

# The preferred leadership and followership styles of employees in state- and privately-owned organizations in Serbia and Macedonia\*

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## Abstract

The aim of the study is to determine the preferred leadership and followership styles, as well as the statistical significance of differences between those preferences among individuals employed in both state and privately owned companies in Serbia and Macedonia. Leadership and followership are important for the efficient functioning of all organizations. Leadership and followership issues are particularly important in transition countries, such as Serbia and Macedonia, where directors general of organizations are no longer appointed politically but are leaders selected according to their capacities. Nationality and type of the organization ownership, the relation between gender and position occupied by an individual within a business organization (a manager, an employee), as well as the preferred style of leadership and followership, have been analyzed. The study was carried out on the sample of 172 participants from Serbia and Macedonia. The data were collected by means of the Personal Questionnaire for Followership Styles designed by Robert E. Kelley (1998), and Fiedler's LPC scale (Least Preferred Coworker, 1984) which was used to evaluate the preferred leadership style. The results indicate that there is no difference in the preferred leadership styles in relation to gender, nationality or positions occupied by the company employees, but there is a difference between the employees who are in the state- or in the privately-owned companies. The participants working in state owned companies prefer a permissive leadership style, i.e. relationship-oriented. The results show that most of the employees in both state- and privately-owned business organizations prefer an active followership, with statistically significant differences compared to the other followership styles. No relationship was found between gender, nationality, type of organization ownership and position occupied by the individual within a business organization, for the preferred followership style.

**Keywords:** gender, followership, leadership, nationality, style, type of organization ownership  
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## 1. Introduction

As compared to followership, more attention has been paid to leadership and leaders in the relevant literature. Very few individuals always find themselves in leadership roles. Most people usually spend their entire careers as followers. Recognizing various followership types is important since having knowledge of the person's followers is necessary in order to motivate them, which could lead to increase in the overall efficiency of an organization. Baker (2007) noted that obsession with leadership and the preoccupation with analysis of the dependence on exaggerated abilities of leaders to motivate their employees, are two main reasons for lack of the studies on followership. He believes that the best leadership turns followers into individuals who are ready to take responsibility. The leader should be a follower of organizational goals. Good followers help to form good leaders. The good follower is the greatest support and is an eager, well-intentioned critic of his/her leader. Followers and leaders develop a mutually supportive relationship since their work is focused on common goal. Followers and leaders have interrelated functions, but different roles. Both leadership and followership styles are compatible and make up an integrated whole.

According to Kelley (1992), people who are effective in their roles as leaders skillfully set up organizational goals and strategies. They use interpersonal skills to achieve consensus, verbal skills to achieve enthusiasm in large and diverse groups, organizational skills to coordinate and, primarily, have a desire to be leaders and to lead others. People who are effective in their roles as followers have ability to see both "the trees and the forest", they possess the social ability to work for others, the moral and physical balance needed to achieve personal and organizational goals but, above all, they have the desire to be part of the team and to achieve common goals. Followership has a relational role within which followers have the ability to influence leaders and contribute to improvement and achievement of both group and organizational goals, which indicates an upward influence in the vertical hierarchy. This is how the concept of followership is complimentary in addition to that of leadership although more detailed consideration of the dynamics between leadership and followership is needed. Traditionally, the leader is determined as the main actor in decision-making process. Hollander (1992) stresses the essential interdependence of leadership and followership in joint decision-making processes.

The concept of follower usually has negative connotations and refers to someone in a low- authority position. In order to avoid any negative meaning, authors often use an alternative, such as student, associate, partner (Grean & Uhi-Bien, 1995), or employee. According to Grint (2000), leadership is a social phenomenon and without followers there are no leaders. Lord and Emrich (2001) point out the importance of understanding the followers and, according to them, if leadership is in the minds of the followers, then it is imperative to gain a deep-

er understanding of the reasoning of the followers. Even though the definition of leadership also mentions the followers, studies on leadership generally pay very little attention to traits of the followers.

The results of Dixon & Westbrook's (2003) study indicate that attention to followership can be crucial in organizations. They suggest that managers must learn to respect followers because followership may be the most important component of organizational success.

Kellerman (2008), Crossman & Crossman, (2011) describe followers, in terms of a hierarchy, as subordinates with a smaller amount of power, authority or influence compared to their superiors. Usually, but not always, all followers are treated as such.

Agho (2009) studied the more desirable features of leaders and followers, when he determined that honesty and competence are often considered important attributes for successful leaders and followers. However, professionalism, loyalty and cooperation are ranked higher as desirable characteristics of the followers.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Followership

Despite the fact that the importance of followers has been previously discussed within different contexts, recent studies show a more serious and focused interest in followership. These studies have emerged alongside already well known books such as Robert Kelley's "The Power of Followership", Ira Shaleff's "The Courageous Follower", Barbara Kellerman's "Followership" and "Bed Leadership". In 1965, Abraham Zaleznik published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* entitled "The Dynamics of Subordinacy" where he focuses on the subordinate who has issues and problems with authorities and leaders. In 1992, together with Manfred Kets, he published the book "Power and the Corporate Mind". However, his interest there is mainly focused on followers who face problems in relation to subordination.

This study is based on the Kelley's theoretical basis of followership (Kelley, 1992). According to his theoretical concept, Kelley created a test that measures followership styles. The followership model is based on two key dimensions: *active participation* and *independent thinking*. Thus, there are five different followership styles, i.e. types of followers: alienated, conformist, pragmatic, passive and active followers.

#### 2.1.1. Alienated followers

Alienated followers possess traits that include the following: they think on their own, have positive self-image, have a healthy dose of skepticism, see things for

what they are, often play the role of devil's advocate in the group, represent the conscience of the organization and are able to stand up for those who are not able to do so on their own. Those types of followers are usually seen by their leaders as problematic individuals who are the cause of trouble, and who are cynical and negative. In addition, they consider them to be rebellious for no reason, and stubborn individuals. These individuals usually find it difficult to fit into team, and they offer active opposition, even to the point of hostility. They are dissatisfied because the leader or manager of the organization does not acknowledge or does not use their abilities and ideas, or even exploit them for his/her own personal gain. Alienated followers always note faults and inconsistencies of leaders, which leaders are often unable to accept. In summary, the alienated followers think independently but critically and are not active in performing tasks, or in playing their role. One could even say that they are not interested in performing the tasks.

Most followers begin their careers as active followers. However, over time it often happens that something changes their attitudes and they begin to act differently. Sometimes things went wrong for them, that is, they perceived themselves as victims. Since then they have been hurt and angry and this has resulted in them feeling isolated. An angry and hurt follower begins to fight against the organization and its leaders. Leaders often punish alienation in followers, and they are usually transferred to a different job position, to another department, or are even fired. Alienated followers are very unhappy because of their situation at work. They focus their hostility on their supervisor or the organization, and they fight against their supervisors regardless of whether this is effective or whether it actually makes any difference. It is very unlikely that they can change anything with their attitude, except to aggravate the situation, which only worsens matters. It seems that life is unfair to them and the only way for them to preserve their self-respect is confront to the leader or to withdraw emotionally, which is what they usually do. They are known to frequently revise the past, reevaluate reasons that caused their dissatisfaction, but this only prevents them from living their life fully. Over time, the alienated followers become the "thorn in the side" of leaders and they begin to inspire derision or aggression from their leaders. Often, the best solution for them is either to learn how to endure such situations since they do not perform their duties fully or with motivation, or to decide to leave their job and find another organization where they will be more appreciated. Alienated followers are described as talented people, or as those who cannot peacefully fulfill their responsibilities, who do not accept criticism, who have problems with authority, make fun of leaders and are full of cynicism.

Leaders believe that that is the result of followers' personality traits such as cynicism and dissatisfaction. However, followers say that their alienation is the result of their unmet expectations of their leaders, as well as a loss of confidence in their leaders. In order for an alienated follower to become an active follower,

he/she needs to overcome his/her negativity. After all, he/she already has a characteristic of the active follower model, which is individual, independent, and critical thinking.

### 2.1.2. *Conformist*

The conformist is a type of follower who easily accepts his/her tasks, is glad when he/she can perform some of them, is a good team player, trusts his/her leader, is completely dedicated to his/her organization, tries to reduce conflict, does not pose a threat to his leader and has no opinion of his/her own. He/she is fully obedient and subservient to the extent that he/she even undermines himself/herself. Conformist often gives up on his/her own opinion in order to avoid conflict and always tries to make a compromise, regardless of the fact that he/she may endanger meeting his/her own needs and his/her private life. There are organizations where every effort is made to achieve full conformity among the followers, where order and rules are strictly adhered to, where the leader is dominant, where it is not at all desirable to show any opposition to the leader, and where agreement with opinions of others is respected, such as in aspects of behavior and dress code. Conformists often find themselves saying “yes” even when they would like to say “no”. Contrary to alienated followers, conformists are considerably engaged in their work but they have weak independent opinion. Conformists have strong desire to please their leader and rely too much on the leaders’ opinions. They accept his/her orders, accept his/her authority and completely accept his/her attitudes and views on the world. Also, they do not bring into question any of the leader’s decisions. Conformists believe that position held by the leaders gives them the power to claim respect and obedience from their followers. Conformists never question the organizational structure because they always know their place. They find comfort in and enjoy the position they occupy on the social ladder, regardless of whether there is anyone above them. For them we could say that they behave like good children and wish to please their supervisor, as a child pleases its parents. They always wish to please their supervisor and to ingratiate themselves.

The follower is a conformist, he/she often loses credibility even if he/she has some other valuable qualities, people understand that he/she could not act independently or think for himself/herself, and would not be able to take on the role of the leader. Reducing the anxiety through conformism could also have negative effect since the leaders might misuse person’s inability to say “no” to his supervisor. The conformist may become an active follower since he/she is very dedicated to his/her work. In order to become an active follower, he/she should develop and cultivate independent thinking skills.

### 2.1.3. Pragmatist

The pragmatist is a type of follower who adheres to certain attitudes and changes his/her attitudes as the policy of the organization changes. He/she knows how to manipulate both people and the system in order to achieve his/her goals. The pragmatist always knows what is happening in the organization, and knows how to play by the rules. Other people usually evaluate the pragmatist's behavior in a negative sense and see him/her as someone who plays various political games. Pragmatists do not like taking risks, they always stick to the straight and narrow and should they make a mistake, they are able to cover their tracks. They do not put a great deal of enthusiasm into their work. Pragmatists always pick the middle path, they question decisions of their leaders, but not too often, and not too critically. They perform certain tasks, but rarely do more than what is necessary. Why do certain followers become pragmatists, that is, what is the cause of pragmatism? Some leaders argue that cause of their pragmatism is the fact that they are sensitive to political changes and can recognize them easily, in which case they manipulate others and manipulate the organization for their own benefit. They avoid taking a firm stand regarding a particular position so as to be able to move on to another one, and to be able to change their attitudes in accordance with political circumstances. They want to keep conflict to a minimum and always have a ready excuse should failure occur. Another explanation for pragmatic behavior of followers is that they are workers who do not want to take much risk and who always want to play it safe. They want to do their job but are not willing to sacrifice themselves for someone or something, and they want to realize only things to which they themselves aspire. That is why through pragmatic behavior people often deal with an unstable situation, regardless of whether it has to do with certain political circumstances or work environment. However, we could state that causes of pragmatic behavior among followers are reduced to two groups: they either want to manipulate the organization or the people for their own goals, or they do not want to take any risk.

In addition, pragmatic behavior is not characteristic only of followers, but also of leaders. Leaders can encourage the pragmatic behavior of followers. Leaders who play some political games or use politics and politicizing with a certain purpose in mind can expect that their followers will do the same in order to achieve their goals. Also, leaders who do not devote themselves to their work can expect that their followers will behave in the same manner and resort to manipulation, just like their leaders. Leaders who view their relationships with the followers in that way, can also expect to attract such followers. If the leader had such attitudes, one could expect that pragmatism would become normal and safe choice for the follower. The disadvantage of pragmatism is that pragmatists are viewed by others with suspicion because they do not trust them and doubt their motives. In addition, another possible outcome for pragmatic followers is to be excluded when important decisions are being made and they may not be given important

tasks. It could happen that pragmatists pay a penalty for their behavior. In contrast to the alienated followers whose dominant emotions are rage and feeling vulnerable, in pragmatists, the feeling of self-sufficiency is mixed with anxiety. Self-sufficiency is a result of perceiving that they fit in quite well and they do less than they could. They are neither at the forefront nor in the back, but somewhere in the middle, where they have sense of safety. In order to increase their sense of safety, they will use diplomacy in their organizational behavior. Their anxiety will come from not knowing whom to trust. Pragmatic followers may become active followers if they find their purpose within the organization, when they gain the trust of others and begin trusting others at the same time. In addition, they should overcome the negative perceptions or negative opinions that others have of them. In order to accomplish that, they have to help others achieve their goals rather than only looking after themselves. The other way would be to reach organizational as well as personal goals through more cooperation and enthusiasm.

#### 2.1.4. *Passive follower*

The passive follower always relies on the leader and his/her initiative. Passive followers act only when they get instructions from their supervisors. Their work always requires supervision by their superior. Passive followers are part of the mass which agrees with the supervisor's opinions and does not ask "why". They usually think that personal effort will not lead them anywhere, that they should not waste their ideas and should not strive to implement them. They believe their supervisor is sure to do what he/she thinks is right, which is why it is better to follow the supervisor and the group. Passive followers lack initiative and sense of responsibility. They need constant guidance from someone, and someone to tell them what to do. Leaders may think that passive followers are such because of their character traits. They may even describe passive followers as lazy, incompetent, unmotivated and lacking in ideas. There are some extremely passive followers who have a "herd mentality" i.e. they are unable to act without the approval of their leader. However, there are, in Kelley's opinion, a few of the passive followers who have not developed their followership skills.

The other group of passive followers includes those who do not like to be followers, and who, when they find themselves in the position of a follower, become introvert and do not use their intellectual skills. Passive followership is often response to expectations of the leaders. When leaders treat their followers like sheep, in return they get what they expect: their followers will start behaving like sheep. If the leader sends messages by his personal behavior that the followers will be at fault if they make a mistake, the followers will not be creative, will not experiment, will not begin new projects and will not accept risk, as there is possibility of making a mistake and being responsible for it. Instead, they will

accept that their supervisor will give orders and take on all the responsibility. Leaders who take on all the responsibility, bear the entire burden and make all decisions, easily force their followers to slip into role of passive followers. Passive followers can learn to be active followers, which means that they should understand that following someone does not mean following him/her without thinking for themselves, or be passive, or simply be an observer. This also means that they should learn to invest in themselves and their own abilities, in achieving objectives of the organization, while at the same time learning to think critically and independently.

### 2.1.5. *Active follower*

Active followers are people who think independently and critically and are not affected too much by the opinions of leaders or groups. Kelley particularly discusses active followers and their skills. They are independent individuals, are innovative and creative, offer constructive criticism and are ready to stand up to their leader. They take active part in their work and use their talents for the benefit of the organization. They know how to assume initiative, know how to actively take part in business and know how to support their team and their leader. They are usually very capable and work more than they are expected to do. The two dimensions are well balanced in their character, active participation and independent thinking. Independent thinking without active participation and vice versa would not be productive. Active followers know how to use both of those attributes, which is of importance to the leader and organization. They sometimes complement the aspirations and efforts of the leader; at other times they may act as a substitute for the leader or can even take on the role of leader in the organization. They offer their leader their best opinions and strongest intellectual abilities and thus act in a complementary fashion, which can increase the power of the leader.

Kelley believes that active followers possess skills which could be learned and which could be divided into three broad categories: business and professional skills, organizational skills and their composed components valued additionally.

The commitment that those followers bring to their work extends further than mere performance of their duties. They add their own values in order for the job to be performed more successfully. For them, work is not just mere performance of one's duties, but in addition, they have the desire to do it well because they are who they are. We would have to say that character is a key component in difficult and complicated kinds of work, and they give their best for that work to be done successfully. Active followers are completely committed to their work, an idea, everything they are working on, their organization and professional life. They do not work for a potential gain or future benefits, such as the amount of money they will be paid, whether they could get a better position, rather they

aspire to realize the goals of the organization. When followers accept goals of the organization as their own, we can speak of an organization which is successful and has perspective. The work environment which has the best followers is an environment where goals are shared, and where followers have a common goal. Companies which do not have clear goal definition do not find it easy to find good followers. Their followers wander, face problems in understanding what that company is striving and aim for. That is why companies which have no clear goals lose the energy and enthusiasm of their followers.

Active followers especially know how to behave in critical situations for the organization. In addition, active followers always want to increase their knowledge and their competence. Once they are given an assignment, they try to use their abilities in order to complete the task in the best possible way. Their involvement can also develop in three directions. They can develop additional professional skills in order to perform their work even more successfully, they can increase the number of activities related to their work, or they can come up with new ideas. They work well with their co-workers and with their leaders. Exemplary followers look upon their organization as a unit, and accept joint responsibility for it. They differ from the followers who view the organization as a place where they can pursue only their own interests, thus not taking into consideration interests of the others, or interests of the society and the organization. Active followers always bear in mind interests of the others and build relationship networks. Each one of us has a relationship network with other people. Our relationships network is a set of mutual relations which connect us to other people in the organization. People in that network do things for us simply because we have that kind of relationship with them, not because it is their job or because it is required by someone, or because it is their duty to do so. One of the most important relationships is that between leaders and followers; active followers are successful in this relationship. Employees who are conformists feel they must always please their supervisor, while alienated followers maintain the view that their leader has ultimate responsibility. Active followers help the leader see both good and bad sides of their ideas and plans. Active followers are honest with each other and with their leaders and co-workers. They offer complete information both when things are good and bad, they give credit to the others but also accept their own faults. Active followers build credibility and trust by being honest. If someone wants to be active follower, one should always use his/her abilities. He/she should successfully perform tasks which are of vital importance to the goals of the organization, and will reinforce the relationship network between his/her colleagues. Active followers are strong and independent partners for their leaders. They think for themselves, guide themselves in their work, and fulfill their duties and responsibilities. They constantly improve their skills, increasing their contribution to the organization, but they also find time to work

with their colleagues. They do not believe they have to know everything, but believe that they always have to keep learning.

Taking into consideration the dimensions which Kelley suggests for identifying the followership style (participation and independent critical thinking), active followers are also highly engaged and show high levels of independent thinking. Unlike them, there are passive followers who have lower value of both dimensions. Conformists have a low level of independent thinking and are very active. To a great extent, they are responsible for many negative events, as well as for realization of poor decisions within the organizations. Conformists, who are highly active, show a lack of critical thinking and have subordinate relationship to their leader, thus becoming a powerful tool and source of strength for leaders. Through their activity the leader achieves his/her goals, often at the expense of the organization. Alienated followers are directly opposite to conformists. They differ from conformists by the fact that they think for themselves, have high level of critical thinking but are not very active, and thus are not useful members of the organization. Pragmatists are moderately active and show modern levels of independent thinking, which is just enough for them to keep their positions and to be able to change sides if necessary.

Kelley's concept of followership offers wide range of specific followership styles, from alienated-uninterested followers to active followers who actively fulfill tasks. This study is based on his concept, dimensions, and the test for identifying the followership styles.

## 2.2. Leadership

As opposed to followership, leadership has been studied for many years and there are numerous published papers and books used by many schools and colleges to educate leaders. According to Rost (1991), a whole industry of leadership was created, while huge interest in leadership and fascination with leadership was called a "leadership romance" by Meindl (1995)

However, this observation applies to the USA and Western Europe. In Eastern Europe, the situation is quite different. Due to the social, economic, and political conditions of socialism; with state and social ownership, neither management nor leadership as one of the management functions, has been studied in detail. Directors of autonomous organizations, as companies used to be called in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), were not elected according to their managerial skills, but were appointed by the political parties, according to their political affiliation and eligibility, as well as loyalty to the ruling political party. The economy was controlled by the state. Transition which began in 1989 in the Eastern Europe, also affected Yugoslavia and its former republics, so that the first studies on management and leadership started emerging, mainly

within the framework of universities. On the other hand, followership remained relatively less studied.

For those reasons, we have decided to investigate the preferred leadership and followership style in Serbia and Macedonia, as former Yugoslav republics which took their own paths after Yugoslavia disintegrated.

Successful leadership contributes to the prosperity of the organization, good economic outcomes, motivation and employee satisfaction. The issue of leadership and followership is especially important in transition countries, such as Serbia and Macedonia because it is necessary to ensure successful functioning of the organization in new conditions. At the same time, leadership styles and employee behavior are important too in relation to followership styles.

In this study, we researched the preferred leadership styles which are based on the Contingency theory of leadership developed by Fiedler (1964). Fiedler (1967; according to Landy & Conte, 2004) defines leader as an individual within a group, who is in charge of leading and coordinating activities of the group in performing certain task, or if no appointed leader, the one who takes over responsibility for functioning of the group. That definition allows us to use words such as manager, supervisor, guide, and coordinator, instead of the word leader.

After fifteen years of working with his colleagues and numerous studies on the phenomenon of leadership in the army, sports teams and industrial organizations, Fiedler (1964, 1967) was first to develop contingency approach to leadership. Being a clinical psychologist, he starts from his own experience that more successful psychotherapists are those who approach their clients with more understanding and patience and consider them equal, as opposed to those who consider their clients being different from themselves and perceive them as people prone to disorders. Similarly, managers who are considerate and patient and have understanding for the least productive workers will be more successful compared to those who act otherwise. Guided by that idea, Fiedler created the LPC scale (Least Preferred Coworker) which measures how managers evaluate their subordinates with whom they experienced greatest difficulties at work, and through which one can indirectly identify management style. Managers are required to describe the least desirable associates on a scale of semantic differential.

The LPC (Least Preferred Coworker) scale indicates priority of motives in the leadership style of individuals. Those who are motivated by tasks view the least desirable coworker in negative light, since he/she represents obstacle when it comes to performing tasks. Their basic goal is to successfully perform tasks, while the secondary one is development of human relations. On the other hand, those who are motivated by relationships view the least desirable coworker in positive light, since their primary need is to maintain good relationship with oth-

ers, to make arrangements, while task performance is of the secondary importance. Score on the LPC scale evaluates leadership style of the participants in a way that it measures the standpoint from which the participant views other person, that is, the manner in which the leader views the person who hinders the realization of his/her goals.

This theory analyzes two leadership styles: leadership motivated by tasks and leadership motivated by human relationships. A leader motivated by tasks is primarily focused on achieving goals, while a leader motivated by human relationships is focused on developing close human relations with his/her followers, helping team members feel comfortable with themselves, others, and their work environment (Northouse, 2009).

Based on the obtained study results, Contingency theory suggests that some styles are more effective in certain situations. Thus, people who are motivated by tasks, those who have lower LPC scores will be more successful in extremely favorable and unfavorable situations, that is, in situations where everything is going smoothly or situations which are out of control.

People who are motivated by human relationships score high values on the LPC scale, and are more successful in less favorable situations or situations where a certain element of security exists, and where things are neither under full control nor completely out of control.

It is not quite clear why Fiedler believed that leaders with high values on the LPC scale are more effective in less favorable situations, nor why leaders with low values on the LPC scale are more effective in extremely favorable or unfavorable situations. Fiedler (1995) later suggested arguments regarding the issue of why leaders who operate in more “problematic” situations are not more effective: a) a leader whose style does not suit a certain situation experiences stress and anxiety; b) in stressful situations, the leader reverts back to the ways in which he/she solves problems, which he/she learned in the early stages of development when he/she did not have much experience; c) consequences of an immature style of resolving situations are poorly made decisions which lead to negative results in the work environment.

Contingency theory suggests that leader effectiveness depends on the extent to which the leadership style fits into the appropriate context. In order to understand the leader’s activities, it is necessary to understand the situation in which the leader guides his/her followers and how he/she sees the followers. It is clear that different leadership styles are related to followers in various ways (Russel, 2003), and that different followership styles are related to leaders in different ways. Effective leadership depends on the extent of the balance between the leadership style and relevant parameters of the environment such as: clarity of

the tasks, the power of leader's position and the quality of the leader-follower relationship.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. *The aims of the study*

1. To determine the preferred leadership styles and the significance of difference between the preferred leadership styles.
2. To determine the preferred followership styles and the significance of difference between the preferred followership styles.
3. To determine the relationship between gender, nationality, and type of organization ownership (state- or privately-owned) and the preferred leadership style.
4. To determine the relationship between gender, nationality, and type of organization ownership (state- or privately-owned) and the preferred style of followership.
5. To determine differences in the preferred leadership styles of managers and other employees.
6. To determine differences in the preferred followership styles of managers and other employees.

We established aims of the study in an effort to determine preferences in terms of leadership and followership styles in the two former Yugoslav countries, Serbia and Macedonia. In the above text, we pointed out that there is obvious lack of studies on leadership and followership, that is, in general, lack of studies on management in Eastern European countries. The above factors, and the significance of the problem at the current moment of transition in Eastern Europe together determined the content of the hypotheses.

#### 3.2. *Participants*

The sample was intended to include respondents of both nationalities, both genders, both from privately- and state-owned organizations, both leaders and followers. In total, 172 respondents took part in the study, 100 of whom came from Serbia while 72 came from Macedonia. 117 of them were managers and 55 were employees. Managers as well as employees from both Serbia and Macedonia took part in the study. The sample included 89 female respondents (51.7%) and 83 male respondents (48.3%). In total, 61 respondents (35.5%) work in state-owned organizations, while 111 of them (64.5%) work in privately-owned organizations.

### 3.3. Instruments

In this study, the Personal Questionnaire for Followership Styles created by Robert E. Kelley (1998) was used to evaluate the followership styles. It consists of 20 questions, while seven-grade Likert-type scale was used for scaling responses to each individual question. The value 0 meant rarely, 3 meant occasionally, 6 meant often; from 0 to 3 meant “between rarely and occasionally”, while from 3 to 6 meant “between occasionally and often”. The overall sum of questions 1, 5, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 measures the Independent Thinking, while the overall sum of questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 15 measures the Active Involvement. Fiedler’s LPC scale (Least Preferred Coworker scale) was used to evaluate the leadership style. It consists of 16 pairs of adjectives, types of semantic differentials with eight levels. This instrument identifies two leadership styles: task-oriented leadership and relationship-oriented leadership. The more positive respondent’s evaluation of the least preferred coworker, the more oriented he/she is toward people, that is, he/she prefers the relationship-oriented leadership style. On the other hand, the more negative respondent’s evaluation of the least preferred coworker, the more he/she prefers task-oriented leadership style. Fiedler refers to this style as directive type, and to the relationship-oriented, as permissive one.

## 5. Results

**TABLE 1: Preferred leadership styles**

Preferred leadership style	Observed N	%	Expected N	Residual
Task-oriented leadership	84	48.8%	86.0	-2.0
Relationship-oriented leadership	88	51.2%	86.0	2.0

Table 1 shows data on the preferred leadership style for the entire sample, both for managers and employees. There is no statistically significant difference in percentages between respondents who prefer particular style of leadership  $\chi^2_{(1)} = 0.093$ ,  $p > 0.01$ . Both relationship-oriented and task-oriented styles are equally distributed.

**TABLE 2: Preferred followership style**

Followership style	Observed N	%	Expected N	Residual
Active	140	81.4%	43.0	97.0
Alienated	3	1.7%	43.0	-40.0
Conformists	5	2.9%	43.0	-38.0
Pragmatists	24	14%	43.0	-19.0

Table 2 shows information on followership styles of among the respondents in the entire sample. We can observe that most of the respondents are active followers, that is, 81.4% of the total number of respondents, followed by 14% of pragmatist followers, 2.9 % of conformist followers and 1.7% of alienated followers. None of the study respondents was characterized by a passive followership style.

There is significant difference in percentages between the respondents who prefer certain followership style,  $\chi^2_{(3)} = 298.000$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

**TABLE 3. The connection between the leadership style and gender, nationality and type of organization ownership (private or state owned)**

Variables	C coefficient	Statistical significance
Leadership style and gender	0.034	0.655
Leadership style and type of organization	0.149	0.048
Leadership style and nationality	0.074	0.328

Table 3 shows the contiguity coefficient and statistical significance of the relation between gender, type of organization ownership and nationality, and the leadership style.

The results presented in Table 3 show that there is statistically significant relation between type of organization and preferred leadership style, but there is no statistically significant relation between the preferred leadership style and other variables: gender and nationality. The respondents from state owned organizations more frequently chose the relationship-oriented leadership style.

**TABLE 4: The connection between the followership style and gender, nationality and type of organization ownership (private and state owned)**

Variables	C coefficient	Statistical significance
Type of followership and gender	0.128	0.415
Type of followership and type of organization	0.202	0.063
Type of followership and nationality	0.151	0.260

Table 4 shows the contiguity coefficient and statistical significance of the relation between gender, type of organization ownership, nationality and the type of followership.

Based on the results shown in Table 4, we can conclude that there is no statistically significant relation between the followership style and gender, type of organization ownership and nationality.

We also wanted to test whether the subsamples of *employees* and *managers* show similarities in the preferred followership style and leadership style.

**TABLE 5: The distribution of the preferred leadership style among managers and employees**

		Preferred leadership style		Total
		Task-oriented	People-oriented	
Managers	Count	59	58	117
	Expected Count	57.1	59.9	117.0
	Std. Residual	.2	-.2	
Employees	Count	25	30	55
	Expected Count	26.9	28.1	55.0
	Std. Residual	-.4	.4	
Overall	Count	84	88	172
	Expected Count	84.0	88.0	172.0

The results  $\chi^2_{(1)} = 0.37$ ,  $p > 0.01$  show that there is no statistically significant relation in the preferred leadership style between managers and employees, although it was expected that managers would often opt for one, while employees would prefer another leadership style.

**TABLE 6: The distribution of the preferred followership style between the managers and employees**

		Preferred followership style				Total
		Model	Alienated	Conformists	Pragmatists	
Managers	Count	96	1	2	18	117
	Expected Count	95.2	2.0	3.4	16.3	117.0
	Std. Residual	.1	-.7	-.8	.4	
Employees	Count	44	2	3	6	55
	Expected Count	44.8	1.0	1.6	7.7	55.0
	Std. Residual	-.1	1.1	1.1	-.6	
Overall	Count	140	3	5	24	172
	Expected Count	140.0	3.0	5.0	24.0	172.0

The results  $\chi^2_{(3)} = 4.02$ ,  $p > 0.01$  indicate that there is no statistically significant relation in the preferred followership styles between managers and employees, that is, that managers and employees who did not occupy managerial functions did not show statistically significant similarity in the preferred followership style; although the trends are as expected.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to evaluate preferences for certain leadership and followership styles among employees in Serbia and Macedonia, who work both in

state and privately-owned companies. Leadership is significant factor for the functioning and success of every organization. Followership is related to leadership style. The study has been carried out with aim to examine leadership potentials in transition countries. With changes of ownership in those countries, the way of appointing managerial personnel also changed. In new conditions, leaders have been chosen according to their qualities, so that our interest was focused on which style was preferred by the leaders. In addition, the aim was to examine which followership style is prevailing and what leaders can expect from followers in accordance with the prevailing followership style, which is an important factor in realization of leadership goals and the success of the organization.

The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in the preferred leadership styles. Also, no relation was determined between gender and preferred leadership style, that is, men and women do not differ in terms of their preferred leadership style. Nationality is also not related to the preferred leadership style. Serbs and Macedonians do not differ with regard to their preferred leadership style. That is understandable because both Macedonia and Serbia were parts of the same country and share the same economic, social and political region. There is a statistically significant relationship between the preferred leadership style and the type of organization ownership. The respondents coming from the state owned companies often prefer the relationship-oriented leadership style, while employees at privately owned companies prefer the task-oriented style. It appears that the type of the organization ownership and general atmosphere in the state-owned organizations requires task-oriented leadership. In private companies, it is more important to achieve objectives, high productivity and perform tasks than to give support to employees, maintain good relations with them and create a pleasant working atmosphere. Privatization in Macedonia and Serbia is relatively recent, management in organizations is underdeveloped, as is the theory and practice of leadership. Accordingly, it is quite logical that in order to achieve the results quickly, task-oriented leadership is preferred.

In terms of the preferred followership style, the active followers dominate, with statistically significant differences in relation to other followership styles. That means that most of the followers have developed critical thinking and capacity for active participation. This information is important in the sense that leaders in human resources management should rely more on the followers and make use of their capacities. The bad economic situation and weak business results in Serbia and Macedonia indicate that the followers' resources have not been sufficiently used. Quinn & Cameron (1983) noted that traditional resource approach and evolutionary organizational theories ignore two important facts: 1) radical change in the business environment and permeability of the organizational entity and 2) followership and followers representing the other side of leadership.

Followers could be proactive and constantly take personal initiative (Carsten, Uhl-bien, West, Patera & McGregor, 2010). Based on this reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers, the more we understand followers, the more we empower our leaders (Kilburn, 2010). Being able to recognize the importance of followers and their contribution to the organization is a great step toward reducing negative stereotypes related to followers, and improvement in managing human resources.

In terms of similarities in preferred leadership and followership styles in managers and employees who do not occupy managerial positions, similar trends can be noted, but statistically significant differences were not determined. Managers and employees mainly differ how often certain leadership and followership style is selected.

The results show that there is no relationship between gender, nationality and type of organization and preferred followership style. Further research could expand into other possible relations with variables such as personal traits, situational variables and organizational factors.

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