

# **Differences in expectations and demands on leadership between students and full-time employees.**

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Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Science in  
International Management

Submitted to Sabine Sedlacek

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## **Affidavit**

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed. The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to analyze differences in expectations and demands on leadership between students and full-time employees. Much attention has been paid in leadership research to explore these expectations in more detail in order to help organizations use the findings to integrate newcomers more effectively. Expectations and demands of leadership, especially among young subordinates, are most often the cause of negative experience and disappointment in their first job experiences. Nevertheless, it was not taken into account whether the expectations differ due to the extent of previous experience and the extent of theoretical engagement with the topic of leadership. Therefore, this thesis used an online survey to collect and compare the expectations and perceptions of a total of 101 students and full-time employees. The goal of this work was to answer the research question of whether there are differences in leadership expectations and demands between students and full-time employees. It also aims to explore general trends in the perceptions of young subordinates.

The findings of this work show partial differences between the two groups. It was found that students prefer different leadership styles than full-time employees, and that they attribute a greater influence to leadership in terms of career development and career success. However, little difference in expectations concerning the leader as a person was found between the groups. Students turned out to be the group which has a much clearer picture of their ideal leader than full-time employees. There is some agreement and some contradiction between the findings of the primary data and the secondary data collected from the literature.

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## **1 Introduction**

Leadership literature makes it clear that companies should give high priority to the successful socialization of newcomers into their companies (Seele & Eberl, 2020). Newcomers are people who are just starting to work in a company. Fast and successful integration of newcomers increases their performance, as well as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). It also increases loyalty to the company (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). The biggest challenges here are the perceptions with which young people begin their first work experience. In particular, the expectations they have of their leaders. Leaders play a particularly important role in integrating new employees (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Despite this importance, researchers have paid little attention to what these perceptions and expectations depend on. It is still unclear whether these expectations differ significantly for newcomers coming directly from their studies compared to those who have already gained work experience. A close analysis of expectations is necessary to help leaders and companies improve the socialization of newcomers.

The leaders of today, at the same time, are already faced with increasing demands and expectations (Shults et al., 2022). The complexity of the leadership profile has increased significantly over the past decade (Shults et al., 2022). Globalization, technological advances, and the generation gap are just some of the factors that have led to this increase in complexity (Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2015). In the challenge of socializing young employees, special attention is paid to social skills. In general, modern leadership research is heavily concerned with social skills and interaction behaviors between leaders and those they lead (Mumford et al., 2000; Riggio et al., 2010). The trend moves toward leaders being judged not only on their professional competence but also on their talent to lead people and to be visionary. The new focus and research findings are also changing the image that young people are given of leaders in their academic education. When they enter the workforce and find that these expectations are not met, this can lead to young employees having difficulty fitting in and becoming dissatisfied more quickly (Seele & Eberl, 2020). However, it is young, well-educated employees that many companies are urgently looking for.



But it is not only academic training that shapes young people's expectations of leadership. It is also their first professional experience through confrontation with leaders and different leadership styles. These strongly shape their views and expectations of leadership and can influence the expectations of their next workplace (Seele & Eberl, 2020).

This paper focuses on young people's expectations and views of leadership. An online survey is used to define in more detail what characteristics young people view as leadership and how they want to be led. It also analyzes the importance they attach to leadership in terms of their professional development and success. Particular attention is paid to the differences between the expectations and demands of young people who have already worked under a leader for some time and those who have little or no experience and are still in their studies.

To define a clear objective of this thesis, an overarching general research question was formulated.

Research Question (RQ): Are there differences in leadership expectations and demands between students and full-time employees?

Because of the complexity of the topic of leadership, this general research question was further used to formulate four specific research questions:

Specific Research Question 1: Are there differences in preferred leadership styles between students and full-time employees?

Specific Research Question 2: Are there differences in prioritizing different expectations of a leader between students and full-time employees?

Specific Research Question 3: Do students and full-time employees place different levels of importance on leadership?

Specific Research Question 4: Do students have a clearer picture of their ideal leader than full-time employees?

To explore these research questions efficiently, four hypotheses were formulated which will be confirmed or refuted during this thesis:

Hypothesis 1: There are differences in preferred leadership styles between students and full-time employees.

Hypothesis 2: There are differences in the prioritization of different expectations of a leader between students and full-time employees.

Hypothesis 3: Students give greater importance to leadership than full-time employees.

Hypothesis 4: Students have a clearer picture of their ideal leader than full-time employees.

In addition to exploring the differences, this will provide a picture of what the two groups being researched are looking for in their leaders in terms of competencies, personality traits, and leadership styles. The direct feedback from this social group is extremely valuable for today's leaders and companies and can be the basis for further research.

This thesis is divided into six chapters, beginning with a general introduction, and followed by an in-depth analysis of the relevant literature. This is succeeded by a more detailed description of the methodology used in this thesis, after which the results are presented. Moreover, the results are discussed, the limitations of the study are pointed out, and the implications of the results for management are presented. Finally, this thesis is rounded off by the conclusion.

## **2 Literature Review**

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic area of leadership and the demands young people place on their leaders, the relevant literature about leadership is conducted. First, special attention is paid to finding a unified definition of leadership with the effect of clearly distinguishing the practical difference between managers and leaders. It is described how leadership has evolved historically with different leadership theories in science. The literature on modern leadership research is summarized to explain the current state of research in more detail. In addition, the current research was used to discuss what a good leader actually is. Another focus is how this image has changed in recent years under the influence of new generations. Finally, the Path-Goal theory is analyzed in more detail as it is used in the data collection of this thesis.

### **2.1 General research on leadership and definition of terms.**

There is a need to define the most commonly used terms in the literature in order to have a clear overview of it. This is already the first challenge in the leadership literature. There are various definitions of the phenomenon of leadership in the literature. It is likely that these numerous inconsistencies and misunderstandings are due to an individual's personal value system and associated mindset rather than a lack of research in the field (Hughes, 2009). Throughout human development, leadership plays an important role. This is true for all social systems such as families, groups of all kinds, and nations. Since topics such as leadership, power, and influence are very sensitive issues, especially in social systems, it is fraught with many prejudices. There are reasons why this topic will probably never come to an assured end. One's personal view of leadership influences how it is viewed and how the success of leadership is measured (Kruse, 2015). This finding was confirmed in the literature decades ago. For example Shaw and Stogdill (1974, p. 7) stated at the time that "there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define the concept." Various authors, such as McCleskey (2014), declared the search for a single definition of leadership futile because the correct definition of leadership

depends on the interest of the researcher and the nature of the problem or situation under study. Despite the difficulty in finding a good definition, leadership is considered to be of great importance in our society. The enormous influence on important organizations such as multinational companies, but especially its impact on people's lives are the main reasons for the assumed importance (Dinh et al., 2014).

This leads to the fact that it is a very well-researched area. In the last decade, scientific research on leadership has developed greatly, leading to the establishment of several leadership theories (Lord et al., 2017; Lindberg, 2021; Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Because of all these efforts, it is important to create a clear picture from the many definitions. Before clear definitions can be given, a widespread confusion must first be cleared up. Leaders are not managers. While they may also take on the role of a manager, leadership is a different activity than that of a manager. Managers must plan, measure, monitor, coordinate, find solutions, hire, fire, and more, so it's a clear job description. However, it is not certain that good managers can become good leaders. This is because the literature shows that leadership has nothing to do with position, work experience, or titles (Ellis & Abbott, 2015). Leaders lead people. Although managers often rely on interpersonal interactions, assigning tasks is not a leadership task. This is because subordinates follow instructions because they are told to do so, not because they want to do it themselves (Capozzoli, 1995). This is also supported by the definition of leadership by Northouse (2021, p.17): "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. "Leadership thus serves to influence other people in an individual and targeted manner. Leadership is thus a collective term for all interaction processes in which there is a deliberate social influence of people on other people, but which serve the fulfillment of common goals. The task of leadership is therefore to motivate and/or enable people to contribute to the achievement of collective goals in organizations (Northouse, 2021). The definition described by Northouse (2021, p.17) is used as the agreed definition in this paper.

This definition, which is the most widely used in the literature, has clear key elements. First, the definition does not speak of any personality traits that a leader should have.

It also does not speak of titles or a style of influence. It also mentions that influence leads to a specific goal (Northouse, 2021). Leadership, then, comes from social influence, not from authority or power conveyed by titles or social positions. According to this definition, leadership needs others, and this means that they do not have to be "directly subordinate" (Kort, 2008). In distinguishing between managers and leaders, the difference between power and authority is often cited (Ellis & Abbott, 2015). At this point, it should be explained that authority is viewed in the literature as a type of power, but not a power that is necessary for or produces successful leadership (Joullié et al., 2021). Authority is the institutionalized power between a superior and a subordinate. It is used to ensure that the superior's wishes are followed. But since leadership aims to influence people, it is necessary to bring about a change in them to make them perform the activities necessary for success, since they want to perform them themselves and are not forced to do so (Robarts, 2018).

It is clear, then, that the power used in leadership is the potential ability to influence others, not authoritarian power. For many leaders, this social influence on these others can lead to an impact on an entire organization, regardless of its size. For example, leaders can develop ethical standards that determine the moral (or immoral) behavior of groups or collectives by shaping the organizational environment and culture (Mayer et al., 2009, Schaubroeck et al., 2012). Leaders can also appeal directly to individuals by aligning the beliefs and identities of their followers with the codes of conduct enforced by the organization or by demonstrating ethical (or unethical) behavior (Brown & Treviño, 2006). It is worth noting that the aforementioned effect extends not only from the leader to the follower but also to the follower him/herself. Active followers have been shown to increase the leader's motivation and elicit good feelings such as satisfaction and happiness, while passive followers decrease the leader's motivation and elicit negative feelings such as defiance and apprehension. (Carsten et al., 2017).

## **2.2 History of Leadership Theories**

Leadership research is primarily concerned with creating theories that explore how to

recognize good leaders, what characteristics they combine, and what exactly makes them a good leaders (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). They also explore which leadership styles are particularly effective and lead to the greatest possible success. One of the earlier theories goes back to philosopher Thomas Carlyle (Carlyle, 2019). He stated that positive changes in society are due to the influence of great personalities. Since this theory was mainly coined in the 19th century, it referred only to male personalities. Since only men were analyzed here, this theory is called The Great Man Theory. These theories about great men assume that the ability to lead is innate and that great leaders are born and not made. A leader was considered to be a person with unique qualities capable of arousing the enthusiasm and imagination of the masses. These abilities were innate and could not be acquired by people who were not born with them. Some of these qualities are motivation, assertiveness, or intelligence (Organ, 1996). Because of the assumption that good leaders are born better than others, this theory strengthened the cult of personality that was widespread at the time. These theories persisted into the mid-20th century (Stippler et al., 2011). Even though leadership theories have evolved greatly to this day, this search for a hero who possesses all the important skills of a leader is still more pronounced in the business world. Today, it is no longer just men who are considered. When looking for a new CEO, board members always hope to find a new savior who possesses these special qualities to save a company. (Khurana, 2002). It is therefore clear that even today, prominent leaders are often said to have the right qualities or personality for their position in the eyes of those who hire them.

Based on the Great Man Theory, research has placed a special emphasis on the personality traits of leaders. Thus, the trait theory of leadership was born. The search for the personality traits that make a good leader dominated the literature in the first half of the twentieth century (Geier, 1967). Personality traits are "psychological characteristics that contribute to a person's enduring and distinct patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving" (Özbag, 2016). At that time, researchers found that personality traits make the difference between leaders and non-leaders. According to the trait theory of leadership, personality traits determine the effectiveness of leaders (Colbert et al., 2012). Lists of personality traits were created to analyze their influence

on leadership. However, the traits listed differed from researcher to researcher. Geier (1967) summarized a list of over 70 traits. Later, Stogdill (1974) shortened the list to 10 traits. In his view, intelligence, attention, persistence, self-confidence, and initiative were particularly important for leaders. However, these theories and lists were heavily criticized in later research. First, because of the large differences in the selected traits, and second, because no significant differences were found when comparing the expression of these traits between leaders and some followers. This raised the question of why these individuals who strongly expressed the leadership-related traits were not leaders (Lindberg, 2021). Two traits where a difference was found were that leaders are good communicators and tend to be more extroverted than their followers. However, trait theory is still being researched today. More recently, however, a consensus has emerged about personality structure based on the five-factor model of personality (MacDonald, 1995). These five main factors are: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Özbag, 2016). Extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness were positively related to leadership tasks. The Big Five personality traits were found to positively correlate with both frequency and effectiveness of leadership tasks. The criterion of leadership personality in this study includes both leadership appearance, i.e., how much a person is viewed as a leader, and perceived effectiveness, i.e., how effectively a person influences and leads the activities of a group. Of the Big Five, Extraversion was most strongly associated with leadership. High Neuroticism scores negatively impact leader behavior and make it difficult for leaders to be effective role models (Özbag, 2016).

Following the trait theory (Stogdill, 1974), research began to pay more attention to the behavior of leaders. Thus, people began to look at the behavior of leaders rather than just their internal characteristics. Therefore, the theories of this period were also called behavioral theories in research (Yukl, 1971). This is also due to the fact that between 1950 and 1970, great advances were made in psychometrics and researchers were able to better measure the cause-effect relationships of - in this case - human behavior. This changed the assumption that leaders are born and that this ability cannot be learned. During this time, research began to show that anyone can learn

leadership and become a good leader under the right conditions (Tannenbaum et al., 2013). Further differentiation came from the fact that based on behavioral studies, different leadership styles were developed and researched for the first time. Starting with the division into leaders who are primarily concerned with tasks and those who focus on people. These findings are based on two studies by Yoder et al. (1952) and Collett (1959). The differences between a task-oriented leader and a people-oriented leader are best seen when a problem arises in a team led by a leader. This is because a task-oriented leader would look more closely at the processes to determine what adjustments are needed to improve the flow of work. A people-oriented leader would approach employees directly to discuss what the problem is (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). This is where leadership styles first appeared, but rather than being task, situation, or employee-specific, they were declared to be universal. This missing component led to a new focus and the contingency theory (Hunsicker, 1976).

To include these contextual variables in leadership theory, theories were first developed around 1970 which took into account the people involved, the tasks, the situation experienced, the type of organization, or other external environmental factors. The so-called contingency Theories. These theories can also be seen as an extension of behavioral theory, as they still analyze behavioral patterns, but their influence strongly depends on the situation in which it is applied (Cherry, 2021). Examples of elaborated theories are Hershey and Blanchard's Situational Theory and the Fiedler Contingency Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, (Miner, 2005). In the latter, three leadership components were identified. The relationship between the leader and the members, the task structure, and the positional power. Here it was analyzed which leadership style is preferred in which context. Hershey and Blanchard's (1969) situational research focuses more on the developmental level of the individual subordinate and argues that different leadership styles should be applied. The focus of the research is no longer only on the leader, more and more factors are included and the subordinates also play an increasingly important role.

This development led to more and more research being done on the basis of exchanges between subordinates and leaders. This gave rise to transactional theories



(Aga, 2016). These focused on the transactions between leaders and followers. One goal of these theories is a positive and beneficial relationship for both sides. An important work of this period is Robert Greenleaf's Servant Leadership. Here, for the first time, the leader is described as the servant of his followers. The leader must use his power to enable his followers to realize their full potential and to work successfully. Therefore, a good leader was judged by the extent to which his followers under him grew personally and professionally, achieved work success, and became more autonomous ("Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness," 1979). Another work in transaction theory is the leader-member exchange theory which identified the quality of the relationship between leader and followers as the most important factor for success (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A relationship characterized by trust and respect is a relationship of high quality. A relationship based on transactional and contractual obligations is a low-quality relationship. It has been empirically proven that high-quality relationships lead to improved leadership results (Humphrey et al., 2007).

In the last decade, further research has been conducted on the basis of transaction theory. Theories of transformational leadership have emerged. Here, leaders are assessed according to the extent to which they manage to motivate their employees to achieve work goals with the help of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, or individual consideration. In modern theories, the relationship between leader and followers should not only be positive but mutually stimulating and enhancing (Bakker et al., 2022). In the work Leadership by James MacGregor Burns, it is shown that followers make leaders moral actors. In today's theories, a moral dimension is added. The relationship between leader and follower should be based on high trust, an increase in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the leaders, but also to encourage the leaders to communicate morally desirable values in order to make it as easy as possible for the followers to identify with them. The ideal behaviors and thus leadership styles of the leader should have the potential to transform their followers and positively influence their work engagement (Burns, 2004).

### **2.3 Good Leadership and Virtues in Leadership**

Even if in academic research such as Brown and Treviño (2006), Lord et al. (2017) or Mayer et al. (2009) more and more focus is put on ethically correct leadership, in practice leaders are still largely evaluated according to their effectiveness. The world's major corporations contain people in leadership positions who wield a great deal of influence. Many of these individuals use their influence to influence their followers toward ambitious goals. However, many of these goals are not ethically sound and thus not worth striving for (Newstead et al., 2019). A famous example is the CEO of Volkswagen. A man who built Volkswagen into the world's largest automaker but made unethical decisions that led to the infamous Dieselgate emissions scandal because of which he now faces criminal charges (Rhodes, 2016). In this example but also in various others, the leaders were successful because they inspired others to work toward a shared objective. These leaders, on the other hand, were motivated by the wrong things; their influencing techniques were dubious to outright immoral; and the goals they sought were not the appropriate ones, not for shareholders, workers, consumers, or communities.

Therefore, the evaluation method should be adapted to help future leaders and existing ones to develop their leadership skills differently. The goal should not be to help them increase their influence and effectiveness but to encourage them to exercise leadership that is both effective and ethical. With this paradigm shift, one hopes for more good leadership. It is not more leaders that are needed, but more good leaders (Newstead et al., 2019).

To understand what good leadership is, one must understand that while good is a very general term, there is a shared understanding of what good leadership is in a variety of articles (Riggio et al., 2010). Good leadership has long been associated in the literature, mainly with personality traits. This research is now being expanded to include another aspect: virtue. An accurate definition of virtue in relation to a leader would be "a character trait that a leader acquires and maintains primarily through

learning and continuous practice and that is expressed through voluntary actions in contextually relevant situations" (Hackett & Wang, 2012). This concept considers essential virtue traits such as learning ability and context. It is stated that linking a leader's virtue with a character feature contradicts the virtue's capacity to learn, because traits are regarded as stable and largely unchanging, at least in social science domains (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). It is now clear that effective leadership must be both ethical and effective (Ciulla, 2017). Both are composed of good virtues. Ineffective leadership is just as undesirable as leadership that acts unethically and demonstrates bad morals. Virtues are not a characteristic of a person's personality. Instead, they are learnt and persistent actions that stem from an aim to accomplish something ethical. Virtue can be compared to a practical skill. That's why Virtue, like any other practical skill, is first taught via observation and direct teaching. As a result, a virtue-based approach to leadership development has the potential to increase leaders' ethics and efficacy, resulting in the development of not just leadership, but good leadership (Newstead et al., 2019).

It becomes clear that when looking for a good leader, one must look not only at the personality traits, but also at the virtues of that person. These insights help in the development and recognition of future leaders (Newstead et al., 2019). However, they also show a significant change in the profile and reputation of a good leader over the past decade. This change is strongly caused by a new generation on the job market and also changes the demand of the new generation in terms of personality traits and virtues their leaders should have (Lord et al., 2017).

## **2.4 Young people's influence on and perception of leadership**

The challenges for leaders in the 21st century have increased as they must adapt their approach to leadership to cope with the diverse coordination of the workforce. One of these challenges has always been leading of different generations (Downing, 2006). Due to technological progress and the resulting incredible acceleration of change in society, the changes between generations are becoming more and more pronounced. One highly researched generation that has brought significant change to the labor

market is the Millennial generation. An significant collection of studies (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al. 2018; Dinh et al. 2014; Downing, 2006) examines the particular issues that Millennials pose in the workplace and gives prescriptions to assist managers handle the generation's demands, wants, and expectations (Zemke et al., 2013). Millennials, those born 1981-1996 are currently the largest single generational group in an economic powerhouse like the United States. They have surpassed both Baby Boomers, those born 1946-1963 and Generation X in this regard, those born 1963-1981 (Fry, 2018). Given their size, it's not unexpected that many efforts have been undertaken to better understand them and increase their productivity as employees.

The Millennial generation has been exposed to technology early in their lives, which sets them apart from every generation before them. This affects how they want to be led in organizations and causes that they enter the workforce with higher expectations (Shults et al., 2022). Millennials regard motivation as a critical component of professional and personal success. Millennials also demand to be led by real leaders and treated as valuable individuals. This is in direct contrast to the current authoritarian leadership profile that is still in place in many companies. Millennials have an advantage since they are tech-savvy and can utilize nearly any technological device without assistance (Au- Yong-Oliveira et al., 2018). There have been a number of research studies examining Millennials in the workplace, recognizing that they communicate through the Internet and online social media and networks, have various opinion leaders such as popular online influencers, and through platforms such as YouTube tend to read less text and engage more with images, photos, and videos (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2015). However, few people have considered how they wish to be led and follow (Chou et al., 2012).

One of the research's key findings is that Millennials have a strong focus on themselves, but they also desire to be excellent team players (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). What appears to be a contradiction stems from Millennials' desire to make a positive influence on their companies; they want to speak openly and regularly with their superiors, yet they are comfortable with modern technology-based communication methods (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). On the other hand, Millennials

are typically seen as selfish, sluggish, and difficult to inspire, as well as being rude and lacking in loyalty (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Stereotypes about Millennials, such as those just mentioned, can arise from attitudes induced by command-and-control leadership models and thereby authoritarian leadership styles in which respect is demanded rather than encouraged. It becomes clear that communication is very important for Millennials (Au-Yong- Oliveira et al., 2015). But the reality of how executives communicate is different, as an example from one of the most valuable companies in the world shows. At Apple, known for its innovation, communication is kept to a minimum, on a need-to-know basis. Young graduates, on the other hand, are not taught this. They often expect induction and to have a great degree of communication and support when they start work, only to be disappointed when they discover the lack of support in their day-to-day work, with "virtuous leadership" almost completely absent in some.

These disappointments come from reinforced expectations and beliefs of what a leader should be like. From the perspective of potential workers, there is a lot of study on how a typical entrepreneurial leader conducts and appears, often known as the "entrepreneurial leadership stereotype." The findings show that entrepreneurial leadership stereotypes are linked to certain leadership characteristics and are cognitively connected with certain groups of persons among potential workers (Rudic et al., 2021). Most people have mental images of how entrepreneurs "usually" behave and appear, as well as how entrepreneurs should act and seem (Gupta & Fernandez, 2008). Because entrepreneurs' conformity to preconceptions might impact their capacity to acquire resources, a deeper knowledge of such preconceptions is required. Because hiring staff is a need for entrepreneurs in the growth process, possible employee perceptions are critical (Moser et al., 2017). When it comes to choosing a job, potential employees are likely to pay close attention to their impressions of business owners, especially their leadership style, because they represent a company (Coad et al., 2017).

People have implicit conceptualizations of social groups, such as leaders in general, and what characteristics or attributes they expect from them. In one way or another,

all respondents expected entrepreneurial leadership behaviors, such as having a clear vision, being able to engage people, and communicating one's ideas and vision (Bagheri & Harrison, 2020). They expect leaders to be courageous because they are not afraid to take risks, to be extremely passionate about it, and also to expect employees to be truly passionate about it (Lord et al., 2017). They also expect good leaders to expect their employees to challenge decisions made by their leader and to bring their own opinions to the table. Entrepreneurs who are aware of stereotypes may better comprehend others' views and expectations, which is essential since views and expectations impact how they are assessed and whether they can obtain legitimacy (Lord et al., 2017).

## **2.5 Path-Goal Theory**

One of the leadership theories that has not yet been explained in detail is that of the path-goal theory. This theory is used in this thesis for the methodological part. To provide sufficient theoretical background to make the methodological part more comprehensible, a separate chapter is dedicated to this theory.

The Path-Goal Theory is mainly due to the US American Robert House (1971). The scope of the theory stems from the leadership research that prevailed until about 1975. The theory is not only concerned with the leader but is also a dyadic theory of leadership. Thus, the relationship between leader and subordinate is explored. More specifically, it explores how leaders influence the motivation and satisfaction of subordinates. A difference to the research standard is the special focus on the leader because the way - goal theory does not research the behavior of leaders but of all people in leadership positions, these can be leaders but also only formally appointed superiors (Indvik, 1986). Furthermore, the theory is not concerned with leaders of whole organizations, the political behavior of leaders, strategic leadership, or leadership in the context of change, but the day-to-day interaction with their subordinates (House, 1971). The path-goal theory derives from earlier research in the expectancy theory of motivation (Axelrad, 1960). Here the central concept is that the force that causes an individual to behave in a particular way is a function of his or her

expectation that the behavior will lead to a particular outcome and the buzz of valence, that is, the personal benefit or satisfaction derived from the outcome.

As is evident in the various definitions of leadership mentioned in sub chapter 2.2, influence is a fundamental component. The path-goal theory focuses on the influence of leaders on the motivation of their subordinates. The motivational function of the leader is to do everything possible to increase the subordinates' achievement of work goals and to facilitate the path to these goals by clarifying, removing obstacles, and helping to increase the personal satisfaction of their subordinates along the way (House, 1971). Thus, in path-goal theory, a leader is considered effective and thus a good leader if he or she manages to provide the necessary additional information, support, and resources. More specifically, those that go beyond those provided by the subordinate's formal organization or environment, the leader uses their position to ensure both subordinate satisfaction and effective work management. In doing so, they aim to ensure that subordinates experience intrinsic satisfaction and receive valid rewards as a result of achieving work objectives (Evans, 1996).

In the development of the theory, two general classes of leadership behavior were identified as necessary for effective leadership. Goal-directed behavior and behavior directed at satisfying the needs of subordinates (House, 1971). However, in order to test and define leadership styles, four types of leadership styles and thus behaviors were defined. The following paragraphs describe these four leadership styles in more detail. The descriptions of all styles come from House (1971) and are summarized for this paper.

The first is the directive leadership style. The goal here is to create the psychological structure for the subordinates, to let them know what is expected of them. To both plan, the work also to clarify specific instructions and guidelines and give them directions. This style is primarily aimed at reducing ambiguity and clearly explaining to the subordinate how their efforts will lead to successful performance. Furthermore, how the achievement of these goals will lead to extrinsic rewards (House, 1971).

The second leadership style is the supportive leadership style. This is primarily aimed at satisfying the needs and preferences of subordinates. The creation of a friendly and

psychologically supportive work environment is the leader's endeavor here. It is hoped to provide the subordinates with a boost in self-confidence and social satisfaction which will lead to more successful work. In addition, this is supposed to reduce stress for the subordinates. It is therefore expected that supportive leadership behavior will increase performance if this behavior is accompanied by purposeful effort (House, 1971).

The third style is that of participative leadership. Here, consulting with subordinates and taking their opinions and suggestions into account in decision-making increases their influence. It is hoped that this will have various effects. It is hoped that this will lead to a greater alignment between the individual goals of the subordinates and the organization's goals. Under participative leadership, the subordinates have an influence on the goals and therefore choose goals that they themselves consider important. Another effect is the strengthening of the autonomy of the subordinates and the ability to realize their intentions, which goes hand in hand with greater effort and performance. It also creates an increase in the pressure on performance through greater participation and thus co-responsibility (House, 1971).

The last defined style is that of performance-oriented behavior. This style aims to promote excellence by setting challenging goals, constantly striving for improvement, and rewarding excellence. This style should lead to the subordinates themselves building a higher level of confidence in their abilities and striving for higher performance standards. This creates a constantly improving standard of performance but also competition among the leader (House, 1971).

Considering these different styles, however, it should be noted that the Path-Goal Theory is particularly popular among researchers because it reminds leaders that their central task as leaders is to help subordinates define and achieve their goals effectively (Northouse, 2021). For this reason, it will also be used in the next section to collect the primary data to determine the preferences of students and full-time employees in terms of leadership styles for this thesis.



### **3 Methodology**

The methodology section of this thesis describes the chosen research design and presents details about the survey design. This chapter provides an overview of all the techniques that were used to collect meaningful data.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

An important part of this research is the choice of how to collect primary data that is meaningful, analyzable, and understandable in order to answer the research question as well as possible.

Research Question (RQ): Are there differences in leadership expectations and demands between students and full-time employees?

In order to get an overall picture of expectations and perceptions of leadership, these are examined at four levels. These four levels each represent one of the sub-research questions and are each designed to test a hypothesis.

Specific Research Question 1: Are there differences in preferred leadership styles between students and full-time employees?

Specific Research Question 2: Are there differences in prioritizing different expectations of a leader between students and full-time employees?

Specific Research Question 3: Do students and full-time employees place different levels of importance on leadership?

Specific Research Question 4: Do students have a clearer picture of their ideal leader than full-time employees?

With the given research question, a solid conceptual framework is developed based on the classical and current leadership literature. The empirical part is based on a questionnaire-based online survey, which is used to collect primary data on the leadership perceptions and experiences of different stakeholders.

First, the leadership styles preferred according to the views of students and full-time employees are analyzed. The second level examines their expectations and perceptions of the leader as a person, what qualities are most important in their perception, and what characteristics should the leader display. In addition, the importance they attach to leadership in general with regard to their professional success is discussed. Finally, the extent to which they themselves have an image of their ideal leader is analyzed. The overarching research question of this thesis is: are there differences in expectations and perceptions of leadership between students and full-time employees? Based on this, this thesis focuses on the comparison between the two groups of students and full-time employees.

The evaluation aims to identify any differences between students and young workers. In order to conduct good and scalable research, it is necessary to make these expectations and perceptions of the target groups measurable. There are three different research approaches existing: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research method collects primary data mainly through interviews and interpretation of the collected data from the interviews. With the quantitative method, the primary data is usually collected through surveys or experiments. The mixed-methods approach is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2014; Matthew & Ross, 2010). Based on the research question a the quantitative approach is applied for this thesis. Due to a final voluntary open-ended question, one could assume a mixed-methods approach, but the majority is quantitative. This approach is beneficial to get a clear picture of a larger number of respondents and to provide information such as averages, trends, or relationships of the data collected (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

Data collection was conducted via an online survey, the design of which is explained in more detail in the next section.

### **3.2 Survey design**

Fink (2022) explains that a survey is a system for collecting information from or about people concerning their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. These can then be described or compared. A questionnaire-based online survey is designed for collecting data from as many study participants as possible to ensure meaningful research. The online survey tool Google Forms (<https://forms.gle/E6z2av85eQCZinUEA>) is used.

The purpose of the survey is to obtain the necessary data to accurately answer the research questions developed in the previous chapters. In addition, the questionnaire was developed based on the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is developed on the basis of literature review. There is a quantitative research approach used in this study, as mentioned earlier, and therefore the questionnaire consists of only quantitative questions with the exception of the last question. The last voluntary open-ended question asks about the characteristics that the ideal leader should have for the participant. Only frequencies of the same answers are collected here to identify characteristics that may not have been strongly considered in the rest of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured along six blocks. Participants are informed at the beginning about the topic of the survey and that all data collected will be used exclusively for the purpose of this research.

In the first block, general demographic information about the participants is collected. In addition to gender, age, highest academic degree, and field of study. Respondents are grouped along two categories: students and full-time employees. This is done by asking participants to indicate whether they are students or full-time employees when asked about their current occupations. If participants are full-time employees, they are directed to the second block, in which they provide information about how long they have been in the workforce.

The third block addresses the tasks that participants believe leaders must perform. In this block, the preferred leadership style is examined based on the four leadership

styles of the Path-Goal theory elaborated by House (1971). For this purpose, questionnaires already used on the topic of the Path-Goal theory were used (Collett, 1959). The questionnaire was to be completed by the leaders to find out which of the four styles they practice most frequently: directive style, supportive style, participative style, or performance-oriented style. For this paper, the 12 statements were extracted from the literature and revised in order to be suitable for evaluation from the subordinates' perspective. Participants must rate each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from not important (1) to very important (5).

The fourth block of the questionnaire analyzes the expectations of the manager as a person. Here, participants must rank 6 attributes that a leader might exhibit from least important (1) to most important (6). Only one importance can be assigned to each attribute, so participants must rank them and cannot give two attributes, e.g., the most important rating.

In the 5th block of the survey, participants are again presented with 5 statements that they are asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" according to their agreement with the content. These questions aim to assess the importance they place on leadership in terms of their career advancement and success. They are also asked to indicate whether they have clear ideas about what an ideal leader should look like.

Finally, the 6th block is followed by an open-ended question asking what characteristics respondents would ascribe to an ideal leader. Thereupon, the survey is closed.

### **3.3 Data collection**

The questionnaire was created as an online survey in Google Forms and shared on the social media platform Instagram in April 2022. A convenience sampling method is used. This means that participants are included in the sample in an uncontrolled way. Because they are readily available or because they volunteer (Etikan, 2016). It also

relies on the snowball system, as all participants are asked to share this survey on their social media channels as well (Leighton et al., 2021). A hyperlink allowed participants to access the questionnaire via social media with one click. This allows for a large audience to be reached without being limited by geographic boundaries and other physical barriers (Brace, 2018). Overall, participants were able to fill the survey for a period of one month. Social media channels such as Instagram were used to reach students in particular. Therefore, the questionnaire was additionally sent directly to some of the employees of two independent companies. These were, on the one hand, the Viennese professional soccer club Austria Wien and, on the other hand, the South Tyrolean company Schweitzer Project. Here, the hope was to get more responses from young full-time employees who already had some work experience. The goal was to have over 100 participants and a more or less balanced distribution between students and full-time employees.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

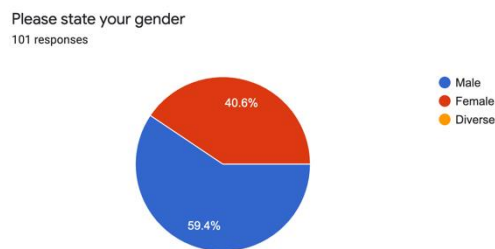
At the end of one month, the survey is downloaded from Google Forms and transferred to the Jamovi (<https://www.jamovi.org>) program for statistical analysis of the data. The process of data analysis takes place exclusively on Jamovi. Microsoft Excel was partially used to create tables and graphics. The first step of the statistical analysis of the data is to clean it by determining the level of measurement and replacing the variables that are not yet continuous with numbers. The next step is analyzing the data set by first looking at the descriptive statistics and determining normality using a Shapiro-Wilk test. Finally, the hypotheses are tested. This is done with the help of a Mann-Whitney U test. All calculations including their interpretations can be found in the next section of this paper.

## 4 Results

In the results section of this paper, the collected data is analyzed. Starting with a general descriptive statistical analysis. Continuing with inferential statistical analysis to test the hypotheses. The aim of this section is to provide a basis for further discussion of the results.

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 104 people answered the survey, but only 101 respondents completed it. The three incomplete ones were removed from the set of answers. The remaining 101 respondents consisted of 59.4% men (60) and 40.6% women (41) and 0% (0) diverse.



*Figure 1 - Gender*

Since the survey was targeted to younger people and therefore partly specifically given to them to fill out, it is not surprising that 61.4% (62) come from the age group 18-25 years. With 26.7% (27) the age group of 26-33 years is the second most frequently represented. The remaining participants are divided between the age group 34-41 years with 9.9% (10) and 2% (2) to the age group over 41 years.

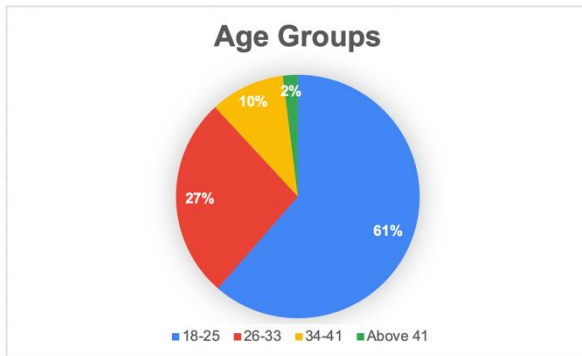


Figure 2 - Age Groups

The third demographic question the participants of the survey were confronted with was the question about their highest completed educational level. At 42.6% (43), most participants are currently in their degree program and selected the Some university credits, no degree category. 26.7% (27) of participants hold a bachelor's degree. The next highest degree, and therefore a completed master's degree, is held by 15.8% (16) of participants. For 8.9% of participants, a high school diploma is the highest academic degree earned and for 5.6% (6), a professional degree.

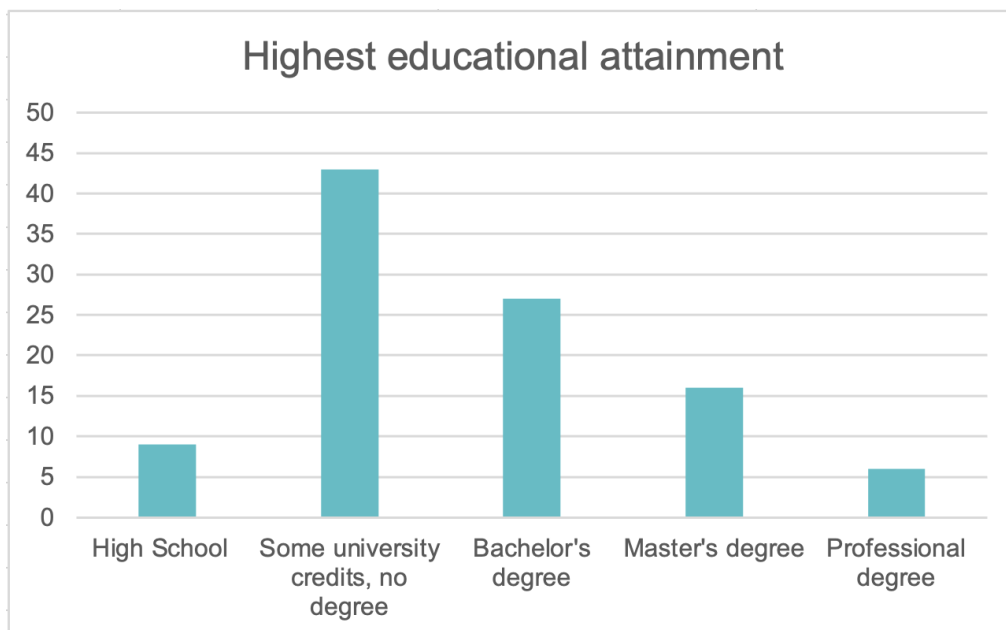
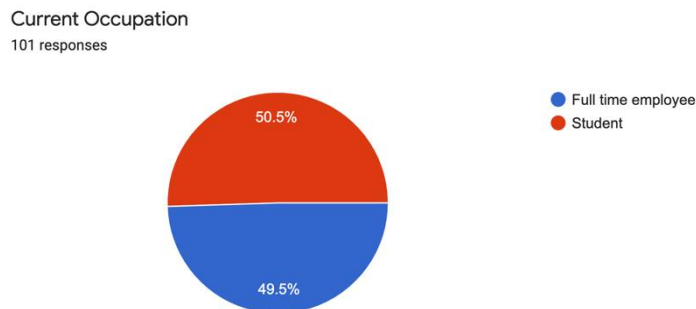


Figure 3 - Highest educational attainment

The next question was aimed at the current employment. The participants could only choose between students and permanent employees, as these two groups were compared in this work. With 50.5% (51) students and 49.5% (50) workers, the distribution is almost perfect.



*Figure 4 - Current Occupation*

Furthermore, it was asked in which field of study the respondents who are still in their studies or have already completed one were studying. In this case, 52 of the respondents chose Business & Law, which is the clear majority. 17 of the respondents have assigned their studies to Engineering & Technology. Eleven chose the answer option "Other field of study" because they did not find any of the selection options suitable. Five participants study in the field of Health, Medicine & Sports. The rest are



evenly split between three participants in Education, Administration & Social sciences and another three in Computer Science & IT.

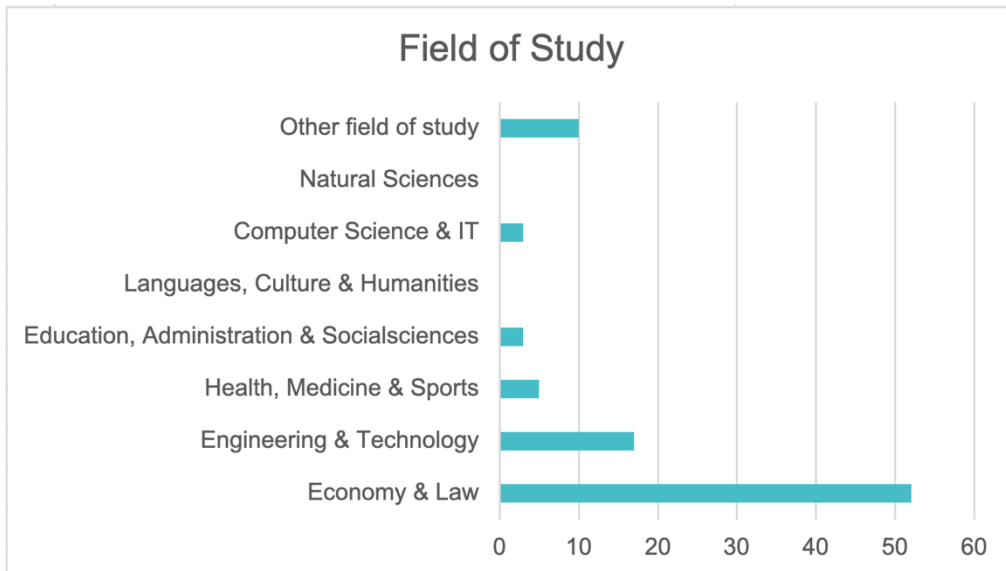


Figure 5 - Field of Study

The final question aimed only at those who are currently employed. Respondents are asked to indicate how long they have been working until today. Here 41.1% (23) have been working for 0-5 years. 32.1% (18) have been working for 6-10 years and 26.8% (15) have been working for more than 10 years.

If you selected full-time employee - indicate how many years you have been working.

56 responses

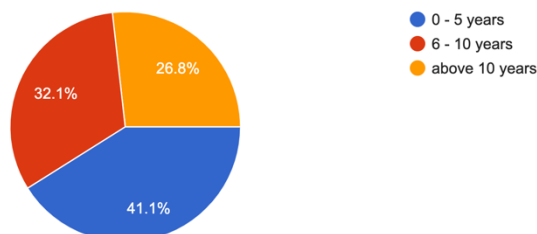


Figure 6 - Working years

To get as comprehensive a picture as possible of the data collected, the descriptive results of the entire sample size are analyzed first. Since the Path-Goal model of House (1971) was chosen for this work in defining leadership styles, questions were asked based on the following four styles described in the literature: The Supportive Style, Directive Style, Participative Style, and the Achievement-oriented Style. The responses of the entire sample to each style will now be examined in more detail.

Respondents who assigned high importance to each of the statements, based on the work of Collett (1959), are also considered in this research to be people who enjoy working under leaders who practice the appropriate leadership style.

The first described results come from the Supportive Leadership Style:

Respondents' perceptions of this style were measured using the following three questions:

Q7: Creating a pleasant working atmosphere while trying to maintain good relations with the subordinates.

Q9: Always consider the individual needs of subordinates in his/her decisions and behaviours.

Q3: Helping subordinates overcome problems that prevent them from performing their duties.

In the table below the descriptive statistics of the supportive style are presented.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Q7	3.98	1.10	101
Q9	3.66	0.90	101

Q3	3.85	0.73	101
Supportive Leadership Style	3.83	0.77	101

*Table 1 -Descriptive statistic Supportive Style*

As Table 1 shows, the average for the Supportive Leadership Style is 3.83. With the help of the evaluation of the individual statements, it is clear that none of the statements has a strong effect on a change in the average, which is confirmed by the standard deviation of 0.77.

The second results that are being described are the one of the Directive Leadership Style

Respondents' perceptions of this style were measured using the following three questions:

Q1: Setting up rules and regulations that the subordinates must follow.

Q2: Showing subordinates what needs to be done and how it needs to be done.

Q12: Communicate to subordinates what is expected of them.

Descriptive statistics will again be used to explore a general trend in respondents' perceptions of this style.

In Table 2 this is shown.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Q1	3.55	0.76	101
Q2	3.67	1.06	101

Q12	3.82	0.9	101
Directive Leadership Style	3.68	0.90	101

*Table 2 - Descriptive statistic Directive Style*

With an average of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.9, no particularity can be determined regarding this data.

Next the results for the Participative Leadership Style are analyzed.

Respondents' perceptions of this style were measured using the following three questions:

Q6: Consulting with subordinates in deciding which tasks need to be completed next.

Q10: Actively listening to subordinates' ideas and suggestions.

Q11: Communicate with subordinates when problems arise in order to solve them.

A general tendency of the respondents' perception of this style is also to be explored here with the help of descriptive statistics.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Q6	3.63	0.92	101
Q10	4.06	0.84	101
Q11	4.18	0.81	101
Participative Leadership Style	3.95	0.86	101

*Table 3 - Descriptive statistic Participative Style*

The participative leadership style has an average of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 0.86. An average that attracts attention in this case is that compared to the others of Q6 with 3.63. Therefore, it can be concluded here that the respondents do not consider the participative of the leader in the decision-making process of what task to perform next as particularly desirable.

The last described results come from the Achievement Oriented Style.

Respondents' perceptions of this style were measured using the following three questions:

Q8: Demanding the highest level of performance from subordinates.

Q5: Consistently setting challenging goals for subordinates.

Q12: Encouraging continuous improvement in the performance of subordinates.

The Descriptive Statistics is intended to identify a general trend in respondents' perceptions of this style:

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Q7	3.48	0.8	101
Q9	3.62	0.79	101
Q3	3.87	0.75	101
Achievement-Oriented Leadership Style	3.65	0.77	101

*Table 4 - Descriptive statistic Achievement-Oriented Style*

With an average of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.77, no statistical peculiarities can be observed for the entire sample size. Again, it is evident that none of the statements has a particular influence on the average, which is generally a good sign since the statements all explore one specific leadership style.

To use this data to explore a trend in the sample, all leadership style means were compared.

Leadership Style	Supportive	Directive	Participative	Achievement-oriented
Mean	3.83	3.68	<u>3.95</u>	3.65

*Table 5 - Mean Leadership Styles*

It can be seen that there are no major differences between the means in the entire sample size. The highest mean and thus the leadership style that received the highest approval is the participative style with an average of 3.95. However, the other means do not deviate far from this, so no clear tendency can be identified.

The third block of the survey dealt with the manager as a person. For this, the respondents were asked to rate from a list of qualities and qualifications how important it is to them that their leader possesses them and makes use of them in leading them. More specifically, they had to rank them from least important to most important. The following table lists the attributes and qualifications.

High level of understanding and expertise of their work.
Great amount of work experience.
Puts in a high level of work hours and effort.
Takes responsibility for the mistakes of their subordinates.
Being approachable and having high interpersonal skills.
Encourages subordinates in the case of mistakes and properly acknowledge their successes.

*Table 6 - Attributes and qualifications of leaders*

Of interest is here is which of the choices are rated as being most important or least important. This percentage distribution is listed in the following table.

	Least Important	Most Important
High level of understanding and expertise of their work.	6% (6)	31% (31)
Great amount of work experience.	31% (31)	3% (3)
Puts in a high level of work hours and effort.	28% (28)	3% (3)
Takes responsibility for the mistakes of their subordinates.	19% (19)	9% (9)
Being approachable and having high interpersonal skills.	9% (9)	25% (25)
Encourages subordinates in the case of mistakes and properly acknowledge their successes.	8% (8)	23% (23)
N	101	101

*Table 7 - Percentage distribution of attributes of leaders*

The most frequently perceived as Most Important with 31% (31) is that leaders should have a high level of understanding and expertise of their work. The requirement that a leader should be approachable and have high social skills was rated second most important with 25% (25). The least important requirement was the great amount of work experience with 31% (31), followed closely by the requirement that a leader should put in a high level of work hours and effort with 28% (28).

In the fifth block, the general importance that the respondents give to leadership is tested. This is done with the help of the following questions:

Q17: If I work in a company where I am satisfied with the leadership culture, it significantly increases the probability that I will remain loyal to that company.

Q18: Unsatisfactory quality of leadership is a reason for me to leave a company.

Q19: If I personally know a leader in a company and consider him or her to be qualified, that is a significant reason for me to join that company.

Q20: The quality of leadership I experience has a significant impact on the development of my career.

The questions show the following distribution of answers.



Figure 7 - Q17



Figure 8 - Q18



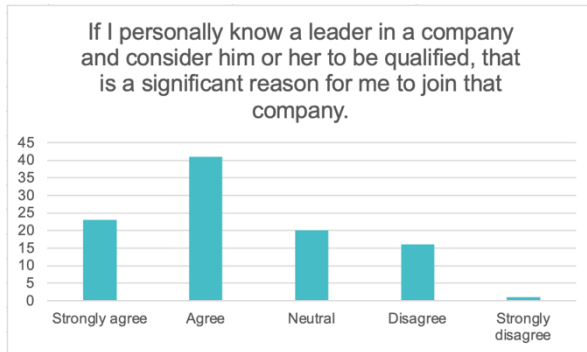


Figure 9 – Q19



Figure 10 - Q20

Mean	3.93
Standard Deviation	0.82

Table 8 - Descriptive Leadership Importance

The response distributions show that a clear majority agree positively with the statements and thus assign a high importance to leadership when it comes to their career, yet there is a non-negligible proportion of negative responses for each statement. With a mean of 3.93, however, the clear positive tendency is again supported.

The answers to the next survey question behave in a similar manner. This aims to determine whether the respondents have a clear picture of what their ideal leader should be like.

To determine of the extent the respondents already have a clear picture of their ideal leader, the following question was raised and evaluated:

Q21: I have a clear picture of the ideal leader I want to work under.

The breakdown of responses and descriptive statistics are summarized in the following figure and table:

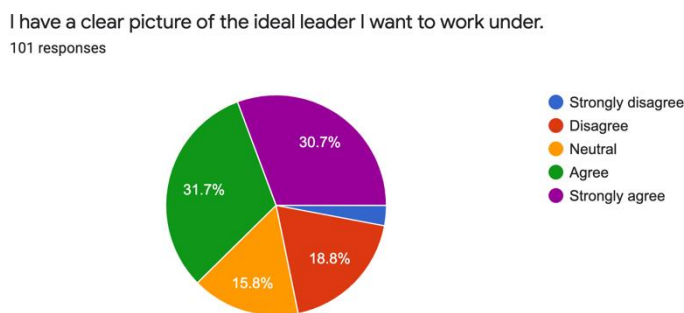


Figure 11 - Q24

Mean	3.68
Standard Deviation	1.40

Table 9 - Descriptive clear picture of the ideal leader

With a mean of 3.68 and the graphical representation of the response distribution, which shows that 34.6% do not agree with the statement, it can be concluded here that a neutral mean value is formed due to the different extent of the clear idea of the ideal leader. The comparatively high standard deviation of 1.40 also indicates that there are significant differences between the answers.

In the final open-ended question:

Q25: Please state some attributes that describe the ideal leader for you.

All respondents who answered Q24 with either Agree or Strongly Agree were asked to indicate which attributes they would assign to their ideal leader. With a total of 30 responses, there was a wide range of answers. Repeated attributes were: Loyal, Motivating, and Empathic. Apart from that, no special features could be found in the answers and no attributes were mentioned that had not yet occurred in the course of the questionnaire.

## **4.2 Inferential Statistics**

In this section, the hypotheses are tested in order to answer the research questions of this thesis. To do this, statistical tests will be performed to prove that there are significant differences between the two groups of students and full-time employees. These are two independent groups and in order to detect a difference, a t-test is the statistical test to be applied. However, this requires a normal distribution. This is tested here using a Shapiro Wilk Test of Normality. In cases where the test does not show a normal distribution, a Mann Whitney U test is used to investigate differences between the groups.

### **4.2.1 Hypothesis 1:**

H1: There are differences in preferred leadership styles between students and full-time employees.

H0: There are no differences in preferred leadership styles between students and full-time employees

In order to determine a significant difference here, the data relating to the respective leadership styles are compared between students and full-time employees.

The data of the hypothesis-testing questions were initially subjected to a Cronbach's alpha test to ensure that the data are reliable.

The results are shown in the table below.

Scale Reliability Statistics

<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	
scale	0.812

*Table 10 - Hypothesis 1: Cronbach's alpha*

With a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.812, the results show a high internal consistency, and the data is reliable.

To determine if a t-test was possible, the data was tested for normal distribution. The results of the Shapiro Wilk test are shown in the table below.

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
Supportive Leadership Style	0.969	0.018
Directive Leadership Style	0.966	0.010
Participative Leadership Style	0.967	0.012
Achievement Leadership Style	0.972	0.028

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

*Table 11 - Hypothesis 1: Shapiro-Wilk Test*

The p-values of all four leadership styles, being less than 0.05, indicating a violation of normality, so a Mann-Whitney U test was used. The results are shown in the following table.

Independent Samples T-Test

		<b>Statistic</b>	<b>p</b>
Supportive Leadership Style	Mann-Whitney U	921	0.015
Directive Leadership Style	Mann-Whitney U	518	< .001
Participative Leadership Style	Mann-Whitney U	952	0.026
Achievement Leadership Style	Mann-Whitney U	663	< .001

*Table 12 - Hypothesis 1: Mann-Whitney U Test*

The p-values of the different leadership styles show a significance as they are smaller than the chosen significance threshold of 0.05. Indicating a significant difference between the two groups because the means of this data set were significantly different between the groups. In order to analyze how the difference relates to the data of all four leadership styles, they were combined and subjected again to a Mann-Whitney U test.

The results are shown in the table below.

Independent Samples T-Test

		<b>Statistic</b>	<b>p</b>
Leadership Styles summarized	Mann-Whitney U	806	0.001

*Table 13: Hypothesis 1: Styles summarized Mann-Whitney U Test*

With a p-value of 0.001 and therefore lower than 0.05, which was chosen as the significance threshold, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. Significant differences in preferred leadership styles exist between students and full-time employees. How these are expressed in detail will be examined in more detail in the discussion section of this paper.

#### **4.2.2 Hypotheses 2:**

H1: There are differences in the prioritization of different expectations of a leader between students and full-time employees.

H0: There are no differences in the prioritization of different expectations of a leader between students and full-time employees.

To determine a significant difference here, the rankings made by students and full-time employees with the abilities and qualities of leaders are compared.

The results of the Shapiro Wilk test to test the data for normal distribution are summarized in the following table.

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
Great amount of work experience.	0.932	< .001
Encourages subordinates in the case of mistakes and properly ac	0.942	< .001
Takes responsibility for the mistakes of their subordinates.	0.950	< .001
Being approachable and having high interpersonal skills.	0.947	< .001
Puts in a high level of work hours and effort.	0.892	< .001
High level of understanding and expertise of their work.	0.925	< .001

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

*Table 14: Hypothesis 2: Shapiro-Wilk Test*

Since all of the data sets with a p-value of <0.01 do not have a normal distribution, a Mann-Whitney U test is performed here to analyze significant differences between the groups. The results are summarized in the following table.

Independent Samples T-Test

		<b>Statistic</b>	<b>p</b>
Great amount of work experience.	Mann-Whitney U	999	0.054

Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	p
Encourages subordinates in the case of mistakes and properly ac	Mann-Whitney U	1024	0.082
Takes responsibility for the mistakes of their subordinates.	Mann-Whitney U	1106	0.245
Being approachable and having high interpersonal skills.	Mann-Whitney U	726	< .001
Puts in a high level of work hours and effort.	Mann-Whitney U	1074	0.162
High level of understanding and expertise of their work.	Mann-Whitney U	1124	0.291

*Table 15 - Hypothesis 2: Mann-Whitney U Test*

Only one of the six statements shows a significant difference with a p-value of less than 0.05. Therefore, this indicates that H0 cannot be rejected here. H1 can be rejected as there is no significant difference in the perception of the importance of qualities and characteristics of leaders between students and full-time employees.

### 4.2.3 Hypotheses 3:

H1: Students give greater importance to leadership than full-time workers.

H0: Full-Time workers give greater importance to leadership than students

First, a Cronbach alpha was used to test whether the data are reliable:



Scale Reliability Statistics

<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	
scale	0.867

*Table 16 - Hypothesis 3: Cronbach's alpha*

As can be seen in the table 16, the data are reliable with a Cronbach alpha score of 0.867.

The results of the Shapiro Wilk test are shown in the Table 17.

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
The quality of leadership I experience has a significant impact on the development of my career.	0.877	< .001
If I personally know a leader in a company and consider him or her to be qualified, that is a significant reason for me to join that company.	0.909	< .001
Unsatisfactory quality of leadership is a reason for me to leave a company.	0.922	< .001

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
If I work in a company where I am satisfied with the leadership culture, it significantly increases the probability that I will remain loyal to that company.	0.891	< .001

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

*Table 17 - Hypothesis 3: Shapiro-Wilk Test*

The data does not show a normal distribution with four p-values of < 0.001, so this hypothesis is also evaluated using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Independent Samples T-Test

		<b>Statistic</b>	<b>p</b>
The quality of leadership I experience has a significant impact on the development of my career.	Mann-Whitney U	617	< .001
If I personally know a leader in a company and consider him or her to be qualified, that is a significant reason for me to join that company.	Mann-Whitney U	653	< .001

Unsatisfactory quality of leadership is a reason for me to leave a company.	Mann-Whitney U	835	< .001
If I work in a company where I am satisfied with the leadership culture, it significantly increases the probability that I will remain loyal to that company.	Mann-Whitney U	1056	0.056

Note. H<sub>a</sub> Full time employee < Student

*Table 18- Hypothesis 3 - Mann-Whitney U Test*

In this case, the Mann Whitney U test was used to investigate whether the group, in this case students, has a significantly higher average than that of the fully employed. The results of the Mann Whitney U test show a significantly higher mean for three of the four questions with a p-value of < 0.001. For the last question, the p-value of 0.056 is just above the significance threshold of 0.05. It can be concluded that the hypothesis is true for three of the four statements. Is it not statistically proven that students and full-time employees have different perceptions of whether satisfied leadership increases their loyalty to a company. As the majority of the questions show significance and the mean value of the students is higher than that of the full-time employees, it can be assumed that students place a higher value on leadership in relation to their career than full-time employees.

#### 4.2.4 Hypotheses 4

H1: Students have a clearer picture of their ideal leader than full-time workers.

H0: Full-time workers have a clearer picture of their ideal leader than students.

Initially, the data was tested for normality using a Shapiro Wilk test.

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
I have a clear picture of the ideal leader I want to work under	0.903	< .001

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

*Table 19 - Hypothesis 4: Shapiro-Wilk Test*

With a result of  $< 0.001$  the Shapiro Wilk test shows that there is no normal distribution and therefore a Mann-Whitney U test is used. The results are shown in the following table.

Independent Samples T-Test

		<b>Statistic</b>	<b>p</b>
I have a clear picture of the ideal leader I want to work under	Mann-Whitney U	543	< .001

Note.  $H_a$  Full time employee < Student

*Table 20 - Hypothesis 4: Mann-Whitney U Test*

Again, the test was used to investigate whether students have a significantly higher mean than the fully employed. With a p-value of  $< 0.001$  this is clearly the case and therefore  $H_0$  can be rejected and  $H_1$  accepted. Thus, hypothesis 4 can be confirmed that students have a clearer picture of their ideal leader than fully employed people.

## 5 Discussion

In the discussion section of this paper, the findings are now critically evaluated and reappraised. The results are compared with the current literature and a more detailed analysis of the differences between the studied groups is made.

The goal of this research was to explore differences in leadership expectations and requirements between people who are still in their studies and those who are already active in the workforce. Starting with the preferences according to leadership styles. The survey confirmed the hypothesis that students have different preferences when it comes to the leadership styles established by House (1971). To explore the exact preferences, one must look at the different averages of the two groups. In the following table these are listed for each style.

Descriptives

	<b>Current Occupation</b>	<b>Supportive Leadership Style</b>	<b>Directive Leadership Style</b>	<b>Participative Leadership Style</b>	<b>Achievement Leadership Style</b>
Mean	Full time employee	3.56	4.08	3.75	3.95
	Student	4.10	3.29	4.16	3.37
Standard deviation	Full time employee	0.927	0.413	0.826	0.483
	Student	0.449	0.805	0.434	0.704

Descriptives

Current Occupation	Supportive Leadership Style	Directive Leadership Style	Participative Leadership Style	Achievement Leadership Style
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*Table 21 - Descriptive groups comparison leadership styles*

Table 21 shows that students have significantly higher means for Participative and Supportive Leadership styles than full-time employees. The latter, on the other hand, have higher averages in Directive and Achievement Oriented Leadership styles. This is highly consistent with the research conducted in the current literature (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2015). Both the supportive and participative leadership styles place particular emphasis on communication and collaboration between leader and follower. It is precisely this aspect that is considered particularly important when working with Millennials (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). One explanation for this difference must be the accumulated experience of full-time employees, who have gained greater security and thus believe they no longer need so much feedback from their leader. This finding is particularly important for leaders and will be revisited in the Managerial Implication section of this paper. The preferences of full-time employees with Directive and Achievement Oriented Leadership styles show the influence of practical experience on the way one wants to be led. Full-time employees build up more autonomy with the help of their experience, which is why they prefer leadership styles that give them clear structures and make them understand clearly what to do, but at the same time do not give them too high a degree of control through the constant presence of the leader (Evans, 1996; Aga, 2016).

The results of the second hypothesis show that there are no significant differences in the perception and expectation of the qualities and characteristics of a leader. The literature explains here only a growing more complex expectation on leaders (Shults et al., 2022). Thus, the findings of this thesis can be described as both in contradiction and in line with current research (McCleskey, 2014). The second most common attribute, that leaders should be approachable and have high social skills, is confirmed in the literature as it states that leaders are exposed to particularly increasing social

expectations and are no longer judged solely on their work (Mumford et al., 2000). In contrast, the quality most frequently rated in this work as the most important quality of a leader continues to be experts in their work, a finding that is at odds with current research. The work identified a difference between the perceived importance of students and full-time employees in only one of the qualities. Namely for the answer “Being approachable and having high social skills.”.

The increased importance assigned to the fact that leaders should be approachable and should possess high social skills shows that students at the beginning of their work career place special importance on human contact with the leader and harmony in the workplace, a finding that is consistent with the literature (Au-Yong- Oliveira et al., 2015; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Two attributes that the respondents overall found least important were the level of effort and hours a leader puts in and whether he takes responsibility for the mistakes of his subordinates. The fact that taking responsibility is not perceived as important can be explained by the personal responsibility that many young subordinates demand of themselves (Lord et al., 2017).

The third hypothesis of this thesis, which states that students place higher importance on leadership when it comes to their careers, was statistically confirmed. This is consistent with the research (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). An explanation for this is that especially students who study in the economic field, which are with 57.8% a large part of the respondents, are exposed to this topic in the course of their studies. Moreover, there is some correspondence here with the preferences in leadership styles. As students prefer supportive and participative leadership and want to trace the presence of the leader. This is understandable seeing the importance and influence they place on leadership in their careers.

The last hypothesis of this work was also confirmed as the statistical results showed that students have a clearer idea of their ideal leader. This is in line with the literature, which shows that the conception and attribution of attributes to leaders or entrepreneurs are becoming clearer (Dinh et al., 2014). The results show that students have a significantly higher mean which can also be attributed to the fact that they

receive more information and theoretical descriptions of a leader in their studies and can thus create a clearer picture. The findings of this hypothesis prove again the assumption that was explained at the beginning of this thesis that students start their professional career with a too clear picture and thus often make negative experiences if their first leaders do not correspond to this picture.

When asked what attributes they would assign to their ideal leader, no attributes stood out in general, as they had either already been examined in research or in the course of the questionnaire. Only loyalty was mentioned more often. However, loyalty was not defined more precisely. Whether they find it important that their leader is loyal to his subordinates or loyal to the company. This would be an interesting extension of the research to find out how high loyalty of the leader influences the performance and loyalty of his subordinates.

## **6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this work was to analyze differences in expectations and demands on leadership between students and full-time employees. It aims to clarify the influence and importance of the practical experience of working under a leader on young workers' expectations of their future leaders. This will show leaders of today that they should treat newcomers to their company differently depending on their previous experience. Another goal of this work was to draw a general picture of young people's expectations of leadership.

The work began by reviewing the current leadership literature and used it to create a questionnaire in which a total of 101 participants took part. Their responses were collected and analyzed. General tendencies in expectations and preferences in leadership were explained and the differences between the studied groups were tested by means of hypotheses. It became apparent that students have clearly different preferences in relation to the four leadership styles of the Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971). It was also shown that students prefer Supportive and Participative



leadership styles whereas full-time employees feel more comfortable with leadership that takes a Directive or Achievement Oriented approach.

Furthermore, it was investigated whether there are differences in the expectations regarding attributes and qualifications of the leader. No significant differences were found. Only students placed a higher value on the fact that their leader should be approachable and possess high social competencies. Another finding of this work is that students attach higher importance to leadership. This is because students are more likely to leave a company if the leadership is inadequate, because students consider the quality of leadership, they experience to have a greater impact on their career success, and because a good leader is more likely to be a reason for them to join a company. Only in the importance of loyalty to a company that provides good leadership for the respondent, no difference was found between the two groups. Finally, with the help of the questionnaire, it could be proven that the participants of this survey who are still in their studies have a much clearer picture of their ideal leader.

What information the leaders of today should draw from the findings of this paper and how they can incorporate them into their work is explained in the following section.

## **6.1 Managerial Implications**

The implications and suggestions for today's leaders from the results of this work are fairly clear. Young people with little work experience attach particular importance to leadership. Therefore, especially at the start, it is very important that leaders spend time with them, pay attention to their needs and thereby give them security and structure. Inexperienced employees also want to feel that their opinions are heard and that their leaders include them in decisions. For companies, it is interesting to realize that even though it is important today to hire leaders who have high social skills and are approachable, young employees still demand that their leader has high expertise in their work. Furthermore, because of the importance young people place on leadership in influencing their career success, it is especially important to listen to this group of people early on when they complain about inadequate leadership.

Because from this work it becomes clear that good leadership strengthens the loyalty of young employees to the company and insufficient leadership is a reason to leave a company. In conclusion, the results of the open question show that loyalty is an attribute that is particularly important to young people when they think of a good leader. This could indicate that sometimes a long-term employee is preferred by young people as a leader. In summary, the clear picture that emerges from this work is that young people change their expectations of leadership based on their experience of working under a leader, and it is the task of companies to manage this change as unproblematically as possible.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. Starting with the small sample size of 101 participants in the survey. Such a small sample size can lower the power and significance of statistical tests. Another limitation is that convenience sampling via social media was used. This makes it impossible to control the quality of the responses, which makes it difficult to generalize the results of the survey to the population as a whole. Additionally, this is the case because with convenience sampling the survey is done with a group of easily accessible people, which can lead to under- or over-representation of certain population groups. In addition, the full-employee group studied in this paper was composed to a large extent of workers from two companies. These workers could all bias the results of this research due to their similar experiences in the same company.

A limitation that could have had a negative impact on the number of respondents is the fact that the questionnaire was sent out without any information on the time required to complete the questionnaire. This could have deterred some from starting the questionnaire. A large proportion of the questions used a 5-scaled Likert Scale as response options. This can lead to a manipulation of the answers due to the tendencies of respondents to choose the neutral answer option for such questions. A further limitation is that the topic of expectations of leadership was only examined in the four levels of expectations of leadership style, expectations of the leader,

perceived importance of leadership, and perception of the ideal leader. Due to the complexity of leadership, further aspects could have been examined in more detail.

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## **Appendix**

### **Bachelor Thesis Survey Leadership Expectations**

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My name is Moritz Schweitzer. I designed this survey as part of my bachelor thesis, which aims to investigate how expectations and the preferred style of leadership change through practical experience. All responses are completely anonymous and the data from this survey will only be used for the purpose of my bachelor thesis. Thank you for participating in my survey! \* **Required**

1. Please state your gender

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male  
 Female  
 Diverse

2. Please choose your age group \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 18 - 25  
 26 - 33  
 34 - 41  
 Above 41

3. Highest educational attainment

*Mark only one oval.*

- High School  
 Some university credits, no degree  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Professional degree

4. Current Occupation \*

Mark only one oval.

- Full time employee    *Skip to question 6*
- Student    *Skip to question 7*

5. If you are current in your studies or have already completed one - what field of study did you study or are you studying?

Mark only one oval.

- Economy & Law
- Engineering & Technology
- Health, Medicine & Sports
- Education, Administration & Social sciences
- Languages, Culture & Humanities
- Computer Science & IT
- Natural Sciences
- Other field of study

**Working Experience.**

6. If you selected full-time employee - indicate how many years you have been working.

Mark only one oval.

- 0 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- above 10 years

**Expectation  
on  
responsibilities  
leaders must  
fulfill.**

The following part lists various responsibilities of a leader as affirmed by the Theory of Leadership. Please rate each one based on the importance you personally assign to each responsibility.

7. **Setting up rules and regulations that the subordinates must follow.**

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

8. **Showing subordinates what needs to be done and how it needs to be done.**

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

9. **Helping subordinates overcome problems that prevent them from performing their duties.**

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

10. **Always consider the individual needs of subordinates in his/her decisions and behaviours.**

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important



11. Consistently setting challenging goals for subordinates.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

12. Consulting with subordinates in deciding which tasks need to be completed next.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

13. Creating a pleasant working atmosphere while trying to maintain good relations with the subordinates.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

14. Demanding the highest level of performance from subordinates.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

15. Communicate with subordinates when problems arise in order to solve them.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

16. Actively listening to subordinates' ideas and suggestions.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

17. Encouraging continuous improvement in the performance of subordinates.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

18. Communicate to subordinates what is expected of them.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Important

**Expectations  
on the  
leader.**

The next part examines the leader as a person. What character attributes, behavioural patterns and qualifications are important for a good leader.

19. Rank each of the attributes from "1 Least important" to "6 Most important". \*
- Each attribute must be assigned to only one rank and each rank can only be chosen once.

*Check all that apply.*

	1 Least important	2	3	4	5	6 Most important
High level of understanding and expertise of their work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Great amount of work experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Puts in a high level of work hours and effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Takes responsibility for the mistakes of their subordinates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being approachable and having high interpersonal skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourages subordinates in the case of mistakes and properly acknowledges their successes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Importance of leadership and influence on career progression and decisions.**

This last part aims to understand the impact leadership has on career development and decision-making. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

20. If I work in a company where I am satisfied with the leadership culture, it significantly increases the probability that I will remain loyal to that company.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

21. Unsatisfactory quality of leadership is a reason for me to leave a company.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

22. If I personally know a leader in a company and consider him or her to be qualified, that is a significant reason for me to join that company.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

23. The quality of leadership I experience has a significant impact on the development of my career.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

24. I have a clear picture of the ideal leader I want to work under.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Agree    *Skip to question 25*  
 Strongly agree    *Skip to question 25*

**Attributes of an ideal leader.**

25. Please state some attributes that describe an ideal leader for you. (optional)

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