely to lead to a more effective and satisfying work experience, high follower satisfaction, and follower self-leadership (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Tekleab et al., 2008; Winkler & Hausknecht, 2010), but incongruences or lack of self-awareness about own leadership (e.g. Yammarino & Atwater, 1997; Felfe & Schyns, 2004) can lead to miscommunication or failure to respond to follower demands and non-optimal outcomes. Despite its pivotal importance, self-awareness seems to be scarce among today's leaders, of whom 79% are supposed to have at least one blind spot and 40% one hidden strength (Orr, 2012). Women seem to fare better, as 19% show self-awareness, vs. 4% of male executives (Weiss, 2012). Broadening the view from executives to all employees, self-awareness not only affects job satisfaction, attitudes, and performance (Atwater& Yammarino, 1992; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997), but has a tangible macro effect on entire companies' bottom lines. Poorly performing companies' employees were 79% more likely to have blind spots and had 20% more blind spots than those with robust returns (Korn Ferry Institute, 2013).

However, individuals tend to either overrate or underrate in comparison to objective sources (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988), making them either overestimators or underestimators. Overestimators have been characterized as being insecure and self-absorbed while not recognizing their weaknesses (Sosik & Megerian, 1999), thus discarding especially negative feedback inconsistent with their self-perception (Sosik, 2001; Sosik & Godshalk, 2004). They consequently resented the need for personal development (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997) and stymied any improvement of their leadership behavior (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997). At the opposite end, underestimators and those who accurately gauged their leadership performance were found to be more self-aware and able to adapt to specific situations as required based on follower input, and were thus more associated with positive outcomes and effectivity (Church, 1997; Atwater et al., 1998; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997; Bratton, Dodd, & Brown, 2011). These high-performers were also characterized as modest, humble, and altruistic individuals (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996), having internal loci of control (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992) and high emotional intelligence (Sosik & Godshalk, 2004). Underestimators further seemed to deflate their self-ratings out of modesty, instead directing their energy outwards for the benefit of their subordinates and the overall organization (Bratton et al., 2011), a trait understudied in Western management research but more commonly valued in Eastern cultures (Lee & Ashton, 2004).

## 3 Research Questions & Methods

To confirm the existing pieces of research and contribute to the slim volume targeting Germany (Schrör, 2016), a set of research questions was derived. The *Leadership Tasks Model* (Desjardins, 2020) served as a framework leading to a quantitative approach to formulating and testing the hypotheses with the corresponding *Leadership Tasks Survey* (Desjardins, 2019b).

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

Resonating with and contributing to the existing research on the interplay between self-awareness and leadership behavior (e.g. Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Felfe & Schyns, 2004; Tekleab et al., 2008; Winkler & Hausknecht, 2010; Korn Ferry Institute, 2013), the first research question can be formulated:

*Q1:* Is there an effect of self-awareness on leadership behavior?

Accordingly, the first null hypothesis can be stated:

*H01:* There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and productive leadership behavior.

*H1:* There is a significant correlation between self-awareness and productive leadership behavior. Assuming the role of the employee, a variety of studies

describe a positive influence of high leader self-awareness on employee motivation and satisfaction (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997; Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Thus, the second research question can be formulated:

*Q2:* Is there an effect of self-awareness on leadership effectivity in the aspects of employee motivation and satisfaction, which should further influence employee productivity?

This can be translated into the hypothesis:

*H02:* There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and leadership effectivity.

*H2:* There is a significant correlation between self-awareness and leadership effectivity.

To account for the three dimensions employee motivation, satisfaction, and productivity, *H02* and *H2* can be subdivided further:

*H20a:* There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and employee motivation.

*H2a:* There is a significant correlation between self-awareness and employee motivation.

*H20b:* There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and employee satisfaction.

*H2b:* There is a significant correlation between self-awareness and employee satisfaction.

*H20c:* There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and employee productivity.

*H2c:* There is a significant correlation between self-awareness and employee productivity.

**Methodology**

To gather the data required for further analysis, the *Leadership Tasks Survey* (Desjardins, 2019b) was applied. It consists of a questionnaire with four questions for each leadership task/subtask and two questions each for introductory/control questions about effectivity, namely work *motivation, satisfaction, and productivity*, resulting in a total of 114 questions requiring an estimated time of 20 minutes for completion. Each question was to be answered on a seven-point Likert-scale (1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = sometimes, 4 = in half of the cases, 5 = frequently, 6 = almost always, 7 = always). The survey was anonymously administered online between May and December 2019 via the address https://www.soscisurvey.de/LTSFFA_Gesamt/ (Desjardins, 2019c). The respondent groups were the author's own professional contacts (*N = 33*), including mainly experienced military professionals, and an evaluation by MBA graduates from Kempten Professional School of Business and Technology (*N = 62*), thus comprising primary data (Malhotra & Birks, 2007, p. 94) specifically raised for this master's thesis.

The secondary data consisted of two company evaluations (*N = 34, N = 35*) and a set of self-evaluations of executives (*N = 91*) (Streibich, 2019).

**The Leadership Tasks Model**

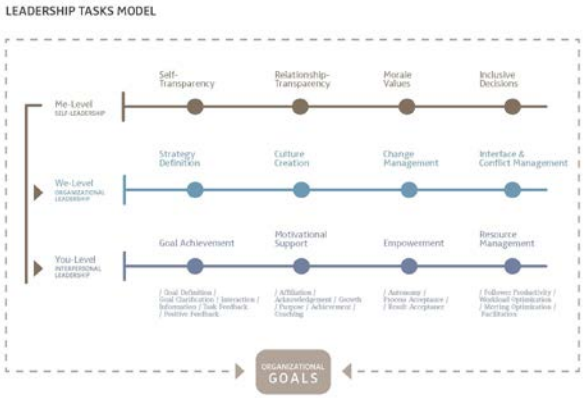
For the question of what makes a good leader, Desjardins (2012) proposed leadership as being an intrinsically organizational role with emergent productivity being due to the fulfillment of specific tasks. Merging the differentiation between people-orientation and task-orientation (e.g. Hersey & Blanchard, 1984) into a holistic approach (Desjardins, 2012), productive leadership is presented as a taxonomy of effective tasks (Fleishman et al., 1991) that facilitate achievement of organizational goals and simultaneously create intrinsic motivation by addressing employees' fundamental needs (Desjardins, 2012; Desjardins & Baker, 2013). The current model is comprised of three layers, the Me-Level, the We-Level, and the You-Level, each representing a different orientation of interaction (Desjardins, 2020).

The tasks at the *Me-Level* form the foundation for all subsequent components. They reflect the leader's personality, character, and emotional intelligence, and especially self-awareness. The task *self-transparency* is thus the foundation, as only a leader in alignment with their own needs and aware of their triggers and blind spots can project responsibility and congruence outwardly to create trust and fully actualize their leadership potential. These reflections are given context by *moral values*, which embody the social and organizational value system. Congruence to these enables casting *inclusive decisions*, which are in harmony with subordinates' needs and thus foster trust, engagement, and intrinsic motivation. The solid inner foundation finally manifests in *relationship transparency*, which is the synthesis of self-awareness, situational awareness, and empathy, letting the leader acknowledge the interdependence of relationships in an organizational context, communicate effectively, and

maintain trusting relationships by displaying consistently congruent behavior.

The *We-Level* covers the entire organization. Breaking down top-level vision, mission, and strategy into more tangible goals, the leader provides direction and guidelines via *strategy definition*. This helps the team align their actions to the big picture. Conveying a new vision with empathy and simultaneously overcoming resistance emerging due to default inertia and anxieties about change beyond employees' control, *change management* is an everyday task for every leader. As the formation of cultures is inevitably inherent to any group of human beings collaborating, it should be purposely directed by all leaders to reflect the strategy of the organization. Hence, *culture creation* uniquely contributes to a company's durable competitive advantage, requiring congruent authenticity and leading by example. Encountering the conflicts that emerge in a changing organization, a modern leader must mediate and facilitate whenever possible. Shedding the authoritative "silverback" archetype, they today find themselves in the role of *interface and conflict manager*, displaying soft virtues like maturity and cooperation inside the company, while saving aggressive competition for outside rival organizations.

Figure 1: *Leadership Tasks Model (Desjardins, 2020)*




Finally, combining the micro (Me-Level) and macro aspects (We-Level) of leadership, a leader can derive the relevant tasks for interaction with others and the core task of achieving corporate goals at the *You-Level*. The major task of *goal achievement*, which basically epitomizes a leader's organizational role, includes the subset *goal definition, goal clarification, interaction, information, task feedback*, and *positive feedback*. Aligning everyone involved requires explicit clarification and continuous updates of the set objectives by the leader to reduce internal friction. Communicating to employees their current level and potentials is crucial, yet most leaders have a massive deficit in the area of coaching and feedback (Desjardins, 2012) when it should be a prime activity to develop and empower employees towards autonomy and responsibility.

Having pointed employees towards a common goal, the task still requires proper *resource management*, which is comprised of *follower productivity, workload optimization, meeting optimization*, and *facilitation*. Unfortunately, this is very often only practiced by leaders for themselves, as they often feel pressured to mindlessly delegate tasks without capacity considerations or managing working conditions, but the leverage would be significantly higher if resource management were applied to all subordinates. Ergo, optimization and balancing along time and workload capacity constraints should be a major concern for all leaders in order to allocate tasks and use meeting time efficiently, ensure mostly uninterrupted workflows, and holistically maximize employee group output.

Having organized resources and objectives, the task of *motivational support* with the subtasks *affiliation,*

*acknowledgement, growth, purpose/sense, performance/ challenging goals*, and *coaching* ensures persistent employee commitment. Accordingly, leaders should self-reflect and empathize to grasp that monetary bonus systems do not raise intrinsic motivation, which is fostered especially by a sense of acknowledgement and purpose, i.e. needs that are universal to all human beings.

A further impact on motivation comes from the task of *empowerment*, which encapsulates the leader creating autonomous work processes and developing follower competences. It consists of the subtask *autonomy*, which highly correlates to other motivational factors, following the intrinsic need for independence (McClelland, 1961). Implementation of high autonomy enables subordinates to make their own decisions responsibly and exert partial control over their work factors (i.e. goal, time, place, and means), but should match their existing skills to be effective. Complementing autonomous behavior are the subtasks *process acceptance* and *result acceptance*, in which leaders in the role of facilitators instead of subject matter experts give employees freedom regarding the means and the details of achieved goals. These support the goal achievement process and increase intrinsic motivation.

## 4 Empirical Results

### General Data Analysis

Examining the cleaned (i.e. removal of outliers) and aggregated (by averaging four answers per Leadership Task item into one score on a semi-continuous scale) survey data ($N = 255$) as a composite and classifying respondents using the simple descriptive statistics *mean*, *standard deviation*, *skewness*, and *kurtosis* revealed that the responses from the MBA online survey and the self-evaluations were overly peaked and skewed to the right, representing an eminent positivity bias. This finding was confirmed by applying a *Shapiro-Wilks* test for normality (Shapiro & Wilks, 1965) to the individual groups' aggregated Leadership Task items, with both MBA online and self-evaluation scoring low as well as the entire sample. Both were consequentially removed from the sample. The modified sample ($N = 102$) much better conformed to normality (*30%* with *Shapiro-Wilks* $p > .05$ after vs. *0%* before), with distributions being less positively biased ($\Delta M = -0.29$), more positively skewed ($\Delta S = 0.30$), and leptokurtic ($\Delta K = -0.38$), but with almost equal dispersion ($\Delta SD = 0.09$).

This modification was necessary to prepare the sample for the following analyses requiring *Pearson correlations* as inferential statistics (Chen & Popovich, 2002), satisfying mainly the criteria continuity (semi-continuous scale by aggregating) and bivariate normality. Linearity and homoscedasticity could not be tested explicitly and had to be assumed (Chen & Popovich, 2002).

### Survey Validity

To verify the construct validity of the Leadership Tasks Survey (Desjardins, 2019b), an *exploratory factor analysis* was performed using all 27 leadership task items as variables (the effectivity items were excluded since they serve as composite control questions). By excluding lists when calculating the Pearson correlation matrix, the effective sample size was reduced ($N = 59$), but the results are still useful in the context of an exploratory pilot study on the latent

Table 1: *Rearranged pattern matrix (N = 59)*

| | Factors | | | | Cronbach's α if item deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| motivational support- performance/ challenging goals | 0.984 | | | | 0.960 |
| goal achievement- task feedback | 0.964 | | | | 0.956 |
| goal achievement- positive feedback | 0.884 | | | | 0.956 |
| motivational support- growth | 0.838 | | | | 0.957 |
| motivational support- coaching | 0.809 | | | | 0.957 |
| goal achievement- goal definition | 0.743 | | | | 0.961 |
| motivational support- purpose/sense | 0.721 | | | | 0.960 |
| goal achievement- goal clarification | 0.713 | | | | 0.957 |
| motivational support- affiliation | 0.698 | | | | 0.957 |
| resource management- workload optimization | 0.588 | | | | 0.957 |
| resource management- follower productivity | 0.556 | | | | 0.959 |
| goal achievement- information | 0.502 | | | | 0.960 |
| self-transparency | | 1.046 | | | 0.956 |
| moral values | | 0.955 | | | 0.955 |
| inclusive decisions | | 0.812 | | | 0.957 |
| strategy definition | | 0.689 | | | 0.961 |
| relationship transparency | | 0.673 | | | 0.958 |
| culture creation | | 0.671 | | | 0.960 |
| change management | | 0.562 | | | 0.957 |
| interface and conflict management | | 0.431 | | | 0.959 |
| goal achievement- interaction | | 0.413 | | | 0.963 |
| empowerment- result acceptance | | | 0.907 | | 0.814 |
| empowerment- process acceptance | | | 0.872 | | 0.806 |
| empowerment- autonomy | | | 0.573 | | 0.800 |
| motivational support- acknowledgement | | | 0.422 | | 0.805 |
| resource management- facilitation | | | | 0.729 | |
| resource management- meeting optimization | | | | 0.685 | |

structure, especially given mostly strong correlations (compare table 3) and high initial communalities (all > *.7*) (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999; MacCallum, Widaman, Preacher, & Hong, 2001). Using *Principal Axis Factoring* due to imperfect normality of the sample (Fabrigar et al., 1999) and an overlay (Bandalos & Boehm-Kaufman, 2009) of the *scree plot* (Cattell, 1966), *parallel analysis* (Horn, 1965; O'Connor, 2000), and the *Kaiser-Guttmann criterion* (Kaiser & Dickman, 1959) to avoid over-factorization (van der Eijk & Rose, 2015), four factors were extracted, explaining a cumulative 75.5% of the total variance.

This supports prior findings (Geiselhardt, 2018), since the number of factors should correspond to common sense and be supported by sound theory, not vice versa (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006; Norris & Lecavalier, 2010).

To attain a *simple structure* (UCLA, 2019), an *oblique rotation* of the factor matrix was performed using the *Promax* procedure (*kappa = 4*) (Thompson, 2004), allowing for potential correlations between the factors (Gorsuch, 1983; Comrey & Lee, 1992; Russel, 2002). The resulting *pattern matrix* (items rearranged with highest factor loadings in descending order, all other

loadings blanked out (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991)) is displayed in table 1.

The allocation can be further corroborated by considering *Cronbach's* $\alpha$ (if item removed) in the last column, which is a measure of internal consistency and confirms the validity of each variable contributing to a factor, as all values are above .7 (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). For factor 4, no values could be calculated since only two variables were allocated.

The corresponding *factor correlation matrix* is displayed in table 2.

Table 2: *Factor correlation matrix*

| Factor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.000 | .775 | .530 | .508 |
| 2 | .775 | 1.000 | .634 | .584 |
| 3 | .530 | .634 | 1.000 | .428 |
| 4 | .508 | .584 | .428 | 1.000 |

*Correlations are significant at .05 (two-tailed)*

Accordingly, a multi-factor structure for the Leadership Tasks Model (Desjardins, 2020) can be justified with four different factors driving the You-Level, the Me-/We-Level, the dimension empowerment and partially the dimension resource management, albeit at the cost of highly correlated factors (table 2). From a different perspective, this contributes positively to the examination of tasks on the Me-Level correlating with other branches of the Leadership Tasks Model (Desjardins, 2020).

Despite the low number of participants ($N = 59$), the resulting model fit seems to be sufficient. Comparing the *initial correlation matrix* with the *reproduced correlation matrix*, the fraction of *residuals* (Suhr, 2006) with $p > .05$ is only 18%, indicating a good fit (Muthén & Muthén, 2010).

**Correlation Analysis**

To examine the correlations between all items of the Leadership Tasks Survey (Desjardins, 2019b), the *Pearson correlation matrix* in table 3 has been created. As a side note, the sample size varies per correlation coefficient between $61 \leq N \leq 102$ due to the exclusion of pairs. Furthermore, since only 30% of all items are normally distributed (see above), the question might arise whether using Spearman rank-order correlations instead of Pearson correlations would yield different results. To test this, the Spearman correlation matrix was subtracted from the Pearson correlation matrix in table 3, resulting in an average difference of $\Delta r = .008$ (minimum: $r = -.087$, maximum: $r = .133$). Hence, Pearson correlations can be used safely with this sample.

Inspecting table 3, several observations are notable. First, most correlations with $\alpha > .05$ are attributed to work productivity, for which correlations are the lowest of the entire sample with an average of $r_{avg} = .240$, except from the other effectivity items work motivation ($r_{avg} = .411$) and work satisfaction ($r_{avg} = .379$). A further string of low correlations, albeit mostly significant at $\alpha = .05$ *(two-tailed)*, is visible for meeting optimization ($r_{avg} = .468$) and facilitation ($r_{avg} = .479$). With regard to the last section, both load uniquely onto factor 4 (table 1), appearing distinct from the rest and confirming the low skills of superiors, on average, at efficiently organizing meetings and reaching a workable consensus.

At the upper end of the scale, change management ($r_{avg} = .646$), relationship transparency ($r_{avg} = .640$), and interface and conflict management ($r_{avg} = .639$) display the highest correlations. The highest inter-item correlations are shown for inclusive decisions and moral values ($r = .873$), inclusive decisions and self-transparency ($r = .866$), and moral values and inclusive decisions ($r = .863$). These findings highlight both the importance of emotional intelligence and its interconnectedness with leadership behavior, confirming prior research (e.g. Antonakis et al., 2009).

Turning to the null hypotheses, self-awareness can best be framed by the items on the Me-Level moral values, self-transparency, inclusive decisions, and relationship transparency. The Pearson correlations between both items and the other LTS items are displayed in table 4. Again, the sample size varies per item due to the deletion of pairs (see above).

Correlations are deemed satisfying for $r > .25$ and high for $r > .50$ (Meyer, Finn, Kay, Moreland, & Dies, 2001). Thi leads to the rejection of

*H01*: There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and leadership productivity,

since for moral values there are $N\ (.25 < r < .50) = 7$ and $N\ (r > .50) = 22$ correlations significant at $\alpha < .05$ *(two-tailed)*, and for inclusive

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Table 3: *Pearson Correlation Matrix of all Leadership Tasks Survey Items, 61 ≤ N ≤ 102*

| | work motivation | work satisfaction | work productivity | moral values | inclusive decisions | self-transparency | relationship transparency | strategy definition | change management | culture creation | interface and conflict mgmt.. | goal definition | goal clarification | interaction | information | task feedback | positive feedback | follower productivity | workload optimization | meeting optimization | facilitation | affiliation | coaching | acknowledge-ment | growth | purpose/ sense | performance/ chall. goals | autonomy | result acceptance | process acceptance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| work motivation | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| work satisfaction | ,848** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| work productivity | ,585** | ,567** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| moral values | ,384** | ,353** | ,303* | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| inclusive decisions | ,470** | ,500** | ,299** | ,863** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| self-transparency | ,412** | ,420** | ,299* | ,873** | ,866** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| relat.-transparency | ,493** | ,470** | 0.176 | ,833** | ,834** | ,840** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| strategy definition | ,453** | ,359** | ,263** | ,787** | ,685** | ,713** | ,657** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| change mgmt. | ,347** | ,307** | 0.128 | ,779** | ,808** | ,774** | ,775** | ,725** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| culture creation | ,339** | ,291** | 0.116 | ,773** | ,667** | ,742** | ,699** | ,707** | ,762** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| interf./confl. mgmt | ,458** | ,372** | ,227* | ,798** | ,781** | ,733** | ,753** | ,681** | ,798** | ,677** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| goal definition | ,348** | ,251* | 0.097 | ,558** | ,534** | ,513** | ,590** | ,478** | ,652** | ,608** | ,655** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| goal clarification | ,286* | 0.195 | 0.074 | ,739** | ,687** | ,701** | ,753** | ,610** | ,808** | ,711** | ,746** | ,788** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| interaction | ,291* | ,244* | ,302* | ,680** | ,663** | ,706** | ,702** | ,659** | ,713** | ,659** | ,650** | ,471** | ,720** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| information | ,320** | ,345** | 0.188 | ,637** | ,678** | ,612** | ,589** | ,559** | ,667** | ,564** | ,631** | ,467** | ,701** | ,659** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| task fdb. | ,345** | ,308* | 0.082 | ,688** | ,581** | ,599** | ,714** | ,550** | ,698** | ,672** | ,739** | ,701** | ,778** | ,599** | ,618** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| positive feedback | ,306* | ,245* | 0.116 | ,698** | ,584** | ,603** | ,687** | ,602** | ,697** | ,687** | ,712** | ,650** | ,806** | ,609** | ,641** | ,879** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| follower product. | ,408** | ,334** | 0.113 | ,651** | ,656** | ,682** | ,690** | ,554** | ,722** | ,599** | ,688** | ,664** | ,730** | ,666** | ,611** | ,634** | ,671** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| workload opt. | ,455** | ,413** | ,251* | ,741** | ,710** | ,669** | ,646** | ,627** | ,741** | ,603** | ,755** | ,614** | ,722** | ,614** | ,702** | ,709** | ,749** | ,823** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| meeting opt. | ,266* | 0.215 | 0.214 | ,453** | ,498** | ,476** | ,411** | ,565** | ,509** | ,497** | ,463** | ,365** | ,434** | ,479** | ,543** | ,365** | ,414** | ,423** | ,573** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| facilitation | ,391** | ,410** | ,342** | ,576** | ,564** | ,579** | ,472** | ,609** | ,472** | ,427** | ,482** | ,265* | ,412** | ,555** | ,542** | ,399** | ,437** | ,322* | ,517** | ,672** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| affiliation | ,384** | ,367** | 0.109 | ,705** | ,682** | ,669** | ,745** | ,609** | ,741** | ,633** | ,750** | ,569** | ,807** | ,670** | ,768** | ,769** | ,779** | ,687** | ,782** | ,528** | ,553** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| coaching | ,424** | ,370** | 0.158 | ,640** | ,613** | ,556** | ,739** | ,588** | ,707** | ,684** | ,679** | ,632** | ,722** | ,640** | ,655** | ,803** | ,802** | ,645** | ,685** | ,525** | ,581** | ,747** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| acknowledgement | ,410** | ,374** | 0.187 | ,674** | ,736** | ,682** | ,777** | ,493** | ,710** | ,547** | ,703** | ,516** | ,713** | ,750** | ,623** | ,603** | ,599** | ,632** | ,629** | ,477** | ,545** | ,717** | ,637** | 1 | | | | | | |
| growth | ,430** | ,389** | ,208* | ,577** | ,607** | ,519** | ,622** | ,618** | ,673** | ,514** | ,641** | ,575** | ,693** | ,599** | ,637** | ,750** | ,748** | ,646** | ,698** | ,481** | ,460** | ,716** | ,687** | ,678** | 1 | | | | | |
| purpose/sense | ,398** | ,361** | 0.134 | ,544** | ,594** | ,494** | ,595** | ,604** | ,672** | ,636** | ,596** | ,488** | ,526** | ,541** | ,563** | ,651** | ,657** | ,653** | ,690** | ,483** | ,369** | ,621** | ,697** | ,594** | ,750** | 1 | | | | |
| perf./chall. goals | ,255* | ,243* | 0.010 | ,472** | ,470** | ,364** | ,593** | ,429** | ,632** | ,504** | ,557** | ,496** | ,566** | ,341** | ,497** | ,712** | ,677** | ,513** | ,551** | ,321* | 0.223 | ,571** | ,681** | ,508** | ,712** | ,705** | 1 | | | |
| autonomy | ,369** | ,363** | ,262** | ,523** | ,554** | ,531** | ,491** | ,383** | ,551** | ,387** | ,553** | 0.188 | ,390** | ,539** | ,376** | ,296* | ,351** | ,352** | ,424** | ,475** | ,463** | ,415** | ,364** | ,622** | ,347** | ,405** | ,255* | 1 | | |
| result acceptance | ,253* | ,253* | 0.152 | ,370** | ,499** | ,374** | ,502** | ,397** | ,488** | ,347** | ,541** | ,340** | ,414** | ,471** | ,362** | ,270* | ,336** | ,545** | ,575** | ,383** | ,282* | ,467** | ,436** | ,606** | ,436** | ,526** | ,332** | ,530** | 1 | |
| process acceptance | ,214* | ,214* | ,226* | ,396** | ,365** | ,496** | ,367** | ,270** | ,335** | ,283** | ,361** | 0.184 | ,388** | ,614** | ,352** | ,248* | ,322** | ,252* | ,240* | ,541** | ,456** | ,407** | ,283** | ,538** | ,233* | 0.175 | 0.074 | ,639** | ,601** | 1 |
| *average* | .411 | .379 | .240 | .636 | .635 | .616 | .640 | .574 | .646 | .578 | .639 | .509 | .621 | .593 | .570 | .592 | .602 | .586 | .630 | .468 | .479 | .632 | .613 | .609 | .588 | .557 | .475 | .447 | .436 | .369 |

*Correlation is significant at .05*/.001** level (two-tailed)*

Table 4: *Pearson Correlations for the tasks on the Me-Level, 67 ≤ N ≤ 68*

| | *r* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | moral values | inclusive decisions | self-transparency | relationship transparency |
| work motivation | .384* | .470** | .412** | .493** |
| work satisfaction | .353* | .500** | .420** | .470** |
| work productivity | .303* | .299* | .299* | .176 |
| moral values | 1.000** | .873** | .873** | .833** |
| inclusive decisions | .863** | 1.000** | .866** | .834** |
| self-transparency | .873** | .866** | 1.000** | .840** |
| rel. transparency | .833** | .834** | .840** | 1.000** |
| strategy definition | .787** | .685** | .713** | .657** |
| change management | .779** | .808** | .774** | .775** |
| culture creation | .773** | .667** | .742** | .699** |
| interf./ confl. mgmt.. | .798** | .781** | .733** | .753** |
| goal definition | .558** | .534** | .513** | .590** |
| goal clarification | .739** | .687** | .701** | .753** |
| interaction | .680** | .663** | .706** | .702** |
| information | .637** | .678** | .612** | .589** |
| constr. feedback | .688** | .581** | .599** | .714** |
| positive feedback | .698** | .584** | .603** | .687** |
| follower productivity | .651** | .656** | .682** | .690** |
| workl. optimization | .741** | .710** | .669** | .646** |
| meeting optimization | .453** | .498** | .476** | .411* |
| facilitation | .576** | .564** | .579** | .472** |
| affiliation | .705** | .682** | .669** | .745** |
| coaching | .640** | .613** | .556** | .739** |
| acknowledgement | .674** | .736** | .682** | .777** |
| growth | .577** | .607** | .519** | .622** |
| purpose/ sense | .544** | .594** | .494** | .595** |
| perf./ chall. goals | .472** | .470** | .364* | .593** |
| autonomy | .523** | .554** | .531** | .491** |
| result acceptance | .370* | .499** | .374* | .502** |
| process acceptance | .396* | .365** | .496** | .367** |
| *average* | .636 | .635 | .616 | .640 |
| *N (.25 < r < .50)* | 7 | 5 | 8 | 5 |
| *N (r > .50)* | 22 | 24 | 21 | 23 |

*Correlation is significant at .05*/.001** level (two-tailed)*

decisions, there are *N (.25 < r < .50) = 5* and *N (r > .50) = 24* correlations significant at $\alpha < .05$ *(two-tailed).* For self-transparency there are *N (.25 < r < .50) = 8* and *N (r > .50) = 21* correlations significant at $\alpha < .05$ (two-tailed) (excluding correlations of items with themselves), and for relationship transparency there are *N (.25 < r < .50) = 5* and *N (r > .50) = 23* correlations significant at $\alpha < .05$ *(two-tailed)*

The most notably high correlations for moral values, besides with the other items on the Me-Level (*.833 ≤ r ≤ .873*), are with goal clarification (*r = .739*), workload optimization (*r = .741*), and affiliation (*r = .705*). At the lower end are result acceptance (*r = .370*), process acceptance (*r = .396*), and meeting optimization (*r = .453*).

For inclusive decisions, the highest-ranking correlations, besides with the other items on the Me-Level (*.834 ≤ r ≤ .873*), can be found with acknowledgement (*r = .736*), goal clarification (*r = .687*), and strategy definition (*r = .685*). The lowest rankings can be found with process acceptance (*r = .365*), performance/challenging goals (*r = .470*), and facilitation (*r = .498*).

Similarly, for self-transparency, the correlations are again highest for the Me-Level (*.833 ≤ r ≤ .840*), followed by interaction (*r = .706*), goal clarification (*r = .701*), and follower productivity (*r = .682*). At the opposite end of the scale are performance/challenging goals (*r = .364*), result acceptance (*r = .374*), and meeting optimization (*r = .476*).

Finally, for relationship transparency, the highest-ranking correlations, besides with the other items on the Me-Level (*.834 ≤ r ≤ .840*), can be found with acknowledgement (*r = .777*), change management (*r = .775*), and goal clarification (*r = .753*). The lowest ranks can be found with process acceptance (*r = .367*), meeting optimization (*r = .411*), and facilitation (*r = .472*).

Surprisingly, the consistently highest correlation could be found for the task goal clarification, ranking among the three highest values for each task on the Me-level. At the low end, meeting optimization can be found three times.

The next null hypothesis,

*H20a*: There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and employee motivation,

must be rejected as well, since the correlation for moral values is *r = .384*, for inclusive decisions *r = .470*, for self-transparency *r = .412*, and for relationship transparency *r = .493.* All four correlations are significant at $\alpha < .05$ (two-tailed) and satisfyingly strong.

The null hypothesis

*H20b:* There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and employee satisfaction

must also be rejected, as the correlation for moral values is $r = .353$, for inclusive decisions $r = .500$, for self-transparency $r = .420$, and for relationship transparency $r = .470$. All are significant at $\alpha < .05$ *(two-tailed)* and satisfyingly strong.

Finally, the null hypothesis

*H20c*: There is no significant correlation between self-awareness and employee productivity

must be rejected. The correlation for moral values is $r = .303$, for inclusive decisions $r = .299$, and for self-transparency $r = .299$. All three are significant at $\alpha < .05$ *(two-tailed)* and satisfyingly strong as well. For relationship transparency, it is $r = .176$ and neither strong nor significant at $\alpha < .05$ *(two-tailed).*

Summarizing the findings, the existence of a measurable impact of self-awareness on leadership behavior can be confirmed for the sample. Besides a few outliers, all correlations were significant, and roughly 75% were classified as strong with averages above $r = .600$.

## 5 Conclusions

The objective of this study was to find a statistically significant impact of self-awareness on leadership behavior.

Within the available literature on the subject, concepts of both leadership and its effectivity have been found to be hugely divergent, requiring an ad-hoc definition within the context of the research problem at hand. Personality traits conducive to effective leadership have been successfully mapped along the Big Five personality traits by many approaches. Emotional intelligence as a property of personality, however, has been found to correlate in some aspects but not be coherent with this framework otherwise. The most recent theories on emotional intelligence cite self-awareness as its foundation. Despite its alleged importance for success in both private and professional life, and especially as a leader, there were comparatively few empirical studies examining the relationship. Those that did, however, found the influence to be rather obvious and strong, while simultaneously claiming self-awareness of emotions and one's strengths and weaknesses to be in short supply among executives. Unfortunately, German studies were rare.

The research questions were operationalized using the framework of the Leadership Tasks Model (Desjardins, 2020). The corresponding hypotheses were examined by applying the Leadership Tasks Survey (Desjardins, 2019b). Applying the survey to a diverse, albeit small, group yielded rather unequivocal support for all hypotheses, showing a broad measurable connection between self-awareness and leadership effectivity. As such, the objective has been achieved.

A consistent, more granular picture, however, could not be extracted, i.e. which tasks showed high consistent correlation in isolation. This observation is also matched by the high inter-factor correlation (see Table 2), allowing for a clean structure only for a trade-off between factors. To find the strongest connections between self-awareness as described by the four tasks on the Me-level and the items on the You- and We-level, further studies with more participants from an even more diverse background are required.

Since our personality as a default setting determines our social interactions and experiences, conscious deviations from our inclinations are only temporarily possible with mental effort, triggering us to revert to our default settings under stress. Consequently, in today's fast-paced business world, with its relentless pressure to go harder and push faster, it is at times difficult to reign in one's psychological quirks. Effective leaders should therefore know and manage their strengths and weaknesses. Given the large base rate of executives who are being impeded by their blind spots (Orr, 2012), mastering one's own can be a huge competitive advantage.

Starting at the core, various practices to increase emotional intelligence and raise self-awareness include the practice of mindfulness (see e.g. Goldstein (2013) for a spiritually inspired primer, Gonzalez (2012) for a more business-oriented approach). However, appearing too calm on the outside can also entail drawbacks, so the display of emotions can have benefits in certain situations (Harris, 2014).

Furthermore, leaders should independently and on their own initiative seek various kinds of feedback, especially from trusted sources (George & Sims 2007), and acquire a mentor or coach if possible (Whitmore, 2017) to increase their emotional intelligence and compensate for extreme propensities (Toegel & Barsoux, 2012). Receiving feedback is an art as well as giving it. To be

effective in helping leaders see themselves as others see them, it requires a quantum of self-confidence to start with and should take place in a safe, non-judging environment (George & Sims, 2007).

Besides frequent feedback to align self-image with reality, journaling can be a tremendous tool to spot patterns and learn from mistakes. Armed with this knowledge, leaders can then devise methods to actively compensate for their weaknesses, as did Steve Jobs, who had an inclination to be perfectionistic and obsessive, and thus built a management layer below him to not alienate Apple employees unnecessarily (Isaacson, 2011).

This plethora of research should eventually serve to accelerate a paradigm shift in business away from the traditional view of an enterprise as a machine comprised of tasks and processes, with inefficient employees only inhibiting optimal performance with their messy emotions. Channeled properly, businesses can harness the power of emotions by raising the self-awareness of their employees and adopting the new paradigm of soft values driving hard results (Winkler & Hausknecht, 2010).

To implement this, a starting point could be to rethink the hiring process, especially of executives. Self-awareness was mostly neglected hitherto in this area, when it should have been the top priority. Similarly, self-aware candidates will assess the fit between corporate culture and their personal culture more easily. Defying conventional wisdom, with regard to self-awareness, candidates changing employers too often actually raises a red flag, as frequent switching can indicate evading recurrent problems at the workplace without ever seriously tackling them and seeing their leadership efforts come to fruition (Winkler & Hausknecht, 2010). Leaders already at the helm should be supported by creating organizational structures that enable task feedback to be delivered in a non-threatening way to help executives compensate their deficits and fulfill their true potential. This also encompasses fostering an organizational culture in which failure is not stigmatized but perceived as an opportunity to learn and grow.

## 6 About the author

Peter Hartung works as a project manager at a renowned German technology and defense company. An interface expert between various specialists and keen student of human nature, he experiences the benefits of self-aware leadership anew every day. Peter served as a commissioned officer in various roles in the German Armed Forces for thirteen years, where he earned an MSc in aerospace engineering and built his leadership skills up from the ground. He earned an MBA from the Professional School of Business and Technology in Kempten.

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