Bounded leadership: An empirical study of leadership competencies, constraints, and effectiveness

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Contrary to the previous leadership theories, which focus on specific and narrow aspects of leadership such as employee characteristics, leader's authenticity, or boundary spanning, the bounded leadership theory is a broad and complex concept. It takes simultaneously many constraints, which are related to activities on an individual, team, organization, and stakeholder level. This study applies the bounded leadership theory to analyze the leadership constraints as the mediator of the relationship between leadership competencies and effectiveness. Our findings show that leaders' competencies are not enough for them to be effective. Specific competencies enable leaders to overcome the set of constraints and then to increase their effectiveness.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0263237320301201

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a r t i c l e i n f o

a b s t r a c t

Contrary to the previous leadership theories, which focus on speci?c and narrow aspects of leadership such as employee characteristics, leader's authenticity, or boundary spanning, the bounded leadership theory is a broad and complex concept. It takes simultaneously many constraints, which are related to activities on an individual, team, organization, and stakeholder level. This study applies the bounded leadership theory to analyze the leadership constraints as the mediator of the relationship between leadership competencies and effectiveness. Our ?ndings show that leaders' competencies are not enough for them to be effective. Speci?c competencies enable leaders to overcome the set of constraints and then to increase their effectiveness.

1. Introduction

The topic of leadership has been an active area of research for many decades. Most prior work in the area focuses on speci?c leadership issues such as leadership styles (Sousa & Rocha, 2019), authenticity (Kempster, Iszatt-White, & Brown, 2019), ambidex- terity (Monje Amor, Abeal V´azquez, & Faín~a, 2020), or boundary- spanning (Salem, Van Quaquebeke, & Besiou, 2018). Conse- quently, several well-known and recognized leadership theories omit crucial aspects that may in?uence leadership effectiveness on individual, team, organizational, or stakeholder levels (see Table 1). For example, according to the research stream on situational leadership, leaders match their leadership style to the situation described by their followers' competences and commitment (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993; G. Thompson & Glasø, 2018), followers' commitment, time constraints, and decision quality (Victor H. Vroom & Jago, 2007; V. H. Vroom & Yetton, 1973), leader-

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member relations, task structure, and position power (Fiedler, 1967). These situational theories concentrate on how leaders operate on the team and organizational level. However, it does not refer to organizational culture, which tends to be a signi?cant organizational factor in?uencing leadership effectiveness (Chong, Shang, Richards, & Zhu, 2018). Moreover, situational leadership theories take neither emotions at the individual level (Nesbit, 2012) nor corporate politics at the stakeholder level (Sinnicks, 2018) into account. As a result, some leadership scholars have highlighted that their research ?ndings do not con?rm situational leadership the- ories (Graeff, 1997).

An alternative stream of leadership studies named trans- formational leadership has shown that some leadership behaviors such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspi- rational motivation, and individualized in?uence (B. M. Bass, 1999; Kanat-Maymon, Elimelech, & Roth, 2020) may support organiza- tional culture (Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, & Gutermann, 2015), the factor missing in situational leadership theory. Still, researchers have raised concerns on the individual and stakeholder level. On the individual level, Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, Browne, and Kubasek (1998) argue that transformational leaders inspire their sub- ordinates while being self-centered, narcissistic, and sometimes unethical. On the stakeholder level, Anderson and Sun (2015) show

Table 1
Review of selected leadership theories.

Stream of	Most cited leadership theories	Individual leadership theories	Team theories	Organizational theories	Stakeholder theories within this stream
Situational Leadership	Situational leadership model (Blanchard et al., 1993)	Leaders need to evaluate their knowledge and sometimes take decisions without consultation with the team			
	Contingency Theory of Leadership (Fiedler, 1967)	Leaders use a speci?c leadership style depending on the commitment and competence of employees			
	Normative theory of leadership (Victor H. Vroom & Jago, 2007; V. H. Vroom & Yetton, 1973)	Leaders apply task-oriented or relationship-oriented behavior depending on the position power, task structure, and leaders-member relationship			
		Leaders adjust their leadership decision style to the required employee commitment			
Transformational Leadership	Transformational leadership theory (B. M. Bass, 1999; Bernard M Bass & Riggio, 2006)	Leaders show genuine concern for their employees			
Authentic Leadership	Authentic leadership and true north concept (George, 2003; George et al., 2007)				
	Authentic leadership model (Walumbwa et al., 2008)				

Leaders know the authentic self and learn from their life stories, practice their values, balance intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations. Leaders practice self-awareness and self-regulation

(individualized consideration), provide an inspiring vision (inspirational motivation), stimulate employee creativity (intellectual stimulation), and serve as a role model.
Leaders empower subordinates in their team, build their support team

Leaders present authentic self to others and analyze data from different sources

Boundary spanning

Boundary spanning leadership theory (Cross

Leaders bridge boundaries between teams in

Leaders manage boundaries, forge common

Leadership

et al., 2013; Chris Ernst

organizations with different ground, and discover new

& Yip, 2009)

values and norms.

frontiers at the stakeholder level.

Bounded Leadership Theory   Leaders manage their emotions, Leaders manage emotions in Leaders use organizational Leaders build industry

process information, practice self-motivation, and apply their code of ethics.

their teams, promote speci?c norms and values, and motivate team members,

entitlements and procedures, and build networks inside the organization.

networks and relationships with different stakeholders.

that transformational leadership is negatively associated with networking. Therefore, power plays and corporate politics might bring problems for transformational leaders.

Authentic leadership theories pay special attention to leaders' ethical behavior (George, 2003; George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007; Wilson & McCalman, 2017) and highlight that authentic leaders are not necessarily transformational (Sidani & Rowe, 2018). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) de- scribes authentic leadership as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internal- ized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and rela- tional transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development"(p. 94). Despite the fact, authentic leadership theory considers many aspects such as ethics or information processing that have not been included in other leadership theories, it does not discuss the issue of corporate pol- itics or power plays at the stakeholder level. This stakeholder level has been addressed by another stream of research, i.e., boundary-spanning leadership. Boundary-spanning leadership behaviors include managing boundaries between different groups of interests, integrating these groups into a larger whole, and discovering new groups that might bring new oppor- tunities (Cross, Ernst, & Pasmore, 2013; Chris Ernst & Yip, 2009). Although boundary spanning leadership theory brings solutions to many problems on the stakeholder level, it neglects several indi- vidual teams and organizational leadership issues.

Practitioners indicate that management theories provide some solutions, which lead to an ef?cient process in stable times and bring predictable outcomes. However, they do not cope with

volatility, complexity, uncertainty, and change (Jakiel, 2017). Simi- larly, leadership theories are rather narrow, i.e., they are focused on employee characteristics such as competence and commitment (Blanchard et al., 1993), leaders' authenticity (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, F., & D., 2004), or network (C. Ernst & Chrobot- Mason, 2011). Contrary to the previous theories, the bounded leadership theory is a broad and complex concept, which does not focus on the leader's role or characteristics (Sims, 2010), but takes simultaneously many constraints, which are related to activities on individual, team, organization, and stakeholder level.

The label-bounded leadership is reminiscent of the concept of bounded rationality developed by Herbert Simon (1957). In his seminal work, Simon argued that the activities of individuals are emotional and irrational because their ability to process informa- tion and solve problems is limited. In the ?eld of leadership research, the theory of bounded rationality has recently been applied in a study among senior leaders in Poland, Ko´zmin´ski (2015). This study found support for the hypothesis that leaders' functioning is limited by constraints related to power play, orga- nizational culture, ethics, emotions, employee motivation, rules and procedures, and access to information. The current manuscript builds on this research to further investigate the mediation mechanisms in a bounded leadership model.

2. Hypotheses development

Previous studies have con?rmed a relationship between lead- ership competencies and leader effectiveness (usually measured through organizational or team performance) (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Guille´n Ramo, Saris, & Boyatzis, 2009; Sturm, Vera, & Crossan, 2017). However, according to the bounded leader- ship theory (Ko´zmin´ski, 2015), coping with leadership constraints might serve as a mediator in this relationship. Speci?cally, bounded leadership theory postulates that leaders can possess ?ve types of competencies:

Anticipation competence: The ability to predict future patterns and conditions in the market, which are essential to the orga- nization, such as the prediction of future trends or customer needs (Kandampully & Duddy, 1999)
Mobilization competence: The ability to inspire employees to put an extraordinary effort into their work (Hetland, Hetland, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2018)
Self-re?ection competence: The ability to analyze past experi- ences and concluding them (George, 2015)
Value-creation competence: The ability to promote a leader's values in the organization (Gao, 2017)
Visionary competence: The ability to create an attractive vision of the organization, communicate this vision to their followers, and empower these followers to act toward vision imple- mentation (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989)

These competencies can help to overcome seven types of constraints:

Cultural constraints: Constraints concerning values and norms, which are dif?cult to change even in case if they are counter- productive (Bryant & Higgins, 2010)
Emotional constraints: Constraints, which are usually related to strong negative emotions and prevent a leader from rational behavior (Korzynski, 2014) Entitlement constraints: Constraints, which appear as a result of organizational formalization describing responsibilities and hi- erarchy (Shamir & Eilam-Shamir, 2017)
Ethical constraints: Constraints concern leaders' ethical di- lemmas (Watts, Ness, Steele, & Mumford, 2018)
Informational constraints: Constraints, which re?ect dif?culties in collecting and processing information (Cristofaro, 2017)
Motivational constraints: Constraints, which refer to the decreased motivation of a leader or his/her followers (Gagne´ et al., 2019)
Political constraints: Constraints, which are the effect of power play and of?ce politics (Pfeffer, 2010)

In the following sections, we will present a theoretical back- ground for these mediation mechanisms (see Fig. 1 for an illustration).

2.1. The role of anticipation competence in overcoming ethical and informational constraints

Previous research con?rms a positive relationship between anticipation competence and organizational performance (Comfort, Sungu, Johnson, & Dunn, 2001). Furthermore, Walther (2015) claims that if a leader can anticipate future interactions, she can also cope with informational constraints (i.e., obtain information from different sources). As new technological advances regularly appear, leaders may also anticipate not only new opportunities in data collection but also some solutions in information processing (Molloy & Schwenk, 1995). Besides, anticipation facilitates dealing with ethical constraints because a leader may anticipate some negative consequences of his or her unethical behaviors and adjust his actions toward a more ethical approach (d'Aquin et al., 2018; Miller & Poli, 2010). Therefore, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

H1. The relationship between anticipation competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming ethical and informational constraints.

2.2. The role of mobilization competence in overcoming entitlement, motivational, and political constraints

Mobilizing employees can bring positive effects in terms of organizational performance (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Obeidat, 2016). K. R. Thompson, Lemmon, and Walter (2015) argue that the mobilization of employees can lead to them being better con- nected in the organization. In such connected organizations, leaders easily cope with political constraints by building coalitions on different levels of organizational structure (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010). Moreover, Schaufeli Wilmar (2015) indicates that a leader, who is actively mobilizing employees through inspiration, under- lining strengths, and encouraging connectedness, can overcome a decrease in employee motivation. Monje Amor et al. (2020) showed that a leader mobilizes employees by enabling access to some essential resources, and this way facilitates work engagement. Beyond dealing with political and motivational constraints, prior work has looked into the role of mobilization in dealing with entitlement limitations (i.e., organizational formalization that de- scribes responsibilities and authority). NOE, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2017) indicate that organizations do not need to apply very formal procedures and rules if their employees are engaged. This implies that leaders who keep their employees mobilized are more likely to cope with entitlement constraints. Thus, we formulated the following hypothesis:
H2. The relationship between mobilization competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming entitlement, motivational, and political constraints.

2.3. The role of self-re?ection competence in overcoming emotional and ethical constraints

In a self-re?ection process, leaders undertake a dialog with themselves (van Loon & van Dijk, 2015). Previous research has shown that this dialog may help unlock leadership potential and improve leadership effectiveness (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016; Lanaj, Foulk, & Erez, 2019).

However, prior work has also shown that self-re?ection in?uences leaders' ability to deal with emotional reactions (Nesbit, 2012) and moral consciousness (Branson, 2007), both of which lead to leadership effectiveness (Datta, 2015; Goleman; Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). Self-re?ection can, therefore, help to deal with emotional constraints (i.e., managing emotional attitudes that limit leader's functioning) and ethical constraints (i.e., being able to apply a leader's moral code of conduct) and then to leadership effectiveness. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is established:

H3. The relationship between self-re?ection competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming emotional and ethical constraints.

2.4. The role of value creation competence in overcoming ethical and motivational constraints

Thanks to value creation competence, leaders can obtain re- sources through alliances with employees sharing similar values (Smith, Lewis, & Tushman, 2016), which in turn affects leadership effectiveness (Tognazzo, Gubitta, & Gerli, 2017). Previous studies have shown that value creation may in?uence the process of coping with ethical constraints (i.e., solving organizational challenges while using ethical decision-making) (Arciniega, Stanley, Puga-

Fig. 1. Bounded leadership theory.

Me´ndez, Obrego´n-Schael, & Politi-Salame, 2017; Fok, Payne, & Corey, 2016). It can also impact the process of coping with moti- vational constraints (i.e., dealing with a lack of employee motiva- tion) (de Castro, Neto, Ferreira, & da Silva Gomes, 2016). Both ethical decision-making and employee motivation are essential in terms of leadership effectiveness (Yu, Yen, Barnes, & Huang, 2019; Zeni, Buckley, Mumford, & Grif?th, 2016). These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

H4. The relationship between value creation competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming ethical and motivational constraints.

2.5. The role of visionary competence in overcoming political, motivational, and cultural constraints

Many leadership studies indicate that visionary leadership serves as a critical factor explaining organizational performance (Taylor, Cornelius, & Colvin, 2014). Thanks to visionary behavior, leaders can inspire organizational members and cope with political constraints, for example, by building coalitions and using organi- zation politics (Van der Steen & van Twist, 2018). When leaders do not possess visionary competence, various agendas may appear on different management levels (Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Lee-Davies, 2005), leading to increased power play in the future. Moreover, research has shown that vision formulation and

communication are positively related to followers' motivation (Berson, Halevy, Shamir, & Erez, 2015). This positive relationship is particularly indicated in studies on transformational leadership, where leader develops the inspirational future image of the organization and this

way increases followers' motivation (Ahmad, Abbas, Latif, & Rasheed, 2014). As mentioned above, overcoming both political and motivational constraints lead to a greater leader's effectiveness. Furthermore, previous research has indicated that leadership vision is positively associated with coping with cultural constraints (i.e., adjusting norms to leader's needs) and, in turn, leads to organiza- tional effectiveness (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2011). In light of the above considerations, we hypothesize:

H5. The relationship between visionary competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming political, moti- vational, and cultural constraints.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Data collection

Our analysis is based on a survey of middle-level managers from Poland, holding positions of managing director, unit director, manager, and owner. They had at least one year of experience in a managerial position in industries such as IT, pharmaceuticals, automotive, biotechnology, FMCG, ?nance, construction, oil and gas. The survey took place in the context of a postgraduate training program at a leading business school in Poland. Each participant ?lled out three questionnaires measuring leadership competencies, the ability to cope with constraints, and leadership effectiveness. In total, 103 participants provided information leading to 309 ques- tionnaires. However, for six participants, information was partly incomplete, leading to a ?nal sample of 97 participants. The average age of participants was 38 years and ranged from 23 to 54 years old.

Among these participants, 56.7% were men.

Leadership competencies were measured using 22 re?ective items. The ability to cope with constraints was measured by exposing respondents to 14 scenarios where each constraint con- cerned two scenarios. Using this information, we created seven formative variables on coping with speci?c constraints. Leadership effectiveness was measured using 11 items measuring effectiveness on the organization and team level. These 11 items were combined into one formative variable on leadership effectiveness. We collected all responses on seven-point Likert scales with appro- priate anchors. Table 2 presents the items used for measurement and Table 3 descriptive statistics on each construct.

3.2. Data analysis using PLS-SEM

We use variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM), i.e., partial least-squares SEM, due to the presence of formatively measured constructs (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004; Reinartz, Haenlein,

& Henseler, 2009; Richter, Cepeda, Rold´an, & Ringle, 2016). Besides, PLS-SEM is the method of choice when theoretical information is low (Chin, Marcolin, & Newsted, 2003), and the reliability and validity of variables need to be assessed as well as a new model tested (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). We used the resampling method for signi?cance testing and bootstrapping of 500 resamples.

In total, we estimated ?ve PLS-SEM models e one for each mediating relationship to be investigated. For the ?ve re?ectively measured constructs (leadership competencies), the composite reliability of our measurement for each model exceeds 0.70, indi- cating internal consistency (Wasko & Faraj, 2005), and Cronbach
alpha is above the minimum threshold of 0.60 (Cossío-Silva, Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Va´zquez, & Palacios-Florencio, 2016). To assess discriminant validity, we analyzed the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), which resulted in an HTMT value
below 0.90 for each model, indicating discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). The average variance extracted (AVE) serves as a criterion to evaluate convergent validity (Naylor, Lamberton, and West, 2012). In our study, for each model, it exceeds 0.50, which con?rms convergent reliability. The ranges of the measures mentioned above are shown in Table 4.

In each model, we tested one speci?c mediation mechanism while keeping all other relationships constant. The results can be found in Table 5. In summary, our models show that about 55% of the variance in leadership effectiveness is accounted for by the ?ve leadership competencies (i.e., anticipation, mobilization, self- re?ection, value-creation, and visionary). Besides, we ?nd signi?- cant empirical evidence for four hypothesized mediating relation- ships (H1-H4) and partial evidence for the hypothesized mediating relationship (H5).

3.3. Robustness check using regression-based methods

A frequently cited reason for the use of PLS in comparison to covariance-based SEM is its lower requirements in terms of sample size. The most common method of sample size evaluation in this context is the "10-times rule," which states that the same size should be at least ten times the maximum number of inner or outer model links pointing to any latent variable in the model (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). In our model, this number is between 9 and 10 (depending on the model), leading to a minimum sample size of 90e100, which is consistent with our sample size of 97. However, the argument of a low sample size is not without dispute

We run ?ve regression models that mirror the ?ve PLS models analyzed previously. We operationalize formative variables as the sum of their items and re?ective variables as the mean of their items consistent with the nature of those constructs and the fact that PLS is a composite-based approach. The results of our analysis are shown in Table 6. For all hypotheses, the bootstrapped con?- dence intervals show that the mediation effect is signi?cantly different from zero. We consider this as further empirical evidence that H1-H4 are not rejected based on our analysis. Because the empirical analysis for H5 is mixed (no support in the PLS analysis but support in the regression-based approach), we consider this hypothesis as not supported to err on the side of caution.

4. Discussion and implications

As Yukl (1989) claimed several decades ago a leader's position in an organization and the resulting power is "a way of bypassing the constraints of formal authority to get things accomplished." This has been empirically con?rmed in prior research, which looked into the role of elites in Poland and showed their inability to successfully cope with constraints (Ko´zmin´ski, 2015). A low level of managerial discretion and cognitive (intellectual) autonomy has been named as a common denominator of such weaknesses (Kaciak & Kozminski, 2019). Our analysis shows that the relationship between leader competencies and leadership effectiveness is mediated by the ability to cope with speci?c types of constraints. Speci?cally, we ?nd evidence for ?ve relationships. Each relationship brings some practical implications we discuss below.

First, anticipation competence enhances a leader's effectiveness under the condition of overcoming ethical and informational con- straints. Such incidents take place, for example, when a leader anticipates not only possibilities of data collection and processing, but also some ethical risks, clearly communicating about it and persuading what is "the right thing to do." It is often pointed out that Mark Zuckerberg, the founder, and CEO of Facebook, do not follow ethical standards in terms of data privacy. Although experts underline that Zuckerberg cannot change his company business model entirely, constant improvements toward data privacy need to be introduced because previous ethical scandals related to sharing users' information with other outside parties in?uenced his leadership effectiveness (Winder, 2019) negatively.

Second, mobilization competence enhances the leader's effec- tiveness only if the leader copes successfully with entitlement, motivational, and political constraints. Such situations occur when the leader is able not only to set up ambitious, mobilizing goals but also to adjust formal ways to achieve these goals, which are generally understood and acceptable by employees in different organizational units and other stakeholders. Elon Musk, the cofounder and CEO of Tesla, is well known for the ability to mobilize employees. This ability leads to constant maximization of employee performance, getting rid of unproductive meetings and procedures, and communicating directly with employees on different organi- zational levels (Leon, 2020; Loria; Kanter, 2019).

Third, self-re?ection competence enhances a leader's effective- ness only if the leader is capable of coping successfully with emotional and ethical constraints. Such incidents happen to leaders, who regularly analyze their behaviors and then undertake actions in line with ethics and with the use of their emotional in- telligence. Stieg (2019) described such a situation while writing about Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft. Nadella took over the CEO role from Steve Ballmer in the year 2014. Since then, he has not only

(Ro€nkko€

& Evermann, 2013). We, therefore, also conducted a

reinvented Microsoft but also generated more than 250 billion USD

robustness check using regression-based methods to con?rm our

?ndings.
Speci?cally, we use the PROCESS macro (Model 4) (Hayes, 2017).

in market value in less than four years (McCraken, 2017). Nadella starts his day from re?ection. It allows him to bring different emotions to the whole organization and to change the ethical

Table 2
Construct measurement.

Anticipation competence (re?ective)
? Is capable of predicting the future

Leadership Competencies and Leader Effectiveness

? Very ef?ciently forecasts future politics/ambience within the organization
? Develops realistic and ambitious long-term plans
? Creates schemes that are way ahead of any existing solutions on the market
? Constantly updates his/her strategic plans
Mobilization competence (re?ective)
? Can encourage extraordinary engagement among his/her supporters
? Inspires great enthusiasm and passion among others
? Skillfully stimulates emotional commitment among his/her supporters
? Strongly inspires supporters to go beyond the call of duty
Self-re?ection competence (re?ective)
? Always draws correct conclusions from successes
? Always draws conclusions from failures to avoid mistakes in the future
? Realistically evaluates his/her capabilities in various areas or concerning different tasks
Value creation competence (re?ective)
? Always sets clear standards, values, and behavior patterns
? Enacts essential norms and values within the team
? Creates a transparent system that regulates behavior within the organization
? Convinces others to comply with codes of good practice within the organization
? Is very consistent in terms of his/her values
Visionary competence (re?ective)
? Develops a speci?c, attractive vision of the future
? Develops realistic and ambitious long-term plans
? Creates schemes that are way ahead of any existing solutions on the market
? Constantly updates his/her strategic plans
? Presents the team with exciting and innovative plans
Leader effectiveness (formative)
? Always pursues the goals of the team

? Creates a very positive image of the team
? Mobilizes the team to spare no effort
? Attains excellent team results
? Always integrates the work of individuals within the team
? Strives to achieve synergy within the team in every situation
? Signi?cantly contributes to increasing the pro?tability of the entire company
? Creates a very positive image of the company
? Very effectively coordinates projects carried out by various departments within the company
? Always manages to mobilize the staff to act
? Connects employees from various departments in every situation

Ability to Cope with Constraints
(Evaluate how effectively you would cope in this situation
on a scale from 1 "I would not cope at all" to 7 "I would cope very well")

Cultural constraints (formative)
? You are the line manager of an employee who is rude to his subordinates but attains high goals
? You are a mid-level manager. You do not like the fact that there are no clear remuneration rules in the organization

Emotional constraints (formative)
? You are a team leader. A long-time employee of the company, whom you like and respect, who is emotionally attached to the company and a symbol of tradition, performs poorly because he/she fails to keep up with new technologies and methods of work. Coworkers complain about him/her
? You are a mid-level manager. You must work alongside colleagues you do not get on with, but they are competent and have a strong position within the company

Entitlement constraints (formative)
? You are a mid-level manager. You know that you can miss out on a very pro?table contract because obtaining the necessary permission from your superiors is taking too long
? You are a mid-level manager. You are unexpectedly put in charge of preparing important documentation for the company, without having the required authorization to perform this task

Ethical constraints (formative)
? You are the CEO of the company. Employees tell you that one of the employees is favored by her line manager, who, in turn, is highly valued by the company's management
? You are the CEO of the company. It has come to your attention that all lucrative contracts in the company are granted to friends of one of the directors, who probably bene?t from it personally

Informational constraints (formative)
? You are a mid-level manager. You never have enough time to prepare and analyze data for partners or clients and are overburdened continuously with urgent inquiries
? You are a mid-level manager. Your superiors expect you to read numerous reports daily and analyze data from a large number of sources at the same time, which often seems unfeasible

Motivational constraints (formative)
? You are a mid-level manager. You have joined the company only recently but have proven very effective and capable of above-standard performance. You have realized the company's rewarding policy: when the target is

signi?cantly exceeded, one can obtain a very high individual bonus. Consequently, however, the target set for the entire team in the next ?nancial period is raised
? You are a high-level manager. Work is of great importance and has much meaning for you. You are aware of your excessive ambition and involvement. You work overtime and expect the same from the employees. This sometimes creates con?icts
Political constraints (formative)
? You are a mid-level manager. Your boss, who has always supported you, has been replaced by a new person. The new boss is unfriendly toward you
? You are a mid-level manager. You realize that the assistant of the Board, who does not like you, plays a key role in the decision-making process in the organization and has an impact on the boss's likes and dislikes

Table 3
Descriptive statistics.

Mean
SD
Min
Max
Leadership Competencies Anticipation competence

4.94

1.03

2.50

7.00
Mobilization competence
5.34
1.00
2.00
7.00
Self-re?ection competence
5.78
0.69
4.33
7.00
Value creation competence
5.49
0.74
3.40
7.00
Visionary competence
5.15
0.93
2.00
7.00

Ability to Cope with Constraints

Constraint	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Cultural constraints	5.41	0.94	2.50	7.00
Emotional constraints	5.41	0.94	2.50	7.00
Entitlement constraints	5.15	0.97	2.50	7.00
Ethical constraints	5.16	0.79	3.50	7.00
Informational constraints	5.24	0.93	2.00	7.00
Motivational constraints	5.47	0.93	1.00	7.00
Political constraints	5.26	0.84	2.50	7.00
Leader effectiveness	5.60	0.59	4.27	7.00

standards of the company. Nadella exchanged "showing off" be- haviors to accountability, transparency, and commitment to di- versity and inclusion (Lyn Gross, 2019).

Fourth, value creation competence enhances a leader's effec- tiveness only if the leader copes successfully with ethical and motivational constraints. In other words, values have to be devel- oped internally within the organization, taking into consideration the personal ethics of employees concerned. Zetlin (2017) indicated that Travis Kalanick, former

CEO of Uber, was an example whose aggressive values led to overcome some motivational limitations; however, because of the lack of ethical approach, they resulted in

harassment suits and bullying and ?nally, in Kalanick's replacement.

Fifth, the positive impact of visionary competencies depends upon the ability to cope with political and cultural constraints. The secret is to convey a vision to the team, then to discuss this vision with different level employees and stakeholders as well as adjust some cultural norms to implement the vision. Tichy and Sherman (2001), pp. 121e122) quote an example of GE Transportation Sys- tems' Jim Paynter, who introduced his team to customer awareness vision. He gathered a group of 150 employees e a mix of hourly workers and supervisors, plus a few managers e chartered a plane and took them on an overnight visit to one of the railroads that bought GE's locomotives. "The idea was to talk about quality. It gave the people who maintained the locomotives out of Omaha or wherever the chance to talk to our people. The electrical guys could ask, 'Why did you wire it that way?' Once they had talked out an issue like that, the best way to make the product usually became obvious. I cannot stress enough how important it is to go to somebody else's turf. That is how you learn."We also provide theoretical implications for leadership theory in several important ways. First, we answer to a call by Sims (2010), for research not focusing not only on leaders' attributes but on leadership activities. We analyze these activities on individual, team, organizational, and stakeholder level. Second, we consider factors that in?uence the leader's effectiveness and were omitted by previous well-known theories. For example, we examine orga- nizational culture (Chong et al., 2018) and a leader's emotions, which were neglected by situational leadership theory. We inves- tigate ethical issues that did not get much attention in trans- formational leadership theory (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998). We

Table 4
Measurement model.

Re?ective constructs (Leadership Competencies)	Composite Reliability (Internal Consistency)	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE (Convergent Validity)
Anticipation competence	0.876e0.883	0.835	0.601e0.642
Mobilization competence	0.912e0.913	0.872	0.722e0.723
Self-re?ection competence	0.792e0.798		

0.645
0.565e0.573

Value-creation competence   0.855e0.855
0.788
0.541e0.542

Visionary competence   0.876e0.878
0.827
0.592e0.592

HTMT (DiscriminantValidity

Anticipation competence   Mobilization competence
Self-re?ection competence
Value-creation competence

Mobilization competence   0.620e0.639
Self-re?ection competence   0.733e0.750 0.537

Value-creation competence   0.572e0.574 0.603
0.646

Visionary competence   0.834e0.896 0.758
0.597
0.527

Note: The ranges indicate the minimum and maximum of the respective
parameters across the ?ve models estimated.

Table 5
Estimation results (PLS-SEM).
Hypothesis R-

Indirect Mediation Signi?cance

H1: The relationship between anticipation competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming ethical and informational constraints.
H2: The relationship between mobilization competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming entitlement, motivational, and political constraints.

Squared Effect
55.2% 0.200 0.049

54.1% 0.134 0.047

H3: The relationship between self-re?ection competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming emotional and 55.1%   0.189   0.015
ethical constraints.
H4: The relationship between value creation competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming ethical and 54.9%   0.131   0.041
motivational constraints.

H5: The relationship between visionary competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming political, motivational, and cultural constraints.

53.4% 0.152 0.097

Note: Because H5 was not con?rmed, we estimated an alternative model in which we dropped overcoming motivational constraints. The R-squared value of this model for leadership effectiveness is 53.2%. The relationship between value visionary competence and leadership effectiveness is mediated by coping with cultural and political con- straints. The total indirect mediation effect is 0.163, which is signi?cant (p-value of 0.040).
The R2 values of endogenous variables in the models are: cultural constraints (20.7%), emotional constraints (12.9%), entitlement constraints (10.4%), ethical constraints (10.4%e24.7%), informational constraints (21.1%), motivational constraints (5.5%e13.7%), political constraints (11.1%e13.3%), and leadership effectiveness (53.4%e55.2%).

Table 6
Estimation results (process macro).
Hypothesis R-

Indirect

Standard Lower Limit

Upper Limit

Squared Mediation
Effect

Error

Con?dence Interval

Con?dence Interval

H1: The relationship between anticipation competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated 27.94% 0.1126 0.0414 0.0364 0.1991
by overcoming ethical and informational constraints.

H2: The relationship between mobilization competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated 39.22% 0.0723 0.0292 0.0264 0.1404
by overcoming entitlement, motivational, and political constraints.

H3: The relationship between self-re?ection competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming emotional and ethical constraints.

H4: The relationship between value creation competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by overcoming ethical and motivational constraints.

32.72% 0.1679 0.0551 0.0650 0.2820
35.94% 0.0976 0.0395 0.0257 0.1798

H5: The relationship between visionary competence and a leader's effectiveness is mediated by 36.19% 0.1223 0.0430 0.0392 0.2073
overcoming political, motivational, and cultural constraints.

analyze the leader's coping with power plays, which were not considered by authentic leadership theory (George, 2015). Third, our study sheds new light on competencies e the leader's effec- tiveness link. Extending previous studies on the relationship be- tween leadership competencies and effectiveness (measured usually by team or organizational performance (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016; Comfort et al., 2001; Obeidat, 2016; Taylor et al., 2014), we show that the impact of speci?c leadership competencies is mediated by coping with a set of leadership constraints.

5. Conclusion

Our study has several limitations that might be addressed in future studies. Our analysis looks at self-reported leader effective- ness as

the outcome variable. Future studies could rely on a more objective measure of leader performance by combining self- reported data on competences and constraints with other data sources. Also, the sample size of our study is relatively small. While we can con?rm our ?ndings using a robustness check that is less sensitive to sample size requirements, replicating our results using a larger sample would be bene?cial. The same applies to testing the robustness of our results in different cultural or geographical contexts.

The importance of constraints in the relationship between leader competencies and leader effectiveness can easily be sup- ported by common sense or anecdotal evidence quoted abundantly in management literature for years. However, our research shows how to place the bounded leadership concept into the broader theoretical context of management science.

A focus on constraints, positions our model within the theo- retical framework of behavioral complexity (Denison, Hooijberg, & Quinn, 1995; R. Hooijberg & Quinn, 1992) providing arguments that leadership is performed both by cognition and action and consists of a variety of behaviors when dealing with a wide range of con- straints. Rooted in the theory of behavioral complexity, the lead- erplex model (Robert Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997) proposes that leader cognitive and social complexities are linked with leader effectiveness indirectly, in a mediation scheme through behavioral complexity (Kaciak & Kozminski, 2019). Our analysis indicates that such behavioral complexity can be presented and analyzed as a process of overcoming different types of constraints.

The complexity of the leadership task calls for a balance be- tween "other-directed" and "self-directed" leadership. The concept of bounded leadership turns our attention to "transcendent lead- ership" (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008), consisting of consciously over- coming constraints linked to leaders. "Managing in increasingly complex and dynamic environments, today's strategic leaders can bene?t greatly from learning how to 'master themselves' (in addition to others and the organization) by developing self-awareness and self-

regulatory capabilities" (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008):132).

According to Detjen and Webber (2017), leaders undertake in- ner conversations with themselves which unfold in three forms: the ego way (i.e., using self-talk mid-level leader supports his/her action with comforting inner messages), the courage way (i.e., a mid-level leader has doubts, but proceeds nevertheless) and the impact way (i.e., a mid-level manager believes in the contribution he/she is making). The leadership competencies investigated in our study and mediated by coping with constraints can be linked with this typology. The ego way corresponds to self-re?ection compe- tence mediated by overcoming emotional and ethical constraints and to value creation competence mediated by overcoming ethical and motivational constraints; the courage way corresponds to anticipation competence mediated by ethical and informational constraint and to visionary competence mediated by cultural and political constraints, and the impact way corresponds to mobili- zation competence mediated by entitlement and political constraints.

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