

# ANALYSIS ON THE EMPLOYEES’ PERCEPTION OF LEADERSHIP, IN A COMPANY WITH A PRODUCTION PROFILE IN ROMANIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The success of an organization consists of a multitude of factors and elements, which combined perfectly lead to the achievement of the best performing standards. The frequently asked question is not whether an organization can be successful, but what exactly makes an organization successful. Therefore, we can say that both managers (leaders) and employees have important roles, starting with the objectives and strategies established at the level of the organization and up to their implementation and the relationship between them and providing permanent and reciprocal feedback. In a previous study we analyzed the relationship between leaders and employees within organizations with a production profile in Romania, so we considered it necessary to analyze the opinion of employees towards leaders. Thus, the 31 respondents occupy different executive positions within a production company. A questionnaire based on a quantitative analysis was used as a working tool. It consisted of 18 questions (17 closed-ended questions and one open-ended question). The questionnaire was distributed directly (online) using the Google Forms platform. In conclusion, we can say that the employee-leader relationship must also be analyzed from the perspective of the behavior that both have within the organization. Following the study, we can say that leaders are largely satisfied with the behavior and attitude that leaders show towards them in different situations.*

**KEYWORDS:** employees, leader, team, feedback, performance

## 1. Introduction

After almost a century of academic research, the issue of leadership in organizations remains a highly analyzed topic both at a theoretical and practical level.

Evidence is beginning to accumulate that follower characteristics can shape the impact leadership has on a work team. Preliminary research has shown that subordinates prefer different types of leaders

based on their own personalities, and that this preference may carry over to performance consequences. Charismatic leaders are more effective as they match their approaches to subordinate self-concepts and the positive effect of leader extraversion, often thought to be universal, has been found to be suppressed by follower proactivity. The aim of leadership is to bring people together around a common goal (Gregory & Willis, 2023). We know a

great deal about leader traits, behaviors, and their effects on performance, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that our lack of similar knowledge on follower characteristics represents an important gap in our understanding of how and why leadership does (and does not) work (Lemoine & Blum, 2013). Moreover, the leader who cares about developing new leaders within the organization assumes the role of leader-coach by using and developing leadership skills and practices (Pless & Maak, 2022).

Understanding a culture is like learning a new language. No matter how influential employees might become, there is always more to discover. Awareness of the level of organizational culture encompasses the ability to understand and respect different cultures, ideas, perspectives, experiences. It is about the knowledge of human values, of the ways of life that define our interconnected world (Skills for success. Your ultimate guide to mastering the most in-demand skills & expert strategies to skyrocket your career in 2024).

While there are many factors that contribute to a team's success, leadership is by far the most important. Without a strong leader, work in a successful team cannot be achieved, and goals cannot be met. Great leaders have the ability to bring out the best in their team members. Thus, one of the missions they have is to motivate, instill confidence and provide the right career guidance to employees.

In all types of organizations, leaders must focus on improving leadership skills. Leadership skills comprise a series of attributes that allow you to effectively guide, motivate and influence other people in the organizational environment of employees. These skills are essential for successful leadership. A list of some key leadership skills of leaders can be listed in the following lines: communication, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution or settlement, empathy and emotional intelligence, delegation, motivation and

inspiration, effective time management, strategic thinking, team building, vision, goal setting and achievement, feedback, and coaching (Kapur, 2020).

The success or failure of an organization does not belong only to the leaders, but also to the supporters, i.e. the employees. The high performance of an organization is achieved by both leaders and employees, especially by the best, the most involved. For a team to achieve high performance, its members must be well prepared, motivated, competent, confident, responsible and proactive. Supporters' behavioral styles have been divided into two dimensions by Robert Kelley, in his book "The Power of Followership" (1991).

The first dimension considers the quality of the supporters' thinking: critical and independent versus uncritical and dependent. Supporters belonging to the first category are more rational, act and make independent decisions, follow their convictions, are creative, innovative, offer constructive criticism when it is necessary and appropriate. Supporters of the second category do not have critical thinking, they follow predetermined instructions and do not deviate from them, they accept the leader's ideas without reservation, without first assessing the situation.

The second dimension emphasizes the type of behavior of the supporter: active versus passive. Active supporters are people who collaborate easily with other members at different levels. These people take initiatives to solve problems and make decisions and are extremely well-known in the place where they carry out their activity. The level of engagement or interaction for passive supporters is extremely limited. These are the people who avoid taking on responsibilities beyond what is provided in the job description and need continuous guidance and control.

Depending on the characteristics that derive from the two dimensions, the five styles of the supporters' behavior result: the

active supporter (efficient), the passive supporter (ineffective), the conformist supporter, the alienated supporter and the pragmatic supporter.

The active supporter is the person who is seriously committed to carrying out the tasks, his main goal being to satisfy the interests of the organization. He/she is critical thinking, independent, not afraid of conflict with other members, not even conflicts with his/her boss.

The passive supporter is the person who lets the leader think about everything that needs to be done. He/she does not have a critical or independent thinking. These people lack initiative and responsibility and constantly ask for guidance.

The conformist supporter is the kind of person preferred by an authoritarian leader. These supporters carry out all orders without considering the consequences of such orders. Conformists are people who avoid conflict, their thinking is uncritical, proactive but dependent.

The alienated supporter is a person with critical, passive and yet independent thinking. This person feels unappreciated for the exemplary work he does, is able to participate in solving problems, but does not want to.

The pragmatic supporter is the person who combines the 4 styles presented above. It is not well-known which side of the barricade this type of supporter is on, as they have an ambiguous image with positive and negative sides (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

## **2. General Elements on Research Methodology**

The general objective of this exploratory research is to analyze the perception of supporters (employees) towards leaders, in a company with a production profile (mechanical processing) in Romania. The company is of medium level and has 31 employees, who represented the surveyed sample.

As secondary objectives we list:

- analysis of the main features of the respondents surveyed;

- identifying the reality of collaboration between employees and leaders;

- identifying the degree of satisfaction of employees with leaders.

A questionnaire based on a quantitative analysis was used as a working tool. It consisted of 18 questions (17 closed-ended questions and one open-ended question). The questionnaire was distributed directly (online) using the Google Forms platform.

## **3. Analysis of the Main Results regarding the Employees' Perception of Leadership, in a Company with a Production Profile in Romania**

Several types of relationships can be created between employees and leaders. We can say that two such types are frequently encountered in the organizational environment, more precisely the one of proximity and the one of distance. These two, depending on the situation or evolution, can help or hinder the interaction between them, providing quick feedback and the speed of completing organizational tasks.

The first of the questions in the questionnaire referred to the moment when employees talk to leaders. As can be seen in Figure no. 1, the majority of respondents (45%) talk to leaders every time they do not know what they have to solve or when they do not understand or have not been told very clearly how to execute a task. A percentage of 29% of respondents talk to leaders only when they are not coping with a situation or in the case of situations when they are aware that the task assigned is not within their competence. A fairly high percentage of respondents (23%) choose to talk to leaders every time they have a dissatisfaction. In fewer situations (3%), supporters do not go to talk to leaders and prefer to wait for them to notice their dissatisfaction and approach them (Figure no. 1). Even if communication in the

organizational environment is an indispensable binder, it can be seen that there are still gaps in terms of the clarity of the

transmission of messages from leaders (work tasks), which makes the transmission of feedback late or not at all.

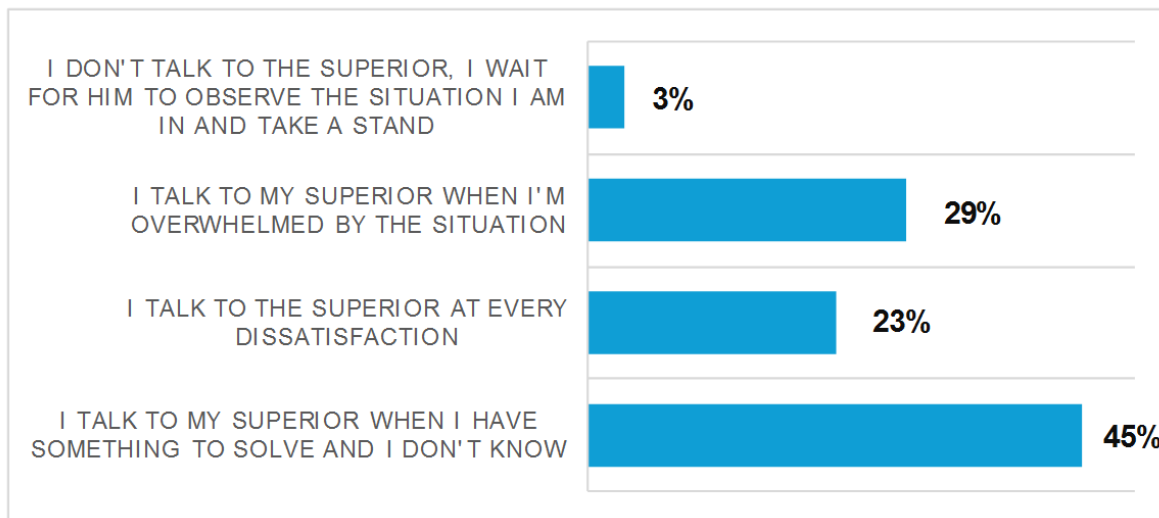


Figure no 1: *How often supporters talk to leaders*  
(Source: Own creation)

When tasks are distributed, it is important for the leader to always keep in mind the skills and interests of the people concerned. According to the data, employees claim that leaders only sometimes take their interests and skills into account when dividing tasks (42%). 32% of them believe

that leaders often take this into account, while 13% of them believe that leaders often have their interests in mind, and 13% say that leaders never consider their interests and skills when leaders divide tasks (Figure no. 2).

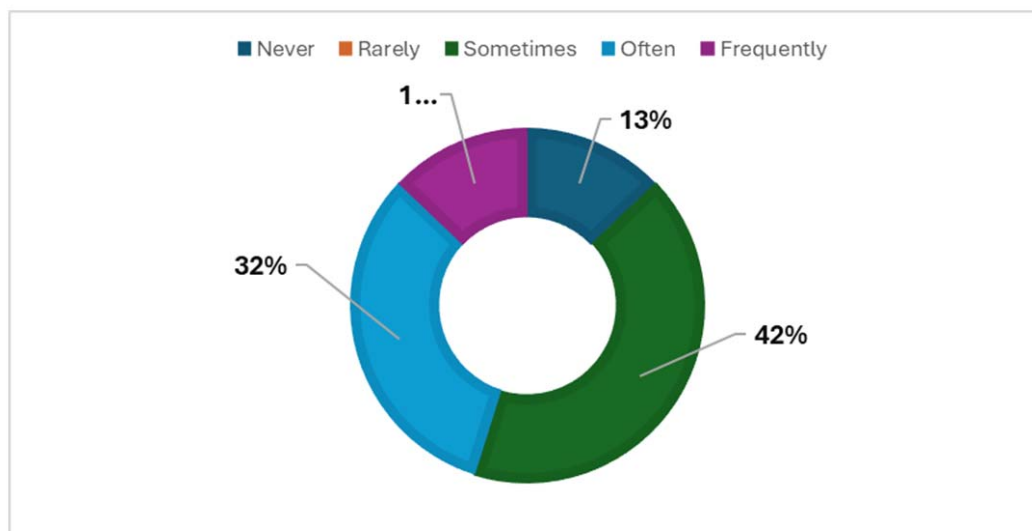


Figure no. 2: *How often leaders consider team members' interests and skills when distributing work tasks*  
(Source: Own creation)

The company's goals are a priority for leaders, so one of their missions is to encourage all team members to aspire to them and achieve them successfully. There are various methods and techniques through which they can do this, so that the message is delivered correctly to the supporters. Centralized data shows that 52% of

supporters say that leaders often guide them to aspire to the same goals. Only sometimes it happens that respondents are not guided to aspire to the same goals or the message is not well conveyed (22%). 13% of them answered that it is rare and frequent for leaders to encourage them to achieve common goals (Figure no. 3).

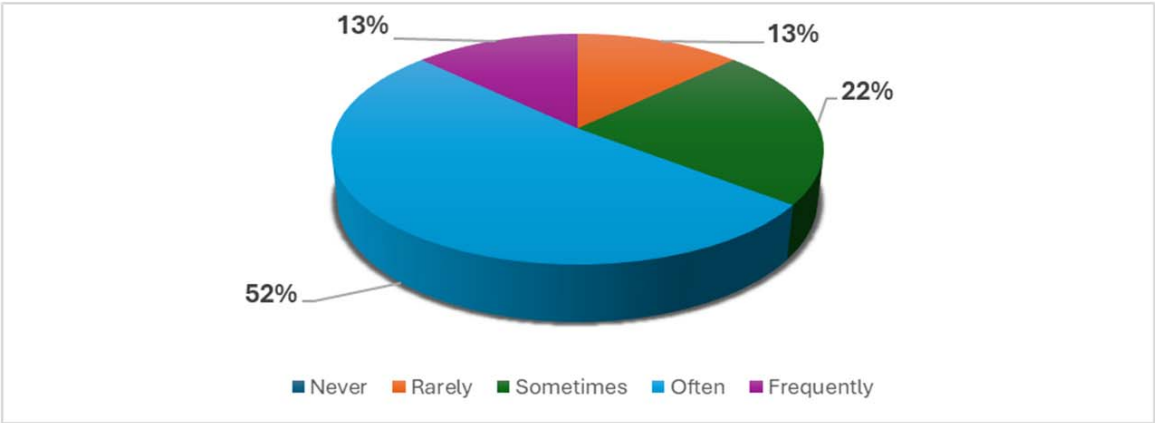


Figure no. 3: *The frequency with which respondents feel encouraged by leaders to aspire to the same goals*  
(Source: Own creation)

Employee insecurity at work derives from several reasons or situations. One of these could be the extent to which leaders know employees' intentions, how they want to evolve, and what their aspirations are. In

this case, 58% of supporters answered yes to this question, 29% believe that their leaders do not know this detail, and 13% do not know or have not asked themselves this question (Figure no. 4).

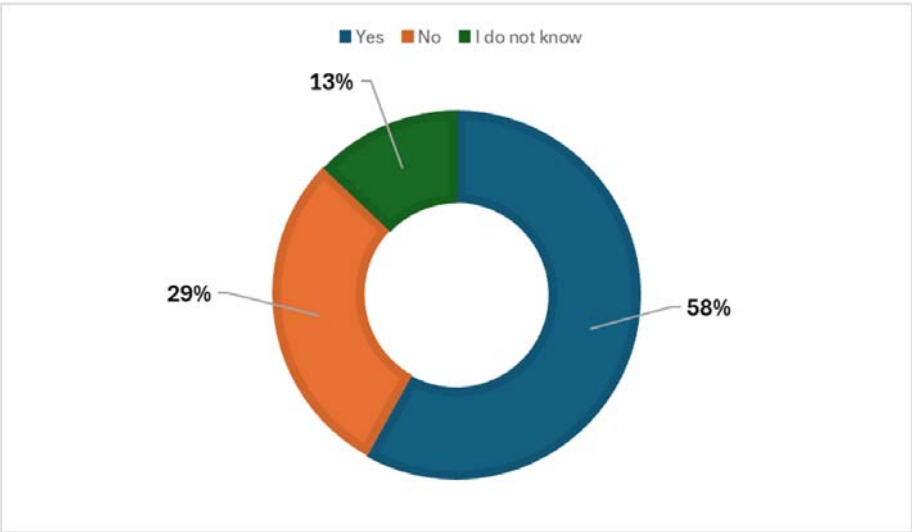


Figure no. 4: *The leader knows the desire of the respondents about how they want to evolve in the team*  
(Source: Own creation)

An employee's motivation to perform at work and their morale are interconnected. If morale is high, there are premises for the person to be motivated in what they do. Low morale makes motivation not long-lasting. For short periods, employees can be motivated by different material or moral methods, but only maintaining a conducive organizational climate can support their motivation in the long term.

To the next question in the questionnaire, respondents had to choose from six answer options that motivate them the most at work: salary offer, collegiality, professional development, intellectual challenge through work tasks, time flexibility and the possibility of working from home. As can be seen in the graph in Figure no. 5,

collegiality is a factor considered important for motivation at work (32%), followed only later by the salary offer (26%). Many times, the interests and needs of the staff do not coincide with those of the leader. For example, while the leader wants their employees to perform at work, some employees come to work primarily to reunite with the work group, which they consider a "group of friends". Professional development (19%) and flexibility of the schedule (19%) are also considered important by respondents, but to a lesser extent. The intellectual challenge through work tasks occupies the penultimate position in this hierarchy, with 3% of respondents choosing it as a source of motivation at work in this case.

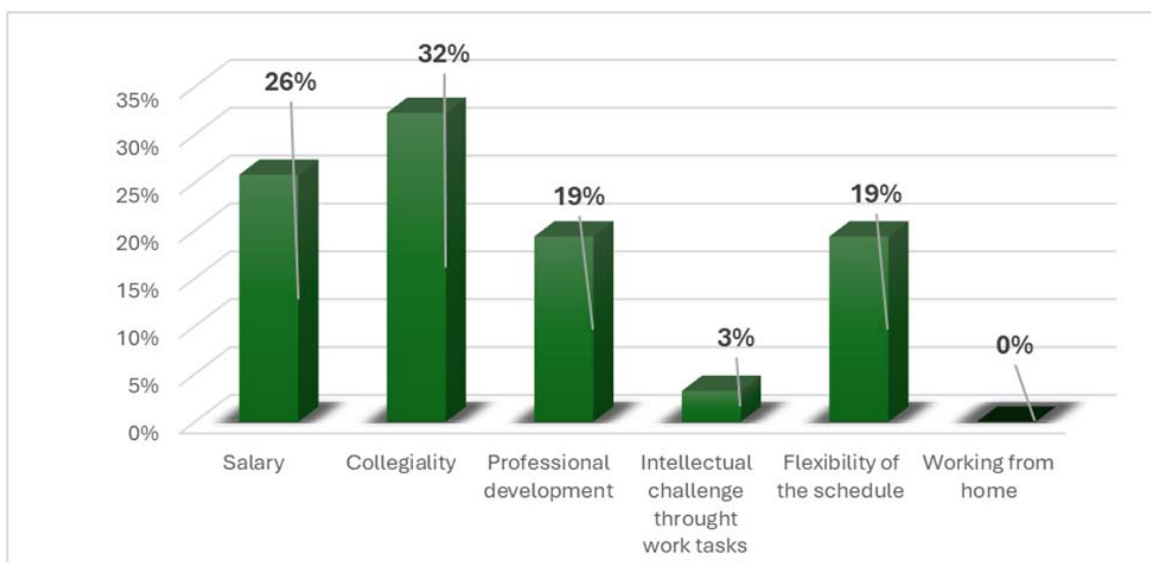


Figure no. 5: *What motivates supporters the most in the workplace*  
(Source: Own creation)

Employees may be very satisfied with their service, but not performing at the same time. The important thing is for the leader to find those ways to motivate the staff through which to instill in them the desire to work efficiently for the organization.

The resolution of problems and work tasks must come in a way that is as original as possible. Leaders need to find these solutions and promote them among supporters. Asked if leaders do this, supporters' opinions are divided (Figure no. 6).

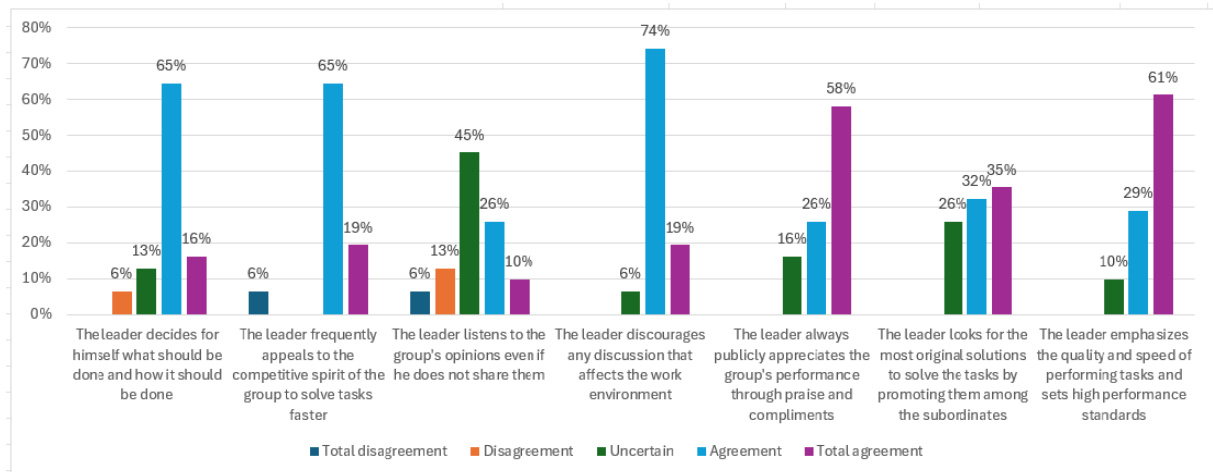


Figure no. 6: Situations in which leaders find original solutions to solve problems (Source: Own creation)

Feedback is very important in the functioning of an organization, but it should not be confused with criticism or praise. There is a distinction between evaluative or prescriptive feedback and truly constructive feedback. Correct feedback should be a balancing factor in an organization.

When asked how often they ask for feedback from leaders, most supporters (35%) believe they are never given feedback, others say they are given weekly (26%),

monthly (19%), semi-annual (10%) and daily (10%). As can be seen from the presentation of the percentages, within the institution where the respondents carry out their activity, there is a communication problem of those at the higher level felt by the employees (Figure no. 7). Thus, they mentioned that they want the leaders to be more communicative, to listen to them more and to organize more frequent meetings in which certain problems they have are discussed.

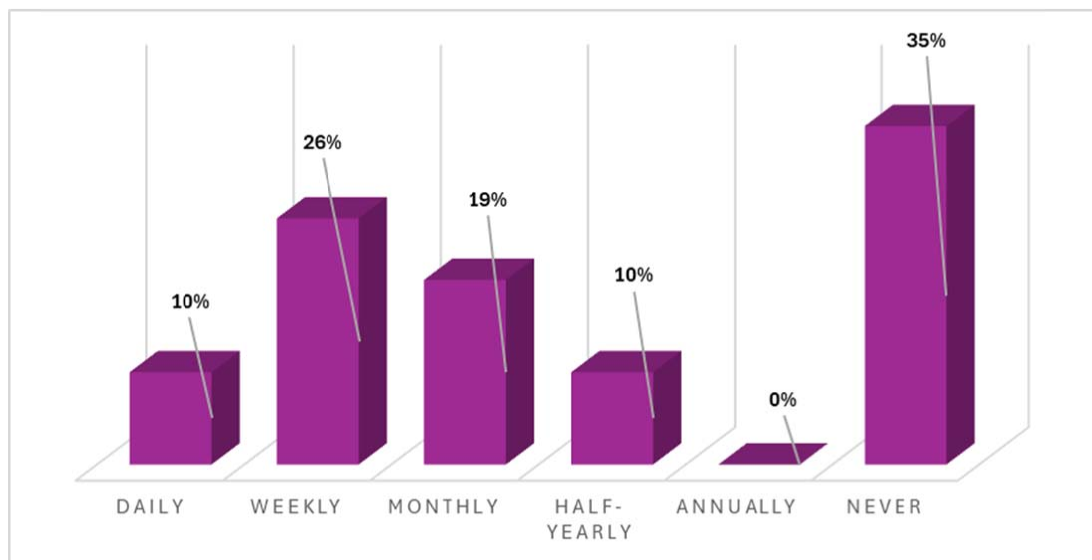


Figure no. 7: Respondents' willingness to receive feedback from leaders (Source: Own creation)

At the same time, respondents were asked if they provide daily feedback to

leaders. The situation is somewhat better for them than for leaders (Figure no. 8).

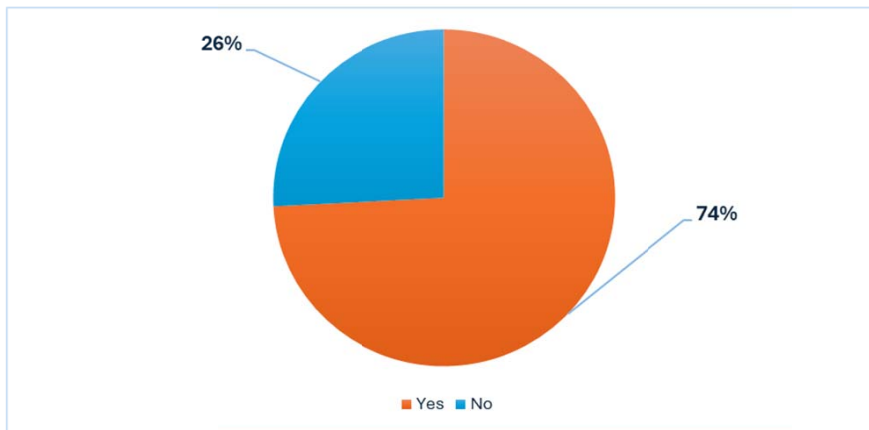


Figure no. 8: *Providing feedback from respondents*  
(Source: Own creation)

Regarding the age of the respondents, 77% of them are aged between 30-45 years, 13% over 45 years old and 10% between 18-30 years old (Figure no. 9).

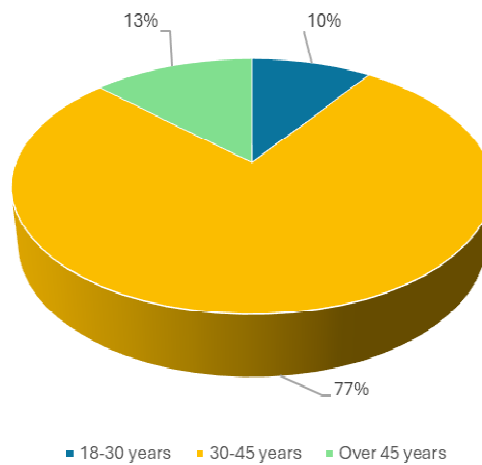


Figure no. 9: *Age of respondents*  
(Source: Own creation)

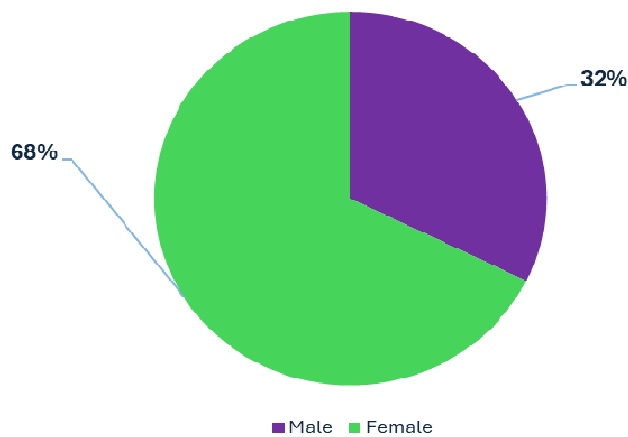


Figure no. 10: *Gender of respondents*  
(Source: Own creation)

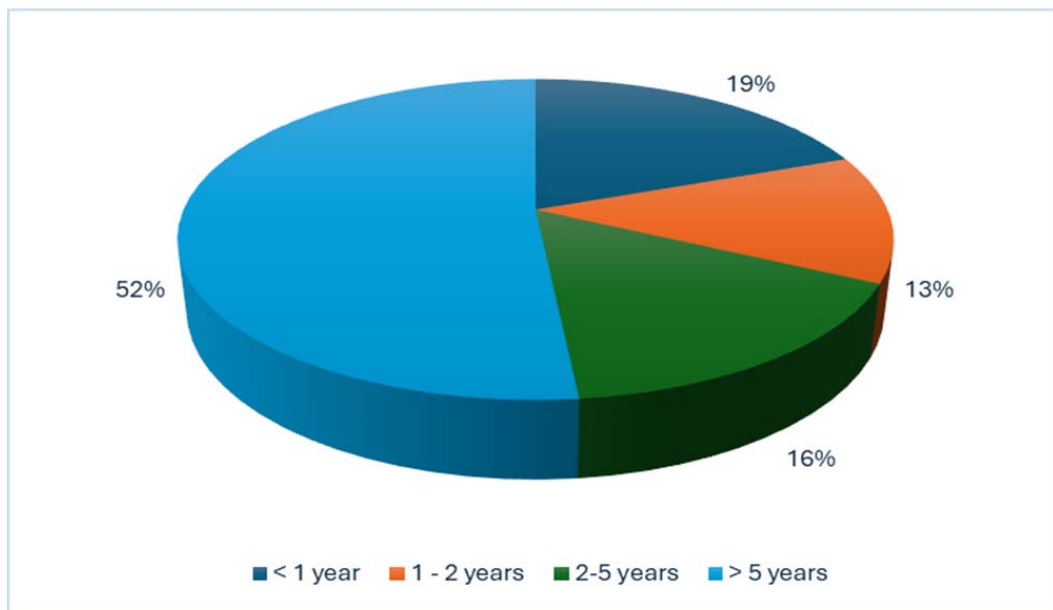


Figure no. 11: *The length of time respondents have been working in the company*  
(Source: Own creation)

Figure no. 10 exemplifies the gender of the respondents. As can be seen, male employees are in greater numbers than female ones. In terms of the period of time since they have been working in the manufacturing company (Figure no. 11), most of them have been with the company for more than 5 years (52%), followed by those with less than 1 year (19%), then with a seniority between 2-5 years (16%).

There are employees for whom a job is more than a source of income. They are those employees who like what they do, like the job they have and want to perform. Moreover, for them their leaders are important and that is why they are not allowed to make mistakes or deviate from the rules of the organization. The last question in the questionnaire was an open one through which the respondents had to offer some aspects that they would like to improve in their leaders. Thus, among their wishes, we recorded the improvement of the work climate by offering more facilities, the desire for leaders to be more communicative in some situations and at the same time the organization of information and counseling meetings more often and even the dissemination of the daily problems they face.

#### 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that the employee-leader relationship must also be analyzed from the perspective of the behavior that both have within the organization.

In the workplace, every employee pursues his or her interests, and when tasks are divided, advocates want leaders to consider both their interests and their skills. From the employees' perspective, as we have previously shown, they claim that leaders mostly take their interests into account. There are sometimes discrepancies between employees and leaders due to the occurrence of unpleasant situations at work or even due to personal problems. As for the feedback that employees give to leaders on a daily basis, this is a very good one. Team members largely claim to provide feedback to the leader on a daily basis to ensure that they perform their work tasks correctly.

Mainly, leaders know what the team members' aspirations are and how they want to evolve within the team. However, the relationship that exists between them is an official one.

Trying to analyze the main features of the respondents surveyed, we noticed that there is a fairly high percentage of people who claim that the most motivating thing for the workplace is the good work environment, collegiality. If morale is high, chances are that the person is motivated in what they do. Another important factor is the salary offer, followed by professional development.

Regarding decision-making at the group level, respondents say that most decisions are made only by leaders, with too few situations in which their opinion is taken into account.

For the organization to be in continuous development, it is not enough for an employee to execute only what they have to do. They must be more involved in the way of solving tasks, come up with innovative ideas and help the leader in the decision-making process.

The relationship between employees and leaders must be an open one, and employees must be sure that they can get in touch with leaders at any time, for guidance or advice. Also, leaders must be either open to their proposals or ideas, which happens frequently in the organization. Following the main objective, we notice that there is continuous communication between employees and leaders, supporters calling for the help of leaders when they have something to solve and do not know, and leaders in turn come to the aid of employees when they are overwhelmed by the situation. Analyzing the situation from this point of view, we could say that there is an open relationship between them.

Trying to identify the true relationships between leaders and

employees, we also set some secondary objectives, which we analyzed. We started by analyzing the main features of the respondents surveyed and we noticed that among employees the most motivating thing is the organizational climate. The work environment often influences employee morale, thus influencing their productivity. If employees feel good at work surrounded by colleagues, but also by leaders, having some open relationships, they will be more productive. Also, employees tend to be motivated by the salaries offered by the company.

In terms of employee involvement in the decision-making process, a weaker involvement can be observed here, as leaders prefer to make decisions at the organization level most of the time on their own. At the same time, leaders try to increase employee satisfaction by showing them that their work is important.

The degree of satisfaction of employees can also be achieved by promoting their ideas or praising the group for well-solved tasks.

Any organization can improve its activity by pursuing the fulfillment of employee needs. Once these needs are met, employees will be much more involved in what they do. As a result of the research, we also had proposals for improvement from employees who want to improve the work climate by offering more facilities, the desire for leaders to be more communicative in some situations and at the same time organizing more often information meetings but also counseling and even dissemination of the daily problems they face.

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