SUSTAINABLE LEADER IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: A FOLLOWER-CENTRIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT. This article presents a sustainable leader identity construction model that explores daily leader-follower interactions and leadership perceptions held by the followers. It is rooted in the relational perspective of the leadership development process and embraces a follower-centric approach to address the gaps in understanding of sustainable leadership co-construction with the followers, as the primary stakeholders of organizations. The data collected from 18 interviews with middle-managers in two countries, accounting for the cultural context, was used to reproduce schemas held by the followers and was framed into a conceptual model that encompasses leader's need, task, and people orientation, individual achievement, and satisfaction of the leader's need(s). The findings unveil cultural, context-related perceptions that differentiate between the leader's competence and the leader's authority as key tenets of the leadership. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on sustainable and follower-centric leadership, and provides empirical evidence from two under researched cultural contexts.

KEYWORDS: sustainable leadership, leader identity construction, follower-centric approach, culture.

JEL classification: J24, M12, O15.

Introduction

The aftermath of the global financial crisis, increasing interconnectedness and raising awareness of sustainability issues calls upon for more secure and stable growth of organizations through more progressive approaches to leadership (Kantabutra, Saratun, 2013). Albeit its infancy phase (Lambert, 2011), sustainable leadership (not to be confused with leadership in sustainability) has been gaining attention and contributing in filling this gap by providing evidence on the benefits of sustainable leadership to businesses and guiding leader development field into the paradigmatic shift.

Seminal work of Casserley and Critchley (2010), Avery and Bergsteiner (2010; 2011), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Davies (2007), and Lambert (2011) emphasize importance of social aspect of the relationship in sustainable leadership, and elevates follower's role in sustainable leadership due to its significance in stakeholders' management (Barr, Dowding, 2012; Groves, LaRocca, 2011; Avery, Bergsteiner, 2011). Limiting consideration of leadership as a control function (Casserley, Critchley, 2010; Crews, 2010), indicates the need to treat leadership as an interdependent dialogue between leaders and followers (Barr, Dowding, 2012). The apparent importance of follower-leader dyad, lack of empiric research in sustainable leadership vein (Gerard *et al.*, 2017), and the contextuality of sustainable leadership (Avery, Bergsteiner, 2011) suggest the gap in the literature. Furthermore, the lack of follower-centric studies in leadership preserve the extant strand of research the infancy stage (Bligh, *et al.*, 2011), resulting in calls for more follower-focused research, employing various research methods, in order to bring new insights, develop emerging theories and test the results (Carsten *et al.*, 2010), and finally, address the contextual dimension of culture. Therefore, this research paper addresses above indicated gaps in the literature by providing evidence from qualitative research on sustainable leader identity construction in two cultural

contexts from a follower-centric perspective. Specifically, in this study, we aim to contribute to the development of sustainable leadership identity construction research by undertaking a follower-centric perspective on leadership, investigating the individual cognitive processes by followers, and exploring the questions (1) How do followers construct the leader's identity based on the daily experienced interaction between the leader and the follower? and (2) How are these processes related to the cultural context? To do so, we rely on a qualitative study in line with methodological guidelines of Corbin and Strauss (2008).

1. Conceptual Overview

While the managerial positions in organizations today implicitly connote institutionalized leadership, the hierarchical perspective does not explain why some supervisors are not seen as leaders (Bedeian, Hunt, 2006; DeRue, Ashford, 2010). Therefore, in organizations, there is a growing need to understand the processes by which managers lead their associates through organizational changes to attain positive outcomes for their organization and for their clients (Kan, Parry, 2004). While these processes occur within relationships and social interactions, there is a gap in the extant literature, however, on the development and evolution of leader-follower relationships, as well as the role of cultural contexts, including cultural norms and values in leadership identity construction processes (DeRue, Ashford, 2010). The understanding of leadership development also calls for "incorporating context and process into an understanding of the manifestation of the leadership phenomenon" (Kempster, Parry, 2011).

The "post-heroic" research approach to leadership can be characterized by the shift in the focus away from the hierarchic, leader-centric perspective and instead, acknowledgement of leadership as a "dynamic, social and relational conception of the leadership development process" (DeRue, Ashford, 2010, p.629). In this vein, the analysis of leadership takes into account the follower's perspective, and the leader's identity as a result of both the leader's and follower's perceptions, and social interaction.

Firstly, leadership is considered as a phenomenon based on the reciprocal influence that takes the form of a dynamic relationship between the leader and the follower (Hogg, 2007). Thus, development of a leader's identity occurs within social interaction, with followers having influence on the process (e.g. Hunt, 1991; Parry, 1998; Bess, Goldman, 2002; Yukl *et al*., 2002; Kan, Parry, 2004; Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2014), as echoed by (Meindl, 1995), stating that construction of leaders and followers rests with the perceptions of followers, and recent theories recognizing the importance of the follower in the context of leadership effectiveness (Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2014). Secondly, the leader's identity and leadership recognition are subjected to attribute-to-schema comparison (Lord, Maher, 1991; DeRue *et al*., 2009), and as a result, a match or a mismatch between the perceived leadership and the implicit schema of leadership held by the follower. Finally, consideration of leadership as a process calls for a shift from static portrayal, towards construal of leadership as a dynamic series of events.

From the viewpoint of leadership theories, the central phenomenon of experienced leader behaviour, based on a follower's experience, mostly reflects behaviour/style theory of leadership, as it does not merely focus on the traits and skills of the manager, but more importantly, on the behaviours through which a manager's competence is experienced by the follower (Northouse, 2015). As followers' evaluation of the leader can be most accurate when based on daily events (Spreitzer *et al*., 2005), the follower-centric approach, in essence, calls

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for research encompassing leadership as it is experienced by the followers. While a considerable body of research has focused on perceptions of the leaders' behaviour held by the followers (Yurtkoru, Ekmekçi, 2011), the research on experienced leadership remains nascent. Methodologically, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to embrace the experience of a participant, as it fosters understanding of complex social phenomena (Ng, Hase, 2008).

The perspective on leadership as a more than the linear, mono-directional event is reflected in considering leadership as a process (Kan, Parry, 2004). Recently, a relational leadership perspective has augmented this view with interpersonal processes at the core of leadership formation and thus presents leadership as a socially constructed phenomenon (Uhl-Bien, 2006). These two tenets merge in leadership identity construction theory, which posits that leadership is a relational process, involving mutual influence as individuals become perceived as leaders by themselves and their followers (DeRue, Ashford, 2010). Leader's identity is therefore not only claimed by the individual but also granted by the followers, and hence is intra-individual and socially constructed (DeRue *et al.*, 2009; DeRue, Ashford, 2010). Leader's identity development is thus rooted in continuous leadership claiming and granting process (DeRue, Ashford, 2010).

Building on these grounds, leadership emerges through a series of interactional events of explicit role negotiation (Marchiondo *et al.*, 2015). While leaders influence followers through their behavior and achieve their goals through followers (Andersen, 2006; Hamlin *et al.*, 2006; Kaiser *et al.*, 2008; Avolio *et al.*, 2009), followers become evaluators who experience leaders' behavior on a daily basis. Thus, in this process of leadership emergence, the followers are more than mere recipients of leader's influence (Jackson, Parry, 2011) as they can accept or reject the claimed leader's role and hence become co-producers (Messick, Kramer, 2004) and active constructors of leadership, while leadership occurs only of the follower perceives it as such (Meindl, 1993; Van Knippenberg, Hogg, 2003; Shamir *et al.*, 2007; Jackson, Parry, 2011). Follower's acceptance of or granting the leader's role strengthens and reinforces the leader's identity (DeRue, Ashford, 2010) while the schematic match between the leader and leader's prototype held by the follower is a prerequisite condition (Lord *et al.*, 1984). Thus, the perceived and experienced leadership in the eyes of the follower greatly contributes to the leadership process. However, to date extant research typically rests with quantitative studies and correlational designs that do not fully reproduce the schemas held by the followers.

In an attempt to study leadership from a follower's perspective, two streams of research are present: a followership approach and a follower-centric approach that complement each other and are built on different focus and underlying assumptions. The followership approach stems from a critical stream of theorizing (Kelley, 2008; Alvesson, Spicer, 2012) and emphasizes the follower roles. Advancement of this approach resulted in some of the most interesting contributions to the leadership field (Bligh *et al.*, 2011), and the shift in perspectives from leaders to followers (Meindl, 1995) fosters emergence of new issues and new questions (Bligh *et al.*, 2011), hence deepening the leader-centric analysis (Weick, 2007).

Prominent emerging themes in current leadership literature focus on stakeholder approaches (Hill, 2017), the importance of leader-follower interrelation, and the need for new, reflexive and participative leadership models (Kopp, Martinuzzi, 2013). Sustainable leadership espouses all of these themes (Gerard *et al.*, 2017). sustainable leadership is a „management approach aimed at delivering better and more sustainable returns, reducing

unwanted employee turnover and accelerating innovation" (Avery, Bergsteiner, 2011, p.5). Crucial characteristic of sustainable leaders focuses on everybody's continuous development (Avery, Bergsteiner, 2010), which places leader-follower relationship in the forefront. This approach enable businesses to become "very savvy in leveraging common long-term interests that bind various stakeholders together" (Avery, Bergsteiner, 2011, p.6), maintain resilience and sustainability (Hall, Suskice, 2001), and enhance business performance (Avery, Bergsteiner, 2011), hence provides new opportunities for businesses through leader development.

2. Conceptual Overview Methodology

Qualitative research that is underpinned by critical realism and social constructionism, is aligned with acknowledgement of leadership as a dynamic, situation-based social process that is contingent upon culture and context (Kan, Parry, 2004; Kempster, Parry, 2011). Methodologically, a qualitative approach has the capacity to provide detailed information about a particular phenomenon, allowing the study of a micro issue of a larger reality within a particular setting (Glaser, Strauss, 1967), and therefore enables the researcher to address the realities of actors in social settings (Suddaby, 2006). Furthermore, literature suggests that the field of management, in particular, would benefit from more qualitative research as this can provide contextual richness in leadership research (Martin, Turner, 1986; Bryman *et al*., 1988; Bryman *et al*., 1996; Conger, 1998; Day, 2001; Locke, 2001; Goulding, 2002; Ng, Hase, 2008; Kempster, Parry, 2011). Driven by the scientific aim of understanding and explanation of contextualized leadership (Kempster, Parry, 2011), we employed a qualitative study (Corbin *et al*., 2014) to generate a substantive theoretical framework that would yield explanations of social processes guiding leadership experienced at work from the standpoint of the follower. Hence, the study addressed the individual cognitive leadership processes by followers, based on their daily experience in the workplace.

2.1 Data Sources and Analysis

Theoretical sampling was employed in the research process (Corbin, Strauss 2008; Corbin *et al*., 2014), involving simultaneous data collection and analysis. As a result, each set of data collected during an interview was analysed starting from the first interview. Based on the analysis, the questions requiring more in-depth answers were identified, yielding corrections for the questions of the subsequent interviews. A semi-structured interview frame was used for the first two interviews. The frame was, however, changed after each interview and its analysis, in order to obtain more data about specific emergent issues. The interviews took between 50 and 90 minutes.

The sample of middle-level managers was selected for collection of interpretations in line with cross-cultural and leadership research (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; House *et al*., 2004), since managers of this type often enact the roles of both followers and leaders on a daily basis, and through day-to-day work actively (often implicitly) reflect on the phenomenon of leadership, its attributes, and effectiveness. Several criteria were established for participant selection process: (1) no previous familiarity between respondents and researchers; (2) diversity in terms of industries represented by respondents; (3) diversity in demographics (such as age, experience, and education). Theoretical saturation was the main criterion in defining the number of interviews to be conducted and the study resulted in 10 interviews

with middle-managers in Iceland and 8 interviews with middle-managers in Lithuania account for almost 300 pages of transcribed material.

The study focused on the leadership of a manager as an appointed leader (i.e. the managerial leader), and the interviews were focused on how the follower experiences the actual leadership of a superior – that is, the enacted leadership where the follower is an actor in leadership granting. The first phase of data analysis, the data confirmed the appropriateness of this approach, with the interview scope of superior managers and their leadership.

The analysis procedure followed the qualitative approach (Glaser, Strauss, 1967; Sutton, Callahan, 1987), involving continuous data and theory comparison in both data collection and analysis processes. Following the Corbin and Strauss' (2014) procedure, the study included three essential stages: (1) open coding for generating initial concepts from data; (2) axial coding for developing and linking concepts into conceptual families, relating categories to their subcategories and identifying central characteristics or phenomena (the axis), and (3) selective coding, aimed at formalizing the established relationships into theoretical frameworks.

Table 1. An example of open coding

Question	Answer	Sub-category	Category
What does leadership mean to you?	Leadership. I would say it's guidance. It's **guidance. And trust.** I would say those are the two words I think straight away.	Counselling employees with trust	Guidance of employees
	When our general manager … the last time we had an open meeting at the firm and all employees. And general manager had a little speech. That was a glimpse of leadership I saw there. Because … in terms that he was a little bit **humble**, he went through what we have been doing the last 6 months. And the results that we were receiving. And **he appraised that and was very clear** in terms **whom to thank for that**.	Acknowledging the achievements of employees	
	And then he laid an example in terms **what he wanted to do** for the **next** 6 months to 12 months. It was just a short speech, but in terms of …it was only 10 minutes or so, but it was clear that he **had an impact on the people that were listening to him.** In terms that **people were ready to take on that challenge**.	Inspiring employees to take on a challenge	
	One thing is because of his character. He is **very well liked** in the company. But also in terms of the … the **humbleness** that he makes in the speech and how he pinpoints or ... he is very **good at pointing out at the other people that they are the value** of the company. That they are doing a good job.	Acknowledging employees' individual value	Inclusive performance of the leader

Source: created by the authors.

The first phase of data analysis - the open coding - resulted in categories, consisting of three or more sub-categories (presented in *Table 1*). During the second phase - the axial coding - as suggested by (Corbin, Strauss, 2008), connections between categories were established (that is, it was investigated which categories are related and how they are related), while at the same time identifying them as the phenomenon, the conditions related to that phenomenon: context conditions, intervening conditions and causal conditions; the strategies

directed at managing or handling the phenomenon and the consequences of the actions/interactions related to the phenomenon. During the final phase of selective coding, a central category was identified and the leader identity construction models were developed. Subcategories and categories in the open coding phase were developed by the method of continuous comparison. All coding phases were complemented by extensive discussions (peer review and debriefing, as in Creswell (1998) in order to attain validity of categories (in open coding phase) and improve emerging results (in axial and selective coding phases).

3. Findings

The open coding process firstly resulted in the formulation of the following categories: motivation to take on the leadership role, manager's need to lead and win, manager's need for growth, employee's need for growth, professional growth of an employee, transformation of a manager, transformation of an employee, competence of a manager, employee's competence at work, employee's incapacity, work-life balance, manager's ruling over employee's performance, manager's control over process, manager's responsibility for the process, manager's responsibility for results, responsible freedom of a manager, responsibility of a manager, responsibility of employee, guidance of employees, manager's trust in employees, employee's respect for manager, inclusive performance of a manager, motivation of an employee, employee recognition, manager's empathy for employee, authority of a manager, overcoming obstacles at work, manager's envisioning, accessibility of a manager, closed business culture, unformed business culture, unpredictable business culture, employee's job satisfaction, and manager's self-satisfaction at work, manager's decision making, persuading employees, leadership stereotypes, manager's flexibility in communication, manager's self-confidence, loyalty of an employee, and manager's self-actualization. Each category consisted of at least three sub-categories.

Then, the axial coding reconstruction of data was implemented "in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories" (Corbin, Strauss, 1990), to identify the central phenomenon, causal conditions, strategies, context and intervening conditions, and delineate the consequences for the central phenomenon identified. For this purpose, a relationship matrix was employed as a tool (Corbin, Strauss, 1990) to sort the categories. The "Competence of a manager" and the "Authority of a manager" were identified as central phenomena during the axial coding stage, where the phenomenon was considered as a central idea or event causing all actions and interactions. Additionally, the causal conditions describe when, why, for what reason a phenomenon is revealed, while the context is related to phenomena as a set of conditions in which actions and interactions are happening. Intervening conditions are conditions of a broader context, intervening with the actions and interactions and can be characterized by the time of appearance, space, culture, status, and alike, and have a limiting or an enhancing effect. Strategies or approaches are a significant aspect of the study as they focus on its development, presenting actions and interactions. Results are characterized as consequences for people, places and or things. The results of the axial coding phase are presented in a relational matrix (*Table 2*).

Table 2. Categories in a relational matrix

Category	Iceland	Lithuania
Causal conditions	Motivation to take a leadership role Manager's need for growth	Manager's need to lead and win Manager's need for growth
Phenomena	Competence of a manager	Authority of a manager
Context	Manager's responsibility for the results Manager's responsibility for the work process Manager's control over the process Employee's need for growth Employees competence at work Unformal business culture Closed business culture Unpredictably (course-changing) business culture	Manager's decision making Professional growth of employee
Strategies	Guidance of employees Manager's empathy for employee Motivation of employee Employee recognition Manager's envisioning Inclusive performance of a manager Manager's trust in the employee Accessibility of manager	Persuading employees Manager's empathy for employee Motivation of employee Manager's flexibility in communication The responsibility of a manager
Intervening conditions	Employee's incapacity Manager's ruling over employee's performance Work-life balance Overcoming obstacles at work	Leadership stereotypes Responsible freedom of a manager
Results	Employee's job satisfaction Employee's respect towards the manager Employee's trust in the manager Manager's self-satisfaction at work Transformation of employee Transformation of manager	Manager's self-confidence Manager's self-realization Loyalty of employee Responsibility of employee

Source: created by the authors.
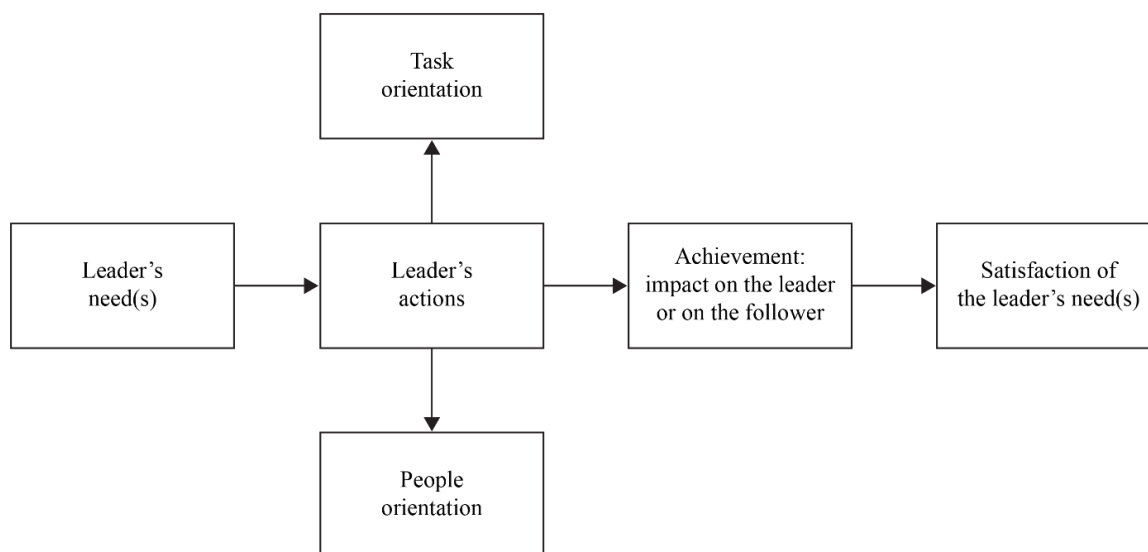
Source: created by the authors.

Figure 1. **Leader Identity Construction Model**

Selective coding phase resulted in the leader identity construction model, or a "storyline" (Creswell, Clark, 2007), which is an outcome of data organization and analysis that will be further used to illustrate a generated substantive framework on organizational leadership in Iceland in Lithuania, based on the followers' daily experience. The model (*Figure 1*) reflects the follower's perception of the leader's identity and the broader phenomenon of leadership granting process. This process is framed by input (the emergence of leadership) and output (the outcomes of leadership). The leadership schemas held by the followers evolve around the leader's need as an input and a starting point of leadership emergence; actions that are task-oriented or people-oriented that mark the leadership process; and achievement and satisfaction of the leader's need(s), perceived as leadership outcomes (output).

3.1 Input – the Emergence of Leadership

The study results reflect two differing perspectives on leadership emergence (or the input, presented in *Table 3*) between Icelandic and Lithuanian followers, that are in line with extant literature on leadership. Both in Iceland and Lithuania, followers associate leadership emergence with the manager's need for growth.

Table 3. Input categories

Category	Present in	Examples
Manager's need for growth	Both Iceland and Lithuania	But I think that every working manager, they always want something more. To go higher, to gain more knowledge. They cannot sit in one place. I think. They have to reach something more and more all the time (Zibuokle). … If I am to grow as a person, I will have to interact and spend time with a… intellectual people. Because those people can challenge me (Maggi).
Manager's motivation to take on a leadership role	Iceland	You know, first is the wish to become a leader. (Cousin)
Manager's need to lead and win	Lithuania	Another important thing … self-confidence is self-confidence, but as I say, to fight till the last minute. Not to give up and not to think that it is impossible to do something, because it's always possible to find various solutions. (Danita) Her name is xxx. Because she … regardless of her personal life <….> was able to climb .. and now is one of the main managers in one of the biggest companies in Lithuania. She is on the board. And she does it. Even though she had a couple of pregnancies … loser husband, but she is so strong. (128500)

Source: created by the authors.

Additionally, they relate leadership emergence with a similar, yet slightly different motivation. In an Icelandic context, the manager's motivation to take on a leadership role is highlighted, while in Lithuanian context, the followers consider leadership to be stemming from the manager's urge to lead and win. These categories are related in such a manner that

leader emergence appears in one of the three ways: (1) the manager has a strong need to lead and win; (2) the managerial leader has a personal need for growth; and (3) the manager has a need to lead and win. The need for growth refers to the manager's constant efforts and nature to reach for more as means to grow: learn more, set new goals, gain more experience, take more responsibility, search for more meaning while giving, and alike. Reaching the work goals is also considered a "platform" for the managerial leader's personal growth. He/she challenges himself/herself to achieve these goals and anticipates success. In pursuit of this aim, the manager communicates with like-minded people and feels personal development through such communication. Once the goal is achieved and challenges are overcome, the manager experiences personal fulfilment, which closes the cycle of a quest for personal growth. However, as challenges are never-ending and goals are continuously renewed, the circle is more of a continuous spiral.

The motivation to take on a leadership role may take diverse forms and is associated with one or more motives of the manager: the desire and skill-based motivation – the willingness to become a leader and having the capacity for it; a favourable cultural climate where one can succeed on one's own; earning respect from followers which encourages the pursuit of a leadership role; opportunity for continuous self-re-evaluation; and a desire for higher social status and material benefits. The manager's need to lead and win is related to the managerial leader's need to be in the front of the event, to overcome difficulties, and to perform, regardless of difficulties. Both the motivation to take on a leadership role and the need for growth are related, and hence a leader emerges in one of three ways: (1) the situation "motivates" or encourages a person to take on the leadership role; (2) a managerial leader has a personal need for growth and achievement, and (3) a managerial leader emerges through a favorable environment (motivation to take on a leadership role) and then the need for achievement is "activated". Leader emergence literature is frequently associated with various motivation theories which in essence are about needs (see Murray, 1938; Atkinson, 1958). In this particular context, the emergence of a leader - the need for growth, leading and winning seems relevant to motivation theory by McClelland (1985), as it focuses on achievement and power. Acquired need theory states that needs are acquired over time and are shaped by a person's experience, especially in childhood. Two particular levels in McClelland's theory reflect the leader emergence levels from this author's findings: power (manager's need to lead and win) and achievement (manager's need for growth). The need for power is divided into two levels: personal and institutional. Personal power is often undesirable, as it rhymes with one's need to control others. However, institutional power, or social power, is related to one's need to organize the efforts of the other people, in order to achieve the goals of an institution or organization. It is argued that leaders with a strong need for social power are more effective. It is impossible to determine which power need of a leader has been identified in the data presented in this thesis. However, in this particular case, the follower may identify the leader as harboring a need for a mixed personal and institutional power. Another need, the need for achievement or manager's need for growth, is connected with a person's need to excel. High achievers need to have regular feedback, in order to monitor the process. When considered together, the need for power and the need to achievement, describe the emergence of a leader from the standpoint of a follower. They are both features of a personality that has a need which can be satisfied in an organizational setting through performance in a management position. A person may not have an underlying motive to become a leader; however, certain favourable situations and interactions with people at the workplace trigger one's consideration in this direction. This is typically based on one's conviction from already gained expertise and

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competence in the field. This type of emergence is usually competence-based and externally enhanced. This should not be associated with situational (Hersey, 1985) or contingency approaches to leadership processes (e.g. Fiedler, 1966; Fiedler, 1986), because even though both focus on external forces, they do not explain the emergence of the leader per se. The focus in contingency approaches and situational theory is on the leadership process and its effectiveness.

The authority of a managerial leader is the main characteristic through which followers in Lithuanian business experience actual leader presence. Emergence of leader's authority is consistent with findings in the current literature review, which indicates the presence of authority in Lithuanian leadership (Diskiene *et al*., 2010). Authority is perceived through certain behaviours and skills of the managerial leader: high competence, acts of will, charismatic appearances, even making an effort to look good and have a successful personal life. However, these characteristics (e.g., high competence) are not the final destination, but a means or a reason for a managerial leader's assertion of authority. Followers see the managerial leader as the decision maker; this relates to the authority of the leader, from the standpoint of the follower. A managerial leader implements decision making through certain strategies; e.g., taking responsibility and maintaining flexible communication.

All three ways of emergence, seem to "fit" different personalities of leaders, as summarized in our analytical notes:

> *It seems, that respondents all see distinct ways of the emergence of a leader: it can be an achievement-driven personality that drives a person forward and the competence, then, is a means to "accommodate" the need for achievement. A totally different type of personality seems to be described in the situation when the leader is "noticed" due to his diligent work, and high competence as a specialist in some field (high competence), considering the leadership position as a next "natural" step, and assuming the person will deal with the demands of the leadership position as well as he is dealing with e.g., sales. We would call the third type Activated by the environment. These leaders are seen as having been "activated" by the environment through observation of their competence in a professional field (e.g., sales) and, therefore, encouraging the person in question to take on a leadership position. In this way then the person's need for achievement is "activated".*
>
> *All three types describe somewhat different personality types of a managerial leader: the first being the proactive, second – reactive, third one – reactive until activated. Moreover, when the followers are describing these ways of leader emergence, they tend to find all of them to be effective; however, it feels like they "present" in detail the type of leadership emergence that they represent themselves. For example, a reactive middle manager can show more fascination with a proactive leader; nevertheless, he will outline in detail examples of reactive leadership. We tend to conclude that the followers see the diversity in the ways of leader emergence; however, the followers tend to favour most strongly the leader emergence path that most closely fits the follower's personality (Memo 90).*

3.2 Process – the Enacted Leadership

The manager's motivation to take on a leadership role as a starting point extends to manager's competence as a central category in leadership process (presented in *Table 4*), as

experienced by Icelandic followers, whereas in Lithuanian context, where the followers consider leadership to be stemming from the manager's urge to lead and win, the manager's authority is considered at the core of the process. The competence of a manager, that is central in Iceland, is understood as a broad range of skills and abilities; that is, primarily, the expertise of a manager and can be described as a manager's set of characteristics and ability to deal with multiple requirements: task-related, relationship-related, within organization, outside organization. Moreover, the manager should maintain the balance between family and work, and perform well in both fields.

Table 4. Process categories

Category	Present in	Examples
Competence of a manager	Iceland	He is not very vocal, but what he says, is usually very thought-through and it really … it had a lot of value what he says in terms of whether it's on your specific project, if it's on your performance if it's on the policy of your division or policy of the firm (Stef_Tia).
		And he was very good at seeing the major point in everything (Smaralind).
Authority of a manager	Lithuania	And when you have responsibility and people see how you solve it, how you solve problems, and that's born, how to say, you become a leader to them. When they start to call you, when they don't know what to do <...> you solve those problems, and they will look at you depending on how you solved those problems. <..> I think, you have to win that authority step by step (Danita).
		It's a person with whom you want to align yourself with and want at least similar achievements, to those he has in his life, profession, personal space, family. Many things come together here (128500).
Manager's responsibility for process & results/manager's control over the process through the manager's envisioning and accessibility of a manager	Iceland	And I usually don't do anything unless she approves, so that's the kind of you know, I mean, I fully respect her authority and that she is the owner, and if something goes wrong, she will take the fall. (Maggi)
		It's up to the managers to find a way to go there - achieving results. (Smaralind)
		A manager will manage a team like a project manager, like a human resource manager. Will manage the team in a way to get it, get it done right. (Karolinas)
		I want to feel like whoever is in charge, I want to feel like he has a plan. I don't want to feel like he has no idea where we are going with this. That's leadership when you can come into a room, and there's total chaos, there's a lot of things going on, but I look at this guy, and he starts talking and I can feel right away "it's going to be fine. Because he has a plan. (Thor)
		The Power Distance is very low in Iceland and I think people want it to be that way. They want to be able to go directly to the CEO of the company and say – hey, I don't like the changes you made yesterday. Or they want to be able to tell their opinion directly to the CEO, they want to have access to the CEO and the managers. (Ana_Jon_Ad)

Category	Present in	Examples
Employee's professional growth (including the need for growth and competence at work)	Both in Iceland and Lithuania	The chance for personal and professional development and to take new assignments and grow and to learn on a daily basis. (New one)
Strategies in approaching employee's need for growth: (1) guidance of employees, (2) manager's trust in an employee, (3) inclusive performance of a manager, and (4) motivation of employees, achieved through employee recognition and manager's empathy for the employee.	In Iceland; and motivation of employees in both Iceland and Lithuania	Leadership. I would say it's guidance. It's guidance. And trust. (Stef_Tia) You know, I am not perfect, but I can be pretty damn good if I want to. That's how I should feel. So, when I'm with them (author's note: managerial leaders) they will give me a rope, they will give me lead, a little bit of freedom, but they will still guide me, they will still help me, without having their fingers in my face all day. (Thor) If a leader has your back, you feel more relaxed. You are more daring to take chances and it's easy to do your job. Because you have to make decisions very fast and sometimes big ones. So when you know somebody trusts you, you handle the trust more responsibly. (Magvid) But what this leader did in my present job, she just guided me and she was really open to every single employee to make something new and be creative. And bring it to the table and talk about it, because she led you... like, if you have had a good idea, she led you to take it to a great idea, by teaching her ways. (Mag_Mag) Because when people feel good about themselves, Then they work well. Treating people right brings out the best in them. I know that. (Maggi) The leader is important everywhere <..> many things happen – need to work extra hours, and everything. The owner cannot always pay for that, and not because of bad intentions – simply, there's no money. <..> So if the leader is able to attract people, where let's say I was working in that company for 10 years. There nobody was counting hours. There was a goal – to satisfy the client. <..> And this I think worked very well and brought money. <..> it's very important that people would want it by themselves – if they are forced because they need to, there will be some kind of result, but not the best (Danita). One thing is because of his character. He is very well liked in the company. But also in terms of the humbleness that he makes in the speech and he is very good at pointing out to the other people that they are the value of the company. That they are doing a good job. (Stef_Tia) When it comes to management and leadership, there is something called, "tilfinningagreind" in Icelandic. That's management by feeling. (Karolinas)
Manager's decision-making: (1) flexibility in communication and (2) responsibility	Lithuania	Difficult to manoeuvre between people <...> owners of the companies have "grown horns" (A.R. are stubborn). It is difficult to manoeuvre between their egos and mine, to reach a result. (128500) We face all kinds of problems <...> we need to check everything all the time that everything would be ok because we carry all the responsibility. (Zibuokle)

Source: created by the authors.

The competence of a managerial leader is the main characteristic by means of which followers in Icelandic business experience an experienced leader's presence, and as such, is a core influencing factor of leadership effectiveness, and this observation is coherent with leadership style theory, particularly with a dual model of task orientation, which is, firstly, directly related to goal accomplishment, and, secondly, to relationship orientation, where a leader's efforts are focused towards followers (Northouse, 2015). The competence manifests through two contextual levels: macro-level, and micro-level, consisting of the manager's responsibility for process and results and control over the process, and the employee's need for growth and employee's competence at work. The macro level of the context is connected with culture - informal, closed, and unpredictable business culture in Iceland, as seen by followers. The manifestation of each level appears through certain strategies and is affected by intervening conditions. The competence of a manager is manifested through two (micro and macro) level contexts, which influence managerial competence and the ways (strategies) a manager deals with demands. While dealing with multiple demands, a manager is expected to disengage from emotional turmoil - a distinctive leadership feature that separates follower and managerial leader.

Followers in Iceland identified that the managerial leader has a control and task-oriented function. Manager's responsibility for process & results/manager's control over the process is related to structure and task implementation, which reflects the initiation of structure (Bass, Avolio, 2004; Judge *et al*., 2004) in leadership theorizing. This level is associated with the formal side of the managerial leader's work, including taking responsibility for the process, controlling the process, and achieving results. Managerial leaders employ two strategies in controlling the process and in taking responsibility for the work process and its results: the manager's envisioning and accessibility of a manager. A managerial leader communicates task-oriented goals and sets out the plan for implementation, which can be monitored and, later on, checked regarding the achievement of results. Therefore, a manager operationalizes his or her responsibility for the process and results, and integrates a controlling mechanism, by conveying a vision, providing a sense of structure and this way persuading followers to work towards a common goal. A manager also makes himself or herself accessible in order to be able to actively monitor and be prepared to react in the event of changes. This is a strategy of providing direct responses and reacting accordingly.

When the process of leadership that is experienced on a daily basis focuses on the authority of the leader, as in Lithuania, the authority is understood as a broad set of characteristics and includes competence, as in the case of Iceland, however, the elements of charisma and authority add up. The competence element is strong here, however, it is expressed as one of the sources of authority. Other sources represent a variety of qualities, serving the authority of a managerial leader: charisma, persistence, will, achievement, ability to solve conflicting demands, even discipline, and personal appearance. A manager's decision-making is related to structure and task implementation which, in leadership literature, is called initiation of structure. It is associated with the formal side of a manager's work. Followers, based on daily experience in the workplace, identified the perception of a manager as the one who has decision-making tasks at work. A managerial leader employs two strategies in the decision-making process - flexibility in communication and responsibility. The authority of a manager manifests itself through the context, which influences a manager's authority and the ways (strategies) he/she deals with demands. The context consists of two sides: the manager's decision making and professional growth of employees.

A rather overlapping category in the leadership process, covering perceptions of both Icelandic and Lithuanian followers, is the employee's professional growth (including the need for growth and competence at work). This is another part of micro-context that focuses on employees, followers. In leadership literature, this is termed relationship orientation or relationship-oriented behaviour (Northouse, 2015). A manager has to be able to identify the competence level and kind of growth an employee is seeking (technical skills, recognition, reward, and alike). Awareness of and enactment of an employee's need for growth is part of the micro context of a manager's leadership process. Followers perceive that the professional growth of employees, as seen by followers, is implemented through the motivation of employees. As the followers in Lithuania express, the motivation consists of a manager's empathy for the employee and power to persuade the employees. The followers in Iceland also denote the number of additional strategies, thus reflecting four strategies for approaching the employees' competence at work and their need for growth: (1) guidance of employees, (2) manager's trust in an employee, (3) inclusive performance of a manager, and (4) motivation of employees, achieved through employee recognition and manager's empathy for the employee.

3.3 Intervening Conditions

The process of leadership is sometimes disrupted by intervening conditions - randomly appearing effects, which affect the leadership process, yet, however, are not permanent and do not impact the overall results of a leadership process in general. Intervening conditions (portrayed in *Table 5*) take the form of (1) employee incapacity -situations where an employee is bound by some condition in the implementation of a task or duty; (2) work-life balance - situations where extra effort is needed to separate private life and work, or to maintain balance once the workload is increased; (3) manager ruling over employee performance - situations too controlled by manager which affect employee participation at work; (4) overcoming obstacles at work - random, not typical obstacles, aggravated experiences, and challenges that arise with regard to issues of gender at work, conflicting demands, betrayed trust, and other. Two categories have emerged in our study: (1) the responsible freedom of a manager and (2) the leadership stereotype. The responsible freedom of a manager represents the freedom of the managerial leader, which is limited by his/her duties; the choices he/she is exposed to - profit-oriented or socially desirable, and other somewhat conflicting demands. Leadership stereotype, as an intervening condition, is associated with random negative prejudices towards a leader as an autocratic person, prejudice regarding leader emotions, but mostly relates to the gender of a leader. Leadership stereotypes could affect the authority of a managerial leader in a negative way for women. However, it might also contain prejudice against men, by stereotyping the work manner of leaders, based on their gender.

Table 5. Intervening condition categories

Category	Present in	Examples
(1) Employee incapacity, (2) work-life balance, (3) manager ruling over employee performance, (4) overcoming obstacles at work	Iceland	Because the first part is that my job might depend on that there's a person doing what they're doing. So I don't have to do my job unless they do theirs. So that's important that they do their job. (Cousin)
		A… can be quite busy. Actually, very busy at times. A… and then it's no difficult, it's just difficult to kind of find balance between …and private life whe it's so busy. So that can be difficult. (Ana_Jon_Ad)
		The experience from the bank was more like an "I rule" syndrome. The leader, or the boss, at my division, was very, was a control freak I could say. Everything had to be exactly like she wanted and there was not much of … well… it was rather … there was not much…what can I say… She did not give much back. She made the rules and you just had to comply with the rules strictly. (Karolinas)
		I mean, you're just kind of giving… you're just telling people in a way that they're not good enough… so of course, it's kind of difficult when you take a job and income from people, but sometimes it just has to be done. (Ana_Jon_Ad)
		I was really disappointed (A.R. with HRM), actually. I'm really tough, I'm just really tough in general. And I push through those things. But I was really, really, really disappointed, because she told me one thing, but did the other thing. (Mag_Mag)
		This has not gotten any respect. Especially not from male bosses, regarding men taking longer maternity (a.r. paternity) leave. So I think that especially male bosses/ superiors are stricter regarding men and more forgiving on the softer side for women. (Magvid)
Freedom (or absence of) of a managerial leader	Lithuania	The responsibility I have today could be less. That would probably help me to implement more tasks and put my attention to some things that are more important for the company, and more actual. But you cannot avoid responsibility, it exists, and you need somehow to manoeuvre, to deal. (Teta)
Leadership stereotypes	Lithuania	Probably anyway their (A.R.men's) word is more strict. So far as I see, it happens that employees don't listen to the manager. (A.R.woman)
		It happens that you look from the side, and it doesn't look good when employees sometimes do not show respect. (Zibuokle)
		Women are very strong as managers in Lithuania. Because they go deep into everything, and men look through their fingers, as in general is easier for men. (Nina)

Source: created by the authors.

3.4 Output – the Outcomes of Leadership

The managerial leadership process, as seen by the followers, produces two types of outputs: managerial leader-related and follower-related (*Table 6*). In Iceland, managerial leader related outputs are the transformation of a manager and manager's personal satisfaction at work, while in Lithuania, it emerges as the manager's self-confidence and self-actualization. Therefore, the process of transformation and self-satisfaction is seen by

followers as the main outcome of daily enacted leadership; that is, related to the leader himself or herself.

However, followers see more outputs of superior leadership, which affect employees themselves. In Iceland, firstly, a transformation of an employee may occur on a personal as well as professional levels and have various outcomes, influencing the follower's their values, behaviours, and attitudes. Secondly, leadership translates into employee's trust in the manager – manager's performance, provided feedback, his/her vision and even trusting him/her with personal things through trust-based communication. Third, the employee's respect towards the manager is developed and connected with the leader's role and the leader's ability to be a good example to the employee. Finally, the employee's job satisfaction emerges, which is associated with a multitude of aspects, such as being able to fulfil one's ideas and potential. In Lithuania, where leadership emerges partly due to leader's need to win and continues through leader's authority as a central category, followers denote two follower-related outcomes: the loyalty and the responsibility of an employee that both represent outcomes in relation to the leader (with no single follower-related outcome). This pattern resembles the paternalistic/maternalistic leadership style (Blake, Mouton, 1985) that is described in terms of a "benevolent dictator" (Northouse, 2015), where followers are considered as if they were dissociated from their tasks, leaders are described as "fatherly" or "motherly" with regard to the treatment of their followers, and the organization is considered as a family. Leaders are responsible for decision making, and moreover, they reward followers for loyalty and obedience.

Table 6 Output categories

Category	Present in	Examples
Transformation of a manager	Iceland	It did not happen again, but I was ... but you know, I was angry...I was very angry. And that's something that goes away, you start forgiving, when somebody shows redemption, somebody shows that this is not going to happen again. (Magvit)
		You have to have a lot of gut feeling, but you have to be able to assess what you just learnt. (Karolinas)
Manager's personal satisfaction at work	Iceland	When we reach and exceed our goals. A... and when we, for example, get big customers to come over. But reach and exceed our goals would probably be the best way to describe it. (Jon_2_Good)
Manager's self-confidence	Lithuania	Everybody could have a place in the world of business, just those who really want and think they can have place <...> of course, there's a tendency in the business world that those big players have taken ... on the other hand, if you think that you cannot do something, then you will not be able to implement it. Because if Steve Jobs had thought you cannot compete with Nokia, and I can give my hand to cut that at that time most of the world thought like that - that you cannot compete with Nokia because it's a monopoly ... almost. And now – here you go, how many iPhones we have? – three (A.R. looks at the table), and in before I always had Nokias <...> The one who doesn't have some kind of prejudice that fear that he will not be able to create, do differently, do give something differently … some product, or service, then he will not do it. The one who thinks he can – will succeed. (Sigrida)

Category	Present in	Examples
Manager's self-actualization	Lithuania	That person was a sort of celebrity in the world. He's a billionaire, and he was telling about his business: how he created it, how he built it, and everything so detailed, but in a simple manner, and you understood that he loves what he does. (Nina)
Transformation of an employee	Iceland	As soon as he talked to me, I understood that this was not going to work anymore. And I immediately stopped. And this all stopped and it got better immediately. So it was very important. (Cousin)
		Because of the introduction of this new capitalism marketing system. It applies also to people, as well as money and the opening of markets and breaking down of borders and things like that. And it also comes into the mentality of the people. And I noticed in XXX also, PPP for the last few years, people, they did not care for the company. They just thought about their salaries, you know, what they could get out of it. And if there was something, you know, slightly better outside the door, they just went for it. (Smaralind)
Trust in the manager	Iceland	I would need of course to look up to him. I would have to a… feel that he can, and trust that he can make things happen. So … there's something that you have to …you have to somehow to believe in him. (Stef_Tia)
		The company grew … we were 40 and grew, we were suddenly 80 people working here. And I was sure that the leaders in charge would be able to take the company forward and it was obvious that they thought everything through. (Magvit)
Employee's respect towards the manager	Iceland	It needs to be somebody you respect. You look up to. That listens and is still strict on things, you know, knows where she or he is going. (Magvit)
		Well, first of all, the bosses that were in their heart really fighting for a cause that they believed in those are the ones that I will always respect and no matter if they, no matter what mistakes they might have done. (Karolinas)
Employee's job satisfaction	Iceland	I really have a passion for marketing, and they gave me the opportunity to grow in that direction, freely. And they were just hearing me out. And that's why I absolutely loved it. (Mag_Mag)
The loyalty of an employee	Lithuania	Well, a bit autocratic. A little bit moody. But a good person. Will always help, and employees appreciate it, because if some trouble or what... there's a part of very loyal employees – that shows that he's a good boss <.> those who still work here, those who are loyal to him – that means that he's good to them. Because many things have happened: were late with paying salaries, and much more, but they stayed. (Danita)
The responsibility of an employee	Lithuania	Timely and with quality, implements his job; who cares, not just, let's say, about his own work or functions, but also about the whole department, and if needed – the whole company. Who, if needed, will do what is needed, who will show initiative, and will not be a mumbler (A.R. always unhappy with everything). (Teta)

Source: created by the authors.

Even though direct comparison of both frameworks is not possible, a conceptual reflection suggests that in both contexts taken together, the leader's identity, as seen by the follower, stems from the leader's needs and is further constructed through a process of experienced leadership, including task implementation, certain task (people- and task-oriented) implementation and achievement of certain goals, which result in in particular

leadership outcomes, that is, leader- and follower-related outputs. The outputs that are follower-centered (e.g. employee's job satisfaction) in a sense of organizational setting is a desired outcome by the managerial leader, as it is part of his managerial duties. Moreover, these outputs represent advancement, achievement, and particular satisfaction of managerial leader's needs, in line with the major idea of key theories of motivation (e.g. Maslow's, Alderfer's ERG, Acquired needs, and Herzberg's), as it describes the process of motivation as a need, that leads to action or behaviour, which then leads to satisfaction. Those needs are "placed" in relatively structured environments, with relatively defined role descriptions (job description of a manager), which typically include implementation of tasks and communication with people. The above result has certain impacts on the leader himself, but more importantly, followers recognize the effects of this process on them. These results correspond to the initial need of the managerial leader, therefore, suggesting certain levels of satisfaction of that need. Finally, in line with the tenets of the emerging followership theory (Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2014), these findings highlight the role of the followers as not only co-constructors of leadership and followership but also co-producers of the outcomes.

Conclusions

From the perspective of leadership theories, the central phenomenon of experienced leader behaviour, based on followers' experience, mostly reflects the behaviour/style theory of leadership, as it does not only focus on the traits and skills of the manager, but more importantly, on behaviours through which a manager's competence is experienced by followers (Northouse, 2015). The results of the study conceptualize the leader identity construction by the followers as a process that emerges from the managerial leader's need for growth and translates into leader-centered and follower-centered leadership outcomes that are capped by the leader's satisfaction. These findings suggest that the followers see themselves as an integral part or active actors in the process of leadership, which, however, is initiated and rounded up by the leader. Followers perceive a managerial leader as the person who will provide employees with the opportunity to grow professionally. The professional growth of the employee is implemented through the employee's motivation - persuasion and empathy, and flexible communication with the managerial leader. Followers recognize random conditions which intervene or are likely to intervene, in the managerial leadership process, thus affecting the authority of a manager (leadership stereotypes) or a manager's decision-making (responsible freedom of a manager).

Employment of two countries in this study further suggests that the leadership process itself, although built around the same components as experienced and perceived by the followers, is embedded in a greater cultural context, potentially adding specific layers of complexity. In both countries, followers consider that leadership is enacted through task-oriented and people-oriented processes, using varying relevant strategies. However, the follower's lens, through which leadership is perceived, differs with regard to the context. In Iceland, the leadership process is perceived by the followers through the competence of a manager, while in Lithuania, the followers view leadership through the authority of a manager. This key differential aspect of leadership process schemas held by the followers may propel the follower's acceptance or rejection of the manager as a leader. Hence, the leader identity construction and leadership granting by the followers may be subject to presence, absence or a degree of competence and authority dimensions.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of our study are implicational in their nature and serve for contributing to the theoretical groundings of leadership identity construction as a process that is co-created and co-influenced by the followers. While our study is limited to the context of two countries, it calls for the future research that would further advance and test the model in both the countries under investigation of this study, as well as additional cultural contexts. Continuing studies within the qualitative strand of research could contribute to further development of each model component and the meaning that leaders and followers embed under the identified categories, as well as specific perspectives or lenses employed by the followers through which they view the leadership process. The quantitative studies that attempt to empirically test the model in different cultural contexts and provide evidence to support or reject the preliminary findings would contribute to the groundings of leader identity construction as a relational and hence, a multi-perspective, multi-actor process.

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Guest Paper

DARNIOS LYDERYSTĖS TAPATYBĖS KONSTRAVIMAS: LYDERIO-SEKĖJO POŽIŪRIS

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SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje siūlomas lyderio tapatybės konstravimo modelis, suformuotas remiantis kokybiniu tyrimu, kurio metu buvo analizuota kasdienė lyderio-sekėjo sąveika ir sekėjo lyderystės samprata. Straipsnio idėja kilo iš santykio perspektyvos lyderystės ugdymo procese ir apima sekėjo orientuotą prieigą, siekiant užpildyti sekėjų lyderystės bendrakūros ir lyderio tapatybės konstravimo sampratų spragas. Tyrime remtasi 18 interviu su dviejų šalių vidurinės grandies vadovais, atsižvelgta į kultūrinį kontekstą. Tyrimo duomenys panaudoti siekiant atkartoti sekėjų schemas ir sukurti konceptualų modelį, apimantį lyderio poreikį, užduotis ir žmonių orientaciją, individualius pasiekimus ir lyderio poreikių patenkinimą. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad kultūrinio konteksto suvokimas išsiskiria tarp lyderio kompetencijų ir lyderio autoriteto kaip pagrindinis lyderystės proceso elementas.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: lyderystė, lyderio tapatybės kūrimas, sekėjų orientuota prieiga.