



THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON LEADERSHIP STYLES IN THE LEBANESE PRIVATE SECTOR

Raymond SAFWAN, Ali MOHAMMAD

Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth

Résumé

Introduction

Le leadership joue un rôle essentiel dans la manière dont les employés se comportent au sein d'une organisation. Différents leaders tendent à adopter des styles de leadership uniques, souvent influencés par des facteurs démographiques qui affectent leur comportement et leurs processus de prise de décision. Cette étude est structurée autour de trois axes principaux. Le premier axe, les caractéristiques démographiques, comprend des variables telles que l'âge, le genre, le niveau d'éducation et l'expérience professionnelle. Celles-ci sont considérées comme des variables indépendantes car elles représentent les facteurs susceptibles d'influencer le style de leadership. Le deuxième axe porte sur les styles de leadership qui incluent différents types tels que le style démocratique, autocratique et laissez-faire. Ce sont des variables dépendantes, représentant les résultats influencés par les facteurs démographiques. Le troisième axe se concentre sur le comportement des leaders, en se référant à la manière dont les facteurs démographiques influencent leur comportement et leurs traits.

Objectifs

Cette étude a pour objectif d'

1. Examiner la relation entre les caractéristiques démographiques – telles que l'âge, le genre, le niveau d'éducation et l'expérience – et les styles de leadership parmi les dirigeants du secteur privé libanais.
2. Identifier les styles de leadership dominants.
3. Évaluer comment les facteurs démographiques influencent l'efficacité du leadership et explorer les implications de cette relation sur la performance organisationnelle dans le contexte socioculturel du Liban.

Pour la première fois, cette étude se penche sur les qualités des dirigeants libanais du secteur privé, en mettant en lumière leurs principales caractéristiques et en examinant la manière dont ils ont géré des défis tels que la crise économique de 2020. Cette recherche apporte des contributions significatives à plusieurs domaines académiques, notamment les sciences de gestion, les ressources humaines, la psychologie organisationnelle, le développement du leadership, la sociologie et les études régionales. Elle met en évidence la façon dont les facteurs démographiques tels que l'âge, le genre, l'expérience et le niveau d'éducation façonnent le comportement et l'efficacité du leadership dans le secteur privé. Ces résultats sont particulièrement précieux pour améliorer la formation en leadership, affiner les politiques de gestion des ressources humaines et concevoir de meilleures structures organisationnelles. De plus, l'étude offre une perspective régionale pouvant être utilisée pour des recherches comparatives dans des environnements culturels ou économiques similaires.

Méthode

Un échantillon aléatoire de 300 employés provenant de 86 entreprises privées libanaises a participé à l'étude. Ils ont rempli un questionnaire composé de 40 questions explorant la relation entre les caractéristiques démographiques et le leadership ainsi que l'influence des styles de leadership sur le comportement des employés. Les données recueillies ont été analysées à l'aide du logiciel SPSS, en utilisant la corrélation de Pearson et le test de Cramer. De plus, des entretiens ont été menés avec les participants afin d'expliquer davantage l'objectif de l'étude et de leur fournir des instructions sur la manière de remplir le questionnaire. Les auteurs de l'article ont rencontré de nombreux défis au cours de l'étude, tels que la longueur du questionnaire, la reprogrammation des entretiens et des rendez-vous avec les entreprises, le refus de certains dirigeants de participer, le manque de transparence ainsi que les biais de certains employés qui ont été exclus de l'échantillon.

Résultats

Les résultats révèlent une relation forte et statistiquement significative entre les caractéristiques démographiques et les styles de leadership. Des facteurs tels que l'âge, le genre, le niveau d'éducation et l'expérience professionnelle jouent un rôle clé dans la détermination du style de leadership adopté, qu'il soit démocratique, autocratique ou laissez-faire. De plus, l'ampleur de cette influence varie selon les facteurs démographiques et diffère en fonction du style de leadership spécifique appliqué.

Conclusion

L'étude a confirmé l'existence d'une relation allant de forte à modérée entre les caractéristiques démographiques – en particulier l'âge et l'expérience professionnelle – et les styles de leadership dans les entreprises privées libanaises. Ces facteurs démographiques semblent jouer un rôle significatif dans la formation des traits et comportements des leaders.

Mots-clés

Leadership – Style – Caractéristiques démographiques – Comportement – Traits.

Abstract

Introduction

Leadership plays a vital role in shaping how employees behave within an organization. Different leaders tend to exhibit unique leadership styles, often influenced by demographic factors that affect their behavior and decision-making processes. This study is structured around three main axes. The first axis demographic characteristics include variables such as age, gender, educational level, and professional experience). These are considered independent variables, as they are the factors that may influence leadership style. The second axis focuses on leadership styles, which include various types such as democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire. These are dependent variables, representing the outcomes affected by the demographic factors. The third axis focuses on leaders' behavior, referring to how the demographic factors influence their behavior and traits.

Objective

This study aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between demographic characteristics - such as age, gender, education, and experience - and leadership styles among Lebanese private – sector leaders.
2. Identify the dominant leadership styles.
3. Assesses how demographic factors influence leadership effectiveness and explore the implications of this relationship for organizational performance within Lebanon's socio – cultural context.

For the first time, this study delves into the qualities of Lebanese leaders in the private sector, highlighting their key traits and examining how they managed challenges such as the 2020 economic crisis. This research makes meaningful contributions to several academic areas, including management sciences, human resources, organizational psychology, leadership development, sociology, and

regional studies. It sheds light on how demographic factors like age, gender, experience, and education shape leadership behavior and effectiveness in the private sector. These insights are especially valuable for improving leadership training, refining HR policies, and designing better organizational structures. Additionally, the study provides a regional perspective that can be used for comparative research in similar cultural or economic environments.

Method

A random sample of 300 employees from 86 Lebanese private companies participated in the study. They completed a survey consisting of 40 questions that explored the relationship between demographic characteristics and leadership, as well as the influence of leadership styles on employee behavior. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS software through Pearson correlation and Cramer's test. Additionally, interviews were conducted with respondents to further explain the purpose of the study and provide guidance on how to complete the survey. The authors of the article faced many challenges during the study, such as the length of questionnaires, rescheduling interviews and appointments with companies, leaders' refusal to participate, lack of transparency and bias of certain employees who were excluded from the sample.

Results

The results reveal a strong and statistically significant connection between demographic traits and leadership styles. Factors such as age, gender, education, and professional experience play a key role in shaping whether leaders adopt democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire approaches. Additionally, the extent of this influence varies across demographic factors and differs depending on the specific leadership style being applied.

Conclusion

The study confirmed a strong to moderate relationship between demographic characteristics - particularly age and professional experience - and leadership styles in Lebanese private companies. These demographic factors seem to play a significant role in shaping leadership traits and behaviors.

Keywords

Leadership – Style – Demographic characteristics – Behavior – Traits.

Introduction

Leadership is considered one of the most important factors in an organization, as it impacts the behavior of employees. A leader guides, influences, inspires, coaches, and motivates others to reach their goals. Leadership encompasses the behaviors, actions, and decisions a leader employs to influence and guide followers. It can take the form of democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire styles, depending on the degree of control exercised by the leader and the level of participation granted to team members. In addition, leadership is a dynamic process through which an individual influences a group to achieve shared goals (Northouse, 2018). Leadership styles refer to the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people (Lewin, K., Lippitt, R. & White, R. K. (1939). Style refers to the consistent patterns of behavior demonstrated by a leader in their interactions with followers, encompassing decision-making processes, communication methods, and the exercise of power and authority (Tannenbaum, R. & Schmidt, W. H. 1973). Previous studies conducted by scientists in sociology and psychology have categorized leadership characteristics into three styles:

Democratic leadership, which encourages full participation, creativity, and innovation. It involves listening to employees and valuing their ambitions and ideas (Yukal, Gray 2002). Democratic leaders involve team members in decision-making and often delegate authority, enabling others to take initiative and responsibility (Gastil, J. 1994).

Similarly, democratic leaders adopt open and honest communication, allowing for feedback, discussion, and transparency with staff (Northouse, P. G. 2021). Democratic leaders foster creativity and innovation within teams. Employees working under democratic leadership often experience higher levels of morale, commitment, and job satisfaction because of their active involvement in the decision – making process (Yukl, G. A. 2013). Furthermore, Leaders collaborate with team members to define goals and strategies, creating a shared sense of ownership (Bass, B. M. & Bass, R. 2008).

Conversely, *Autocratic* leadership, which is based on regulations, control, and sometimes bullying can negatively affect employee motivation and job satisfaction (Delorese Ambrose, 2003). The autocratic leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from subordinates. In this case, the leader gives clear orders and expects compliance, maintaining strict oversight of all activities (Northouse, P. G. 2021).

In organizations led by autocratic leaders, policies and procedures are strictly enforced to maintain control and ensure uniformity (Robbins, S. P. & Judge, T.

A. 2019). At the same time, the lack of autonomy and participation can lead to dissatisfaction and reduced motivation among team members (Goleman, D. 2000).

The third style of leadership is *Laissez-faire*, which is characterized by a lack of follow-up, high delegation and independence (De cock et al. 2014. Kontos et al. 2010. Mc Andrew and Jegon 2012). This style is characterized by providing employees with little guidance and allowing them substantial freedom in how they perform their work. Employees have the authority to make decisions and solve problems independently.

This style works best when team members are self-motivated, experienced, and capable of working independently, but without adequate structure teams may lack direction, coordination, or accountability (Robbins, S. P. & Judge, T. A. 2019).

Additionally, sociologists and psychologists mention that demographic factors such as age, sex, education level, major, and experience may influence people's personalities (Paul M. Mbutu, 2019). Demographics are the characteristics of a population expressed statistically, such as age, sex, income, education, marital status, occupation, religion, birth rate, death rate, average size of a family, and average age at marriage (Black, J., Hashimzade, N. & Myles, G., 2017).

The life stage theory (Super, 1957, Levinson, 1978) suggests that younger leaders in the early stages of their career may favor democratic leadership style to build relationships and engage their teams, whereas middle-aged leaders in mid-career may adopt more autocratic styles because of their experience.

Additionally, Eagly (1987) and Karau (2002) assign different expectations to men and women, observing that men are expected to be assertive and dominant, while women are expected to be nurturing and collaborative.

The human capital theory (Becker, Gary, 1964) concludes that highly educated leaders may feel more confident in exercising formal authority, resulting in more autocratic behavior, whereas leaders with less formal education may rely on democratic approaches.

According to situational leadership theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982) leaders with limited experience tend to adopt laissez-faire style, whereas highly experienced leaders are more likely to adopt autocratic or democratic approaches.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups (e.g., by demographic characteristics), and that these group memberships influence their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of others (Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. 1979). Likewise, the life Course Theory explores

how demographic factors—such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status—shape individual behavior and life trajectories over time. It emphasizes that human behavior is influenced by historical context, social structures, and transitions (e.g., education, employment, family formation) (Elder, G. H., Jr. (1994).

In addition, the implicit leadership theory (ILT) studied by (Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. 2002), indicate that Demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and ethnicity influence leadership expectations and styles. For example, women and men may be expected to display different leadership traits. This theory helps explain the tendency for women leaders to adopt more democratic or transformational leadership styles, whereas men are more often associated with autocratic or task-oriented approaches.

In 2024, a group of researchers published a study in the *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* based on a sample of 2,084 entrepreneurs from around the world. The study identified a relationship between gender and generation in relation to transformational leadership. Similarly, Taylan Budur and Ahmet Demir (2023) conducted a study on 408 leaders from private companies in Iraq. Their findings showed no significant differences between male and female leaders in terms of attitudes and behaviors toward employees. However, they found significant effects of experience and education level on leadership behaviors, morale, and knowledge.

Moreover, Syiva Humairo and Zaen Alabidin (2023) published a study in the *Journal of Business Management and Economic Development*, examined the influence of gender, age, education, and experience on the intellectual capital of leadership. Their results indicated that age and work experience had a negative effect, while education had a positive effect on intellectual capital.

Additionally, Teodora K. Tomova Shakur, Michael S. North, Yair Berson, and Shaul Oreg (2024) in the *Journal of Psychology*, showing that older leaders were perceived as less transformational and less transactional, with the negative effects of age being more pronounced when evaluations were made by followers rather than through self-assessment.

During our work in human resources management across several private Lebanese companies, noticeable differences were observed in leadership style linked to demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, and professional experience of company leaders. However, no scientific or statistical evidence had been found to support these observations. These demographic characteristics appeared to have a significant impact on company management and employees, which prompted the current study and raise the following questions: **Is there a relationship between demographic characteristics and**

leadership within Lebanese private companies? Do these characteristics impact the adoption of specific leadership styles, such as democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire? Which demographic factors have the greatest influence on the choice of leadership style?

To address these questions, the study aims to examine various hypotheses:

H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level and professional experience) and leadership styles in Lebanese private companies.

H2: leaders' demographic characteristics influence their adoption of specific leadership styles, such as democratic, autocratic or laissez-faire.

H3: among the demographic variables, professional experience has the strongest influence on the leadership adopted.

H4: female leaders are more likely to adopt democratic leadership styles, while male leaders tend to favor autocratic styles.

H5: higher levels of education are positively associated with the adoption of democratic leadership styles.

H6: younger leaders are more inclined to adopt laissez-faire or democratic leadership styles compared to older leaders, who generally prefer autocratic approaches.

H7: the combination of multiple demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, education, and experience) has a stronger predictive power on leadership style than any single factor alone.

1. Methodology

1.1 Sample design

The study sample was determined and calculated by applying "Richard Geiger" formula:

$$n = \frac{\left(\frac{z}{d}\right)^2 \times (p)^2}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left[\left(\frac{z}{d}\right)^2 \times (p)^2 - 1 \right]}$$

n: the required sample size (300)

N: the total population size (10.000)

d: the acceptable margin of error (usually expressed as a proportion, e.g., 0.05 for 5%). In our study $d = 5.7\%$ (acceptable).

The *sample* selection was based on the following criteria:

The primary criterion for selecting the study sample was that respondents were required to possess sufficient knowledge of their leaders' age, professional experience, and educational background. Specifically, participants needed a minimum of five years of experience within the company led by the leader being evaluated along with a close professional relationship with that leader. Additional criteria included accessibility and willingness of respondents to participate in the study.

Efforts were also made to ensure the inclusion of a diverse set of companies representing different sectors to achieve a broader range of perspectives.

Regarding data collection, a random sample of 300 employees, shortlisted from 86 Lebanese private companies located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, distributed according to their economic activities as follows:

Table 1: study sample

Economic activity	Manu- facturing	Trade	Edu- cation	Tour- ism	Health- care	Media	ICT	Transpor- tation	Bank- ing	Total
Number of companies in the sample	10	14	17	12	6	4	10	8	5	86
Number of employees in the sample study	46	32	85	80	15	8	10	12	12	300

Approximately 92 % of the companies were in Beirut and 8% in Mount Lebanon (Baabda and Metn district). These areas were chosen for several reasons; they host most large companies and encompass leaders with diverse backgrounds and orientations. Beirut serves as Lebanon's principal business hub and a center of diversity.

1.2. Pilot study

Before conducting the main study, a pilot study was conducted with 20 participants from the target population. The purpose of this preliminary stage was to assess the clarity and validity of the questionnaire and to ensure that the statements were easily understood by respondents.

The feedback from this pilot phase was used to refine and revise several items before the final distribution of the survey. This step was essential for enhancing reliability and validity of the research instrument and improving the overall quality of the data collected.

1.2.1. Study Ethics and data gathering

After obtaining approval from the Saint Joseph University in Beirut Ethics Committee, data were collected between February and October 2022. This study adhered to the principles of *informed consent* and refrained from collecting any personal or identifying information from respondents.

The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions and included a total of 40 questions addressing the relationship between demographic characteristics and leadership, as well as the influence of leadership styles on employee's behavior. Completing out the questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes.

1.2.2. Measurement tools

The questionnaire was formulated based on theories related to demographic characteristics and leadership style traits. A total of 300 participants from employees participated in the study responding to questions designed to assess the impact of demographic characteristics on leadership approaches within the companies where they were employed.

The questionnaire was tested by two methods:

- *Cronbach's Alpha* : a statistical measure used to assess the reliability and consistency of questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha value for this study was **0.89**, indicating a high level of internal consistency.
- *Pearson correlation*: used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

1.2.3. Data analysis

The data collected underwent both *field* and *central* editing. The data were then classified and tabulated based on common characteristics. Following tabulation, the data were analyzed using the SPSS software to identify correlations through Pearson's correlation coefficient and Cramer's Test.

Table 2: Pearson Scales

Scales	Interpretation
0.00 – 0.10	Negligible correlation
0.10- 0.30	Weak correlation
0.30- 0.50	Moderate correlation
0.50 – 0.70	Strong correlation
0.70 – 1.00	Very strong correlation

Source: Cohen, J (1998)

Table 3: Cramer's Test

Cramer's value	Strength of association
0.00-0.10	Very weak
0.10-0.30	Weak
0.30-0.50	Moderate
> 0.50	Strong

Source: Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (1992)

2. Results

2.1. Description of Lebanese Leaders at private companies

2.1.1. Ages

Leaders under the age of 35 account for 17% of the company's sample, while those between the ages of 35 and 65 represent the majority at 82%. Leaders aged over 65 constitute only 1% of the total sample.

2.1.2. Gender

The representation of women in leadership positions within Lebanese companies remains notably low, comprising only 7% of the study sample. In contrast, male leaders account for 93%.

2.1.3. Education level

Leaders with a university-level education comprise 85% of the sample, those with a secondary-level education account for 10%, and those with only a primary-level education represent 5%.

2.1.4. Professional experience

Seventy-two percent of the company leaders in the sample have between 10 and 25 years of professional experience; 7% have over 25 years; and 21% have less than 5 years.

2.2. The impact of demographic characteristics on leadership styles

2.2.1. The impact of age on leadership style

Table 4: The impact of Age on leadership style

Ages (years) / leadership styles	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez-faire	Total %
25-30	58%	14%	28%	100
30-35	47%	41%	12%	100
35-40	53%	34%	13%	100
40-45	34%	55%	11%	100
45-50	46%	38%	16%	100
50+	37%	39%	24%	100

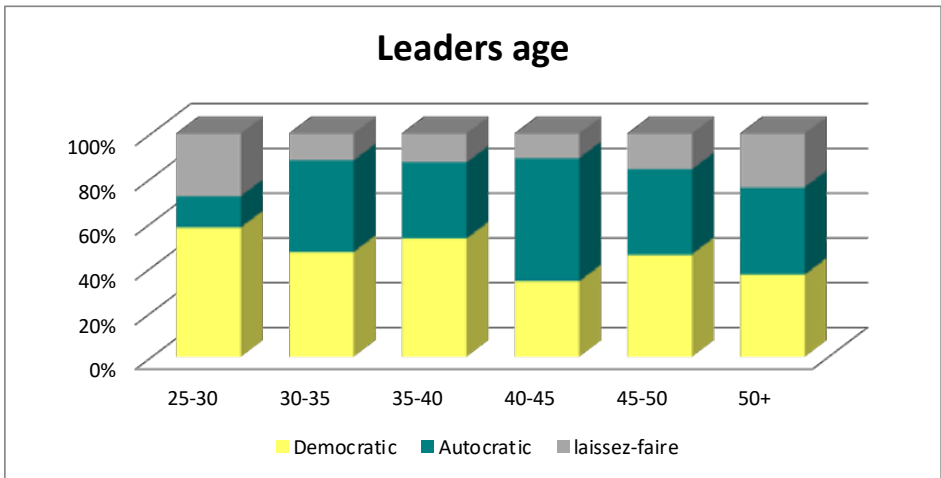


Figure 1: The impact of Age on leadership style

The data illustrates how perceptions of leadership styles vary across different age groups:

Fifty-eight percent of employees in Lebanese private companies confirmed that leaders aged 25 to 30 exhibit more democratic behaviors than those aged 50 and above. Additionally, 55% of respondents reported that leaders aged 40 to 45 are more *autocratic* than those aged 25 to 30. It means that *Democratic Leadership* is most favored among the youngest age group.

Laissez-faire Leadership shows a mixed pattern, with higher percentages in the youngest (28%) and oldest (24%) groups, and lower values in the middle age ranges.

A Pearson correlation of $r = 0.89$ indicates a very **strong** positive linear relationship between age and leadership style, which means that age influences the style adopted by Lebanese leaders. In contrast, Cramer's $V = 0.22$ shows a **weak** association between age and leadership style.

2.2.2. The impact of gender on leadership style

Table 5: The impact of gender on leadership style

Sex / leadership styles	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez-faire	Total %
Female	53%	40%	7%	100
Male	35%	39%	26%	100

The data reveal that 53% of employees reported that companies led by women exhibited more *democratic* behaviors compared to those led by men. Conversely, men were more likely to adopt an *autocratic* leadership style than women. However, women were less likely to exhibit *laissez-faire* leadership compared to men. *Laissez-faire* style is notably more associated with males (26%) than females (7%).

Cramer's $V = 0.27$, indicates a *Weak to moderate* association between sex and leadership style. Likewise, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.023$) indicates a very *weak* positive relationship between gender and leadership style. This suggests that gender has no meaningful linear influence on leadership style in the sample.

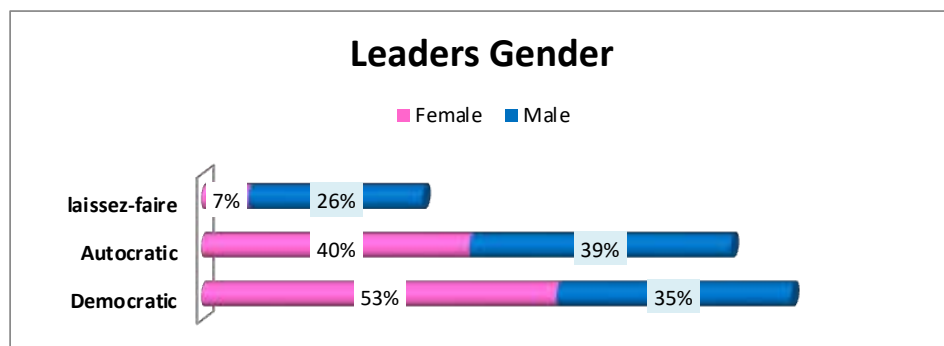


Figure 2: The impact of gender on leadership style

2.2.3. The impact of Education Level on leadership style

Table 6: The impact of education level on leadership style

Education Levels / leadership styles	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez-faire	Total %
Primary / Elementary	100%	0%	0%	100
Higher secondary	50%	50%	0%	100
Higher education	36%	39%	25%	100

All employees working in companies led by leaders with only a primary level of education reported that their leadership style was *democratic* (100%). Meanwhile, 39% of employees confirmed that leaders with higher levels of education tend to adopt an *autocratic* style, followed closely by those who prefer a democratic style (36%).

It is worth noting that Pearson’s correlation coefficient ($r = 0.082$) indicates a *very weak* positive linear relationship between education levels and leadership style. However, Cramer’s $V = 0.47$ suggests a *moderate strength* of association between the two variables.

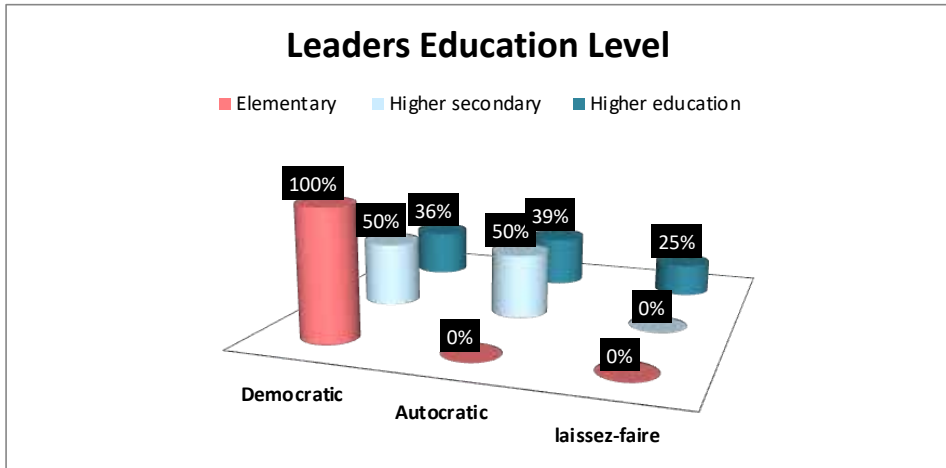


Figure 3: The impact of education level on leadership style

2.2.4 The impact of professional experience on leadership style

Table 7: The impact of professional experience on leadership style

Experience (years) / Leadership styles	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez – faire	Total %
Under 3 years	9%	6%	85%	100
3 – 6	74%	18%	8%	100
6 – 10	75%	18%	7%	100
10 – 15	61%	24%	15%	100
15 +	27%	62%	11%	100

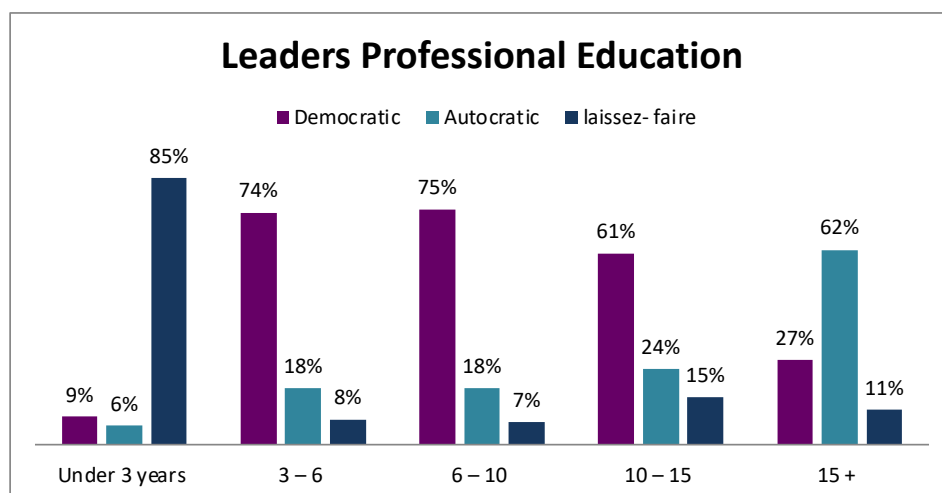


Figure 4: The impact of professional experience on leadership style

The data presented in Table 4 illustrate the influence of professional experience on leadership style. The findings indicate that the use of the democratic leadership style decreases as experience increases. Only 9% of employees reported that leaders with less than three years of experience adopt a *democratic* style. In contrast, this percentage rises to 27% among leaders with 15 years of experience.

Additionally, as experience increases, the adoption of the *autocratic* leadership style also increases, as reported by 62% of employees. On the other hand, the *laissez-faire* leadership style is most common among leaders with less than three years of experience, according to 85% of respondents. Therefore, a clear pattern emerges showing that leadership style changes with experience.

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = -0.57$) indicates a *strong* negative linear

relationship between professional experience and leadership style. Similarly, Cramer's $V = 0.70$ indicates a strong association, suggesting that leadership style varies significantly with the length of professional experience.

2.3. The traits of different leadership styles in Lebanese private companies

Table 8: The traits of *Democratic* leadership style in the Lebanese private company

Democratic Leadership traits		%
1	Addressing the chaos in the company	15
2	Encouraging participation in the company	10
3	Involving employees in decision-making	7
4	Encouraging creativity and innovation	6
5	Motivating and rewarding employees	7
6	Advocating an open-door policy	13
7	Providing employees with the necessary information	8
8	Preferring to reward rather than focus on accountability	6
9	Making decisions after consultation	5
10	Being present at employees' ceremonies	8
11	Valuing and respecting diversity	7
12	Welcoming constructive criticism and remarks from employees	8
Total		100

The data reveals that respondents most commonly associate democratic leadership with traits such as addressing internal chaos (15%), advocating an open-door policy (13%), and encouraging participation (10%). While all 12 traits were recognized, those related to collaboration, communication, and support were viewed as the core of democratic leadership. Less emphasis was placed on traits like decision-making after consultation or innovation, suggesting a perception of democratic leadership as more people-focused than process-driven in this context. These findings indicate that *Lebanese democratic leaders* are accessible, inclusive, and supportive.

Table 9: The traits of Autocratic leadership style in the Lebanese private company

Autocratic Leadership traits		%
1	Rewarding those who are active and taking a firm stance against negligence	9
2	Having doubts about employees' performance	17
3	Refusing to admit his mistakes	11
4	Enforcing strict policies without considering the situation	6

5	Making assumptions about employees' behavior without considering their circumstances	8
6	Favoring certain groups, leading to clique formation	9
7	Cultivating an environment of surveillance and reporting among employees	8
8	Rejecting new ideas	6
9	Promoting employees without considering their qualifications and achievements	5
10	Creating a toxic environment	6
11	Deciding without consulting others	5
12	Excluding his competitors from taking over management	10
Total		100

The most notable behavior indicating autocratic leadership is leaders' refusal to admit mistakes (11%). Conversely, the least observed trait of autocratic leadership is promoting employees without regard to their qualifications and achievements, coupled with making decisions without consultation.

Commonly associated traits include doubting employee's performance (17%), refusing to admit mistakes (11%) and excluding perceived competitors from leadership roles (10%). These reflect the protectiveness and power-hoarding typical of autocratic styles.

Mid-range traits include favoritism or clique formation (9%), rewarding only the highly active and punishing negligence (9%), and making judgments without sufficient understanding (8%). These show that autocratic leadership is often linked to distrust, excessive control, and bias.

The least cited traits for the Lebanese Autocratic leadership style are: Enforcing rigid rules (6%), Rejecting new ideas (6%), and Toxic environment (6%).

Overall, Lebanese *autocratic* leadership is perceived as highly authoritative, distrustful, and centralized, often creating a constrained work environment.

Table 10: The traits of Laissez-Faire leadership style in the Lebanese private company

Laissez – Faire Leadership behavior		%
1	Hesitating to make a decision	8
2	Mismanaging despite having a vision and mission	10
3	Failing to organize	11
4	Becoming agitated during a crisis	8

5	Handling problems and obstacles at a very slow pace	11
6	Taking long periods of absence from work (absenteeism)	9
7	Yielding to political demands or the conditions set by suppliers	8
8	Forgiving employees who make multiple errors	7
9	Failing to forecast obstacles and hazards	5
10	Failing to manage crises and risks	10
11	Disregarding the deadline	9
12	Unexcited about evaluating employee performance	4
Total		100

Respondents identified the top traits of Lebanese *Laissez-faire* leadership style as poor organization (11%), Handling problems slowly (11%) and failure to manage crises and risks (10%). These traits reflect the core perception of *laissez-faire* leadership as disorganized, passive, and ineffective under pressure.

Other mid-range traits include Hesitation in decision-making (8%), agitation crises (8%), yielding external pressures (8%), and disregarding deadlines (9%). Collectively, these indicate a weak leadership presence – both physical and mental - often seen in *laissez-faire* settings.

The least cited – traits were Forgiving repeated mistakes (7%), Failing to forecast risks (5%), and showing little enthusiasm for performance evaluations (4%).

3. Discussion

3.1. According to the characteristics of Lebanese leadership

The studies referenced in the introduction, including those by (Yukal, Gray, 2002) and (Gastil, 1994) delineate the characteristics of the *democratic* leadership style, emphasizing the involvement of the team in decision-making processes, the encouragement of individual initiative, creativity, and innovation. These attributes were observed among leaders managing private companies in Lebanon who adhere to a democratic leadership style. The Lebanese *democratic* leadership style is characterized by participation, involving employees in decision-making, providing them with the necessary information, welcoming criticism, and offering motivation and rewards.

Additionally, the observations made by (Goleman, D. 2000. Robbins, 2019) and others regarding autocratic leadership traits—such as the imposition of stringent management controls, unilateral decision-making, the absence of autonomy in work, and the enforcement of strict supervision—were evident in leaders who adopt an autocratic style in Lebanese private companies. These behaviors were found to be detrimental, fostering a toxic work environment

and a sense of oppression. Our study confirmed these observations in Lebanese private companies led by autocratic leaders. The Lebanese *autocratic* leaders are characterized by high autonomy and tendency to doubt others performance. They make decisions without consultation, enforce strict policies and regulations, reject new ideas, and often create a toxic work environment.

Furthermore, according to Kontos et al. (2010) and Andrew and Jagon (2012), the *laissez-faire* leadership style is characterized by a lack of follow-up, high delegation, minimal guidance, and a high degree of independence. These traits correspond to the Lebanese *laissez-faire* leadership style identified in our study. Lebanese *laissez-faire* leaders often fail to organize their companies during crisis, delay or hesitate in decision-making and tend to ignore performance appraisal.

3.2. According to the influence of demographic characteristics on leadership style

Firstly, our findings substantiate the assertions made by scholars in psychology and sociology (SIT and LIT) studies regarding the influence of demographic characteristics on personality. These characteristics—including age, educational level, gender, and professional experience—affect behavior, albeit to varying degrees.

Secondly, our study confirmed the theories mentioned in the introduction such as the life stage theory, which suggests that younger leaders tend to favor democratic leadership, specifically 58% of employees in Lebanese private companies reported that leaders aged 25 to 30 exhibit more democratic behaviors than those aged 50 and above. Similarly, both our study and the 2023 study published in the *Journal of Business Management and Economic Development* found a significant relationship between age, work experience, and leadership style. The influence of age on leadership was also confirmed in both our research and the 2024 study published in the *Journal of Psychology*.

Thirdly, the findings revealed that companies led by women tend to adopt more a *democratic* leadership style compared to those led by men, who are more likely to adopt an *autocratic* leadership style. This result supports the findings of (Eagly and Karau) who argued that women tend to be more collaborative, while men to be dominant and assertive. In contrast to the study published in the *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, which found no significant difference between male and female leaders' attitudes toward employees, our study rejected that conclusion. We found that female leaders are more likely to adopt a democratic leadership style compared to their male counterparts.

Fourthly, our study confirmed that Lebanese leaders with low educational levels tend to adopt democratic leadership style, whereas those with higher educational

levels exhibit are more inclined toward an autocratic style. This result aligns with the human capital theory, which links education and leadership approach.

Fifthly, both our study and the situational leadership theory suggest that leaders with less professional experience are more likely to adopt laissez-faire style. In contrast, leaders with higher levels of professional experience tend to exhibit either autocratic or democratic leadership styles.

3.3. According to the study Problem and Hypotheses

Regarding the research problem addressed in this study, our findings indicate a significant relationship between demographic characteristics—particularly age and professional experience—and leadership traits within private companies in Lebanon. In contrast, factors such as gender and educational level exhibited a minimal to moderate influence on leadership styles.

Consequently, it can be concluded that demographic characteristics substantially affect the leadership behaviors of company executives, influencing their adoption of specific leadership styles—whether democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire.

In response to the study's hypotheses, the findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between the variables of age and professional experience and leadership style. In contrast, gender and educational level were found to have weak to moderate effects on leadership style.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the results indicated that age is the most influential demographic characteristic in the adoption of the democratic leadership style, according to the Pearson correlation analysis.

For the third hypothesis, the study found that professional experience significantly affects the adoption of leadership styles, particularly the autocratic style.

As for the fourth hypothesis, although the Pearson correlation coefficient and Cramer's test did not confirm a statistically significant relationship between gender and leadership style, employee responses suggested that female leaders were more likely to adopt a democratic leadership style than their male counterparts.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis was not supported by the Pearson correlation test, showing no significant relationship between educational level and leadership style. However, Cramer's V indicated a moderate association between the two variables: leaders with lower education levels (primary level) tended to prefer a democratic style, whereas more educated leaders were inclined toward autocratic or mixed leadership styles.

With respect to the sixth hypothesis, the data did not support the assumption that younger leaders are inclined toward the laissez-faire style; rather, they are

more likely to adopt the democratic style. However, the findings did show that as leaders age, they tend to shift more toward the autocratic style.

Finally, the seventh hypothesis can be rejected, as not all demographic characteristics exert the same level of influence on leadership style. As noted, age and professional experience have a greater impact on leadership than gender and educational level.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of demographic characteristics on leadership styles within private companies in Lebanon. The findings indicate that:

- Age and Professional Experience: These two factors exhibit a significant influence on leadership styles, with older and more experienced leaders tending towards autocratic behaviors.
- Gender and Educational Level: These characteristics show minimal to moderate effects on leadership styles. Notably, while female leaders are perceived to adopt more democratic styles, statistical analysis did not confirm a significant correlation.
- Age and Leadership Style: Younger leaders are more inclined towards democratic leadership, whereas older leaders tend to adopt autocratic styles.
- A *high level of education* does not correspond with the democratic leadership style.
- One of the salient features of the *democratic leadership* style in the Lebanese private company lies to the participation and openness.
- A defining characteristic of *the autocratic leadership* model within the Lebanese private company is the distrust and exclusion.
- The *laissez-faire leadership* style prevailing in the Lebanese private company is characterized by disorganization and absenteeism.

To sum up, demographic factors - particularly professional experience and age - play a substantial role in shaping leadership behaviors within Lebanese private companies. However, gender and educational level appear to have a lesser impact.

Finally, this study contributes to several theoretical perspectives, particularly in the field of *human resources*. It examines the relationship between leaders' demographic characteristics and their behavior, supporting more effective recruitment, training, and promotion strategies based on personal attributes and organizational needs. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of leadership training and consulting by developing customized coaching programs for age and educational background.

In addition, the study contributes to the field of *organizational psychology*, as it enhances understanding of leadership motivation and behavior in relation to age, gender, experience and education.

The study also provides a detailed analysis of how leadership styles are shaped by demographic variables, thereby supporting the design and implementation of effective leadership *development programs*.

Moreover, the study makes a valuable contribution in *sociology*, by improving understanding of social relationships. It explores how social and demographic factors influence interactions and power dynamics within the workplace.

Finally, this research adds value to *comparative and regional studies*, it offers insights for comparing Lebanon with other countries in terms of leadership patterns and demographic diversity within organizations.

Future Directions

Future research could expand upon this study several ways. First, additional demographic variables such as income, marital status, occupation, birth rate, average family size, and cultural background could be included to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their influence on leadership styles.

Second, future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach to observe how leadership traits evolve over time in relation to professional experience and age.

Moreover, comparative studies across sectors (e.g, public vs. private) or countries in the Middle East could determine whether the observed patterns are unique to Lebanese private companies or more broadly applicable. Incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or case studies could also provide deeper insights into how leaders perceive the impact of their demographic background on their leadership behavior.

In addition, researchers could examine the influence of generational groups – such as traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y – on the adoption of leadership styles.

Finally, future research could explore the role of organization culture and external economic factors in moderating the relationship between individual characteristics and leadership styles.

Notes

- ¹ Values close to 1 indicate high reliability, while lower values suggest poor consistency.
- ² Is a statistical measure that indicates the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables, with values ranging from -1 to +1.
- ³ Cramer's Test (Cramer's V) is a statistical measure used to determine the strength of association between two categorical variables, based on the Chi-square (χ^2) test.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago Press.
- Black, J., Hashimzade, N. & Myles, G. (2017). *A dictionary of economics* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. (2002). "Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders". *Psychological Review*, 109(3), p. 573-598.
- Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. (2002). "Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders". *Psychological Review*, 109(3), p. 573-598.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1994). "Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course". *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57(1), p. 4-15.
- Gastil, J. (1994). "A definition and illustration of democratic leadership". *Human Relations*, 47(8), p. 953-975.
- Goleman, D. (2000). "Leadership that gets results". *Harvard Business Review*, 78(2), p. 78-90.
- Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K. H. (1982). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources* (4th ed.). Prentice-Hall.
- Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. Knopf.
- Lewin, K., Lippitt, R. & White, R. K. (1939). "Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social climates". *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 10(2), p. 271-299.
- Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Rea, L. M. & Parker, R. A. (1992). *Designing and conducting survey research: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Robbins, S. P. & Judge, T. A. (2019). *Organizational behavior* (18th ed.). Pearson.
- Super, D. E. (1957). *The psychology of careers*. Harper & Brothers.
- Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1979). "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict". In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, p. 33-47. Brooks/Cole.
- Yukl, G. A. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.



BIOGRAPHIES

- Raymond SAFWAN, né à Ras Beyrouth en 1983. Titulaire d'un diplôme en Sciences Politiques et Administratives de l'Université Libanaise. Détient également un Master et un Doctorat de l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth. Membre du Syndicat des Ressources Humaines au Liban, exerce en qualité de formateur et consultant en gestion des ressources humaines, ainsi que professeur universitaire depuis 13 ans. Réalisation de plusieurs projets liés aux tests de recrutement, à la certification ISO et à l'analyse de poste.
- Ali Mohamad, Directeur des Ressources Humaines à l'Université Al Maaref, Liban, membre du Syndicat Libanais des Ressources Humaines. Enseignant des cours en

Gestion de Projet, Organisation des Entreprises, Organisation de la Maintenance et Gestion de la Production dans plusieurs universités libanaises, titulaire d'un doctorat en Sciences Humaines, spécialisé en Leadership et Gestion des Ressources Humaines, de l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ).



BIOGRAPHY

- Raymond Safwan, born in Ras Beirut in 1983. Holds a Bachelor's degree in Political and Administrative Sciences from the Lebanese University, followed by a Master's and a Ph.D. obtained from Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut. Dr. Safwan is a member of the Lebanese Human Resources Syndicate, with over 13 years of experience as a university professor. In parallel, works as a trainer and consultant specializing in Human Resources Management (HRM). Successfully completed various projects focused on recruitment testing, ISO implementation, and job analysis.
- Ali Mohamad, Director of Human Resources at Al Maaref University, Lebanon, member of the Lebanese Human Resources Syndicate. Teaching courses in Project Management, Business Organization, Maintenance Organization, and Production Management at several other Lebanese universities, holder of a PhD in Human Sciences, specializing in Leadership and Human Resources Management, from Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ).

List of tables

Table 1	study sample.
Table 2	Pearson scales.
Table 3	Cramer's Test.
Table 4	The impact of Age on leadership style.
Table 5	The impact of gender on leadership style.
Table 6	The impact of education level on leadership style.
Table 7	The impact of professional experience on leadership style.
Table 8	The traits of <i>Democratic</i> leadership style in the Lebanese private company.
Table 9	The traits of Autocratic leadership style in the Lebanese private company.
Table 10	The traits of Laissez-Faire leadership style in the Lebanese private company.

List of figures

	The impact of Age on leadership style
Figure 2	The impact of gender on leadership style
Figure 3	The impact of education level on leadership style
Figure 4	The impact of professional experience on leadership style

