

CAPABILITIES OF MANAGEMENT AND OPERATING FIRMS OF LEADERS

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Abstracts

This research focuses on surveying and measuring the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City. The study was based on the results of previous studies and expert interviews for its implementation. Data was collected from 100 small and medium-sized enterprises operating in Hai Phong City. The research uses qualitative research methods and quantitative methods. Quantitative research method with the support of SPSS software and analytical tools such as descriptive statistics, reliability analysis of scales (Cronbach alpha analysis), independent T-tests, and Anova analysis to check the appropriateness of the measurement scales. The results show that the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of leaders are highly appreciated, having both theoretical and practical significance. There is a significant difference in the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders between the mentioned three groups of types of businesses.

Keywords: human resource management, firm leaders, management, operating, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), business administration, economics

JEL codes: M12, O15, M54, J01, D21

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership and leaders are one of the topics that receive the attention not only of many researchers around the world and in the country but also of many practical subjects.

In the US, about 80% of US firms, of which 90% are in the world's Top 500, use the subordinate leadership assessment method to evaluate leadership results and leader capacity in the workplace program to improve the capacity of senior management teams (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

From an academic perspective, many studies on leadership have been conducted from different aspects, in which research on individual leaders always occupies an important position. According to DeChurch et al. (2010), research on individual leaders always accounts for half of

leadership research. In academic studies, researchers have mostly focused on examining the downstream aspects of the two groups of qualities.

As for firms in emerging and developing markets like Vietnam, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, facing limited resources, such as technological and financial resources, has caused leaders to rethink their firm innovation strategy.

Hai Phong City has more than 37,000 firms operating on a small and medium scale (Hieu Phuong, 2022). In addition to SMEs that have good activities, there are still some SMEs that go bankrupt or temporarily suspend operations. Therefore, the topic of leadership is one of the topics that attracts the attention of many researchers.

Hai Phong is one of the two cities with the earliest development of industrial parks and factory parks in our country. Since the Dinh Vu-Cat Hai economic zone was established under Decision No. 06/2008/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister (2008), industrial parks in this city have developed increasingly strongly. Industrial parks outside the Dinh Vu-Cat Hai economic zone have attracted 110 foreign direct investment projects with a registered investment capital of 1.846 billion USD and 22 domestic investment projects with a registered investment capital of 6,665 billion USD (Party Affairs Committee of the City People's Committee, 2018).

This research will contribute to clarifying the theoretical framework for measuring the management and operating capabilities of firm leaders and improving employees' understanding of leaders in emerging and developing countries like Vietnam.

2. THEORIES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal qualities of leaders

According to Bright et al. (2006), there is a relationship between leadership qualities and one or several personal qualities such as courage, integrity, passion, compassion, optimism or kindness, humanity, purpose, and altruism.

The relationship between personal qualities and the level of satisfaction in work and life includes: courage, peaceful attitude, liberality, decency, pride, positive attitude, friendliness, trustworthiness, recognition, self-esteem, fairness, honor, and sincerity (Chun et al., 2009).

Forbes magazine (2012) conducts an annual leadership survey to summarize the important qualities that make a successful leader, according to which the 10 important qualities are: (i) honesty; (ii) authorization; (iii) communication; (iv) humor; (v) confidence; (vi) commitment; (vii) optimism; (viii) creativity; (ix) intuition; and (x) ambition.

The negative qualities of leadership also have positive aspects, and vice versa (Judge et al., 2009; Furnham et al., 2012).

Rauthmann and Kolar (2012) affirmed that pride and arrogance are considered to have a more positive impact on employees' acceptance of leaders than the other two personalities, which are cunning tricks and a lack of psychological understanding.

Leaders' understanding is assessed through creative thinking, curiosity, willingness to absorb new things, and continuous learning—the ability to evaluate and cover the situation, grasp the problem as a whole, but not ignore important details (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Understanding and readiness to learn are demonstrated in their daily work (Judge et al., 2002) as well as in the way they face changes in the organization (Judge et al., 1999). Creativity and innovation may not be truly effective in tasks that need to be meticulous, direct, specific, and simple (Judge et al., 2009).

The humanity of leaders demonstrates compassion, sincerity, and sympathy to share with subordinates and colleagues not only in work but in life; they are ready to help when others need it; and they know how to motivate at the right time and in the right way (Thurn, 2009).

Leadership restraint is understood as the ability to control emotions, both positive and negative, towards oneself as well as towards others. Specific manifestations are humility when talking about oneself and success, prudence in work and decision-making, discipline when pursuing goals, altruism and acceptance of employee shortcomings, and being willing to give subordinates the opportunity to express themselves (Luong, 2014).

Capabilities of management and operating firms of leaders

The theory of transformational leadership was inherited and developed by Bass (1990) and has become one of the most influential leadership theories today. According to Bass (1990), managers with a transformational leadership style are expressed in four characteristics, including: ideal influence (the ability to present an attractive and engaging vision to employees); intellectual stimulation (the ability to stimulate and develop employees' intelligence); inspirational (the ability to motivate and inspire employees); and personal concern (demonstrating care and attention to employee support and training).

Previously, the image of leadership was associated with power, but today it is the image of creativity, communicating values and vision, and attracting individuals toward the organization's goals (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Bennis (2007) believes that leadership is the process of a leader influencing others to behave in the way the leader desires. According to Hollander (1978), leadership is an influence process between leaders and subordinates. Leadership is the process of influencing others to create changes to achieve common goals (Evans, 1970). Meindl & Ehrlich (1987) pointed out that leaders are the main agents in the success or failure of firms.

According to Evers (2008), leadership capacity includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for leaders. This definition is based on the Attitude, Skill, and Knowledge (ASK) model, whereby ASK represents competency standards by job title. ASK is composed of three main groups of standards: attitude, skills, and knowledge.

Le (2010) pointed out outstanding leadership qualities, including meticulousness, adaptability, decisiveness, creativity, patience, and inclusiveness.

Besides, according to Le (2014), the reasons why firms want subordinates to evaluate leaders include (i) identifying the core competencies of the firm; (ii) increasing customer service efficiency; (iii) supporting the implementation of employee initiatives; (iv) enhancing connections within the organization; (v) reducing administrative management and increasing decentralization and decentralization of management responsibilities; (vi) identifying factors that hinder performance; (vii) assessing development needs; (viii) minimizing "opaque spaces" within the organization; (ix) connecting capabilities to results; and (x) ease of implementation.

The leader is the image of the firm, and when subordinates quit, they leave the leader (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Polaris Global Leadership (2013) uses a questionnaire with 75 scales, collecting data online. Evaluate leadership from four perspectives: self-management, public relations, business thinking, leadership skills, and cultural adaptability.

Firm leadership and knowledge management capabilities are considered important factors that directly affect firm output (Lei et al., 2021).

Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009) note that transformational leaders actively inspire staff members to consistently create and deploy innovative ideas in times of resource scarcity by emphasizing intellectual stimulation and letting them know about the long-term vision. According to Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt (2018), transformational leadership techniques have the power to mold and cultivate an innovative culture by promoting creativity, taking calculated chances, and fostering innovation.

Many studies show that transformational leadership creates a positive, supportive working environment, providing adequate physical and mental resources to help enhance the organization's knowledge management capabilities (Ugwu & Okore, 2020). Bass & Avolio (2000) argue that the charisma, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation of transformational leaders encourage employees to actively communicate and share knowledge with each other. According to Birasnav et al. (2011), transformational leaders are concerned with developing a set of values, assumptions, and beliefs that promote knowledge acquisition, sharing, and process participation in employee knowledge management.

Table 1: Capabilities of management and operating firms of leaders

Code	Description
MO1	The organizational, management, and operating capacities of firm leaders are quite good.
MO2	The strategy for training, fostering personnel, and developing human resources in the long term is well-built by firm leaders.
MO3	The organizational structure of the company is adaptable and efficient.

MO4	Firm leaders establish good relationships with stakeholders.
MO5	The enterprise's executives have skillfully constructed an investment and development strategy that aligns with the local socio-economic development agenda.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The subjects evaluated are leaders of SMEs in Hai Phong City; they are members of the board of directors. The questionnaire is designed with five scales to evaluate the management and operating abilities of firm leaders.

The questions are designed with a 5-point Likers scale, from 1: Completely disagree to 5: Completely agree. The five scales were built based on the results of previous studies and expert opinions and adjusted to suit the Vietnamese context.

The survey subjects are middle managers and office staff of SMEs in Hai Phong City. Survey methods include direct (distributing questionnaires to survey subjects and collecting them) and online (via Google Docs, Zalo, Facebook, etc.). After collection and cleaning, 210 ballots were complete and used for analysis (see table 2).

Table 2. Respondents by gender, academic level, and type of business

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Academic level			
Bachelor or higher	176	83.8	83.8
College or intermediate level	34	16.2	100.0
Gender			
Female	72	34.3	34.3
Male	138	65.7	100.0
Type of business			
Joint stock companies	85	40.5	40.5
Limited companies	92	43.8	84.3
Private enterprises	33	15.7	100.0
Total	210		

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Information on the data collected is shown in Table 2. It shows that among them, the common gender of respondents is female, accounting for 34.3%, while the remaining males are 138 people, accounting for 65.7%. Among the respondents, 83.8% of the participants have a qualified bachelor or higher, and 16.2% of the participants have a qualified college or intermediate level. Of these respondents, 40.5% of participants work for SMEs, which are joint stock companies;

43.8% of participants work for SMEs, which are limited companies; and 15.7% of participants work for SMEs, which are private enterprises.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 indicates that the respondents agree with the variable of the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders, where five attributes were quite high. All five attributes were rated at an average of 4.1 or higher.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of attributes

Code	N	Mini	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders (MO)									
MO1	210	1	5	4.24	0.727	-1.011	0.168	1.904	0.334
MO2	210	2	5	4.40	0.694	-1.086	0.168	1.208	0.334
MO3	210	1	5	4.34	0.702	-1.167	0.168	2.525	0.334
MO4	210	2	5	4.33	0.694	-1.076	0.168	1.744	0.334
MO5	210	2	5	4.10	0.745	-0.576	0.168	0.187	0.334
Valid N (listwise)	210			4.28					

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Cronbach's Alpha

To evaluate the internal reliability of the scales, we rely on the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The statistical results in Table 4 show that Cronbach alpha values in the range of 0.763 to 0.812 are higher than the significance level of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming the reliability of the scale used in the study.

Table 4. Results of Cronbach's alpha testing of attributes and item-total statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items			
.819	5			
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
MO1	17.17	4.746	0.659	0.768
MO2	17.01	5.139	0.554	0.799
MO3	17.08	4.855	0.651	0.771
MO4	17.08	4.812	0.680	0.763
MO5	17.32	5.080	0.514	0.812

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Next, tables 5, 6, and 7 show that exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted through component analysis and variance.

The results of Bartlett's test examining the hypothesis of correlation between observed variables show that the KMO index is 0.835, greater than 0.5 (>0.5); the extracted variance is 58.348% ($>50\%$), which means that these 5 observed variables explain 58.348% of the variation in the data; Bartlett's test is statistically significant (Sig. <0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the indicators in the study meet EFA analysis standards (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014).

These statistics demonstrate that research data analysis for factor discovery is appropriate. Through the quality assurance of the scale and the test of the EFA model, we have identified five components of the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair et al., 2014).

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.835
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	338.332
	Df	10
	Sig.	.000

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Table 6: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.917	58.348	58.348	2.917	58.348	58.348
2	0.665	13.293	71.641			
3	0.598	11.961	83.602			
4	0.433	8.657	92.259			
5	0.387	7.741	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Table 7: Component Matrix^a

MO	Component
	1
MO4	0.816
MO1	0.804
MO3	0.797
MO2	0.716
MO5	0.676

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

ANOVA – types of businesses

An ANOVA test was needed to make a comparison of the results of the evaluation of the differences in the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders between the three subjects, including participants who work for SMEs, which are joint stock companies, limited companies, and private enterprises. Table 8 shows that the sig Levene statistic of 0.000 is smaller than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis of homogeneity of variance among the variable value groups (different types of businesses) has not been violated. Table 9 shows that sig. is 0.018, which is smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders between the mentioned three groups of types of businesses (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014).

Table 8. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Descriptions	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
MO				
Based on Mean	8.657	2	207	0.000
Based on Median	7.354	2	207	0.001
Based on Median and with adjusted df	7.354	2	148.572	0.001
Based on trimmed mean	7.241	2	207	0.001

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Table 9. Robust Tests of Equality of Means

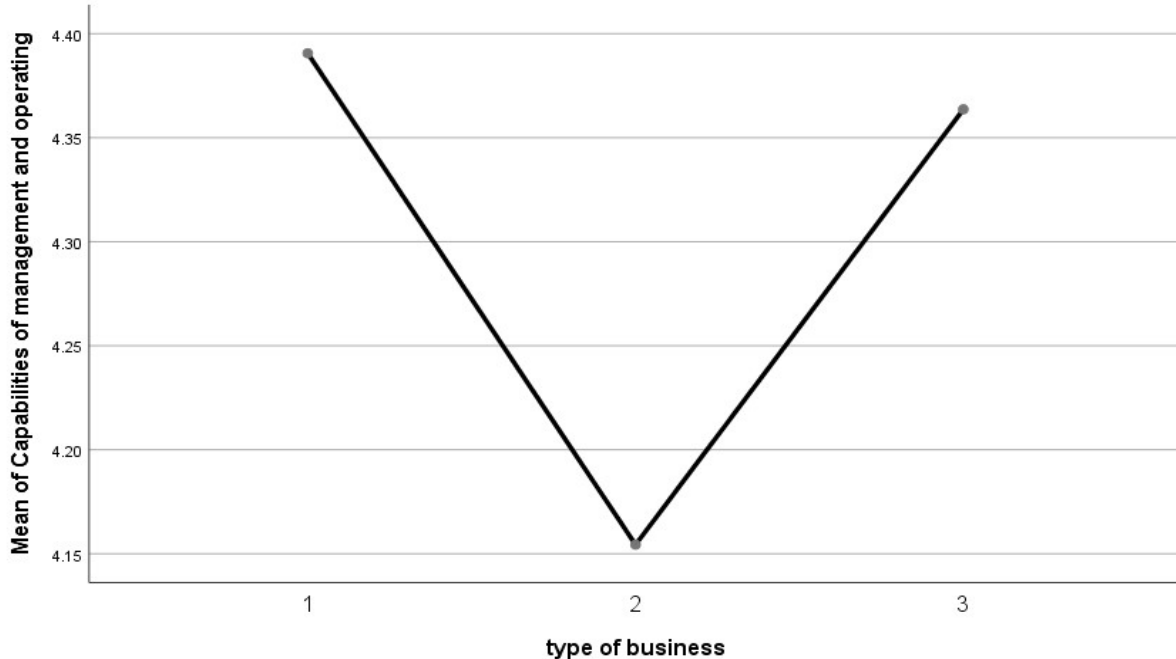
MO

	Statistic ^a	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	4.215	2	91.017	0.018

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

The relationship between the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders: types of businesses

Next, the line graph shows the relationship between the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders and each respondent's types of businesses (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that this line tends to slope up when the respondents work for SMEs, which are private enterprises. But this line tends to go down when the respondents work for SMEs, which are limited companies.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024) and SPSS software.

Figure 1: The line graph shows the relationship between the capabilities of management and operating small and medium-sized enterprises in Hai Phong City of Leaders and each respondent's types of businesses.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The quality of the relationship between leaders and employees is one of the factors that directly affects business performance. Therefore, subordinates' evaluation is important to the leader's development. However, in SMEs in Hai Phong City, many leaders have not proactively asked their subordinates for evaluation because they are afraid that the evaluation results may not be positive. Therefore, SMEs in Hai Phong City, when organizing leadership evaluations for subordinates, should fully prepare evaluation tools and communication work.

The management and executive ability of firm leaders is demonstrated by the ability to meet job requirements, that is, leaders are always dedicated to their work; leaders have good memory and details in work; and leaders are always optimistic about the future of the firm. These capabilities of SME leaders are quite uniform.

Leadership's human resource management capacity for management and administration includes: encouraging employees to learn; encouraging employee commitment at work; making employees believe in the future of the business; and directing employees to higher achievements, capturing employee ideas. However, the human resources management capacity of leaders is still low, such as through decentralization or delegation, providing feedback to employees about work, creating

a good and competent staff framework, and preparing personnel. succession, succession, and employee performance evaluation. Therefore, leaders of SMEs in Hai Phong City should improve their human management and self-management capabilities.

SMEs should promote the application of computer-based evaluation.

Firm leaders should develop their self-management and people-management capabilities. SMEs should identify improving leadership capacity as a top priority. Leadership capabilities should be enhanced, specifically motivating employees, training employees, delegating and decentralizing, assigning work, and evaluating job completion.

The management and operating abilities of firm leaders should aim at the goal of joining hands between government and firm.

The current labor scale attracted to SMEs is still low, so the contribution to increasing the labor scale of SMEs is limited. Therefore, SMEs should take measures to increase the attraction of workers to work at SMEs in the city.

The research findings open up opportunities for SMEs to create good products at reasonable costs based on applying transformational leadership styles to management practices to enhance the management and control capabilities of firm leaders.

Besides the results achieved, the basic limitation of the study is the small sample size. This study uses a questionnaire that includes five scales to measure the management and operating abilities of leaders and subordinates, each of which will be evaluated with different levels of satisfaction. However, the survey sample is not large enough, and the method of collecting survey questionnaires does not completely ensure enough autonomy and security for evaluators. Therefore, this study has limited significance.

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