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Essential Leadership Skills for Frontline Managers in a Multicultural Organization

Janelle Ward

University of South Florida, backporchbranch@aol.com

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Essential Leadership Skills for Frontline Managers in a Multicultural Organization

by

Janelle (Viera) Ward

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Department of Business
Muma College of Business
University of South Florida

Co-Major Professor: Robert Hammond, DBA
Co-Major Professor: Richard Will, Ph.D.
Lisa Milici Gaynor, Ph.D.
John Townsend, DBA

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my parents, sisters, and brother who always supported not only my academic pursuits, but also my personal and professional endeavors.

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I wish I could thank everyone individually for their help and encouragement over the past three years. Several people and groups stand out and I would like to recognize them publicly for their significant contributions on a recurring basis.

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory research examined the leadership skills essential for frontline managers to be effective in a multicultural organization. The purpose was to inform company management of vital skills to include in a new leadership development program (LDP) initiative. The literature review revealed that a list of commonly accepted leadership skills does not exist. This research gap is even greater for multicultural environments. In addition to developing a list of skills, I assessed the impact of situational factors, including the scenario and demographics of the people involved, on perceived critical leadership skills.

I conducted a survey within the company of interest to validate and refine a list of skills previously identified in pilot study interviews. These skills formed the basis of the survey, which included both quantitative and qualitative questions. Both team members and managers from the diverse workforce completed the survey.

Results of the survey validated the list of six leadership skills that evolved from the pilot study: leveraging individual differences, building team cohesion, managing expectations of team members, motivating team members, resolving conflicts, and communicating with team members/others. As expected, findings also revealed that perceived essential leadership skills vary based on the scenario and demographic make-up of the individuals involved.

The resulting list of leadership skills and insights regarding the impact of situational factors already serves as a starting point for the company's LDP. However, future research could contribute not only to the company, but also the limited field of study of leadership skills in multicultural environments. Plans are already in place to compare results with input from

company employees from different regions of the world from those who participated in the original survey.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Think about your first day as a new manager. Or, imagine what it might be like. How did you feel? Excited about your new job? Anxious about supervising your former peers? Nervous about whether or not you had the skills required to perform your new duties successfully? Like many new managers, as well as those with experience moving to a higher-level position, it is likely you did not feel adequately prepared for this stressful transition. With these thoughts in mind, I undertook the research described herein to better prepare new and seasoned managers to lead their employees.

This study explored the desired leadership skills essential for frontline managers (those who directly supervise employees, not other managers) to effectively lead their multicultural employees. The ultimate research objective was to enhance the company's leadership development program (LDP), with the initial focus on new supervisors. A US-based company, with a diverse workforce employed in the social media field, served as the host for the study.

The initial focus area for the study centered on multicultural aspects unique to the office being studied, due to company leadership interest in the topic. However, I quickly realized that the workforce was diverse in more ways than just geographically based culture, including demographic factors, such as age and education level. At the time of the study, training for managers in the company across all locations was comprised of online, one-size-fits-all content. A multicultural workforce conducted operations at the selected location for the study. Company personnel at this location routinely faced dynamic challenges, including balancing ongoing,

time-sensitive demands with forward-looking, innovative approaches to meet long-term requirements. Additionally, employees were frequently subjected to inquiries due to the high visibility of the supported program. In order to thoroughly capture aspects related to effective frontline manager leadership in a multicultural work environment, perceptions of employees at multiple levels within the offsite location were collected via survey and analyzed.

The objective of the study was to answer the following research question (RQ).

- What leadership skills are essential for frontline managers in a multicultural organization?

In order to analyze the RQ, I proposed two hypotheses based on the premise that the most effective leadership skills are situation-dependent. The hypotheses focused on two aspects of the situation: scenarios facing frontline managers and the multicultural nature of the workforce.

Motivation for Research Topic

The study focused on frontline managers for several reasons. First, both mid- and senior-level managers in the company questioned whether or not the existing manager training was sufficient to prepare individuals to lead team members in such a dynamic and complex work environment, especially for first-time frontline managers. The intent of the study was to provide a feedback mechanism from an offsite location to senior leaders at the company's headquarters in a different state. Hassan (2011) posited that frontline managers were the most critical managers for an organization's success, yet they tended to be overlooked by executives. Thus, Hassan's (2011) article gave credence to the study's focus on these integral employees. Finally, Neal, McKinney, and Bailey (2014) stressed the importance of teaching new managers not only requisite management skills but also introducing them to their new leadership roles.

Of particular interest was the multicultural nature of the office being studied, as opposed to the more homogenous environments predominant throughout the rest of the company. In general, most employees at other locations within the company were raised in Western cultures. According to Yukl (2013), it is increasingly more likely that leaders will find themselves interacting with individuals from other cultures, requiring not only communication skills, but also an understanding of cultural aspects that may influence exchanges. Multicultural interactions occurred on a daily basis at the location studied. An extreme example unfolded when a threat was made by one of the employees to others in the company. The situation could have quickly escalated if not for the cultural awareness of a mid-level manager, who recognized that this type of statement was an appropriate negotiating technique in the threatening employee's culture. Given such a scenario, I expected culture-related leadership requirements, such as cross-cultural communication, to be mentioned by the study participants.

Problem Framing

Frontline managers tend to supervise up to 80% of the workforce in organizations and are thus critical to the success of a company. However, chief executive officers (CEOs) spend a limited amount of time with them. Training can help frontline managers better understand their roles and establish themselves when they become supervisors (Hassan, 2011). Adding to the problem from an organizational standpoint is that top young managers tend to be on a "nonstop job hunt" (Hamori et al., 2012, p. 20). Furthermore, Hamori et al. (2012, p. 20) stated the following:

- An estimated 75% of employees in their 30s report actions related to searching for a new job annually
- 28 months is the average time spent with a company

- The lack of “formal career development,” such as mentoring, is cited by many as lacking in their current companies

Challenges for leaders can be more complex for those who work in multicultural organizations. As pointed out by Schein (2015), the more diverse the subordinates and complex the task, the more important relationship-building becomes between managers and employees. However, most managers do not have training to prepare them adequately to lead such culturally diverse organizations (Offermann & Phan, 2002).

Leadership development program challenges. LDPs, such as the fledgling initiative in the company of interest, pose challenges of their own. Dynamic skill theory contributes a framework for researching leader development. Day and Dragoni (2015, p.142) provided an overview of the theory based on a “web of development,” as opposed to more traditional linear leader development “ladders.” Leader development is composed of iterative cycles, rather than purely sequential steps, better representing the complex environment in which leaders operate. Dynamic skill theory also emphasizes the importance of the individual and context, suggesting that training must be tailored to fit both the leader and the organization.

As with Day and Dragoni’s (2105) iterative cycle, Noe, Clarke, and Klein (2014, p. 247) viewed leadership development as a comprehensive process. In the company of interest, new managers received online training once identified for a leadership position but nothing further. Noe et al. (2014) posited that development requires more than just training. Specifically, they identified the following additional components:

- Formal education
- Job experiences

- Relationships
- Personality and skill assessment

Abbas and Yaqoob (2009, p. 269) held a similar view, with “coaching, training and development, empowerment, participation and delegation” cited as elements of leadership development in Pakistan. In addition, Lorsch and Mathias (1987) recommend that ongoing training be provided to keep managers in the loop regarding organizational changes. Lorsch and Mathias (1987) also stated that both formal and informal interactions with leadership are important developmental opportunities. Thus, according to Lorsch and Mathias (1987), leadership development is a continuing, multi-faceted process.

In addition to cyclical development and multiple components beyond training highlighted above, Buckingham (2012) contributed an individual differences element. In particular, Buckingham (2012) emphasized the fact that LDPs should be tailored to each individual. This was not the case in the company of interest, as each new manager completed the same training modules regardless of previous supervisory experience in other organizations.

While Buckingham (2012) focused on the individual, Day (2000) recognized organizational factors relevant to effective LDPs. Day (2000, p. 606) stated that leadership development must be implemented at all levels within the organization. Often it is only the top managers who benefit from such developmental opportunities. Also, initiatives at all levels within the organization should be integrated “within the context of a strategic business challenge” in order to be most effective. While Bernhard and Ingols (1988, p. 41) focused on corporate training and development in general, and not leadership development specifically, they also recognized the importance of a strategic perspective in two of their “Six Lessons for the Corporate Classroom.”

- Articulate a strategic vision
- Analyze strategic priorities and company needs

According to Bernhard and Ingols (1988), LDPs should be implemented with a strategic framework as a guideline.

As outlined above, frontline managers are critical to the success of organizations, yet many face limited developmental opportunities. In addition, those working in multicultural organizations face even more complex scenarios than employees in less diverse environments. Adding to the problem is the fact that successful LDPs require more than one time, one-size-fits-all training for managers to fulfill their potential as leaders within their companies.

Pilot Study Interviews

I conducted pilot study interviews in the company of interest as a course requirement prior to initiation of the current research effort. Given that interview results formed a foundation for the dissertation, a brief overview is provided here. I designed the pilot study to explore which leadership skills are required of frontline managers or “team leads” to lead their employees effectively.

I interviewed three managers and two team members, including both native and non-native foreign language speakers, to capture a greater variety of perspectives from the multicultural population of over 100 personnel. I selected the five interview participants from within the largest language group in an effort to represent the entire population best, while at the same time staying within the same chain of command. A structured interview, consisting of two questions regarding challenges that frontline managers face, was followed immediately by an open discussion session.

The pilot study identified six leadership-related themes: individual differences, team building, expectation management, motivation, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Given the company leadership's emphasis on culture, it is noteworthy that all five participants mentioned a cultural element during their interviews. These comments validated mid-level and senior leader perceptions that the multicultural nature of the organization added to the complexity of challenges faced by team leads. Results also highlighted the fact that individual differences, including, but not limited to, culture, underlie the other five themes that emerged from the pilot study. The six skills that emerged from the pilot study served as a starting point for this dissertation.

The following four chapters provide a literature review, methodology summary, overview of survey results, and discussion. Conclusions are that both hypotheses were supported, thus suggesting situational factors, including the scenario and diversity of the workforce, impact leader effectiveness. As originally intended, the results are currently in use within the company of interest, serving as a foundation for a new LDP.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature search revealed that companies recognize both the need for LDPs and the importance of frontline managers. Despite the fact that companies prioritize LDPs, a common list of critical skills did not emerge from the extensive number of available references on the subject of leadership. Research within multicultural environments, such as in the company of interest, is especially lacking. The following research question (RQ) was proposed to gain further insight regarding this gap in the literature identified during the pilot study.

- What leadership skills are essential for frontline managers in a multicultural organization?

Research Approach

A series of three iterative literature searches began with the *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* to identify common keywords, phrases, and research gaps. I downloaded references from the publisher Annual Reviews most closely related to the RQ for further analysis. Next, I used similar terms for searches via Google Scholar, as well as specific journals that I identified from the reference lists of initial sources. Searches including such terms as “leadership skills” and “multicultural” generated a large number of references for further analysis. However, finding sources specifically relevant to the information services industry, in which the workforce being studied operated, proved to be much more challenging. Searches for “information services” yielded results covering a variety of

unrelated topics. A common theme in the literature was leadership skills required for librarians, deserving a more in-depth examination than other sources resulting from this keyword search. I reviewed two references that revealed commonalities with other leadership-related research across a variety of industries, such as the military and the medical and hospitality fields.

I reviewed recommended references from professors and fellow graduate students during the second phase, along with additional online searches using keywords. Overall, 366 references resulted from the second literature search, although I reduced the actual number after eliminating articles that appeared more than once or were identified in the previous literature search. I eliminated many of the articles based on the title alone. I downloaded 10 articles for further consideration based on the titles and abstract reviews. Ultimately, 21 references from both the first and second literature searches were selected as the most relevant to the RQ. I did not utilize PsycINFO during the first two searches, so the third literature search focused on PsycINFO as the primary database.

Once I combined the results from all literature searches, the final list covered a wide spectrum of references dating from 1987 to 2017. I included a variety of journal articles, books, and other sources. Ultimately, I selected 65 of the most relevant references from the series of three literature searches.

Literature Review

Definitions. Although leadership is a widely researched domain, a common definition does not exist. Some studies focused specifically on aspects of leadership, such as the traits and behaviors of leaders, and thus the researchers espoused narrow definitions. I adopted Yukl's (2013) broad definition of leadership for the current research effort, in order to avoid being overly restrictive given the exploratory nature of the study. Yukl (2013, p. 7) defined *leadership*

as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.”

Yukl (2013) classified leadership skills in three categories: technical, interpersonal, and conceptual. These categories were based on years of research, dating back to the original taxonomy proposed by Katz (1955). Yukl (2012, p. 77) also provided a taxonomy that included four main leadership behavior categories, and stated that “Skills are not equivalent to actual behavior, but they can help us understand why some leaders are able to select relevant behaviors and use them more effectively.” Therefore, while these two concepts (skills and behavior) are different, their relationship reveals that leadership behavior research is relevant to the current study that focused primarily on skills that could be used for training purposes.

As with the definition of *leadership*, many definitions exist for *management*. According to Steers, Nardon, and Sanchez-Runde (2016, p. 19), “most writers have agreed that management involves the coordination and control of people, materiel, and processes in order to achieve specific organizational objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible.” Day (2000) provided additional insights by comparing leadership and management development. While management development often consists of training the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to address known problems, leaders must learn how to enable people to find solutions in unforeseen circumstances. Thus, according to the literature comparing leadership and management, leadership tends to focus on people and influence, while management is more task-oriented, with an emphasis on coordination and control. I used the same distinction between management and leadership throughout the literature review process.

Originally I focused the research effort on geographically based cultural aspects of the office being studied, in accordance with discussions with and perceptions of company leadership. However, as I developed the survey, it became clear to me that the workforce was diverse in many more ways than just culture based on geographic origin. For example, many employees had a military background and some had worked more than twenty years in the military culture. Thus, I adopted a broad definition of *multicultural*, incorporating a variety of demographic factors in the diverse workforce being studied. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, *multicultural* is defined as “of, relating to, reflecting, or adapted to diverse cultures,” with “culture” defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time” (Multicultural, n.d.).

Research gaps. Hogan and Hogan (2002) revealed that, while leadership is a widely researched topic, there is no consensus regarding a list of agreed upon features for effective leadership. Within the context of academic libraries, Wong (2017) also found a lack of consensus regarding leader effectiveness. When it comes to leadership development in particular, Day and Dragoni (2015) pointed out that, while it is a priority for many organizations globally, the topic is still a relatively new research area. Thus, research gaps exist regarding what specific skills make an effective leader and how best to develop them.

Yukl (2013, p.382) proposed several questions for future cross-cultural leadership research, including “What is necessary for effective leadership in a multi-national team with members who differ in their cultural values?” Leung, Ang, and Tan (2014) also emphasized the need for research to identify intercultural competencies, in particular to identify specific contexts and roles. In addition, Hajro and Pudelko (2010, p. 178) recognized the importance of situational

factors, asking “is there a set of specific leadership requirements across all companies or do leadership requirements differ in different institutional settings?” Finally, a review of three decades’ worth of cultural research on groups and teams included minimal leadership skills-related content (Zhou & Shi, 2011).

Situational leadership theory. Bass and Bass (2008) claimed that individual situations are an important overarching aspect to consider when determining the most effective leadership characteristics. According to situational leadership theory, characteristics of subordinates are critical drivers of effective leadership behavior. Environmental factors are also important for a leader to take into account (Bass & Bass, 2008; Yukl, 2013). For example, Van Fleet and Yukl (1986) stated that in order for a military leader to be effective, behavior must be adapted, in both combat and noncombat situations, and likely varies with the military rank of the leader as well.

Multicultural and diversity factors. According to Schein (2015), relationship building becomes more important as cultural diversity increases. Similarly, Watson, Johnson, and Zgourides (2002) conducted research on teams within an ethnically diverse environment. Their findings indicated that interpersonal leadership activities have a greater impact on team performance in diverse teams, whereas task-focused leadership is most important in non-diverse teams. Maznevski and DiStefano (2000) also conducted leadership research regarding diverse teams. They focused on global teams and concluded that mapping, bridging, and integrating are of critical importance. Thus, leaders must be developed to facilitate these processes, particularly in global teams.

Development of future leaders of multicultural teams can be aided by the use of tools to assess the potential for success of aspiring international executives. For instance, the Prospector tool consisted of fourteen dimensions derived from existing literature. Two of the categories

were related to culture: “sensitive to cultural differences” and “is culturally adventurous” (Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997, p. 6). In addition, Hajro and Pudelko (2010) identified “cross-cultural awareness” as a key competency for multinational leaders.

Leung et al. (2014, p. 490) provided insights focused specifically on intercultural competence. They broke this factor relevant to multicultural organizations into three components:

- Intercultural traits
- Intercultural attitudes and worldviews
- Intercultural capabilities

Of particular importance to the current study, Leung et al. (2014) reported benefits of intercultural training. Similarly, Rehg, Gundlach, and Grigorian (2012) found training to be effective in building cultural intelligence. Offermann and Phan (2002) also stressed the importance of cultural intelligence for effective leadership in their research of the culturally diverse workforce serving a varied customer base at the Washington Hilton. As in many other multicultural organizations, the authors reported a lack of training for leaders in culturally diverse environments.

Rehg et al. (2012, p. 216) also stated “we can explore how to improve the functioning of individuals across cultures regardless of what context they operate in, while the manifestation of that knowledge and understanding may differ operationally.” Joshi and Lazarova (2005), in their analysis of leadership in multinational teams, supported the view that common competencies may be relevant to, but applied differently across, contexts. Additionally, the authors posited that the same competencies apply across both cross- and mono-cultural teams.

In their study of perceptions regarding effective leadership, Galperin, Lituchy, Acquah, Bewaji, and Ford (2014) also reported shared competencies. The researchers compared results between the African diaspora in the United States and in Canada. While many commonalities were identified, such as being wise and knowledgeable, Galperin et al. (2014) noted some differences as well. And of the common perceptions regarding what makes a leader effective, some of the competencies were ranked differently between American and Canadian participants. Thus, while commonalities exist, which skills are most important may vary across cultures and contexts.

Leadership skills. The literature review can be summarized in terms of the number of leadership skills referenced (Figure 1). I added communicating to the list of skills, due to its prevalence in the literature search. This decision will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

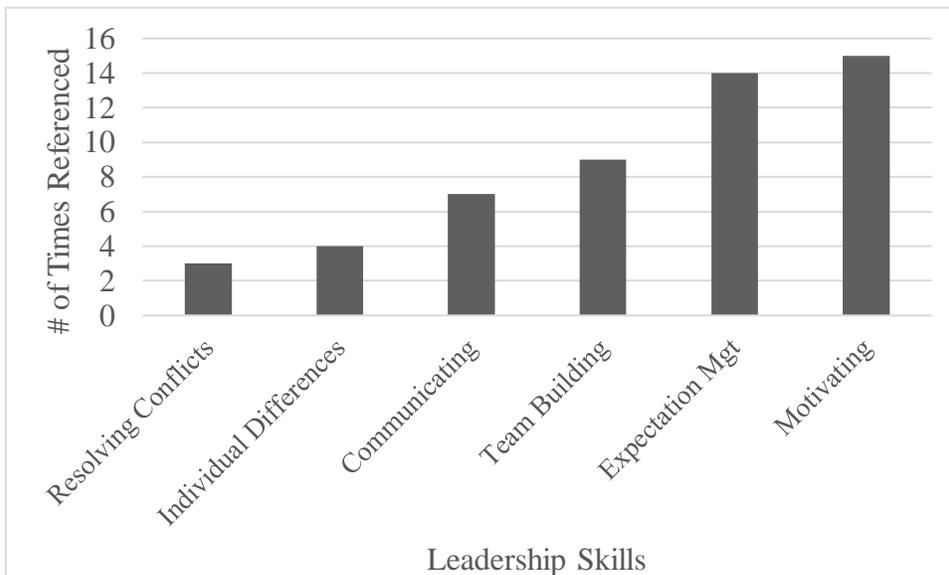


Figure 1. Leadership skills identified in literature search by number of times referenced.

As mentioned previously, a definitive list of skills necessary for effective leadership does not exist. However, I found commonalities when comparing skills across sources, as seen in

Table 1 (see page 16). I categorized skills in the “Other” category for a variety of reasons. For instance, some were only mentioned once in the literature. Some skills were considered too broad and not necessarily related to leadership. *Planning* and *executing* are examples of terms that were excluded for this reason. Additionally, I included skills of a managerial nature in the “Other” category, such as administering discipline and conducting performance evaluations. While leaders may need to fulfill these functions, these two examples are more representative of tasks performed by managers, as defined earlier in this chapter.

Summary

The results of the literature search revealed a lack of an agreed upon list of skills required for effective leadership. However, broadly defined commonalities do exist. Additionally, the types of skills that are most important vary by factors, such as the multicultural make-up, the diverse nature of the workforce, or the particular situation. Finally, research suggests training can be effective in improving leadership skills for managers in diverse, multicultural organizations.

Table 1

Leadership Skills Identified in Literature Search by Source

Leadership Skills	Sources
Leveraging individual differences	Crandall (2007); Hajro and Pudelko (2010); Spreitzer et al. (1997)
Building team cohesion	Alpander (1986); Bass and Bass (2008); Day and Dragoni (2015); Hogan and Hogan (2002); Robles (2012); Taylor (1995); US Army (2015); Van Fleet and Yukl (1986); Zaccaro, Rittman, and Marks (2001)
Managing expectations	Bass and Bass (2008); Day and Dragoni (2015); Galperin et al. (2014); Hajro and Pudelko (2010); Neal et al. (2014); Peterson and McAlear (1990); Van Fleet and Yukl (1986); Wong (2017); Zaccaro et al. (2001)
Motivating	Alpander (1986); Galperin et al. (2014); Hajro and Pudelko (2010); Neal et al. (2014); Peterson and McAlear (1990); US Army (2015); Van Fleet and Yukl (1986)
Resolving conflicts	Peterson and McAlear (1990); Van Fleet and Yukl (1986)
Communicating	Alpander (1986); Galperin et al. (2014); Peterson and McAlear (1990); Robles (2012); Taylor (1995); Van Fleet and Yukl (1986); Wong (2017)
Other	Alpander (1986); Bass and Bass (2008); Day and Dragoni (2015); Galperin et al. (2014); Hajro and Pudelko (2010); Neal et al. (2014); Peterson and McAlear (1990); Robles (2012); Spreitzer et al. (1997); Taylor (1995); US Army (2015); Van Fleet and Yukl (1986); Zaccaro et al. (2001)

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Research Overview

The research undertaken in the company of interest built upon a pilot study conducted previously to fulfill graduate-level course requirements. Based on the pilot study findings and the research gap identified in the literature review, the survey was developed to validate and refine the initial list of leadership-related themes. I conducted the dissertation research within the same company as the pilot study, but incorporated survey data from employees and managers across numerous teams and a wider variety of cultural backgrounds and demographics. I developed the survey based on results from the initial interviews, additional literature searches (as described in Chapter 2), and an iterative process that included feedback from pilot study participants regarding the design of the survey.

Overall Research Design

I utilized a mixed methods approach in the exploratory research effort. The foundation of the research was a pilot study including qualitative interviews. Pilot studies are useful in that they can help “develop an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 67). Because information regarding the leadership challenges specific to the population was anecdotal, qualitative research was conducted initially to explore managers’ perceptions regarding the impact of geographically based multicultural factors on leadership effectiveness.

The dissertation research contributed predominantly subjective quantitative data, although two open-ended questions provided supplemental qualitative information as well. Thus, by using a sequential, mixed methods approach, a more robust picture of the essential leadership skills required for frontline managers in the company of interest emerged.

Survey

The purpose of the survey was to validate and refine the list of leadership themes identified in the pilot study and sequential literature searches. The research question was refined slightly after the pilot study as the scope of the exploratory research narrowed.

- What leadership skills are essential for frontline managers in a multicultural organization?

The unit of analysis was at the individual level. I surveyed individuals, including employees, team leads, and mid-level managers. As in the pilot study, the term “frontline managers” referred to “team leads” at one of the company’s locations. The survey research focused on team leads, as training for these individuals was the motivation for the study.

I based the hypotheses on the pilot study, literature reviews, and comments from interview participants who helped develop the survey.

- H₁: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across scenarios
- H₂: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across demographic groups (management level, years with the company, supervisory experience, military experience, education level, gender, culture, and age)

Lacking an agreed upon framework of skills from the research community, I categorized the wide variety of leadership skills, traits, and behaviors identified in the pilot study according to Yukl’s (2013) taxonomy of skills. Next, I nested the six leadership skills within the

interpersonal and conceptual skills categories proposed by Yukl (2013), given in Table 2. And finally, I excluded the third category, technical skills, from the research effort because the company had training in development for these types of skills that focused primarily on employees, as opposed to leadership skills for managers.

Table 2

Pilot study results and Yukl's (2013) three-factor taxonomy

	Pilot Study Leadership Themes	Status
Technical Skills	N/A	In development under current contract
Interpersonal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual differences (i.e., culture) • Team building • Expectation management • Motivation • Conflict resolution 	Focus of dissertation
Conceptual Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making 	Future advanced training topic

While conducting the dissertation literature search, it became clear that one commonly referenced leadership skill was missed during the pilot study interview analysis process: communication. When I reviewed the raw interview data again, communication was a common underlying theme. It is likely I failed to identify the new theme during the pilot study because the participants did not mention communication repeatedly. In some instances, communication was only implied. For example, when one of the interviewees talked about the importance of explaining expectations to team members, I categorized the statement as expectation management. The importance of communication as a separate skill was not apparent to me until I delved further into leadership references. Given the prevalence of communication skills being cited in the literature, I added communication to the interpersonal skills category in the taxonomy referenced above.

Another departure from the list developed in the pilot study involved decision-making. The conceptual skills category includes broad subjects, such as “[g]eneral analytical ability, logical thinking, proficiency in concept formation, and conceptualization of complex and ambiguous relationships” (Yukl, 2013, p. 152). Given that the research effort focused on leadership skills for new managers, I considered decision-making as an advanced skill that would be taught later in a manager’s career. Thus, I determined that decision-making out of scope in the list of skills explored in the dissertation survey.

Survey development. All five pilot study participants were actively involved with development of the dissertation survey. As with the original interviews, they volunteered their time and insights without any compensation. I conducted a series of interviews and beta-tests of the survey with the pilot study participants to ensure I captured their insights correctly and used common terminology for both team members and managers alike.

Additionally, I sought feedback from the dissertation committee, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program cohort members, and an independent third party with previous teaching experience at the graduate level who was not affiliated with the company, the office being studied, or the DBA program. Through an iterative process, including interviews with the aforementioned individuals and reviews of survey drafts, I refined the descriptions of the six leadership skills so as to be clear to survey respondents.

- Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences
- Building team cohesion
- Managing expectations of team members
- Motivating team members
- Resolving conflicts

- Communicating with team members/others

One of the initial proposed questions, similar to Question 4 in the survey (Appendix A), generated discussion that ultimately resulted in Questions 1-3 on the final version of the survey. One of the pilot study participants commented that the leadership skills required vary depending on the scenario, as was highlighted in the literature review. I used situations described in pilot study interviews to develop the notional scenarios described in Questions 1-3. Finally, I added Question 6 at the request of two managers, specifically to address training for new team leads. I included two qualitative questions (Question 5 and the final question following the demographics section) as well. These open-ended questions enabled participants to provide insights regarding leadership skills that were not listed and feedback on the survey itself and the company's leadership development initiative as a whole.

One of the survey constraints was that time spent by the survey participants could not be charged due to the company's work rules. Hence, participants were surveyed "off the clock" and thus, did not receive any pay for the time spent completing the survey. Additionally, operations could not be affected in any manner by the survey. In order to minimize the potential impact of these restrictions on the response rate, I limited the length of the survey, with an estimated completion time of less than 15 minutes. In order to compensate for time constraints and potentially sensitive topics, participants were given the option to skip questions for any reason, if desired.

Due to the company's work rules, employees would have been required to complete the survey electronically while outside the office environment, potentially reducing the response rate. Thus, I provided hard copy surveys to give participants the option to respond at work or outside business hours.

I took care to avoid interjecting my opinions (bias) regarding perceived required skills for team leads to effectively lead their employees. In addition, I dedicated a concerted effort to minimize the possibility of “leading” questions to support my expectations or misinterpreting information when analyzing results. For example, the skill regarding individual differences did not specifically list “culture” to avoid steering participants toward the hypothesis that multicultural factors influence perceptions regarding what makes a leader effective. Instead, I included a question regarding language (native, heritage, or non-foreign language speaker) to capture the multicultural aspect of the workforce. Using language as a proxy for culture also enabled me to gather information related to respondents’ backgrounds without asking in which country they were raised, a sensitive subject among the workforce. As an added safeguard, the consent form and survey did not include “culture” or “multicultural” anywhere in either document, despite the interest of company management on the geographically based demographic. Creswell (2013, p. 80) referred to this cautionary measure as “bracketing.”

Data collection. The population included native and non-native (heritage) speakers of foreign languages, with a variety of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. In addition, potential respondents differed in their previous work experience, education level, gender, and age. I surveyed individuals from different organizational levels (team member, team lead, and mid-level manager) to incorporate perceptions that may have varied based on the participants’ job positions. Due to the limited number of team leads and mid-level managers in the survey population, I considered participants in these positions to be “managers” for the purpose of analysis and discussion.

Following approval to proceed from the university’s institutional review board (Appendix B), the client at the study location, and the company’s senior leadership, the Regional Operations

Manager sent an email to all company employees at the office surveyed (Appendix C). The email included a request to complete the survey in support of the office's new leadership development initiative. Survey administration commenced two business days following the original email from the lead manager at the location of interest.

I attached a consent form (Appendix D) to the survey. Participants were given an opportunity to read the informed consent form and then to choose whether or not to complete the survey. Potential respondents were informed that submission of the survey indicated their consent to participate. In order to maintain anonymity, I did not require signatures or collect identifying information.

I hand-delivered a hardcopy of the consent form and survey over three days to the majority of the survey population. An email followed, letting potential respondents know the location of blank surveys in case I missed anyone on the previous days due to shift work or scheduled absences. Participants submitted their completed surveys via a lockbox in a common area in the work location to ensure their anonymity. Only I had the lockbox key.

A small subset of the population worked in a separate location. Most of the team members in this office space had less than a year of experience with the company. However, the offsite manager and several employees expressed an interest in the survey. The offsite manager helped deliver and collected anonymously the completed surveys.

Initially, I gave survey participants one week to complete the survey. I sent a second reminder email to the survey population and extended collection one week to increase the response rate. Additionally, I also extended a second face-to-face invitation at the primary office location. And later, a member of the local management team sent an email to other managers requesting their support for the survey.

Data from survey participants was entered manually into a spreadsheet on a computer under my control. Once entered, I compared all of the spreadsheet data with the original hardcopy surveys for quality control purposes. R 3.5.0 was used to analyze descriptive and exploratory aspects of the survey data. Nonparametric procedures were employed due to the small sample size, with a focus on the language demographic question (Q7) to further research the impact of geographically based culture on perceptions regarding leadership. Specifics of the survey population, sample, response rate, and data analysis are discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

Introduction

The research methodology used in this study was primarily quantitative; however I also included two open-ended, qualitative questions (see Appendix A), with the intent to capture additional insights regarding leadership skills and to guide the development of the company's new LDP. Two hypotheses guided the development of the survey and analysis of results.

- H₁: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across scenarios
- H₂: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across demographic groups

As mentioned in Chapter 3, nonparametric procedures were used for the statistical analyses. This was due to the small sample size and the dependent variables being ordinal or less, including rank order data. Thus, normality could not be assumed.

For ease of understanding, I abbreviated the skills, as defined in Table 3.

Table 3

Leadership Skills' Abbreviations

Skill #	Full Description	Abbreviation
1	Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences, etc.	Individual Differences
2	Building team cohesion	Team Building
3	Managing expectations of team members	Expectation Management
4	Motivating team members	Motivating
5	Resolving conflicts	Resolving Conflicts
6	Communicating with team members/others	Communicating

Demographics

Overview. The population was comprised of a total of 102 team members and managers, including both team leads and mid-level managers. However, two team members and four managers were not eligible to complete the survey because they had participated in the pilot study and follow-on survey development. Thus, the total eligible population was 96. Of the eligible population, 39 opted to participate in the survey, resulting in a response rate of 41%.

Demographics question 1 (D1): Position. The total population included 81 team members and 21 managers. Thirty team members and seven managers participated in the survey (Figure 2), with the position of two participants unknown.

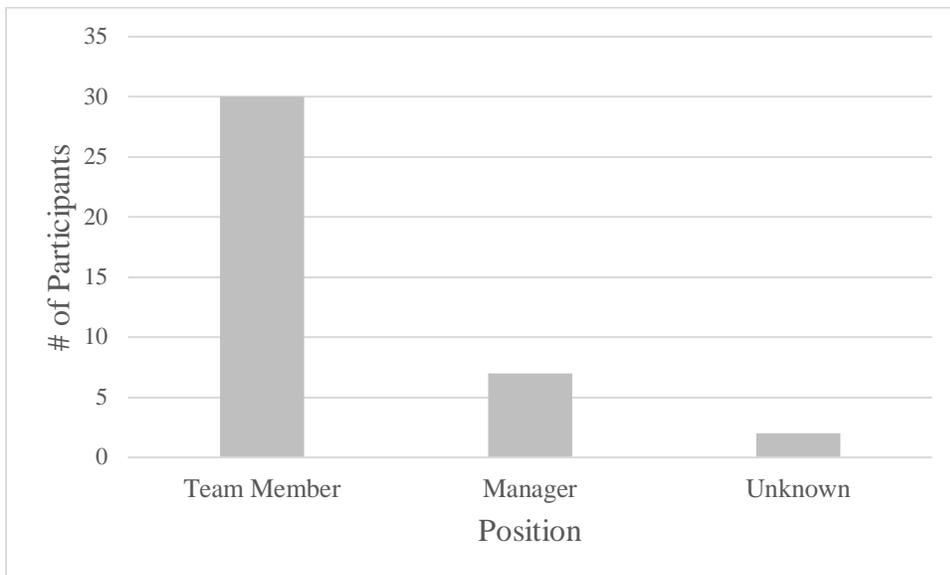


Figure 2. Position demographics.

D2: Years with company. Survey respondents averaged approximately three years with the company. They provided a varied cross-section of experience with the company, from less than one year to seven, as seen in Figure 3.

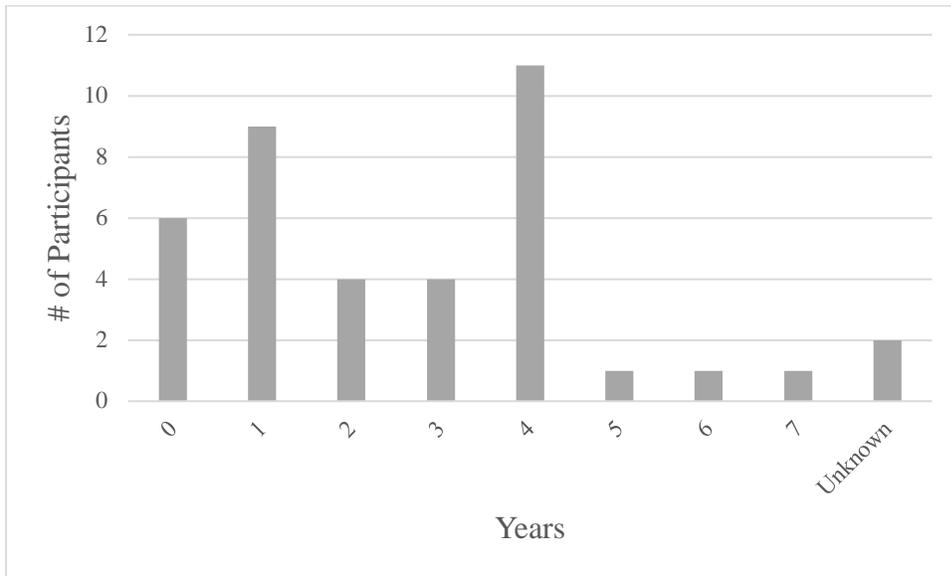


Figure 3. Years of experience with the company.

D3: Supervisory experience. Survey participants had a wide range of supervisory experience, including in both their current and previous positions. As can be seen in Figure 4 (page 28), the majority of respondents had four or less years serving as a supervisor. The longest supervisory experience cited in response to this question was 30 years.

D4: Military experience. Approximately 50% of the respondents indicated they had current or previous military experience (Figure 5, page 28). Two individuals did not provide responses.

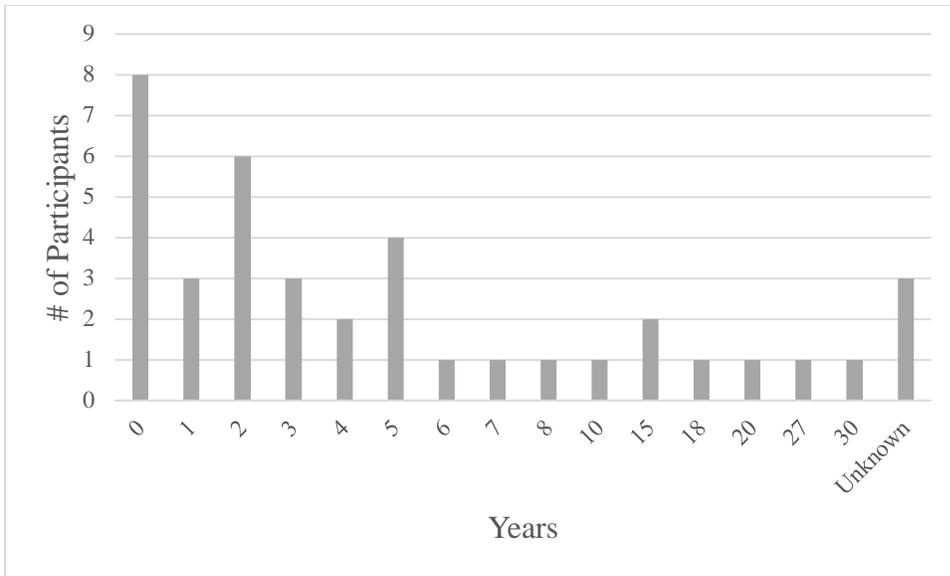


Figure 4. Years of supervisory experience.

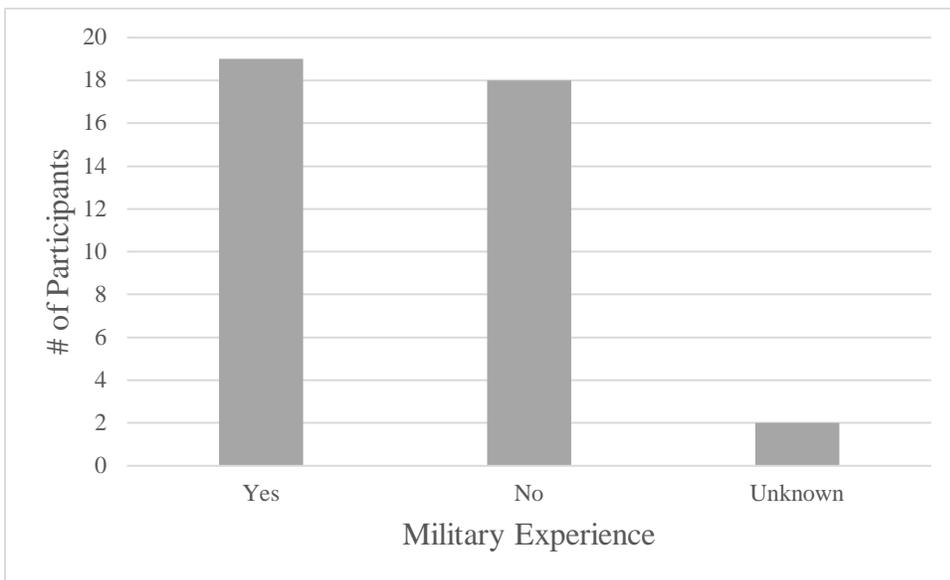


Figure 5. Military experience.

D5: Education level. I divided education into four levels: high school, associate degree, undergraduate degree, and graduate degree. The majority of positions within the company require a minimum of an undergraduate degree. The data reflected this education requirement,

with over 86% of respondents to Question D5 holding at least a bachelor's degree (see Figure 6 for additional details).

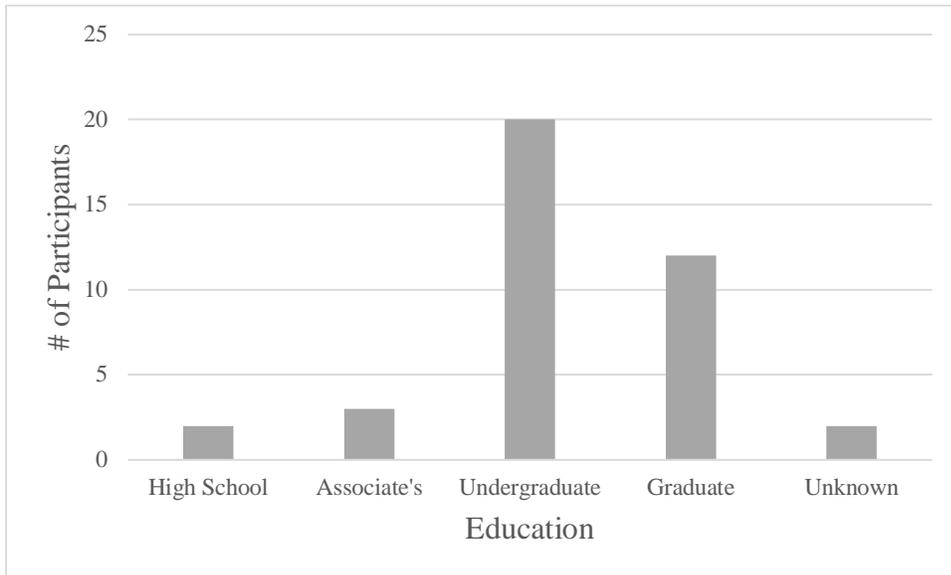


Figure 6. Education level.

D6: Gender The total population consisted of 77 men and 25 women, or approximately 25% women. Research participants reflected a similar percentage of women and men as in the population (see Figure 7, page 30). Of the 37 valid responses to D6, 27% were women.

D7: Foreign language skills. The total population of interest consisted of 90 foreign language speakers, including both native and non-native speakers combined. Twelve spoke English only. As seen in Figure 8, the majority of survey respondents indicated that they also speak a foreign language. The large number of foreign language speakers in both the population and survey sample mirrored the foreign language requirement for most positions.

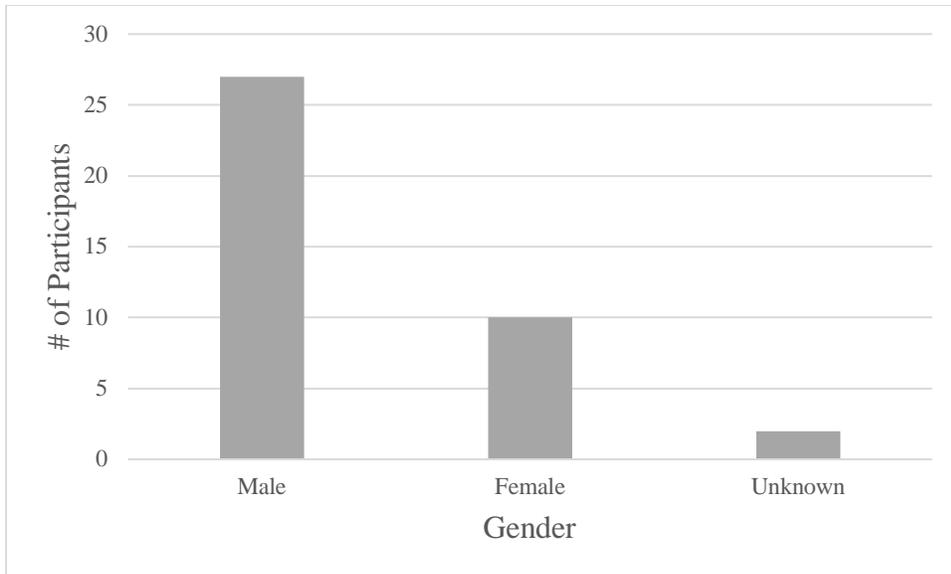


Figure 7. Gender.

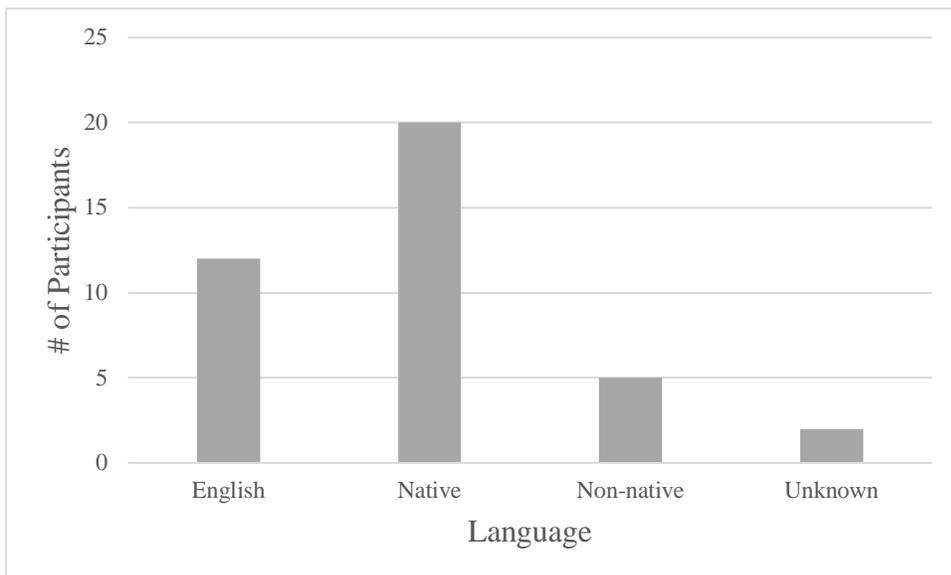


Figure 8. Foreign language skills.

D8: Age. Survey respondents were from a broad range of age groups, from the 21-30 year old range to the 51 or more year range. The survey included a fifth response for those who were 61 or more years old. Since only one participant was in this age group, D8 survey responses

for the oldest two groups were combined for analytical purposes. The decision to combine groups was based on the assumption that perceptions of the individual in the oldest age group were similar to those of respondents in the next oldest age group (51-60 years). The company had hired individuals with varying degrees of experience, which is reflected somewhat in responses to D8. Figure 9 provides additional details regarding the ages of participants.

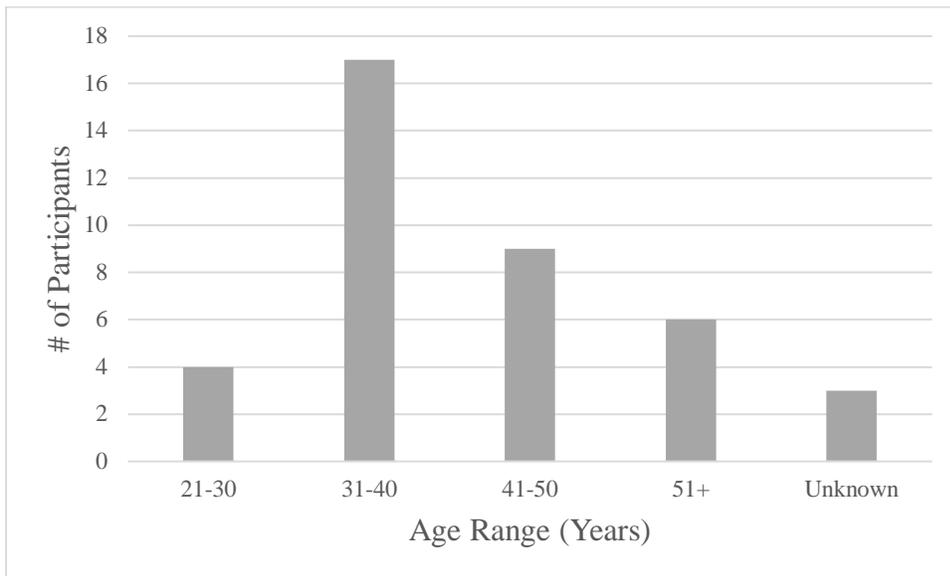


Figure 9. Age.

H1 - Quantitative Survey Questions: Q1-3 (Scenarios)

Q1-3 included three notional scenarios facing team leads. I used the same Likert scale for each question, with ordinal data collected across a 7-point scale from “1” (Not Important) to “7” (Very Important). The scale included a neutral score of “4” and an option to select “N/A” if a particular skill was not applicable to the scenario for a given respondent. Each respondent was presented with the same three scenarios (repeated measures). Only Resolving Conflicts varied across scenarios, $F(2, 74) = 7.23, p = .001$. A post-hoc Quade pairwise comparison with false

discovery type adjustment for familywise error revealed significant differences between Scenarios 1 and 2 ($p = .020$), as well as between Scenarios 1 and 3 ($p = .001$). Scenario 2 and 3 scores did not vary significantly. Thus, five of the six skills did not vary in importance based on the scenarios facing team leads in the first three questions of the survey. The only skill that varied in importance was Resolving Conflicts.

H1 - Quantitative Survey Questions: Q4 (Overall Ranking of Leadership Skills)

As compared to the ordinal data collected in Q1-3, the rank order data in Q4 proved to be more challenging for survey participants as well as analysis of the results. There seemed to be some confusion for respondents regarding the rank ordering of the leadership skills from “1” (most important) to “6” (least important), as presented in Q4. For example, some respondents did not rank all six of the skills. After reviewing the data, responses from only 28 of the 39 participants were analyzed. Based on the proportion of “1” scores, the most important skill was Communicating, followed by Team Building and Motivating. The least important skills, according to the proportion of “6” scores, were Expectation Management and Motivating, with a tie between Individual Differences and Resolving Conflicts.

Figure 10 presents the data visually and provides additional insights by showing the trend across all six rankings for each skill. As identified above, Communicating received the largest proportion of “1” scores. Communicating also received a relatively high proportion of “2” scores, consistent with the previously reported result. Team Building also had relatively high rankings. While Individual Differences did not receive any “1” scores, it received a large proportion of “2” and “3” scores, indicating that leveraging individual differences was an important skill for team leads. Conversely, Expectation Management and Resolving Conflicts were consistently ranked in the lower end of the importance spectrum, indicating managing

expectations and resolving conflicts tended to be less important skills for team leads to employ in general. Motivating remained relatively consistent across rankings.

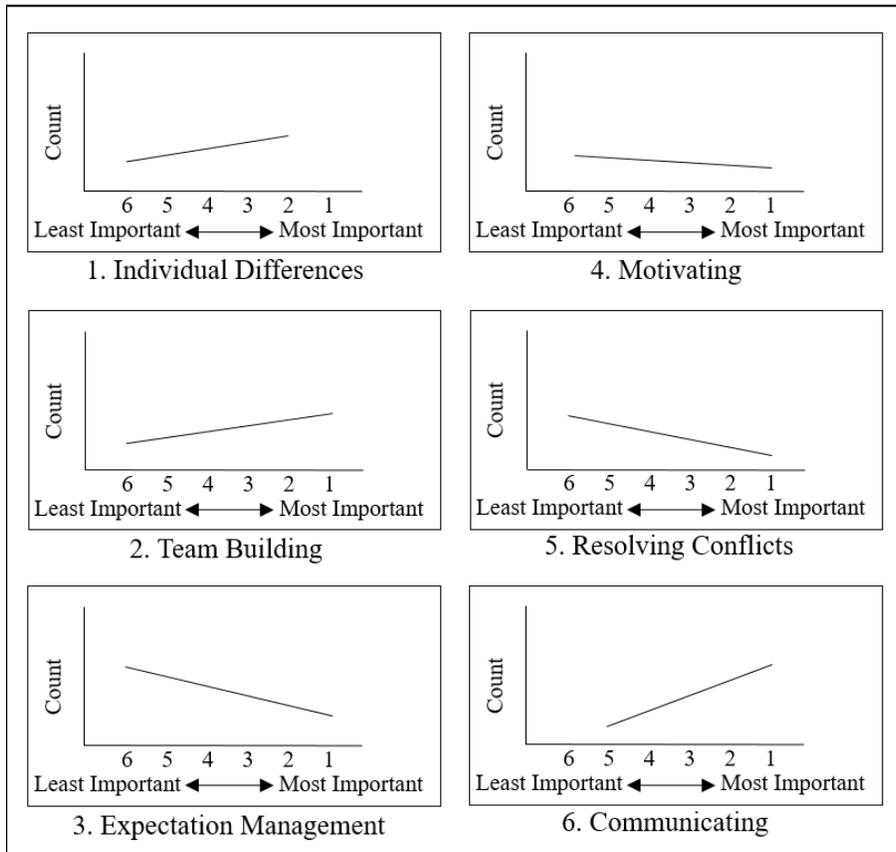


Figure 10. Visual representation of Question 4 overall leadership skills rankings.

H1 - Quantitative Survey Questions: Q1-3 (Scenarios) vs. Q4 (General)

The comparison of results from the scenario-based questions (Q1-3) and the overall leadership skills rankings (Q4) was reduced because only 25 of the 39 respondents provided complete data for all four questions. In order to compare the data between Q1-3 (ordinal data) and Q4 (rankings), scenario ranks were constructed by summing skill values across the scenarios. Next, the skill sums were ranked across the skills themselves. When ties occurred,

both of the scores received the lower rank. The high number of ties in scenario rankings is somewhat concerning when analyzing the results. For example, one participant ranked all of the skills the same.

A Quade test was used to analyze the results. The treatment factor was ranking type (Q1-3 vs. Q4) with skill ranking as the response. The blocking factor was the survey respondent. Three skills varied significantly between the scenario questions (Q1-3) and the general ranking question (Q4). The differences tended to suggest that perceived importance of Individual Differences, Team Building, and Communicating varied between specific and general contexts.

Table 4

Results of Q1-3 (Scenarios) and Q4 (General Ranking) Comparisons

Skill	Significance
Individual Differences	$F(1, 24) = 23.27, p < .001$
Team Building	$F(1, 24) = 24.24, p < .001$
Expectation Management	$F(1, 24) = .23, p = .63$
Motivating	$F(1, 24) = .83, p = .37$
Resolving Conflicts	$F(1, 24) = 2.26, p = .15$
Communicating	$F(1, 24) = 15.93, p < .001$

H1 - Quantitative Survey Questions: Q6 (Leadership Skills for New Team Leads)

Too few respondents correctly answered Q6 for statistical analysis to be conducted. Twenty of 39 survey respondents completed Q6. However, based on the reported number of years with the company, 14 of the 20 participants likely should not have answered Q6, as they do not have the number of years associated with management-level positions. As only six valid records remained, statistical analysis was not an option.

H2 - Quantitative Survey Questions: Q1-3 (Demographics)

Cumulative link mixed models (CLMM) were used to analyze the effects of demographic groups on responses to the scenario-based questions (Q1-3). CLMM models, also referred to as proportional odds models, are a type of regression appropriate for ordinal response data when repeated measures are used. In this case, all of the demographic data was included in the model for each skill, with scenario serving as a covariate. A likelihood ratio test was used to analyze the overall significance of each demographic characteristic, taking into account all of the others, while at the same time controlling for scenario. Individual Differences, Team Building, Resolving Conflicts, and Communicating varied significantly across different demographic groups. The results for these four skills are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Skill 1 (Individual Differences). Individual Differences ratings differed significantly by language group (D7) when controlling for scenario ($p = .006$ for main effect). In accordance with a post-hoc Tukey test, the only significant difference in Individual Differences ratings was between native and non-foreign language speakers. However, using Wald odds ratios, significant factor-level effects were evident for native foreign language speakers, who were 28 times more likely to rate Individual Differences higher than non-foreign language speakers ($p = .001$), and non-native speakers were 37 times more likely to rate Individual Differences in a similar manner ($p = .064$).

Skill 2: Team building. The number of years an employee worked with the company and education level both displayed significant main effects for Team Building. As the number of years with the company increased, the importance ratings for building teams decreased ($p = .008$). For education level, the main effect was significant ($p = .003$), with a Tukey test revealing

that the only significant factor-level effect was between those with undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Next, polynomial contrasts were used because of the order that exists for ordinal data. Therefore, instead of group-by-group comparisons, as with non-ordinal factors, an ordering relationship between the response and ordinal predictor were analyzed. When considering linear, quadratic, and cubic contrasts, p-values equaled .344, .061, and .024, respectively. Overall for education level and Team Building, it appeared importance ratings tended to increase from high school through undergraduate degrees and then decrease for those with graduate-level degrees. The model predicted the order of education, with 1 being “High school” and 4 being “Graduate degree (master’s or doctorate)” as 1, 4, 2, 3 in terms of importance ratings for Team Building.

Skill 5: Resolving conflicts. Using CLMM procedures for Resolving Conflicts, a significant main effect was found between scenarios ($p = .009$). In addition, Tukey test results indicated ratings between Scenarios 1 and 3 were significant, while others were not. A closer look at the Wald odds ratios revealed Scenario 3 scores for Resolving Conflicts were approximately seven times more likely to be rated as important than in Scenario 1 ($p = .005$).

The number of years survey participants were employed with the company also significantly impacted importance ratings for Resolving Conflicts ($p = .006$). Looking at the main effect for number of years with the company ($b = -.680$), it was suggested that employees with longer amounts of time with the company tended to rate the Resolving Conflicts skill as being less important than those with fewer years as employees ($p = .013$).

Education level also had a significant main effect on scores for Resolving Conflicts ($p = .019$), although the post-hoc Tukey test indicated none of the pairwise comparisons were significant. Further analysis of the linear ($p = .097$), quadratic ($p = .102$), and cubic ($p = .118$)

contrasts revealed ratings tended to initially increase with degree obtained and then decrease as respondents reached the graduate level. The model predicted the education order with regards to the importance ratings to be Groups 1, 2, 4, 3, again with the education level increasing from Group 1 through Group 4.

Finally, age had a significant main effect on Resolving Conflicts ($p = .002$), with a Tukey test revealing that ratings from the youngest age group (21-30-year-olds) differed significantly from the ratings of their older counterparts. Further analysis indicated that, as age increased, so did the importance level ratings for Resolving Conflicts, with effects diminishing in accordance with the significant quadratic term (linear, $p = .003$; quadratic, $p = .023$; cubic, $p = .265$). Ultimately, the model predicted the order of age groups as 1, 2, 3, 4, with “1” being the youngest and “4” being the oldest.

Skill 6: Communicating. Age was the only demographic group with a significant main effect for Communicating ($p = .033$). A post-hoc Tukey test indicated none of the pairwise comparisons were significant. However, the apparent trend was that older survey participants rated communication skills as more important than those in lower age groups. This factor-level effect seemed to diminish after Group 3 (41-50-year-olds; linear, $p = .102$; quadratic, $p = .017$; cubic, $p = .681$), with the model predicting the following order of age: 1, 4, 2, 3.

H2 – Quantitative Survey Questions: Q4 (Demographics)

A Kruskal-Wallis test (nonparametric equivalent to a one-way analysis of variance procedure) was used to analyze demographic factors. Age was the only demographic group with a significant overall effect on skill rankings. Older respondents were significantly more likely to rate Expectation Management as more important than younger survey respondents ($H = 8.87$, $p = .012$). A post-hoc analysis (Dunn test with Bonferroni adjustment) revealed age groups 2 (31-40

years) and 3 (41-50 years) were significantly different ($Z = -2.96, p = .009$). None of the other pairwise comparisons were significant ($p < .05$).

Qualitative Survey Questions: Q5 and Final Question (Open-ended)

Qualitative responses to Q5 provided support for the list of six leadership skills in the survey, adding supplementary insights to the quantitative data discussed previously. Although the intent of the question was to capture additional leadership skills, instead many respondents emphasized the importance of the existing skills outlined in the survey. Table 5 summarizes the number of responses categorized according to Skills 1-6. Based solely on the count per skill, the two most important skills for team leads to be effective were Individual Differences and Communicating. Given the focus of the research on multicultural factors, it is notable that culture was mentioned in four of the ten responses associated with Individual Differences.

Table 5

Number of Responses to Q5 Per Leadership Skill

Skill #	Leadership Skill	Count
1	Individual Differences	10
2	Team Building	2
3	Expectation Management	1
4	Motivating	2
5	Resolving Conflicts	1
6	Communicating	9

Fifteen comments to Q5 did not nest within the original set of skills, covering a variety of different topics, such as treating individuals equally when assigning tasks and hiring team members into management positions. Several comments centered on compassion, caring, and treating team members as family. Upon review of all comments for Q5, an additional skill did not emerge, serving to validate the original list of six skills in the survey.

I included a final “catch all” write-in question at the end of the survey. Survey participants provided a total of eight comments. All comments supported the survey and LDP initiative in general, such as “A good initiative in my opinion.” Given the ultimate objective of the research was to apply results to team lead development, it is notable that three of the eight responses related specifically to training. For example, “Leadership training is a must.”

The next chapter examines both the quantitative and qualitative results. In addition, potential future research topics are highlighted. Finally, the current application of research results in the company of interest is summarized.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSION

A literature review, pilot study interviews, and survey led to the results discussed in this chapter. In this chapter, a summary of the research is provided, conclusions are presented, including how the findings supported the two hypotheses, and survey results are related to situational leadership theory and the RQ. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research efforts and an overview of the applications of the survey results within the company of interest.

Summary

Purpose. The objective of this research was to identify the skills required in order for frontline managers in a multicultural organization to be effective leaders. Ultimately, the intent of this study was to inform the development of a new company LDP. The following RQ guided the research effort:

- What leadership skills are essential for frontline managers in a multicultural organization?

The RQ evolved from pilot study interviews that I conducted to address company leadership concerns about challenges facing frontline managers. In particular, company leadership was interested in how multicultural factors impacted the work environment. I explored two hypotheses, focusing on the impact of situational factors on perceived essential leadership skills, including scenarios facing frontline managers and demographic groups in the workforce.

- H₁: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across scenarios
- H₂: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across demographic groups

Literature review. The literature review resulted from an iterative set of searches that commenced prior to the pilot study and continued via the survey. First, the terms *leadership* and *multicultural* were defined. I selected broad definitions due to the exploratory nature of the current study. The literature review identified several research gaps; in particular, it found that there is no consensus regarding the skills that make a leader effective. The gap is even greater when considering leadership skills in multicultural environments. Additionally, I introduced situational leadership theory as defined in the literature, which ultimately led to the hypotheses provided above. The following list of six leadership skills were mentioned most frequently in the literature and were explored further via the survey.

- Motivating
- Managing Expectations
- Building Team Cohesion
- Communicating
- Leveraging Individual Differences
- Resolving Conflicts

Methodology. I used a mixed methods approach in the development of the survey (Appendix A). Participants from the pilot study interviews assisted in the development of the survey, which was developed using an iterative series of reviews. The resulting survey included questions related to leadership skills and demographics. I utilized Likert scales, rank ordering, and open-ended questions. The first three questions included notional scenarios facing team leads (H₁), followed by a question regarding leadership skills in general. A fifth question gave

participants an opportunity to include additional leadership skills not included in original list of six. Next, I included a question to be answered only by employees with experience as team leads.

Finally, I asked demographics questions, including the following factors (H₂):

- Position (manager or team member)
- Years with the company
- Supervisory experience
- Military experience
- Education level
- Gender
- Language (multicultural factor)
- Age group

I hand-delivered a hardcopy survey to managers and team members in the company of interest, at a location with a multicultural workforce. In addition, the regional manager sent a recruitment email to encourage participation prior to survey administration (Appendix C). I collected data over the course of two weeks. Thirty-nine out of a total 96 in the eligible population completed the survey.

Findings.

Quantitative questions. In analyzing the three notional scenarios addressed through Questions 1-3, only Resolving Conflicts was significant. Analysis of the general leadership skills question (Q4) revealed Resolving Conflicts was not ranked highly. Of the six skills, Communicating and Team Building were ranked the highest. When comparing the results of Q1-3 and Q4, it was revealed that Individual Differences, Team Building, and Communicating varied significantly between scenarios and general rankings. Q6 did not include a large enough

response rate for statistical analysis, due to the small number of participants with team lead experience.

Statistically significant results were also obtained when demographics were considered. Individual Differences, Team Building, Resolving Conflicts, and Communicating all varied significantly across different demographic groups when scenario-based questions (Q1-3) were analyzed. Further analysis revealed the following demographic groups varied for Q1-3:

- Language (Culture)
- Years with the Company
- Education Level
- Age

Q4 rankings varied significantly for Age as well. I was particularly interested in the fact that responses between team members and managers were not significantly different. A significant difference would have indicated that employees at different levels within the organizations had disparate perceptions regarding what skills are effective.

Qualitative questions. No additional skills were identified in Q5. However, the skills provided in this open-ended question validated the original list of six skills used in the survey. In other words, when given the opportunity to add skills that I may have missed when composing the original list, respondents did not indicate that any skills should be added. Generally, the write-in comments in the final question of the survey provided support for the research and new LDP initiative.

Conclusions

H₁: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across scenarios. Survey results tended to support H₁, suggesting that particular scenarios impact the effectiveness of leadership skills. In particular, when taken together, Q1-3 differed significantly for Resolving Conflicts. This suggests that when resolving conflicts, leaders should consider the scenario when deciding the type of leadership skill(s) to apply.

A comparison of Q1-3 and Q4 results provided further support for H₁. While Q1-3 were based on three notional scenarios, Q4 included general rankings of the six leadership skills. Results revealed significant differences between the scenario-based questions (Q1-3) and general rank ordering (Q4) for Individual Differences, Team Building, and Communicating. Given the significant results found when comparing the two types of questions (Q1-3 vs. Q4), additional support was provided for H₁. This outcome suggests that the scenario is particularly relevant for frontline managers to contemplate when leveraging individual differences, building teams, and communicating with team members and others.

H₂: Perceived essential leadership skills vary across demographic groups. As with H₁ (scenario), results from Q1-3 and Q4 tended to support H₂ (demographic groups). First, significant differences across demographic groups were found for Individual Differences, Team Building, Resolving Conflicts, and Communicating in responses to Q1-3.

- Individual Differences: language (culture)
- Team Building: years with the company and education level
- Resolving Conflicts: years with the company, education level, and age
- Communicating: age

Correlations between Years with the Company, Education Level, and Age were analyzed for collinearity. None of the correlations for these three demographic groups were below -.03 or above 0.3, so their correlations were considered to be negligible.

Of particular interest was that language had a significant effect on perceived importance of Individual Differences. This result not only supported H₂, but also company leadership’s original belief that geographically based cultural factors (captured by the language demographic question, D7) impacted the office environment. Also of note, results for the following demographic groups were significant for two skills each: years with the company, education level, and age (see Table 6).

Table 6

Significantly Different Skills Per Demographic Groups

Demographic Group	Significantly Different Skills	
Years with the Company	Team Building	Resolving Conflicts
Education Level	Team Building	Resolving Conflicts
Age	Resolving Conflicts	Communicating

Responses to Q4 also tended to support H₂. As with Q1-3 results for Resolving Conflicts and Communicating, age varied significantly in Q4. Thus, responses to all four questions tended to support the hypothesis that perceived essential leadership skills vary across demographic groups, highlighting the diverse nature of the workforce studied. Based on these findings, frontline managers should pay particular attention to at least: language/geographically-based culture, years with the company, education level, and age.

Discussion

Situational leadership theory. According to situational leadership theory (Bass & Bass, 2008; Van Fleet & Yukl, 1986; Yukl, 2013), the skills a leader applies in order to be effective vary depending on the situation (what) and people involved (who). Since leadership skills varied across scenario-based questions (Q1-3) and between Q1-3 and the general rank-ordering question (Q4), results tended to support situational leadership theory. In the same way, the significant effect of demographics on survey results supported the theory as well.

Research question. In order to address the RQ as a whole, I compared the literature review and survey results. Figure 1 from Chapter 2 is included below for discussion purposes and reveals the top-ranked skills: Motivating, Expectation Management, and Team Building (Figure 1, see page 46).

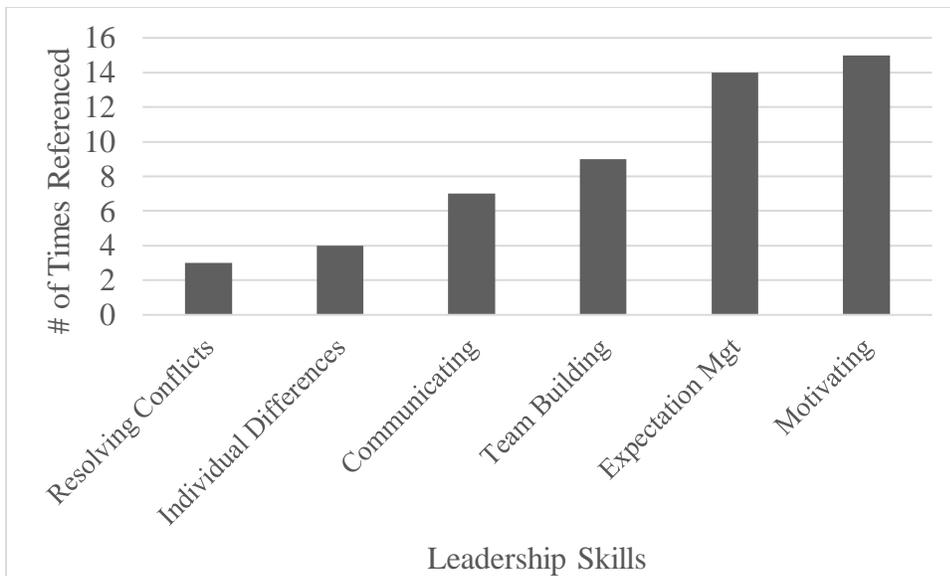


Figure 1. Leadership skills identified in literature search by number of times referenced.

Leadership skills were also rank ordered based on responses to the three scenario-based questions (Q 1-3). I calculated the mean score per skill for each question to obtain the rankings.

The top three skills for each question are as follows.

- Q1: Communicating, Team Building, and Individual Differences
- Q2: Communicating, Motivating, and Resolving Conflicts
- Q3: Communicating, Resolving Conflicts, and Team Building

The results from the general rank-ordering question (Q4) were summarized in two ways. First, the count of “1” importance rankings resulted in the following three highest-ranked skills.

- Q4 (“1” rankings): Communicating, Team Building, and Motivating

The results are also visualized in Figure 10, replicated from the Chapter 4. The third most important-ranked skill changed from Motivating to Individual Differences when the results were analyzed visually. Communicating and Team Building remained first and second.

- Q4 (Figure 10 trends across rankings): Communicating, Team Building, and Individual Differences

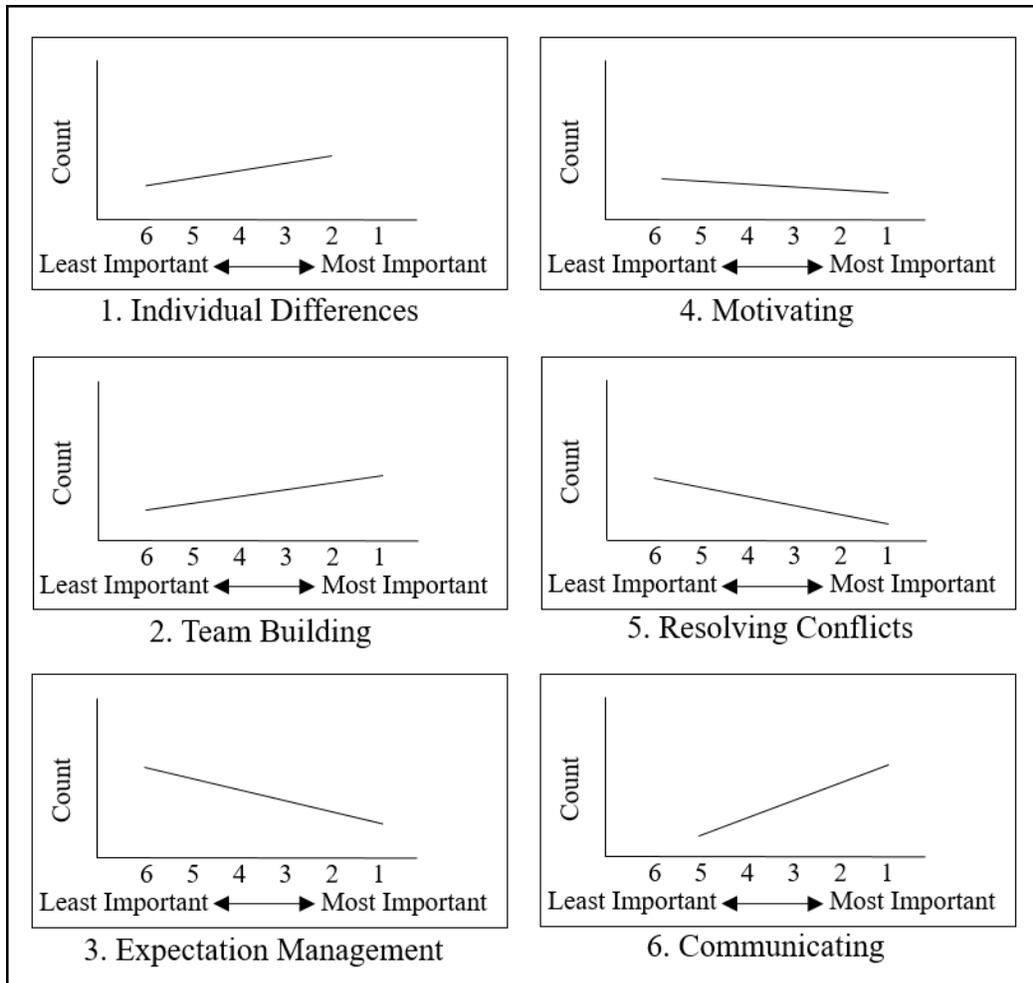


Figure 10. Visual representation of Question 4 overall leadership skills rankings.

Finally, results from qualitative survey question Q5, revealed the following top-ranked skills, according to the number of comments recorded.

- Individual Differences, Communicating, Team Building/Motivating

Team Building and Motivating tied in the rank ordering. As stated in the Results chapter, the lowest rank was assigned when ties occurred.

To summarize the results, I generated Table 7, with “6” being the highest score. I summed the scores to derive rankings that combined the literature review and survey results. Based on the overall results summarized in Table 7, Communicating was the most important

leadership skill, with Team Building and Motivating as the two next highest ranked skills. With regards to the company of interest, the LDP could focus on the top three skills for frontline managers and provide more in-depth training on all skills as leaders progress.

Table 7

Skill Rankings Across Literature Review and Survey Results

Source	Individual Differences	Team Building	Expectation Management	Motivating	Resolving Conflicts	Communicating
Lit Review		4	5	6		
Survey Q1	4	5				6
Survey Q2				5	4	6
Survey Q3		4			5	6
Survey Q4	3	5		3		6
Survey Q5	6	3			3	5
OVERALL	13	21	5	14	12	29

Recommendations

Future research. Several ideas for potential future research emerged during the course of the study, both within the company of interest and with other organizations. First, the sample size was small, resulting in a need to use nonparametric procedures. The population could be extended to team members and managers from a broader range of geographical regions, working at the same company location. This approach would increase the overall sample size and also allow for comparisons across various regions of the world.

Another potential area for future research would be to explore the generalizability of survey results. The survey could be administered to other multicultural organizations with similar workforces, to analyze similarities and differences. An alternative would be to administer the survey to a more homogenous workforce. Such research could explore the position of Joshi and Lazarova (2005), who argued that common competencies exist across mono- and

multicultural teams, as discussed in Chapter 2. Furthermore, it might be possible to combine the results from within the company of interest to those obtained in similar organizations, thus addressing the sample size issue discussed previously. Finally, rather than focusing on cultural factors, results with companies outside the social media field could be compared to assess generalizability across industries.

Additionally, it is possible that in the effort to avoid steering participants toward multicultural factors, I had the opposite effect by addressing the topic indirectly via a proxy (language). If I had specifically asked questions about culture in the original pilot study and/or survey, I could have explored this element further. In the future, follow-on interviews could be conducted or a survey could be administered to analyze directly the effect of culture on leadership effectiveness.

I could also revisit the survey question “What leadership skills do you think are more important for **new** Team Leads to master, based on your experiences when you **first** became a Team Lead?” The response rate was too low for statistical analysis, due to the small number of respondents with the required experience. I could ask for all employees, not just those with team lead experience, to answer the question. The results could then be used to guide the development of new managers.

In addition, I could focus on some of the highest ranked skills to provide more detailed insights to guide the leadership development initiative. For example, the skills that are ranked highest in Table 4 could serve as a starting point for a future study. Yet another option would be to research some of the demographic groups with significant results, including language/geographically based culture, years with the company, education level, and age. Interviews with team members and managers within demographic groups could be conducted to

gain more in-depth insights as to the significant differences highlighted by the survey. Again, the results from such efforts would support the development of training for frontline managers.

Practical application in the company of interest. The ultimate objective of the research was to inform the company's new LDP initiative, with a focus on geographically based cultural factors. As the study progressed, I grew to think of the office environment as “multi-divers-ural” rather than simply multicultural, in the strictest sense of geographically based culture. This discovery resulted in additional data being collected for H₂, broadening the scope to include numerous other diverse demographic groups represented in the workforce.

From a practical standpoint, given that results tended to support both H₁ and H₂, situational leadership theory could be used as an LDP subject for frontline managers. In particular, training would stress that effective leaders need to take into account the scenario they are facing (H₁) along with demographic factors (H₂) within and external to their teams.

Even before quantitative results of the study were analyzed, I used preliminary results from the pilot study and qualitative survey questions within the company of interest. First, the list of skills from the pilot study helped identify a potential training source for both team members and managers. Next, once all completed surveys were returned, I sent qualitative survey question responses to site managers and company senior leaders. Finally, I submitted qualitative survey questions to contribute to a list of potential topics for discussion with all of the company's team members and managers at the location of interest.

Again, imagine yourself as a new manager. Whether or not you are a first time supervisor or a veteran, leadership can be challenging and at times anxiety provoking. LDPs can help better prepare managers by arming them with skills that can be applied on the job. The purpose of this study was to lay the foundation for such a program.

In conclusion, the research served to support situational leadership theory. The survey results tended to support both H₁ and H₂, suggesting that both the scenario and demographic groups impact the effectiveness of leadership skills. The results from this survey research expand the body of knowledge with a snapshot of perceived leadership skills by a multicultural workforce in the information services industry, specifically within the social media field. Although the study will inform the new LDP initiative in the company of interest, it remains to be seen as to whether or not a common list of leadership skills can be applied across diverse teams and industries. Based on my experiences in conducting the research and analysis of the survey results, I formulated a variety of recommendations for potential next steps, some of which are already underway in the company studied.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey

Leadership Skills Survey

Questions (all questions are optional)

Answer all questions based on your experience working for [Company].

For Questions 1 through 3, rate the listed Leadership skills on a scale of 1-7, with 1 being “Not Important” and 7 being “Very Important.”

1. Imagine you are a Team Lead welcoming a new [Company] employee to your team. The new hire has **many more years of work experience** than you and your team members, but **lacks some of the technical skills** required for the job. Thus, team members will need to provide additional help to train the new employee. How important are each of the following Leadership skills for you as the Team Lead to integrate the new employee within your team and make them productive as soon as possible?

Please place an “X” in the column for the number that best represents your view or “N/A” if the skill is not applicable to the scenario.

Leadership Skills	Not Important		Neutral			Very Important		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences, etc.								
Building team cohesion								
Managing expectations of team members								
Motivating team members								
Resolving conflicts								
Communicating with team members/others								

2. Imagine you are a Team Lead with **new approaches to improve performance** that worked well for another team in the office. You are **not sure how effective or well-received the changes will be** within your team, especially given friction between both teams in the past. How important are each of the following Leadership skills for you as the Team Lead to successfully implement your ideas?

Please place an “X” in the column for the number that best represents your view or “N/A” if the skill is not applicable to the scenario.

Leadership Skills	Not Important		Neutral			Very Important		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences, etc.								
Building team cohesion								
Managing expectations of team members								
Motivating team members								
Resolving conflicts								
Communicating with team members/others								

3. Imagine you are a Team Lead with a team member who is **qualified to perform the job but only does the minimum amount of work required**. As a result, **other team members are frustrated** at having to make up for the additional workload they must absorb to fulfill requirements. In addition, you have heard rumors that team members are accusing you of favoritism. How important are each of the following Leadership skills for you as the Team Lead to address the performance issue and concerns of other team members?

Please place an “X” in the column for the number that best represents your view or “N/A” if the skill is not applicable to the scenario.

Leadership Skills	Not Important		Neutral			Very Important		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences, etc.								
Building team cohesion								
Managing expectations of team members								
Motivating team members								
Resolving conflicts								
Communicating with team members/others								

4. **In general**, how important is each individual Leadership skill for Team Leads to be effective?

Please rank the following in order of importance from 1 to 6, where 1 is **most** important and 6 is **least** important.

_____ Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences, etc.

_____ Building team cohesion

_____ Managing expectations of team members

_____ Motivating team members

_____ Resolving conflicts

_____ Communicating with team members/others

5. Again, based on your experience working for [Company], what **additional** Leadership skills are important for Team Leads to be effective? Please write your inputs in the space below.

If you have **experience as a Team Lead with [Company] in your current and/or previous position**, please answer the following question. **If not, skip this question.**

6. What Leadership skills do you think are most important for **new** Team Leads to master, based on your experiences when you **first** became a Team Lead?

Please place an “X” in the column for the number that best represents your view.

Leadership Skills	Not Important		Neutral			Very Important	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Leveraging individual differences, such as strengths, preferences, etc.							
Building team cohesion							
Managing expectations of team members							
Motivating team members							
Resolving conflicts							
Communicating with team members/others							

Demographics (all questions are **optional**)

1. Do you approve other people’s timecards?

- Circle **Yes** or **No**

2. How many years have you been a [Company] employee? Please write your response below.

_____ years

3. How many years of supervisory experience did you have prior to working for [Company]? Please write your response below.

_____ years

4. Do you have any past or current military experience?

- Circle **Yes** or **No**

5. What is the highest level of education you have **completed**? Please circle your response below.

- High school
- Associate degree
- Undergraduate degree (bachelor's)
- Graduate degree (master's or doctorate)

6. What is your gender?

- Circle **Male** or **Female**

7. Are you a native or heritage foreign language speaker? Please circle your response below.

Note: If you do **not** speak a foreign language, circle "N/A"

- Circle **Native** or **Heritage** or **N/A**

8. In what age group do you fit? Please circle your response below.

- 21-30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41-50 years
- 51-60 years
- 61 or more years

Would you like to share any comments regarding the survey? If so, please write your inputs in the space below.

Please place your completed survey in the lockbox marked "**SURVEYS**" on the CD shredder near the printers in the front of Rm 119.

Thank you for your time and participation!

Janelle Ward
[Email Address]

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Exemption Letter



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

4/30/2018

Janelle Ward
Muma College of Business (DO NOT USE FOR IRB 2.2.3)
[Address]

RE: Exempt Certification

IRB#: Pro00034982

Title: Essential Leadership Skills for Frontline Managers in Multicultural Organizations

Dear Ms. Ward:

On 4/30/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets criteria for exemption from the federal regulations as outlined by 45CFR46.101(b):

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
- (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
 - (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

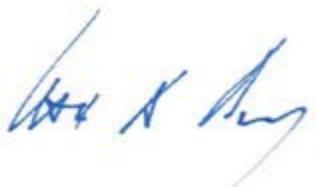
As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF HRPP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF HRPP Policy, once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARC. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new

study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application.

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARC. This does not limit your ability to conduct your research project.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Ruiz".

Mark Ruiz, PhD, Vice Chairperson USF
Institutional Review Board

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Subject: ***NEW*** [Company] [City] Leadership Development Program (LDP)

[City] Team - A new Leadership Development Program (LDP) initiative is in the works that will benefit all of us by enhancing leadership effectiveness, as well as individual and team performance. Janelle Ward is the lead on the effort. Please support her requests for your inputs in the future to ensure the LDP is tailored to our needs here in [City]. The first step will include a survey related to [Company] new manager training.

[Program] Team Members & Managers – You will receive a survey within a week to gain a better understanding of leadership skills required for Team Leads to be effective. The objective is to improve new manager training for [Company] employees in [City]. All [Program] Team Members and Managers are eligible to participate in the survey based on their work experience with [Company] in [City]. In addition to supporting the new LDP initiative, this survey is part of a research study (#00034982) being conducted by Janelle Ward for her dissertation at the University of South Florida.

The survey is anonymous and should take less than 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is optional. You will not be compensated for completing the survey and your time is not billable to the contract. In addition, participating in the survey must not interfere with operations in any way.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the [Company] LDP initiative or the survey, please e-mail Janelle Ward: [Email Address].

[Name]

[Company]

Regional Operations Manager

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Pro00034982

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study. You are being asked to take part in a research study that explores essential leadership skills for frontline managers (Team Leads). The person who is in charge of this research study is Janelle Ward. This person is called the Principal Investigator.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of leadership skills required for Team Leads to be effective. Ultimately, the objective is to improve new manager training for [Company] employees in [City]. To do so, you are asked to share your own personal views through an anonymous survey that should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Why are you being asked to take part?

You are being asked to take part in this research study because your workplace experience makes you a knowledgeable person with an informed view.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to share your perceptions regarding leadership skills essential for Team Leads to be effective. You will provide your responses in a roughly 15 minute survey. Your identity is anonymous and cannot be associated with this research. Likewise, your responses are anonymous and cannot be linked to your identity.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer; you are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. This study is not linked to your employment status so your decision to participate or not to participate will have no impact on your employment status in any way.

Benefits and Risks

I am unsure if you will receive any personal benefits by taking part in this research study. There are no direct promotion or monetary benefits gained from taking part in this study. However, results of the study will be directly applied to new manager training as the first step in [Company]'s Leadership Development Program (LDP) in [City], currently in development by the Principal Investigator.

This research is considered to be minimal risk.

Compensation

I will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

You may <u>not</u> charge time participating in the survey to the contract, as per the [Company] President, [Name].

Privacy and Confidentiality

I must keep your study records as confidential as possible.

Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are: Janelle Ward, the Principal Investigator; [Name] and [Name], Advising Professors from the University of South Florida, and The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Contact Information

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu. If you have questions regarding the research, please contact the Principal Investigator at [Phone Number] or by email at [Email Address].

I may publish what is learned from this study. If I do, I will not let anyone know your name. I will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are. You can keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by proceeding with this survey that I am agreeing to take part in research and I am 18 years of age or older.

To participate in the study, please complete the attached survey.