

Leader-Staff Relationships in Kosovo Customs: Leadership and its Impact on Customs Effectiveness

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Abstract: Leadership styles and leader-staff relationships have always impact on organizational effectiveness. It is important to study of this dimension in Kosovo Customs, taking into account the impact and contribution it has to the country's budget. The purpose of this research is to analyze the style of leadership that is mostly used in this organization at both management levels and to see whether that style has influenced the organization's effectiveness. In this study data were collected from various levels of Customs employees. The survey questions have been raised based on two instruments, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, and the Leadership Describing Questionnaire. Also, correlations of leadership styles are tested based on Pearson's theory. The paper analyzes four leadership styles used by the leaders at two managerial levels, the results of the study show that the democratic style is the dominant style of leadership in this institution. Also, the survey results show that, as top-down, also bottom-up, there is a good relationship between leaders and subordinates at both levels of management. Thus, this leader-staff relationship positively affects the effectiveness of Customs.

Keywords: customs, effectiveness, kosovo, leadership.

1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is the leader-staff relationships in an organization, and the focus of this paper is to investigate this relationship in Kosovo Customs. This article explored the style of leadership that is most used in this organization and whether that style has influenced the organization's effectiveness. The findings will indicate which of the theories on leadership may determine the effectiveness of the leader finds implementation in Customs. Which leadership style is used at both management levels, the General Director and the Directors of Directorates, and what reciprocal relationships are subordinated to their leader. The paper also focuses on subordinate behavior towards leaders, seeking answers about behavior and trust between them.

2. Methodology

The main research question is: *What style of leadership prevails in Customs and how does the leader-staff relationship affect the effectiveness of the organization?* So the purpose of this research is to analyze the leadership-staff relationships in a public

institution in Kosovo, in this case, Customs, as well as the leadership of this organization, to see what is the leader's impact on the organization's effectiveness.

Two hypotheses have been raised in this paper.

Hypothesis 1: The dominant leadership style positively influences the effectiveness of the organization.

This hypothesis will test whether the leadership style most frequently used by the leader positively influences the effectiveness of the organization or its style hampers effectiveness in the organization.

Hypothesis 2: Lack of employee confidence in their leader hampers effectiveness in the organization.

This hypothesis tests the employee's report with the leader and will be verified by measuring the confidence of the workers in the leader. The credibility that the leader can have on the employee helps to increase the effectiveness of the organization, and in this case, it will be tested whether the workers trust or not the leader and whether the relationship between them affects the effectiveness of the organization.

The purpose of this research is to highlight the influence of the leader on the effectiveness of Kosovo Customs. To respond to the research question, data were collected from various levels of Customs employees. Survey questions have been raised based on two instruments, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 1992), and the Leadership Describing Questionnaire (Ohio State University, 1962).

The survey was conducted with two questionnaires; one addressed to the Directors of the Departments and the other to the staff of those Departments. The Department Director's questionnaire is made up of two parts in section "A", where they responded to their behavior with the staff of the department they are leading and part "B" asking about the Director-General. The staff questionnaire has been a part of interrelated questions about the Director of the respective Department. The questionnaire has a Likert scale, and it is structured into three sections, the demographic section, the leadership style section, and the leader's section of behavior and belief.

The conclusions and recommendations of this paper, based on the results of the empirical and theoretical analysis, tend to contribute to enhancing the organization's effectiveness. Respondents provided survey data from three different directorates in Kosovo Customs. Respondents were of different sexes and ages from the Law Enforcement Directorate, the Directorate of Operations and the Border and the Directorate for Legislation and Human Resources. The reason for the selection of these three directorates is the role that each of them has in the organization, starting from the operations directorate and the border managing the border points, and consequently the main part of this institution. The Law Enforcement Directorate is the organization that has sectors dealing with import and smuggling investigations, while the Directorate for Legislation and Human Resources is considered to have less impact on the functioning of Customs than the other two, and this is the reason for the selection of this Directorate (Kosovo Customs, 2016a).

3. Theoretical Approaches to Leadership

The leader must understand the importance of the style that (s)he chooses to exercise in a given situation. The style of leadership that (s)he selects always affects his/her subordinates' performance, but also their enjoyment of work, resulting in employee motivation and, consequently, higher efficiency in the organization. According House and Aditya (1997, p. 451), the term of leadership style refers to "the manner in which specific behaviors are expressed may vary substantially." There are many and varied definitions of leadership and leadership theories have long been related to issues of power and authority (Eisenberg, Goodall Jr. & Trethewey, 2010). In his book "Leadership in Organizations", Yukl (2010, p. 21) introduces some definitions and ascertains that "most of the leadership definitions reflect the assumption that it involves a process where intentional influence has been exercised over other people to guide, structure and simplified activities and relationships in a group or organization." Based on Bass definition (1990, p. 19) "leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership". Chemers (2014, p. 1) defines leadership as "a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." Kevin Barge (2009, p. 593) sees it "as a contextual process involving the performance of talk and/or action that other people see as moving toward progress on certain important tasks." Leadership behaviors can affect positively, but also negatively the subordinates, encouraging or discouraging them. People who gather together in an organization to achieve a goal always need someone to lead them. As John P. Kotter says (1999, p. 2), "without leadership, organization stagnate, lose their way and eventually suffer the consequences." Former United States President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, said that "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want to be done because he wants to do it" (Friedman, 2008, p. 159). In an organization, leadership plays a major role in achieving goals. Hackman and Johnson (2013, p. 11) define leadership as "human communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others to meet shared group goals and needs."

There are different theories about leadership, and all have a goal, finding the right leadership for an effective organization. The role of a leader is indisputable in achieving effectiveness in the organization. The function of the leader is to guide others towards the organization's objectives. In today's "wild" market, the organization needs the kind of leader that will survive the competition, and a complete leader must have different traits and not just one type of leader (Montgomery, 2012, p.36). The leader should be able to make decisions at the right moment, know when to impose orders (authoritarian), consult with others (democratic), delegate all his work to his subordinates by giving more freedom to their activity (liberal) and when rewarding them in order to increase their engagement as it motivates them to perform beyond expectations (transformational). For an effective organization, a leader needs to create an appropriate work environment and have the ability to interact with subordinates, using the power to motivate them and

persuade them to follow in achieving the organization's goals. Of course, the desire of each leader is to be effective and successful, but what are these skills that make the leader effective, to have greater support than another leader. Research (White and Lippitt, 1960; Blake and McCanse, 1991; Burns, 1978;) shows that different factors determine the effectiveness of the leader. The features of the leader, mentioned in the first leadership theories, leadership styles, vision, and culture, impact on its effectiveness as a leader. A leader does not have the task of exercising only power but also identifies the moment and the way that (s)he will exercise that power to attain certain objectives. Mutual leadership-staff reliability is another factor. How much do their subordinates believe their leader and vice versa, to what extent does the leader trust his staff to give them the task of persuasion that it will be performed as he asks them? Legitimacy or how many subordinates prefer their leader affects the effectiveness of the leader, and also the interaction between them.

4. Organizational Structure of Kosovo Customs

The Kosovo Customs Institution was established in August 1999 by UNMIK. After nine years of operation as the UNMIK Customs Service, in November 2008, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a new Customs Code that enabled the transfer of all competencies to local authorities and transformation into Kosovo Customs to complete oversight by UNMIK (Kosovo Customs, n.d.)¹. The Kosovo Customs Mission can be divided into two main categories, contributing to economic issues and combating illegal activities (Kosovo Customs, 2009)². Customs continues to be the institution that brings the most revenue to Kosovo's budget, but, besides customs duties, Kosovo Customs is also tasked with protecting the society from drug smuggling or other prohibited goods. In 2016, Customs has collected revenues of 1 billion and 40 million euros (Kosovo Customs, 2016b)³.

Customs is the only field in which the European Union finds that Kosovo is in a moderate stage of development. In the 2016 Progress Report (2016, p. 46), the European Commission reports on the progress achieved in the Kosovo Customs. "The customs service has further improved its legislative and organizational capacity. Despite an overall fall in imports, revenue collection in 2015 increased by 9.2 % on 2014. Kosovo Customs collected more revenue (+27 % until March 2016) than in the same period in 2015. The increase is mainly attributed to the fight against corruption and organizational and procedural reforms."

The election of the General Director is regulated by the Customs and Excise Code of Kosovo. Article 5 of this Code (2008, p.5) specifies that the General Director is

¹ <https://dogana.rks-gov.net/old/en/History#History>

² <https://dogana.rks-gov.net/old/en/Mission?l#Mission>

³ <https://dogana.rks-gov.net/en/customs-concludes-with-record-revenues-2016/>

proposed by the Minister of Economy and Finance, and is appointed by the Prime Minister of Kosovo. The second paragraph of Article 5 clarifies that the General Director is obliged to report to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The General Directorate consists of five directorates and 14 different departments. The five directorates are⁴:

- Operational Directorate and Border
- Directorate of Law Enforcement
- Directorate of Origin, Tariff, and Laboratory
- Directorate for Legislation and Human Resources
- Directorate of Common Services

Directorates are run by the Director appointed by the General Director. Departments are managed by directors, except the Department of Supervision of Procedures and Excises, who respond directly to the General Director. The Director-General administers the Customs and submits any matter necessary for the efficient functioning of Customs. With section 9 of Article 6 of the Customs and Excise Code of Kosovo (2008, p.7), the Director General has the authority to “provide all customs officers with clear terms of reference, where in detailed is prescribed work that they have to perform.” The Director-General appoints the directors and directors are responsible to the General Director. Another responsibility of the General Director is also the competence to advance or to lower the rank of any employee, based on the recommendation of a formed commission. The General Director may also dismiss or suspend the employee under Article 6 of the Customs Code.

5. Leadership and Effectiveness in Kosovo Customs

The paper discusses leadership style at two levels of management. The leadership style used by the General Director in relation to Directors of Directorates, and the leadership style of Director of Directorates with his subordinates. In Table 1, there were collected and analyzed demographic characteristics of the sample. According to the analysis, the sample is dominated by males aged 25-40 and respondents with over ten years of experience. Table 1 shows the number of respondents by gender. This table also summarizes the demographic data of this study, such as the age of employees divided into several main age groups, the position of the work they exercise in Customs and the working years in this institution.

⁴ https://dogana.rks-gov.net/old/repository/docs/Organogrami_2016_127097.pdf

Demographic characteristics of respondents	N	%
SEX	60	100
Women	23	38.3
Male	35	58.3
Valid	58	96.6
Missing	2	3.4
AGE		
25-40	35	58.3
41-50	23	38.3
51-60	2	3.3
Over 60		
Valid	60	100.0
POSITIONS IN CUSTOMS		
Customs Officer	8	13.3
High Customs Officer	15	25.0
Unit Leader	24	40.0
Head of the sector	8	13.3
Head of the Department	3	5.0
Valid	58	96.7
Missing	2	3.3
WORK EXPERIENCE		
Up to 5 years of work	1	1.7
5 - 10 years work	15	25.0
More than 10 years of work	44	73.3
Valid	60	100.0

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the sample (designed by the author)

5.1 Leadership at the First Level of Management

To analyze the relationship at the highest level of management, surveys were conducted with the Directors of different Directorates in Kosovo Customs. The Director's Questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first part was devoted to the report with their staff, and the first 12 questions were about the style of leadership they use in the leading Directory, while in the second part, the questions were about the style of leadership used by the General Director.

It can be concluded that the General Director combines the four styles in relation to his subordinates (see Figure 1). However the dominant is the democratic style, which, according to the respondents, is the most often used by their leader.

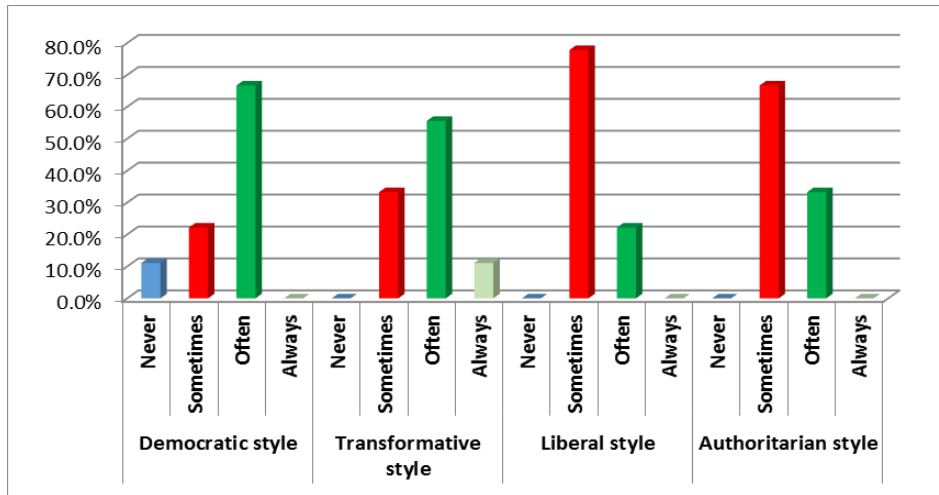


Figure 1
Data on the General Director's four styles of leadership

In the reports, the General Director with the Directors of Directorates notes that regular meetings and instructions for guidance dominate the relationship between them. Although the General Director sometimes encourages initiatives from others, according to the respondents most often he does not take into account the ideas of others. As a result of ignoring ideas, when asked if they approach the General Director, when they have a problem, the respondents have chosen mostly the answer, 'sometimes'.

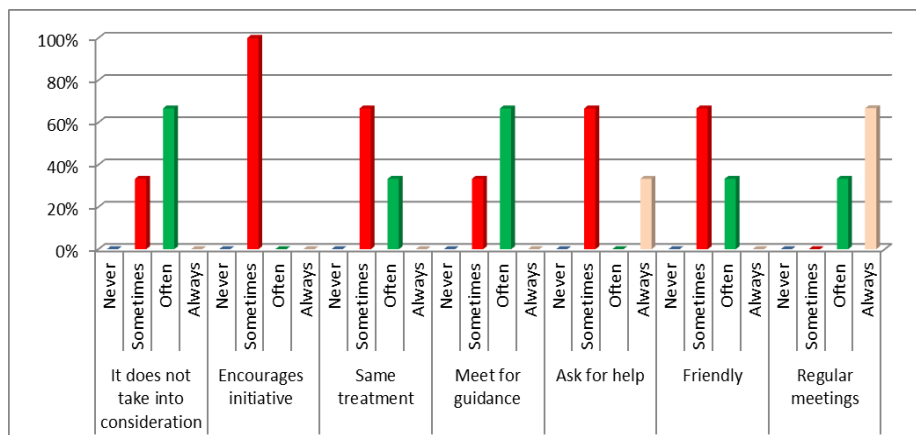


Figure 2.
Findings - The behavior and trust between the leader and staff at the first level of management

These findings confirm Jablin's theory, which states that the subordinates lost the will to contribute if they have the perception that their opinion/idea is not taken into account by the leader, in our case, by the General Director.

4.2 Leadership at the Second Level of Management

This section analyzes leadership style at the second level of management, i.e., the leader of a particular department. To understand the leadership style there were surveyed staff members of the three directorates: the Law Enforcement Directorate, the Directorate of Operations and the Border and the Directorate for Legislation and Human Resources. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, three questions for each leadership style with Likert scale. According to the respondents, the style of leadership mostly used by the Directors of Customs Directorates is the democratic style (33.9%, see Figure 3).

Almost half of respondents responded that their leader sometimes consulted with them before making the decision (42.1%, see Table 2). 43.9% (see Table 2) of them required their contribution to decision-making, and it often happens that the leader welcomes subordinates' ideas.

		N	%
He consulted before making the decision	Never	17	29.8%
	Sometimes	24	42.1%
	Often	13	22.8%
	Always	3	5.3%
It requires the contribution of others in decision-making	Never	9	15.8%
	Sometimes	25	43.9%
	Often	22	38.6%
	Always	1	1.8%
Welcomes the subordinates' ideas	Never	8	14.0%
	Sometimes	15	26.3%
	Often	23	40.4%
	Always	11	19.3%

Table 2.
Data on democratic style

Apart from the democratic style, another style that is often used by Directors of Directorates is the liberal one. Respondents have responded that sometimes their director delegates work to them (see Table 3). Most respondents think that their leader never gets involved in decision-making as respondents have provided the answer 'often' when being asked whether the Director allows them to have a large degree of freedom in their work.

		N	%
Delegates work to the staff	Never	10	17.5%
	Sometimes	21	36.8%
	Often	17	29.8%
	Always	9	15.8%
Avoid decisions by not being involved in leadership	Never	29	52.7%
	Sometimes	20	36.4%
	Often	4	7.3%
	Always	2	3.6%
Allows a large degree of freedom at work	Never	5	8.8%
	Sometimes	17	29.8%
	Often	21	36.8%
	Always	14	24.6%

Table 3.
Data on liberal style

Compared to the transformational style, there are more cases when authoritarian style is used by the Director of the Directorate. In all three questions (Table 4) related to this style (if the Director imposes orders, does not require the subordinates' opinion and exercises authority), the answer 'sometimes' is dominant.

		N	%
Impose orders	Never	23	41.8%
	Sometimes	22	40.0%
	Often	9	16.4%
	Always	1	1.8%
Does not require the subordinates' opinion	Never	22	38.6%
	Sometimes	24	42.1%
	Often	9	15.8%
	Always	2	3.5%
Exercises authority	Never	17	30.4%
	Sometimes	28	50.0%
	Often	11	19.6%
	Always	0	0.0%

Table 4.
Data on authoritarian style

As observed in Table 5, half of the respondents replied that they were never rewarded by their leader while more than half (58.9%) said that they were never

motivated by their Director and 34.5% of them stated that the Director pushed them to overcome personal interests for the good of the organization.

		N	%
Reward based on results achieved at work	Never	28	50.0%
	Sometimes	23	41.1%
	Often	4	7.1%
	Always	1	1.8%
It motivates the staff	Never	33	58.9%
	Sometimes	16	28.6%
	Often	6	10.7%
	Always	1	1.8%
Push staff to overcome personal interests	Never	9	16.4%
	Sometimes	11	20.0%
	Often	19	34.5%
	Always	16	29.1%

Table 5.

Data on transformational style

The following graph shows the responses of respondents from the three departments. As observed in Figure 3, the leadership style dominating in Kosovo Customs is the democratic style. According to the respondents, this style is often used (33.9%).

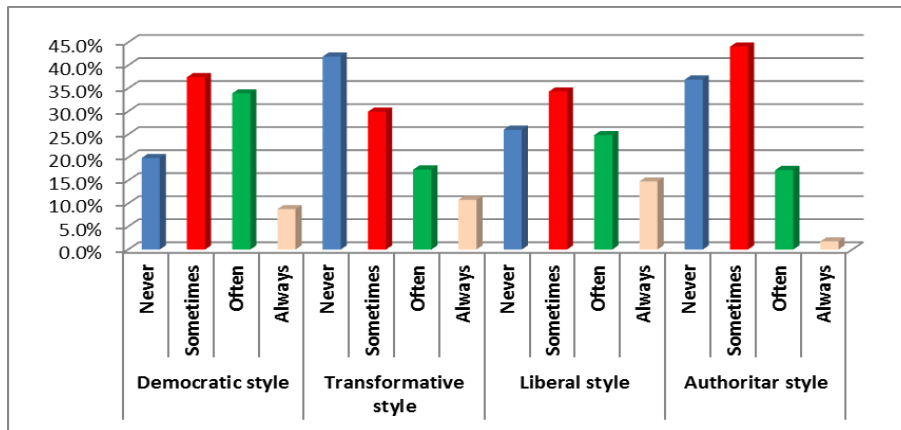


Figure 3.

Data of four leadership styles from Director of Directorates

Comparing the three directorates whose staff is involved in the survey, it can be noticed that the democratic styles dominate only in the Directorate for Legislation and Human Resources. Meanwhile, authoritarian and liberal styles have been singled out by

law enforcement respondents as the Director of the Operations Department and the border, according to the respondents, most frequently use the democratic and liberal style. The figure below shows the usage frequency for all four leadership styles in all three Directorates involved in the research.

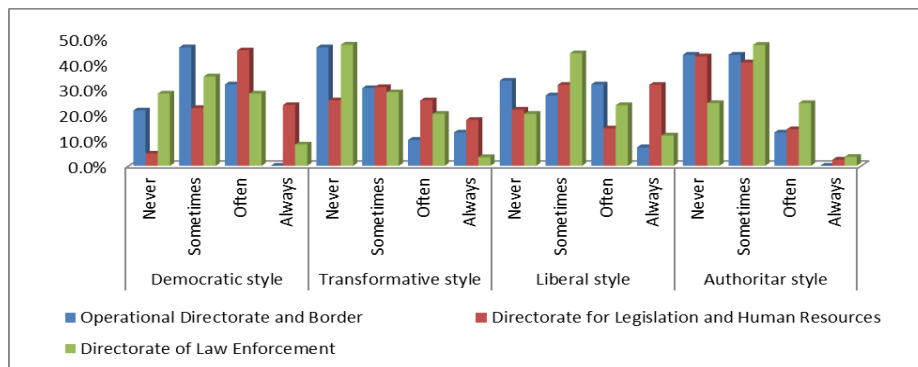


Figure 4.

Data on Four Styles of Leadership in the three Directories included in the Survey

As the relationship between the Directors of Directorates and Staff is concerned, it can be noticed (see Figure 5) that Directors encourage the initiatives coming from their staff, and this makes them more friendly to them, but they are convinced that their opinions are not taken into account. Almost half of the respondents believe they often have the same treatment from their Director, but some of them think that sometimes they are not treated the same.

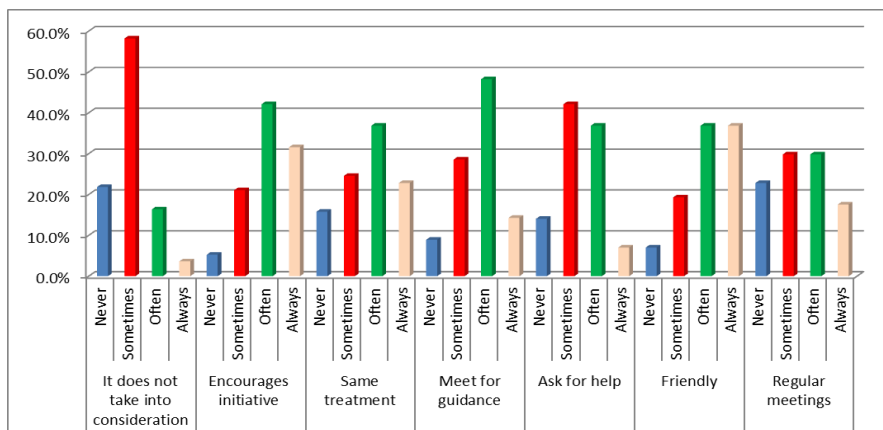


Figure 5.

The data of questions that measured the behavior and trust between the leader and staff at the second level of management

To test the correlation of leadership styles, The Pearson correlation coefficient is used, which evaluates the strength of the reciprocal bond between the two random sizes X and Y, expressed in the relevant formula, $r = r(X, Y)$, with the coefficient ranging from +1 to -1. A value above zero (0) shows a positive correlation, and if it is below zero (0), then the correlation is negative. The correlations between variables in this study were based on James D. Evans' descriptions.

The value of the coefficient correlation	The strength of the correlation
.80 or more	Very strong
.60 to .79	Strong
.40 to .59	Moderate
.20 to .39	Weak
.00 to .19	Very weak

Table 6.

Ranking and description of correlation coefficients according to Evans (1996, p. 146)

Based on Pearson's theory, correlations of leadership styles are tested (see Figure 6). In testing the relationship between the style of democratic leadership and the transformational leadership style, it results that there is a positive correlation between these two variables ($r = .516$). Thus, among the democratic leadership and transformative leadership variables, there is a moderate relation that implies that changes in one variable are on average related to the second variable. There is also a positive correlation between the style of transformational leadership and the liberal leadership style, ($r = .276$), however, based on the Evans' descriptor scale, it is a weak link.

In testing the relationship between the style of liberal leadership and authoritarian leadership style, it results that there is a positive correlation between these two variables ($r = .026$), but the relationship is very weak. A positive correlation but weak correlation exists between the style of democratic leadership and the liberal leadership style, ($r = .271$), while a negative, very weak correlation ($r = -.038$) is in the midst of the style of transformative leadership and authoritarian leadership style. There is also a negative correlation between the style of democratic leadership and the style of authoritarian leadership, ($r = -.227$). So between these two variables, there is a weak negative relation. When one style is used, more than the rate of another style usage will decrease.

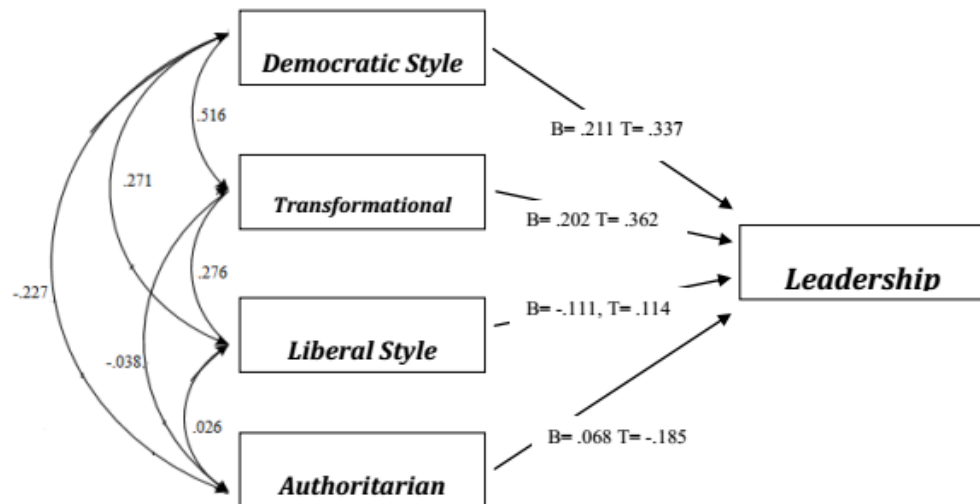


Figure 6.

The correlation between four leadership styles.

Source: Own. Note. B = Behaviour. T = Trust

Based on Pearson's theory, the correlation of leadership styles has been tested by measuring the correlation between the styles and the relationship between leader and staff. From the data analysis, it turns out that the most positive relationships are the democratic style variables and the transformational style with the other two variables, behavior and belief. So the influence of the Democratic leadership variable on the leadership factor is positive, as well as of the transformative leadership because increasing the use of this style also implies a rise in the relationship between leader-staff.

The coefficient of correlation is lower in the liberal and authoritarian style, in relation to the other two styles of leadership. The correlation of the liberal style variables with the behavior is negative, whereas authoritarian leadership has a negative correlation with the confidence variable, which indicates that using this style reduces the confidence of the staff to the leader.

4.3 Relationship Leader-Staff at Both Levels of Management

Two levels of management are analyzed, the relationship between the Director-General and Directors of Directorates, as well as the relationship between Director of the Directorates and their subordinates. Respondents are employees of different levels, of whom 38.3% do not have managerial positions, 40% are low management level, while 18.3% are middle and senior management level. To analyze the relationship at the highest level of management, surveys were conducted with the Directors of different Directorates of Customs. The Director's Questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first part was

devoted to the relationship with their staff and consisted of 20 questions, while in the second part, the question was for the relationship with the General Director.

In the questionnaire for the Directors of Directorates the leader – staff relations from top-down have been measured. Based on the responses of the Directors of Directorates (Figure 7), it can be concluded that there is trust between the leader and the subordinates. The Director often believes that the job is performed as it is required by confirming trust in their staff. On the other hand, the subordinates feel free to seek help when encountering problems and this happens often, implying that there is mutual trust between them, according to the perspective of the leaders of the Directorates.

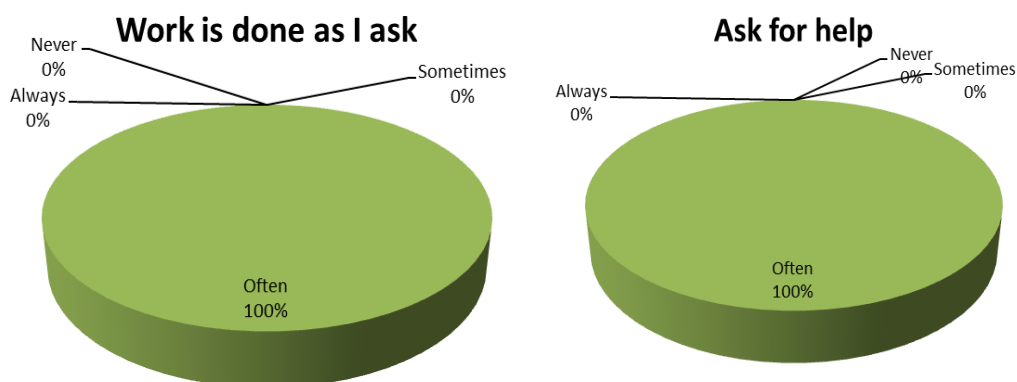


Figure 6.
Leader-staff relationships

Similar results also emerge from respondents' responses from the staff of the Directorates. When they have problems at work, either when they need advice in drafting a report or when they need to make detailed checks, 42% of them say that sometimes they are addressing the Directorates of Assistance, while 36.8% of them state that have the freedom to seek the help of their leader often (see Figure 8). This shows that the relationship between them is positive and this is confirmed by the opinion of the respondents that their leader is friendly to them since out of 57 respondents, 42 believe that he is almost always friendly to them.

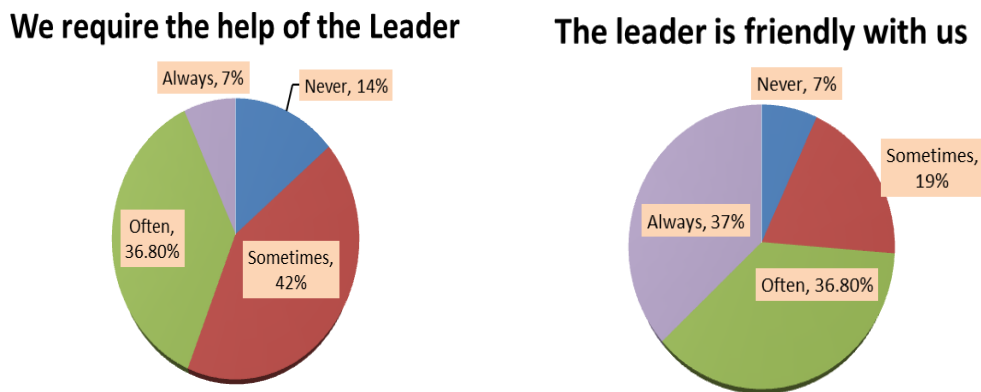


Figure 7.
Staff-Leader relationships

5. Conclusions

This research has been done to analyze the leadership-staff relationships in a public institution in Kosovo, namely Customs, an extremely important institution, taking into account the impact and contribution it has to the country's budget. The paper analyzes four leadership styles used by the Customs leaders at two managerial levels, at the first level by the General Director towards the Directors of Directorates, and at the second level by the Directors of Directorates to their respective staff. At both levels, the results of the study show that the democratic style is the dominant style of leadership in this institution. To measure the organizational effectiveness based on leadership-staff relationships, there are some questions that relate to the belief of the subordinate leader and vice versa, as well as to the behaviors between them. The survey results show that there is a good relationship between leaders and subordinates at both levels of management. Thus, this leader-staff relationship positively affects the effectiveness of Customs.

Hypothesis 1: *The dominant leadership style positively influences the effectiveness of the organization.* This hypothesis is confirmed as the dominant leadership style in Customs has a positive impact on the Customs effectiveness. This is asserted by testing the correlations of leadership styles with the subordinate leader's trust and conduct, based on Pearson's theory. In testing the relationship between the style of democratic leadership and the leader-subordinate relationship related to the organization's effectiveness, it results that there is a positive correlation between these variables (the democratic style-behaviour: $r = .211$ and the democratic style-trust: $r = .337$). Based on the Evans' descriptor, the correlation between these variables is weak, but it is positive,

thus leading to the conclusion that this dominant style does not hinder the effectiveness of the organization.

Hypothesis 2: *Lack of employee confidence in their leader hampers effectiveness in the organization.* This hypothesis is considered inaccurate because the outcome of the study proves that there is trust in Customs between the leader and his subordinates. Reliability of leadership staff helps to enhance the organization's effectiveness. According to the opinion of the respondents involved in the research, there are elements of trust from both sides, besides the reliable report, there is a friendly relationship which helps the organization's functioning.

5.1 Recommendations

- Customs should make sure that chosen leaders, either at the first managerial level or even at the second level, should show fewer signs of an authoritarian leader because this type of leader almost always has a negative effect on the organization's functioning. This is also the opinion of the staff and of their leaders. Testing the correlation between the authoritarian style and leader-staff trust, it resulted a negative correlation, which differs from the other three styles.
- Ignorance of the opinions and ideas of others by the leader, observed in the relations of the Director General with the Directors of the Directorates is an issue that needs to be improved because not taking into consideration the subordinate's opinion negatively affects his interest in contributing to the improvement of the organization's functioning.
- Employee discrimination in the leader-staff relation is an issue that is addressed by nearly 40% of respondents. Therefore, it is recommended that this needs to be improved to reduce the number of cases when the leader does not have the same treatment to the subordinates. For this, Customs employees have also participated in various seminars and workshops focusing on discrimination within the organization.
- Based on the results of the study, it is recommended for Customs to regulate legally or with any administrative instruction, the opportunity to reward the distinguished workers, which would increase the motivation within the staff.

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