

1. Brief Overview

„Leadership is a disputed topic and discussion on it inextricably mingles cold cognitions and hot emotions quite often” (Neuberger, 2002, p. 2, translated by the author).

Relatively new in the discussion of leadership is the transformational leadership approach (e.g. Bass, 1985). A transformational leader is supposed to elevate his¹ subordinates' motivation to higher levels in the Maslow hierarchy. The transformationally led subordinate transcends his own self-interest for the good of the group. As this is supposed to lead to extra effort on the part of the subordinates and to their enhanced autonomy, transformational leadership was or is seen as a good possibility to help the organizations maneuver through the current unstable times of globalization and rapidly changing world markets. Furthermore, as transformational leadership is related to positive outcomes such as satisfaction or higher profit, it basically started a boom of research investigation and practical application. In order to measure transformational leadership, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (e.g. Bass & Avolio, 2000) was developed. It assesses several facets of transformational and transactional (exchange based) leadership as well as non-leadership behavior. As it can be considered to be the most prominent amongst several questionnaires for transformational leadership, and is used quite often not only in the American culture where it originated but also in other countries and languages, its validity should be thoroughly examined.

This study aims to investigate aspects of the construct validity of the MLQ. After a short introduction into leadership research and a more detailed analysis of the concept of transformational leadership, recent empirical research concerning this theory will be presented. Central to the subsequent empirical investigation will be the factorial validity of the questionnaire, its relation to other leadership behavior questionnaires and to external criteria. The factorial structure of the MLQ has often been criticized and will therefore introduce the empirical part. In order to be able to position the MLQ in the research field of leadership, it will be compared to another questionnaire that assesses

¹ Luckily, subordinates and leaders are currently not dominated as much by the male sex as they were a couple of decades ago. For this manuscript, though, I decided to choose the male form in order to make the text easier to read.

transformational leadership as well as to the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), the former standard instrument to evaluate leadership behavior. With the examination of the MLQ's relation to external criteria, parts of the convergent and discriminant validity will be looked at. The goal of this paper is to provide more insight into the validity of the MLQ and therefore be able to offer possible suggestions for improvement. The manuscript will therefore end with a discussion of the obtained results, their integration into the theoretical background, and recommendations for future research.