



THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATIVENESS

Radmila Bjekić

University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics in Subotica, Republic of Serbia

✉ rstojanovic@ef.uns.ac.rs

Maja Strugar Jelača

University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics in Subotica, Republic of Serbia

✉ m.strugar.jelaca@ef.uns.ac.rs

Slobodan Marić

University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics in Subotica, Republic of Serbia

✉ marics@ef.uns.ac.rs

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to investigate if there is any correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in the case of middle and large companies that operate on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. For this research authors have used Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) on the sample of 159 organizations that have more than 50 employees. Respondents were managers. For data analysis Hierarchical Multiple Regression and Spearman's correlation was used. Results of analysis show that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in companies in the Republic of Serbia. Available literature and results of previous surveys pointed out all benefits of this leadership style and in this paper results of research show that active leadership style is one of the crucial factors which encourage organizational innovativeness. Due to its positive influence on creating innovative atmosphere and growth of innovativeness, managers should pay more attention to active leadership style and implement it.

Keywords: Active leadership style, Organizational innovativeness, MLQ, Serbia

JEL classification: M54, O32

1. Introduction

The topic of leadership has been occupying attention of scientists and researchers for many years. A number of different leadership theories has been developed and one of the more prominent is the full range leadership (FRL) theory. Leadership surveys in the context of FRL theory have been conducted by numerous authors. Most of them observed the three leadership styles: transformational, transactional and passive leadership, which is specific for methodology based on the conduct of the MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire). In this study, the authors viewed leadership as active and passive, with active leadership constituting the components of transformational and active transactional, while passive leadership constitutes from passive transactional and *Laissez-Faire* leadership.

Organizational innovativeness, as an inevitable condition for organization's survival and development, is a phenomenon that has been associated with leadership in numerous surveys and studies (Chen, et al., 2016; García-Morales et al., 2012; Jung et al., 2008; Mumford et al., 2002). However, in most surveys in this area, authors have made connections between transformational leadership and innovativeness (Raj & Srivastava, 2016; Aslan et al., 2011; Rosing et al., 2011; Jung et al., 2008; Mumford et al., 2002), and a smaller number of surveys has had for their object the effect of transactional leadership style onto organizational innovativeness (Sethibe & Steyn, 2018; Aminu & Nana Ama, 2017; Pieterse et al., 2010). The concept of active and passive leadership in the context of organizational innovativeness has been the object of a small number of surveys (Ryan & Tipu, 2013).

According to the authors' knowledge, there are no surveys on the influence of active leadership style on innovativeness of the organization in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, according to the described approach. Given that Serbia is a transition country whose environment is characterized by constant changes at the macro and micro levels, it is a reasonable assumption that company management prefers to apply transformational and partly transactional leadership style, while passive leadership style they seek to eliminate (Bobera et al., 2017). This was precisely the motive for conducting the survey and composing this paper.

Testing the correlation between leadership and innovativeness is important, especially in the context of developing countries, as business conditions and therefore the ability to innovate are hindered. Macroeconomic and institutional instability is something that characterizes the environment of organizations operating in developing countries (Farashahi & Hafsi, 2009). And given that innovativeness provides an organization the ability to survive in these dynamic and uncertain conditions and represents the best competitive weapon, it is clear why this topic receives increasing attention.

The aim of this paper is to determine the correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in medium and large companies operating

on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The object of this paper is the analysis of the concept of active leadership and organizational innovativeness based on existing literature in this field. The survey was conducted using the MLQ questionnaire, and the analysis of the collected data was made in SPSS statistical program; and statistical techniques that were used are Multiple Hierarchical Regression and Spearman's correlation.

The paper consists of four parts. In the first part theoretical framework of the paper is presented, with the dominant views and theoretical assumptions of prominent authors and researchers in this field. The second part describes the methodology used. The third part deals with empirical research, in which the authors presented the results of the research and established the correlation between active leadership style and the innovativeness of the organization on the example of companies operating in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The last part of the paper presents a discussion on the research results and recommendations for future studies.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Active leadership

The original concept of transformational and transactional leadership was developed by Burns in 1978. Since then, the full range leadership model has been developed, which includes nine components that fall into three groups and describe the three leadership styles. The first five factors describe transformational leadership (idealized influence, IIA, and idealized behavior, IIB; inspirational motivation IM, intellectual stimulation IS, and individualized care IC). Transactional leadership has been described through conditioned rewarding, active management using AMbe exceptions, and passive exception management, while the third style of leadership is referred to as *Laissez-Faire* (Bass et al., 2003). Unlike the existing classification of leadership styles in the framework of full leadership theory which distinguishes transformational, transactional and passive leadership, which is most commonly used among divisions, the authors have viewed leadership styles as active and passive ones, based on pre-existing research, where the active leadership style is transformational and active transactional, while passive leadership style makes passive management using exceptions and LFL (Ryan & Tipu, 2013; Bycio et al., 1995; Waldman et al., 1990). Transformational (IIA, IIB, IM, IS, IC) and Transactional (CR, Ambe) represent active and constructive forms of leadership (Avolio et al., 1999). Active transactional leadership in this way has been observed by a number of other authors (Avolio, et al., 2004; Bycio et al., 1995; Zhu et al., 2012; Ivey & Kline, 2010). Medley & Larochelle stated that observing active and passive dimensions of leadership is the best representation of the FRL model (Medley & Larochelle, 1995).

For the purpose of closely defining active leadership style, the components that make it will be explained below: if components *IIA* and *IIB* are explained through a single component *II*, idealized influences, then it can be said that idealized influence implies such leadership behaviors as aligning behavior with the purpose of the organization, putting the interests of the organization before their own ones, setting high ethical standards through personal example (Kark et al., 2003). A leader behaves in such a way that he/she fosters a sense of community through defining a shared vision and values and through active action with the aim of achieving a defined vision. This component shows the degree to which employees respect, trust the leader, and the extent to which they identify with the leader. The *IM* component implies that leaders put challenges in front of their employees, which involves creating and presenting attractive shared vision of the future, using symbols and emotional arguments, as well as demonstrating optimism and enthusiasm (Kark et al., 2003). The *IS* component indicates that leaders motivate their employees to be creative, to step beyond established boundaries of thinking and approach, and to broaden their perspectives. The *IC* component involves paying attention to the individual needs of employees and encouraging achievement of their full potential. In this way, leaders motivate their employees to be innovative. This purportedly involves creating learning opportunities for employees, trying to stimulate their development through leadership, coaching and mentoring activities. The next component of active leadership is *CR* and it indicates that the leader is task-oriented and rewards his or her employees (material or intangible) in accordance to the performed tasks. The last, but not least important component of active leadership style is *AMbe*, which focuses on setting standards and actively and closely monitoring employees while taking corrective action in order to achieve standards.

An active leader has a clear vision of the future and knows how to define mission and set values to achieve the intended vision. An active leader is aware that without teamwork and mutual support of employees there is no progress, that is why he creates such a climate in an organization where attention is paid to individual needs of each employee, encouraging their creativity and innovativeness. Putting challenges in front of employees and providing support to respond to those challenges adequately, encouraging employees to use new methods and techniques to solve old and prevent new, more serious problems, is an integral part of an active leader's behavior. An active leader is task-oriented and clearly sets the standards to be achieved, and from the very setting of the standards to the completion of the tasks, the leader is active in overseeing and taking timely corrective actions and measures to achieve the standards. An active leader is aware of the importance of remuneration as an important factor in motivating the employees, and accordingly he knows whether the task has been completed, how it has been completed, and to what extent it was successfully completed so an active leader rewards the employees. The core of active leadership style is the fact that active leaders oversee their employees, anticipate problems, and take proactive actions with the aim of achieving common goal and avoiding more serious problems.

2.2. Organizational innovativeness

Innovativeness of a company is the subject of research conducted by numerous authors and it is being defined in different ways. Most often, organizational innovativeness is viewed through the its openness to adopt new ideas and the ability to harness its creative potential. Innovativeness reflects company's willingness to successfully adopt and implement innovations (Gebert et al., 2003; Hurley & Hunt, 1998). One of the most used definitions, of course, is the one developed by Wang and Ahmed, who define organizational innovativeness as offering incremental and radical innovations over a period of five years (Wang & Ahmed, 2004). The same authors have defined organizational innovativeness as the total innovative capacity of an organization as the sum of innovative abilities to introduce new products or open new markets, combining strategic orientation with innovative behaviors and processes (Wang & Ahmed, 2004, 304), based on different approaches to innovativeness and defined dimensions of organizational innovativeness, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of organizational innovativeness

Author	Product	Market	Process	Behaviour	Strategy
Miller & Friesen (1983)	*		*	*	*
Schumpeter (1934)	*	*	*		
Capon et al. (1992)		*			*
Avlonitis et al. (1994)	*		*	*	*
Subramanian & Nilakanta (1996)			*		
Hurely & Hult (1998)				*	
Rainey (1999)				*	*
Lyon et al. (2000)	*		*		
North & Smallbone (2000)	*	*	*	*	

Source: Wang & Ahmed, 2004, 304.

Organizational innovativeness has been acknowledged as one of the most important conditions for creating and sustaining competitive advantage over the long term (Rubera & Kirca, 2012). The same authors pointed out the importance of organizational innovativeness through their study, whose results have shown that innovation has crucial impact on organizational performance. In today's business environment, characterized by high intensity of competition, dynamism and uncertainty of the market, companies must ensure their survival through inclusion of innovative practices (Gibb & Haar, 2010; Miguel et al., 2008).

2.3. Corellation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness

Leadership style is often highlighted as one of the most influential factors in organizational innovativeness, with the reason being that leaders can directly decide on implementation of new ideas into business, set specific goals, and foster employees' creativity and innovation (Zacher & Rosing, 2015). Analysis of the impact of leadership on organizational-level innovativeness has often been the subject of research by various authors (Mumford et al., 2002; García-Morales et al., 2012; Jung et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2016).

Given the undeniable importance of transformational leadership behavior in today's business environment, it has been the subject of numerous analyzes. Transformational leadership is also the most prominent topic in this field (García-Morales et al., 2012), and thus the number of studies that had examined the influence of leadership style on organizational innovativeness is largely devoted to transformational leadership. All the results obtained so far point to the great innovative potential of this type of leadership because employees who are under the mentorship of transformational leaders are more likely to have an evolved perception that organizational-level climate is innovatively oriented (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015; Aarons & Sommerfeld, 2012), which directly affects the growth of individual employee creativity, so one can expect the growth of innovativeness at the team level (Chen et al., 2013), and therefore within an entire company. A number of authors have directly linked transformational leader and company's innovativeness and demonstrated that transformational leadership has a positive impact on it (Raj & Srivastava, 2016; Aslan et al., 2011; Rosing et al., 2011; Jung et al., 2008; Mumford et al., 2002; Waldman & Atwater, 1994; Keller, 1992).

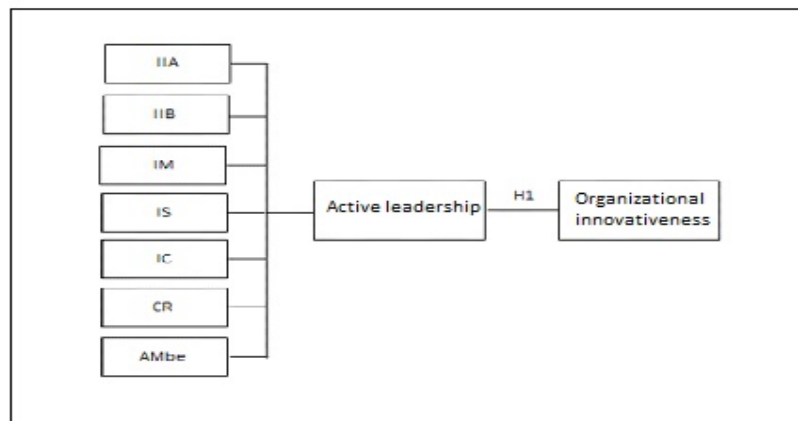
When speaking of transactional leadership style, there are conflicting opinions of the authors as to whether transactional leaders have positive or negative impact on organizational innovativeness. What should be emphasized is that in a transactional leadership style, in the context of organizational innovativeness, only two components need to be considered, namely conditioned rewards and active exception management. By providing conditioned rewards, transactional leaders can motivate company members to achieve clear goals from the domain of organizational innovativeness, and through active exception management, transactional leaders can monitor and reward the achievement of innovation goals (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1993). From an innovation perspective, one group of authors highlights the detrimental impact of a transactional leader on an individual employee level, viewed through his or her reduced creativity (Sethibe & Steyn, 2018; Pieterse et al., 2010). On the other hand, a number of authors consider the transactional leadership style to be innovative (Prasad & Junni, 2016; Aminu & Nana Ama, 2017).

Since the object of the paper is analysis of active leadership style and its impact on organizational innovativeness, that will be the exact focus in the text further. There are papers on the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on organizational innovativeness, but as separate leadership styles. There is no large number of studies that have analyzed the correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness. The research conducted by Ryan & Tipu had focused on analysis of the relationship of active and passive leadership styles with the company's tendency to innovate. Active leadership is made up of transformational (IIA, IIB, IM, IS, IC) and active transactional (CR, AMbe). Research findings have shown that there is a strong and positive impact of active leadership style on company's propensity to innovate (Ryan & Tipu, 2013). One survey that was very similar to the concept of the impact of active leadership style was conducted by Prasad and Junni in 2014 on a sample of 163 companies. That research looked at transformational and transactional leadership (CR and AMbe components only) and their relationship to organizational innovativeness. The results have shown that there is a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership style and organizational innovativeness in a highly dynamic environment, while the correlation between transactional leadership style and organizational innovativeness is also positive, but only in stable environmental conditions (Prasad & Junni, 2016). However, it should be noted that the concept of active leadership style was not used.

Based on the presented theoretical framework, the following hypothesis was composed:

H1: There is a statistically significant correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovation in medium and large companies in the Republic of Serbia.

Picture 1. Research framework



Source: Author's presentation

3. Methodology

The survey was conducted in the first half of 2017. The questionnaire was filled in by managers of different levels in medium and large companies (number of employees greater than 50). The sample consisted of 159 companies operating on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Most of them operated in private sector, 80.5%, and their legal form is AD or LLC, while a smaller number of analyzed companies operated in public sector, 19.5%. The largest number of companies operated in manufacturing industry, 55 companies or 34.6%, and in the trade sector 23 companies or 14.4%. The smallest number was in the field of education and real estate business, from these sectors only one organization was surveyed. Both male and female managers responded to the questionnaire. The number of male managers was 99, accounting for 62.3% of the sample, and the number of female managers was 60, accounting for 37.7% of the sample. Regarding their age, the highest number of respondents was in the age group 25-44, 92 respondents, or 57.8% of the sample, followed by the age group of 45-54 with 48 respondents, or 40.2% of the respondents, and the smallest number of managers examined were more than 55 years old and they made up 11.9% of the sample.

The questionnaire used to examine leadership style is the MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire), which consists of 45 questions (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Nine questions used to measure organizational innovativeness were adapted from the survey created by Ahmed and Wang (2004). The original scale consisted of 29 statements, but according to authors' opinion, it was reduced to key statements that are consistent with the innovative performance of the companies in the territory of the Republic of Serbia (Strugar, Bjekić, 2018).

In the MLQ questionnaire, 36 questions relate to leadership styles, and nine questions relate to leadership outputs. These 36 questions address nine leadership components that are grouped into 3 leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and passive. For the purpose of survey and testing the hypothesis, active leadership style that involves transformational (IIA, IIB, IS, IM, and IC) and active transactional (CR and AMbe) leadership will be analyzed in more detail (Zhu et al., 2011; Avolio et al., 2004; Bycio et al., 1995) as well as their correlation to organizational innovativeness. A 1-5 Likert scale was used to evaluate the answers to all the questions.

For the purpose of data analysis, a two-step hierarchical multiple regression was performed. In the first step, the dependent variable or organizational innovativeness was set and the control variables - legal form and sector (private and public) - were added, whereas in the second step an independent variable was added - active leadership style.

4. Survey results

Table 2. Spearman's correlation (N=159)

		M	SD	Organizational innovativeness	Sector	Legal form	Active leadership
Organizational innovativeness	rho	3.9455	.82657	1.000			
	p			.			
Sector	rho	.4591	.4999	-.166*	1.000		
	p			.037	.		
Legal form	rho	.1950	.39743	-.202*	0.47	1.000	
	p			0.11	.555	.	
Active leadership	rho	4.3553	.31301	.320**	-.207*	-.071	1.000
	p			.000	.009	.374	.

*correlation is statistically significant at the level 0.05 (two-way)

** correlation is statistically significant at the level 0.01 (two-way)

Source: Author's presentaiton

From the summary of the data in Table 2 it can be seen that there is a positive statistically significant medium-strong correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness, $r = 0.320$, $n = 159$, $p = 0.000$. There is also a negative statistically significant correlation between the sector to which the organization belongs and its innovativeness, $r = -0.166$, $n = 159$, $p = 0.037$. It can also be concluded that there is a negative correlation between company's legal form and organizational innovativeness, $r = -0.202$, $n = 159$, $p = 0.11$, but this correlation is not statistically significant.

The coefficient of determination (R square) is 0.163, which means that the model explains 16.3% variance of the sample. The resulting coefficient of determination is acceptable, generally R square and 0.10 is accepted for studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, since human behavior is difficult to predict accurately. According to Falk and Miller, it is recommended that the value for R square is equal to or greater than 0.10 in order to be considered adequate (Falk & Miller, 1992). Furthermore, Durbin-Watson is 1,698 (between 1.5 and 2.5) indicating that the data is not in auto-correlation.

Table 3. ANOVA Statistial significance of the model

Model		Sum of square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.764	2	4.382	6.892	.001 ^b
	Residual	99.183	156	.636		
	Total	107.947	158			
2	Regression	17.618	3	5.873	10.077	.000 ^c
	Residual	90.329	155	.583		
	Total	107.947	158			

Source: Authors' presentation

The model is statistically significant. Independent variables in the final model statistically significantly determine the dependent variable $F(3, 155) = 10.077$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression model – dependant variable: organizational innovativeness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Str. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.136	.087		47.508	.000
	Sector	-.231	.134	-.140	-1.729	.086
	Legal form	-.434	.168	-.209	-2.585	.011
2	(Constant)	.756	.871		.867	.387
	Sector	-.170	.129	-.103	-1.321	.188
	Legal form	-.385	.161	-.185	-2.384	.018
	Active leadership	.768	.197	.291	3.898	.000

Source: Authors' presentation

Based on the results of the analysis in Table 5, it can be concluded that Hypothesis *H1*: *There is a statistically significant correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in medium and large companies in the Republic of Serbia* is confirmed, which is in accordance with the results of previous research (Prasad & Junni, 2016; Ryan & Tipu, 2013). Also, according to the negative beta coefficient, it can be concluded that public sector companies are less innovative than private sector ones, when other variables in the model are controlled. The legal form variable was not proved to have a statistically significant correlation with organizational innovativeness.

5. Discussion and concluding considerations

The importance of innovativeness has been pointed out many times, both from the perspective of an individual, the team, and from the point of view of company as a whole. Leadership has also often taken central spot in the papers as a phenomenon that plays a significant role in functioning of each organization. Considering that leadership has been singled out as one of the most significant predictors of innovation in a large number of studies to date (Prasad & Junni, 2016; Dunne et al, 2016), it is clear that one of the motives of this research was to connect these two variables in the context of the Republic of Serbia, given that the above has not been researched enough in our country. So far, leadership and organizational innovativeness have been put into correlation, while examining different leadership styles and their impact on company's tendency to innovate (Chen et al., 2016; García-Morales et al., 2012; Jung et al., 2008; Mumford et al., 2002). Most

commonly, FRL theory and observation of transformational, transactional and Laissez-Faire leadership have been focused on when examining correlation between leadership and organizational innovativeness. However, observation of leadership styles within the framework of FRL theory can continue also toward active and passive leadership, which has been applied in this paper. Very few number of studies has so far linked active and passive leadership to organizational innovativeness (Ryan & Tipu, 2013), even though before them, Medley & Larochelle stated that observing active and passive dimensions of leadership is the best representation of the FRL model (Medley & Larochelle, 1995).

Based on statistical analysis of the data obtained through implementation of the MLQ filled out by managers of different levels in medium and large companies engaged in various activities and operating in public or private sector, it is found that the coefficient of determination (R square) is 16.3%, which means that the model explains 16.3% of sample variance. The model is statistically significant. Independent variables in the final model statistically significantly determine the dependent variable, i.e. the organizational innovativeness. The results of the research show that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in medium and large companies in the Republic of Serbia, which confirms the Hypothesis H1. The above indicates that companies where active leadership is applied, that is, in which leaders have a clear vision, support teamwork, support employees, understand their individual needs, stimulate their creativity and innovativeness, leaders who clearly define tasks, set the standards and remain vigilant while overseeing the execution of tasks and reward others by performance are more innovative. In other words, anticipating problems, taking proactive actions, and moving towards changes, which characterizes behavior of active leaders, significantly contributes to organizational innovativeness. In addition, the results of the survey have shown that businesses operating in private sector are more innovative than those in public sector. Nett argued the same in his paper, stating that private companies need to act more innovatively in order to be more competitive, and thus have a greater incentive to invest in R&D than the companies that work in public sector (Nett, 1994). Apart from the above, there are other reasons that contribute to making public sector companies less innovative than private sector ones, such as lack of adequate human resources, regulatory requirements, risk avoidance culture, lengthy decision-making process, etc. (Cankar & Petkovsek, 2013).

The results are obtained by primary survey conducted in companies operating in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, so the paper has a special dimension, since the authors did not find that such a survey has been conducted in these areas up to now. The model is representative, and many coefficients are significant, which greatly contributes to the quality of survey. Given that the authors did not find a large number of papers that analyzed correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in general, this paper could lay the foundation for

exploring this area in a broader context. It would be interesting to include variables of environmental uncertainty in the model and thus examine the correlation between active leadership style and organizational innovativeness in the context of environmental uncertainty, which certainly characterizes the environment of companies that operate in the Republic of Serbia. The recommendation for future research is also to increase the number of managers surveyed, that is, to include more companies, in order to obtain results that are even more relevant to the present state than the results presented in this paper.

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ZNAČAJ AKTIVNOG STILA LIDERSTVA ZA INOVATIVNOST ORGANIZACIJE

Abstrakt: Cilj rada je da istraži da li postoji veza između aktivnog stila liderstva i inovativnosti organizacije na primeru srednjih i velikih preduzeća koja posluju na teritoriji R. Srbije. Istraživanje je sprovedeno primenom MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire) na uzorku od 159 organizacija koje imaju više od 50 zaposlenih, a ispitanici su bili menadžeri. Analizom podataka primenom višestruke hijerarhijske regresije i spirmanove korelacije utvrđeno je da postoji statistički značajana pozitivna veza između aktivnog stila liderstva i organizacione inovativnosti u preduzećima koja posluju na teritoriji R. Srbije. Raspoloživa literatura i rezultati dosadašnjih istraživanja su ukazali na sve benefite ovog stila liderstva, a rezultati ovog istraživanja su ukazala na to da upravo aktivan stil liderstva predstavlja jedan od ključnih faktora koji podstiče inovativnost organizacije. Zbog svog pozitivnog uticaja na stvaranje inovativne klime i povećanje inovativnosti, menadžeri bi trebali više pažnju da obrate na ovaj stil liderstva, da ga primenjuju, a naučni radnici da dalje istražuju ovaj fenomen i da ga promovišu.

Ključne reči: aktivno liderstvo, inovativnost organizacije, MLQ, Srbija

Authors' biographies

Radmila Bjekić is Teaching Assistant at the Faculty of Economics in Subotica, University of Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia. She is assistant for scientific area of Management and student of doctoral studies at the Department of Business Economy and Management – module Entrepreneurial Management at the Faculty of Economics in Subotica, University of Novi Sad. She teaches exercises for the courses of Organizational Theory and Organizational Design (undergraduate studies). She is author and coauthor of scientific and professional papers in the fields of human resource management and organizational design that are presented at national and international scientific meetings or published in national and international journals

Maja Strugar Jelača, PhD is Assistant Professor at the Department of Management, Faculty of Economics in Subotica, University of Novi Sad. She teaches courses such as Strategic Management, Management innovation and Management and development at both under and postgraduate levels. Her research primarily aims at: measuring innovative activities in management practice, as well as analyzing different leadership styles to understand what drives the entrepreneurship orientation and innovative success of large organizations. She is the author and co-author of more than forty different scientific and professional papers published in conference proceedings, national and international research journals.

Slobodan Marić is research assistant at the Department of Management, Faculty of Economics Subotica, University of Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia, where he teaches bachelor's courses in Principles of Management and master's courses Performance Management and Contemporary Management. He has taken part in many national and international scientific and research projects. In addition, he is author and coauthor of numerous scientific and professional papers in the fields of management, performance management, entrepreneurship and project management.