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REVALIDATING BLANCHARD'S SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL: INDUCTION OF THE UNPRODUCTIVE FOLLOWER

Abstract: The globalisation, economic crisis, recession, and the global pandemic had created a new, uncertain environment producing significant disruption in business plans and operations for organisations. The level of uncertainty caused by the pandemic is unprecedented, and it affected organisations to explore diverse approaches to overcome the challenges and discover new opportunities for development in the new normal. Leading effectively in this new and increasingly virtual environment while managing a challenging present requires a particular combination of leadership approaches and skills for adequately identifying situational context because it is a paradoxical setting in which a leader has to provide direction and guidance while acknowledging the unpredictability and ambiguity of the business environment. Organisations have to reexamine their leadership strategy and focus on how to optimise their processes to develop followers and deal with unproductive followers. This paper explores Blanchard's situational leadership model, which proposes four development level of followers and four accompanying leadership styles. The paper's core idea is to review the mentioned leadership model and investigate if a fifth follower exists in the model, representing an unproductive follower who is unmotivated and incompetent. Data were collected from questionnaires provided to the new employees in different organisations. The results of the research proved that unproductive followers exist. This paper contributes to the leadership theory by expanding existing situational leadership theory. Practical implications represent guidelines on how to identify unmotivated and incompetent followers.

Keywords: Situational Leadership Model, Unproductive Follower, New Normal, Business Environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many various factors are making an impact on organisational performance and the contemporary business environment. Authors usually single out globalisation as one of the main factors to influence the organisation, but modern studies (Cuervo-Cazurra, Doz & Gaur, 2020) emphasise that even scepticism of globalisation can influence the global strategy of firms. Indirect impact on the organisation is also the subject of state-of-art papers, and Zhu and Westphal (2021) described an indirect impact of intermediaries on the organisation. Mirčetić (2020) point out that organisations in a contemporary business environment regularly confront different challenges due to the rapid changes, digitalisation, and the progression of techniques and technologies and Tornjanski, Marinković, Savoju & Čudanov (2015) underline that changes make a substantial impact on the business systems worldwide to develop rapidly and create new possibilities. Accordingly, Strugar Jelača, Bjekić, Aleksić and Berber (2020) consider that this hypercompetitive business environment imposes the necessity for organisations to generate creative ideas on how to survive and continuously grow.

The business situation is nowadays even more complex due to the impact of the unusual circumstances related to the pandemic. Connor (2021) points out that more than two a-half million people have died due to the coronavirus since one year ago when the World health organisation have declared a global pandemic. Ahern and Loh (2020) emphasise that this is the most significant global pandemic since Spanish influenza. Gopichandran, Subramaniam and Kalsingh (2020, p. 214) describe the pandemic as a litmus test of trust in a health system. However, it is not only a global health crisis. United Nations Development Programme emphasised that there are secondary consequences of the pandemic

related to the six OECD dimensions of fragility - economic, social, human, political, security and environmental (Connor, 2021). The uncertainty caused by the pandemic is unprecedented, and organisations need to explore different approaches and discover new possibilities for development in the new normal. Organisations operating in uncertain business environments are trying different ways to increase their performance and gain a competitive edge (Mirčetić, Janošik & Malešević, 2019). Čudanov, Tornjanski and Jaško (2019) conclude that managing complexities and uncertainties of the change process cause a growing requirement for the development and determination of proper quantitative approaches and tools in change management procedures to produce a successful outcome.

Organisations without established effective leadership are commonly more vulnerable to pandemic elements and consequently less capable of addressing the pandemic's impacts. That is a paradoxical situation in which a leader has to elucidate and provides direction to the followers while recognising the unpredictability and ambiguity of the business environment. The pandemic affected all segments of business and prompted an unprecedented global demand for effective leaders. Leadership strategies have to be reexamined, and organisations need to identify unproductive followers and optimise processes to develop their development level.

Berber, Slavić, Miletić, Simonović and Aleksić (2019) underline leadership as one of the essential concepts that are in the focus of scientific research and business practice. Authors (Stojanović-Aleksić, 2016, 2017; Cvijanović, Mirčetić & Vukotić, 2018) describe leadership as a complex and multidimensional process. Scholars (Poór, Slavić & Berber, 2015; Strugar Jelača, Bjekić & Leković, 2016) consider leadership to be a significant determinant for the success of organisations that can be used to gain competitive advantage and develop corporate performances. Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky (2009) point out that leadership have to be adaptive at all levels in complex and unpredictable situations. Jaško, Čudanov, Jevtić & Krivokapić (2013) describe the nature of leadership as a guide for followers that should encourage and motivate them to realise previously set goals. Research confirms that leaders, such as top executives, significantly impact organisational performance (Mackey, 2008), and such influence progress over time (Quigley & Hambrick, 2015).

While some authors (Miller & Chen, 1996; Finkelstein, Hambrick & Cannella, 2009) examined the identification and implementation of distinctive strategies, its antecedents were less considered (Deephouse, 1999; Crossland, Zyung, Hiller & Hambrick, 2014; Wowak, Manno, Arrfelt & McNamara, 2016). Mirčetić & Vukotić (2020) consider situational leadership one of the most effective leadership strategy. Blanchard's situational leadership model encompasses four leadership styles and four follower development levels based on their correlation (Northouse, 2018). This model recognises a new follower as motivated. This paper's starting theoretical prediction is that a follower does not have to be motivated when starting a new job or new task. The present study addresses this gap by proposing the new, revalidated Blanchard's situational leadership model.

After the introduction, the article explores Blanchard's situational leadership model, which proposes four development level of followers and four accompanying leadership styles. The next chapter elaborates the research regarding existing of unproductive followers in organisations. The next-to-last segment of the chapter presents the research results, and the last segment of the chapter discusses the results mentioned above. According to the research results, the penultimate chapter of the article presents the Revalidated Blanchard's situational leadership model and inducts unproductive follower as a fifth follower type in this model. The last segment of the paper consists of the article's conclusions, underlying expanding exiting situational leadership theory by inducting a new follower type.

2. BLANCHARD'S SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

The situational leadership model is a part of contingent leadership theory in which the leader adapts to situational factors and adjusts to the changes of a particular situation. Stogdill (1948) was one of the first scholars to point out that effective analysis of leadership requires researching both leaders and situations, but Fielder (1964, 1967, 1972, 1978) developed the contingent leadership theory based on examining the effectiveness of hundreds of leaders and their methods depending on the situational context. Berber, Slavić, Miletić, Simonović and Aleksić (2019) base the contingency approach on the premise that the correlation between the leadership style and organisational results is affected by situational factors related to the environment. Such a leadership model is one of the effective leadership approaches in these uncertain and continuously changing times. Brisson-Banks (2010) acknowledge that fundamental determinant of an organisation's effectiveness is the capability to adapt to the change, while some scholars (By, 2005; Čudanov, Jaško & Săvoiu, 2012; Cameron & Green, 2015; Jeraj, Marić, Todorović, Čudanov & Komazec, 2015; Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015) highlight that successful change management is a pattern for endurance and long-term organisational sustainability.

There are specific terminological variations in the situational leadership theory (Mirčetić & Vukotić, 2020). Blanchard, Zigarmi & Nelson (1993) emphasised that inevitable discrepancies arose regarding improving the model. Blanchard et al. (1993, p. 34) pointed out that, to better comprehend research trends related to the situational leadership model, it is essential to acknowledge the genesis and changing of the situational leadership model and its instrumentation. Blanchard (1985a, 1985b, 1985c) presented a revised version of situational leadership and labelled it Situational Leadership II.

This study is based on Blanchard's situational leadership model and its terminological expressions and colour pattern in the graphical representations of the model. In this model, the follower's development level represents follower maturity,

and it is a combination of two factors - competence and commitment. Competence is proven knowledge and gained skills related to the organisational goal or given task, and commitment is motivation and belief in a special goal or task. Follower's development level does not represent an overall knowledge or skills of an individual's skills but is goal-oriented or task-oriented. Accordingly, there are four types of followers:

- (1) Enthusiastic Beginner – D1;
- (2) Disillusioned Learner – D2;
- (3) Capable, but Cautious, Performer – D3; and
- (4) Self-Reliant Achiever – D4.

Each of the follower types mentioned above represents a mixture of competence and commitment levels and various development level descriptors (Table 1).

Table 1: Development Level Descriptors

D4	D3	D2	D1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident • Consistently competent • Inspired/inspires • Expert • Autonomous • Self-assured • Accomplished • Self-reliant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-critical • Cautious • Doubtful • Capable • Contributing • Insecure • Tentative/unsure • Bored/apathetic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmed • Confused • Demotivated • Demoralised • Frustrated • Disillusioned • Discouraged • Flashes of competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopeful • Inexperienced • Curious • New/unskilled • Optimistic • Excited • Eager • Enthusiastic

Source: Blanchard, 2000.

Mirčetić and Vukotić (2020) underline that effective leadership in a situational context is achieved when the leader correctly determines the follower's type and uses the appropriate leadership style.

3. RESEARCH "MAPPING THE UNPRODUCTIVE FOLLOWERS"

The extent of work that employees conduct and their performance varies, as found in the milestone article by Bishop (1987), which analyses six reasons behind the performance variation. Closer to our research is an analysis of influence coworker-support and coworker-exchange has on employee performance, identified by Singh, Selvarajan and Solansky (2019). Wadhwa and Kumar (2019) measure variation on a sample of 550 junior/middle-level bank employees. Their overall performance scale mean is 3.83 with a standard deviation of 0.432, which accounts for 11% of mean, while the partial deviation of 12 items within the performance measurement scale is larger. Common experience and normal distribution indicate that we can find both hardworking employees and employees who are working as little as they can in most large organisations. Ivančević, Ivanović, Maričić and Čudanov (2020) underline that workaholicism has been the subject of many studies since the seventies. In practice, some employees are the complete opposite of workaholics, especially in the public sector, and they are practically useless. The public sector is inclined to be overstaffing and often characterised by workforce redundancy (Rama 1999; Feldheim 2007). Recent examples of layoffs in the public sector globally (Eliason, 2014; Kopelman & Rosen, 2016; Zahariadis, 2016; Laird, 2017) proved that strategies for organisational change of the public sector regularly include downsizing (Awortwi, 2010). There are different strategies when employees are unproductive. Čudanov, Săvoiu, Jaško and Slović (2020) emphasise that these problems have a negative impact to the commercial activity and economic development, decreasing their efficiency and propose an objective and efficient method for downsizing/rightsizing that is also comprehensible, quantitative and reliable.

While most research is aimed at the positive aspect of work – productivity, this paper aims to map unproductive followers, provide a practical tool for their identification, and give guidelines for developing their productivity. To confirm the starting predictions of the paper, the authors conducted research that analyses the unproductivity of employees, especially the demotivation of the new employees.

3.1. Questionnaire

To prove that the unproductive follower type exists, the authors conducted empirical research among new employees. Authors consider unproductive followers as employees working at their job for less than six months and cumulatively are not competent and are not committed to the work.

The questionnaire combines several existing studies, and it contains three major sections: demographic information, level of competence (10 items) and level of commitment (10 items).

The demographic section of the questionnaire explores only necessary information regarding respondents. The first two questions are basic and relate to the gender and age of respondents. The third question is essential for our research because it determines whether the respondent works at the job for less than six months. Returned questionnaires in which respondents answered they are working for more than six months are considered inapplicable.

The following two sections are related to competence level and commitment level and are not physically separated in the questionnaire. Set of ten questions that explore the level of commitment of employees are constructed from several studies (Tremblay et al., 2009; Zaccaro, 1991; Withey & Cooper, 1989; Burris, Detert & Chiaburu, 2008), and set of ten statements that analyses level of competence of respondents is also formed from various researches (Spreitzer, 1995; Francis-Smythe, Haase, Thomas & Steele, 2013).

Respondents were asked to their level of agreement with a variety of statements on the 5-point Likert scale (key: 1 - strongly disagree; 2 - mostly disagree; 3 – undecided, neither agree nor disagree; 4 - mostly agree; 5- I strongly agree) with the exception for two statements (Burris, Detert & Chiaburu, 2008) that apply reverse scoring (key: 1 - strongly agree; 2 - mostly agree; 3 – undecided, neither agree nor disagree; 4 - mostly disagree; 5- I strongly disagree) which were used as control questions.

3.2. Methodology and measures

The research aims to prove the existence of Unproductive followers. As stated before, authors define an Unproductive follower as an employee working at the job for less than six months, and cumulatively is not competent and not committed to work. It was challenging to find adequate respondents because employees who are not motivated to work are not motivated to fill questionnaires related to work.

The same rules and the same scale apply for sections that relate to respondents' commitment and competence level. For each section, there is a total of ten questions, rated from 1 to 5. Therefore, the minimum score per section is 10, and the maximum score is 50.

For this study, the authors proposed a score scale (Figure 1), and the same scale is valid for competence and commitment.

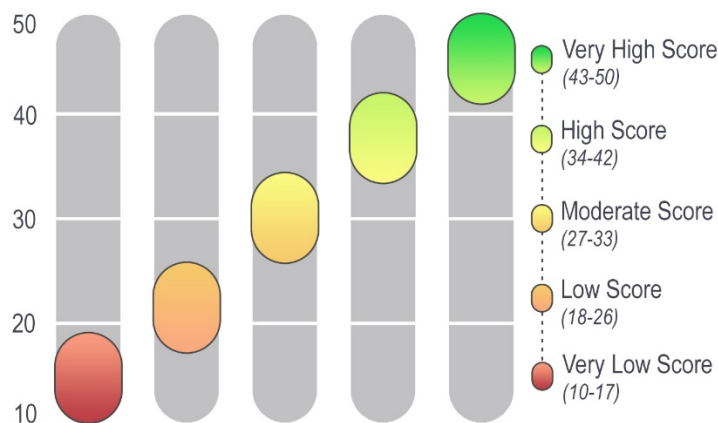


Figure 1:Score scale for MAPPING THE UNPRODUCTIVE FOLLOWERS
Source: Authors

If the respondent scores low or very low (26 or less) on a commitment scale and low or very low (26 or less) in a section related to the competence level cumulatively, the respondent is considered the Unproductive follower. If the respondent scores more than 27 in one or both sections, the respondent is not considered the Unproductive follower. Therefore, if a respondent score less than 26 on the competence scale and more than 27 in a section related to the commitment, or vice versa, the respondent is not the Unproductive follower.

3.3. Results and discussion

The survey was distributed among new employees in the public and private sectors in April 2021, and the questionnaires were issued in electronic form via Google Forms. A total of 263 questionnaires were submitted. The analysis showed that not all questionnaires were relevant. Because the target group for the research was only new employees, all questionnaires in which respondents stated they are working for more than six months are rejected and are not relevant for further analysis. A total of 12 respondents answered that they have been working for more than six months, and consequently, 12 questionnaires were rejected. When all non-valid surveys were rejected, a total of 251 validly completed questionnaires remain, which is an appropriate sample for conducting the research. Of the total number of valid questionnaires, female consists 132 surveys or 52.59%, while men completed 119 or 47.41%, as shown in Chart 1.

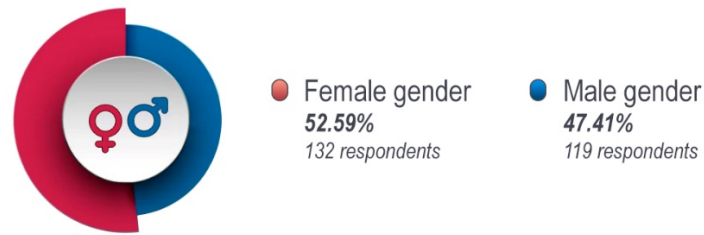


Chart 1: Gender distribution in MAPPING THE UNPRODUCTIVE FOLLOWERS

Source: Authors

The responses in the 251 completed questionnaires that are considered for further consideration were very different. Analysis of responses showed that respondents are motivated, which is expected, given that they are new employees that principally implies they are enthusiastic about working and learning. When it comes to competence, the results were different and, in general, lower than commitment level.

To map unproductive followers, respondents have to score 26 or less according to the authors' scale in both segments. Analysing the research results was found that some respondents score 26 or less in one segment and score 27 or more in the other segment. These respondents are not unproductive followers. When a cross-section of results is made, and only those questionnaires are selected where respondents have a score of 26 or less for both segments, cumulatively competence and commitment, the results show that 42 respondents meet the criteria designated by the authors; therefore, 16.73% of respondents are Unproductive followers (Chart 2).

The research results confirm the authors' initial assumption and prove that Blanchard's situational leadership model should be improved and expanded by adding a new type of follower - Unproductive follower (D0).

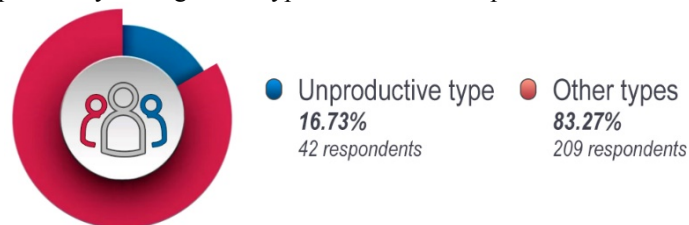


Chart 2: Percent of unproductive follower type

Source: Authors

4. REVALIDATED BLANCHARD'S SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

The very presence of the D0 class is contra intuitive with the organisational paradigm. Employee with both low competence and commitment is in the long term clearly undesirable for the organisation, and its existence can be explained by the large set of different factors, which we can classify as acceptable and pathological, both given in the text below.

- Organisationally acceptable reasons for the existence of Unproductive followers:
 - Learning curve on the new job
 - The new employee is overwhelmed with initial tasks
 - Personal issues with adaptation to the new job
 - New employee did not manage the job orientation process as expected
- Pathological organisational reasons for the existence of Unproductive followers:
 - Toxic organisational climate
 - The inadequate new employee selection process
 - Corruption at employment
 - Nepotism
 - Lack of adequate job orientation practices

Based on Blanchard's situational leadership model, the starting theoretical prediction of the study was that there is an additional follower type in the model, and therefore it should be revalidated. The results of the conducted research confirmed the existence of the new follower type – Unproductive follower – D0. The revalidated Blanchard's situational leadership model with incorporated Unproductive follower is shown in Figure 2.

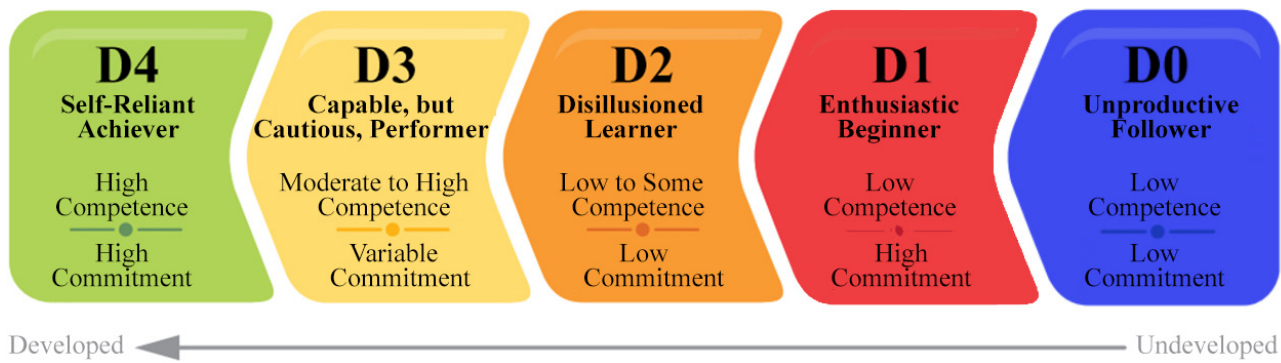


Figure 2: The revalidated Blanchard's situational leadership model
Source: Authors

The unproductive follower is new to the organisation or some task. The authors consider that employee is new if the follower is working for an organisation or at some tasks for less than six months. The unproductive follower is new in the organisation and, therefore, unskilled and incompetent. This follower is not motivated to start a new job or new task and shows apathy and frustration. This type of follower does not have any or enough experience related to the job. Unproductive follower is not contributing and is not motivated to start contributing, so accordingly authors labelled this type of follower – Unproductive follower. With that in mind, we can post a hypothesis that "Unproductive followers" are specific to phases of sudden organisational growth, which exist in more than twenty lifecycle theories by different authors (Adizes, Rodic & Cudanov, 2017). Having to satisfy suddenly emerging need for more produced value, the organisation can grow faster than its control mechanisms can eliminate large concentrations of "Unproductive followers". Table 2 presents three different descriptors for Unproductive follower: (1) Competence descriptor; (2) Commitment descriptor; and (3) Development level descriptor.

Table 2: Unproductive Follower Descriptors

Competence descriptor	Commitment descriptor	Development level descriptors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New/unskilled • Incompetent • Inexperienced • Non-contributing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmotivated • Demoralised • Apathetic • Frustrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unproductive • Passive • Unexcited • Bored

Source: Authors

To accurately comprehend the Revalidated Blanchard's situational leadership model, it is essential to discern differences between Unproductive follower (D0) and similar follower types in the model.

Such as Enthusiastic beginner (D1), Unproductive follower (D0) is also new to the organisation. As mention above, the follower is working for an organisation or at some tasks for less than six months. Both types of followers are not competent or have limited competency, but, unlike Enthusiastic beginner, Unproductive follower is not committed to the work. For some reason, this type of follower is not motivated.

Unproductive follower (D0) seems somewhat similar to Disillusioned learner (D2) because both follower types are not committed to the work, and their competence level is low. The main difference is that Unproductive follower is new to the organisation and has never been developed to the D1 level, and the Disillusioned learner was at D1 level before he/she got developed to the D2 level.

While an occasional case of the "Unproductive follower", being more an exception than a regular practice, can be remedied, a higher concentration of "Unproductive followers" indicates that something is wrong within the organisation. In combination with organisational pathologies given below, "Unproductive followers" can lead to a vicious cycle, deteriorating organisational traits, and accepting more "Unproductive followers" until unmotivated and incapable employees form a majority within the organisation. As Jim Collins (2001) explained in "Good to great", great organisations are easy to be left but very hard to get in, so "Unproductive followers" should not be seen, unless as a temporary exception, in any organisation thriving to be great. Unproductive followers resemble "deadwood" employees described by Adizes (1976). Just as the "deadwood" employees, Unproductive followers will not leave organisation on their own – they have to be either educated, developed or extracted from the organisation.

Left on their own, "Unproductive followers" may undermine even a healthy organisation. They have the potential to turn into "Toxic employees" (Bitting, 2006; Jonason, Slomski & Partyka 2012). The shock of low performance and low motivation to contribute to organisational goals is good ground for developing or expressing the "Dark triad": narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Another similarity is the finding of Templer (2018) that toxic employees gain good performance results based on their political skills (contrasted to their actual performance). If allowed to turn in the toxic employee, instead of "Enthusiastic beginner", "Unproductive follower" sets a bad example and, like a rotten apple, spoils the whole batch. We can argue that "Unproductive followers" and "Disillusioned learners" are ideal potential for future toxic employees and thus need to be recognised, selected and treated with the utmost care if the organisation survives.

5. CONCLUSION

Situational leadership has been analysed for more than five decades. While many studies have been conducted regarding the situational leadership model, little theoretical or empirical work has examined possibilities for expanding it. The present study addresses this gap by proposing a new situational leadership model with five follower types, unlike Blanchard's situational leadership model with four follower types. The new model is called The revalidated Blanchard's leadership model, and the new follower type is named Unproductive follower.

Our findings provided strong support for our theoretical predictions based on analyses and expansion of Blanchard's situational leadership model type. Overall, these findings supported our prediction that there is an additional new follower type in the situational leadership model – Unproductive follower. Our theoretical arguments and supportive findings also contribute to the cognitive leadership theory by providing a valuable and innovative perspective to better understand leadership in the situational context. Specifically, our study contributes a novel perspective to explain the situational leadership model.

This study has some limitations that also suggest opportunities for future research. While this paper has examined and identified the new follower type in the situational leadership model and proposed the revalidated Blanchard's situational leadership model, future studies can extend this research by investigating and identifying the appropriate leadership style leader should use with the unproductive followers. Further, we need to explore if our sample was biased: are "Unproductive followers" a trait of a specific organisation category? According to our results, we can claim that "Unproductive followers" exist in some organisations, but we cannot generalise their existence to all organisations. are they specific to some phase in the lifecycle, public sector, large organisations?

This study also has implications for managerial practice. Specifically, our findings can help CEOs, directors, and top managers understand various follower types better and use that knowledge to run their organisations more successfully. Building on the insights on different follower types may help stakeholders recognise the follower development level of their subordinates and understand what leadership style they should apply, but it is also a promising direction for future research.

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