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MANAGERIAL READINESS OF SUPERVISORS: EVIDENCE FROM EMPLOYEE ASSESSMENTS

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Purpose: This study aims to develop and empirically validate a unidimensional index of perceived managerial readiness from the employee perspective, and to assess its temporal stability.
Design/methodology/approach: The study was conducted in two waves (2023 and 2025) using a repeated cross-sectional design. A four-item index was constructed to capture preparedness, knowledge, use of tools, and learning from mistakes. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (EFA and CFA) were conducted, and the index was evaluated in terms of reliability, measurement invariance, and differences between waves.
Findings: The index demonstrated a unidimensional structure, good reliability, and measurement stability. Measurement invariance criteria were met, enabling comparisons across waves. A small but statistically significant increase in perceived managerial readiness was observed. The index did not significantly differentiate demographic subgroups, and the extended version did not alter the interpretation of the results.
Research limitations/implications: The study relies on a cross-sectional design and a single data source. The extended version was characterized by a high level of missing data. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs, more diverse populations, and further validation of the index against established leadership measures.
Practical implications: A simple perceptual index can serve as a preliminary diagnostic tool for assessing leadership quality, enabling organizations to monitor managerial readiness from the employee perspective. The findings suggest that employees' evaluations of leadership preparedness are driven more by actual managerial behaviors than by formal participation in development programs.
Originality/value: The paper provides an empirical validation of a synthetic, single-factor index of perceived managerial readiness, offering an alternative to complex competency models and leader self-assessments.
Keywords: managerial readiness, leadership, employee perception, leadership assessment.
Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations operate in conditions of increasing complexity, pressure for efficiency, and continuous technological and social change. In such an environment, the quality of leadership becomes particularly important, and managerial readiness emerges as a key factor determining team effectiveness. Managerial readiness extends beyond formal qualifications or participation in training programs, encompassing the ability to translate knowledge into action, adapt to changing conditions, and learn from mistakes in everyday managerial practice.

Despite growing interest in leadership readiness, the literature offers diverse and often complex approaches to its conceptualization and measurement. Existing research is dominated by multidimensional competency models, leader self-assessment tools, and indicators embedded within broader organizational climate studies. Less attention has been given to developing synthetic, simple indices that enable the operational measurement of perceived managerial readiness from the employee perspective, even though employees' experiences constitute a critical source of information about leadership quality.

There is therefore a noticeable lack of simple, unidimensional screening indices that balance measurement efficiency with basic standards of reliability and validity. In particular, there is a shortage of tools that allow for the rapid monitoring of perceived managerial readiness over time without the need for complex and costly diagnostic procedures.

The aim of this study was to examine whether it is possible to construct and empirically validate a simple, single-factor index of perceived managerial readiness assessed by employees. The study addresses the gap related to the lack of short, synthetic screening tools that could support organizations in monitoring leadership quality in an operational and temporally comparable manner.

2. Theoretical foundations

The literature review indicates diverse approaches to conceptualizing managerial readiness, ranging from psychological and developmental perspectives to an operational view focused on managerial competencies. Four dominant interpretative streams can be identified, forming the theoretical background for the operationalization adopted in this study:

- Readiness as a psychological construct, understood as a state of being both willing and able to perform managerial tasks, is dependent on the organizational context (Armenakis, Bedeian, 1999; Holt et al., 2007; Mutua, Mukumbang, 2025).

- Readiness as a developmental capacity, reflecting the ability to grow, learn, and adapt to the managerial role, emphasizing its dynamic nature (Donovan et al., 2015; Hannah, Avolio, 2010; Singh, Akalenaga, 2019).
- Readiness as a subjective sense of role fit, relevant to how managerial responsibilities are performed and how individuals adapt to their roles (Hu et al., 2016; Shannon, Cantillon, 2024).
- Readiness as an operational perspective, highlighting practical competencies and behaviors necessary for effective performance in everyday management practice (Coronica, Prado, 2025; Gunawan et al., 2019; Yahaya, Segbenya, 2023).

These perspectives demonstrate that managerial readiness is conceptualized in multiple ways, confirming its multidimensional nature and the absence of a single, universally accepted model.

The diversity of theoretical approaches is reflected in how readiness is operationalized, resulting in the use of varied measurement tools. The literature includes both dedicated leadership readiness scales (Oppi et al., 2022; Thien et al., 2025) and instruments based on self-assessment, satisfaction surveys, or 360-degree feedback models (Nowack, Mashihi, 2012; Urban, 2010). In some studies, readiness is inferred indirectly from assessments of leadership effectiveness (Ibar et al., 2025). Literature reviews highlight a wide range of measurement approaches from short scales to extensive questionnaires (Gunawan et al., 2019) while also pointing to the lack of a synthetic and unified approach to measuring readiness.

An important differentiating factor across studies is the source of evaluation. Research is dominated by leader self-assessments or expert evaluations (Al-Fattal et al., 2024; Douglas, McGhee, 2021; Yahaya, Segbenya, 2023), while the employee perspective is less frequently used (Alsulami et al., 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2024). However, it may provide more critical and relationally grounded insights into leadership quality (Long, Sochalski, 2025; Xu et al., 2024).

A noticeable gap in the literature concerns the lack of simple, synthetic screening tools based on employee evaluations. The dominance of complex models and leader self-assessments limits the feasibility of an efficient and temporally comparable measurement of perceived managerial readiness.

Based on this premise, a construct composed of four components was proposed, representing the minimum conditions for managerial readiness:

- Overall assessment of managerial preparedness - reflecting a subjective evaluation of the supervisor’s adequacy for the managerial role.
- Knowledge and competencies - forming the foundation for effective managerial performance (Shannon, Cantillon, 2024; Yahaya, Segbenya, 2023).
- Use of tools - indicating the operational translation of knowledge into action (Ashour, 1973; Cheng, Osman, 2023; Garzón-Lasso et al., 2024; Yukl, Mahsud, 2010).

– Errors - reflecting the ability to avoid fundamental managerial mistakes that reduce leadership effectiveness (Eubanks, Mumford, 2010; Thoroughgood et al., 2013; Zenger, Folkman, 2009).

Considering the developmental context, an extended version of the construct was also developed, supplemented with an item related to formal and informal education. Prior research suggests that learning without formal education is less effective (Alsulami et al., 2024; Yukl, Mahsud, 2010), while other studies indicate that engagement in educational activities is not widespread among managerial staff (Mohamadamin, Shabila, 2025). Therefore, including this dimension in the construct was considered justified.

The adoption of a simple, four-item index was justified by its diagnostic function, enabling a rapid assessment of the overall level of perceived managerial readiness without the need for complex measurement tools. Such a synthetic measure can serve as an "early warning" mechanism, identifying potential risk areas in managerial performance and indicating the need for more in-depth analysis or developmental interventions.

3. Methods

The study was designed as a preliminary validation of a perceptual instrument measuring managerial readiness from the employee perspective. A quantitative survey procedure was applied in two waves (2023 and 2025), enabling the assessment of the construct's temporal stability.

A purposive sample of management students with basic knowledge of management was selected. It was assumed that their perspective remains perceptual and does not necessarily reflect the objective level of organizational practices, but constitutes a relevant indicator of the subjective experience of the relationship with their supervisor.

Table 1.
Sample characteristics

Variable	Category	2023 N (%)	2025 N (%)	Total N (%)
Gender	Male	100 (34,1)	70 (46,7)	170 (38,3)
	Female	193 (65,9)	80 (53,3)	273 (61,7)
Generation	Older cohorts	256 (88,3)	126 (84,0)	382 (86,9)
	Generation Z	34 (11,7)	24 (16,0)	58 (13,1)
Work experience	No experience	27 (9,2)	9 (6,0)	36 (8,1)
	Occasional jobs	79 (27,0)	16 (10,7)	95 (21,5)
	Up to 1 year	72 (24,6)	31 (20,7)	103 (23,3)
	More than 1 year	115 (39,2)	94 (62,7)	209 (47,2)
Place of residence	Rural area	66 (22,5)	40 (26,7)	106 (23,9)
	City < 20,000	43 (14,7)	17 (11,3)	60 (13,5)
	City 20,000 - 100,000	59 (20,1)	29 (19,3)	88 (19,9)
	City > 100,000	125 (42,7)	64 (42,7)	189 (42,7)

Source: own elaboration.

The sample structure in both waves was comparable in terms of place of residence and generational affiliation. However, the 2025 sample included a higher proportion of respondents with more than one year of work experience and a more balanced gender distribution compared to 2023.

The core index was defined as a perceptual measure of managerial readiness, calculated as the mean of four questionnaire items:

- Assessment of the supervisor's overall preparedness for the managerial role.
- Assessment of the supervisor's level of knowledge required to perform the managerial role.
- Assessment of the extent to which various tools (e.g., appraisal forms, motivation tools, bonus systems) are used in performing the managerial role.
- Assessment of the frequency of errors in managing employees by the supervisor (reverse-coded item).

All items were measured on a 1 - 5 scale, and the index was calculated as a mean score provided that at least three out of four responses were available.

The full index represented an extended version of the core index, including two additional items:

- Assessment of formal education (e.g., training) for the managerial role.
- Assessment of informal education (e.g., observing one's supervisor or other managers) for the managerial role.

The full index was calculated as a mean score provided that at least four out of six responses were available. This requirement was introduced to minimize measurement bias resulting from incomplete responses.

The indices demonstrated good reliability (0,763-0,851), with detailed results presented in the descriptive statistics tables.

The analyses included Mann-Whitney U tests, Kruskal-Wallis tests, Spearman correlations, and effect size r for comparisons between waves. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS and Jamovi software.

4. Results

To verify the structure of the core index, an exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted. The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO = 0,711), indicating an acceptable level of sampling adequacy, and a significant result of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2(6) = 758{,}482$; $p < 0{,}001$), suggesting significant correlations among the items.

The eigenvalue analysis revealed a single factor with an eigenvalue of 2,538, explaining 63,4% of the total variance. Subsequent components had eigenvalues below 1, supporting the unidimensional structure of the index.

Factor loadings were high for the items supervisor preparedness (0,831) and supervisor knowledge (0,819), moderate for use of tools (0,507), and acceptable for errors (reverse-coded) (0,381). No grounds were identified for removing any of the items. The index demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha \approx 0{,}80$-$0{,}85$ depending on the wave).

To confirm the unidimensional structure of the core index, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted separately for each wave. In 2023, the index showed an excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2(2) = 0{,}73$; $p = 0{,}694$; CFI ≈ 1,00; SRMR = 0,012; RMSEA = 0,000). In the second wave, the model also demonstrated acceptable fit ($\chi^2(2) = 4{,}01$; $p = 0{,}134$; SRMR = 0,040; RMSEA = 0,082), with the elevated RMSEA interpreted cautiously due to the very low degrees of freedom (df = 2). Overall, the CFA results confirm the unidimensional structure of the core index in both waves.

Multi-group analysis confirmed configural invariance of the model ($\chi^2(4) = 4{,}75$; $p = 0{,}314$), indicating that the same factor structure was maintained across both years. The model with equal factor loadings (metric invariance) did not show a significant deterioration in fit ($\chi^2(7) = 11{,}5$; $p = 0{,}120$), nor did the model with equal intercepts (scalar invariance; $\chi^2(6) = 11{,}5$; $p = 0{,}075$).

These results indicate that the criteria for configural and metric invariance were met, along with acceptable scalar invariance.

Additionally, convergent validity of the model was assessed. In both years, the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0,50 (2023: AVE = 0,62; 2025: AVE = 0,57), and composite reliability (CR) was high (2023: CR = 0,86; 2025: CR = 0,83), confirming adequate consistency and stability of the construct. All factor loadings were positive and significant, with the highest values observed for perceived preparedness and supervisor knowledge.

Given the use of the DWLS estimator, robust fit indices were also reported, confirming very good model fit (Robust SRMR = 0,027).

In summary, the results of factor analyses, invariance testing, and reliability indicators confirm that the core index constitutes a stable and valid measure of perceived managerial readiness across both waves of the study.

In the next step, the level of the core index in 2023 and 2025 was analyzed, starting with descriptive statistics presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics

Year	N	M	SD	Me	Alfa Cr
2023	271	3,02	0,93	3,00	0,809
2025	150	3,26	0,83	3,25	0,763

Source: own elaboration.

The mean level of the core index was higher in 2025 (M = 3,26; Me = 3,25) than in 2023 (M = 3,02; Me = 3,00), with slightly lower variability of responses. In both waves, the index demonstrated good internal consistency (α > 0,75).

A comparison between the two years using the Mann-Whitney U test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of the core index (U = 23,660; Z = 2,80; p = 0,005), with a small effect size (r = 0,14), indicating a modest but statistically confirmed increase in 2025.

To assess the demographic stability of the core index, subgroup analyses were conducted separately for each year. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics

Variable	Test	2023	p	2025	p
Gender	U Mann-Whitney	U = 8684,5	p = 0,224	U = 2761	p = 0,248
Work experience	Kruskal-Wallis	H(2) = 5,44	p = 0,066	H(2) = 2,03	p = 0,362

Source: own elaboration.

No statistically significant differences in the level of the core index were found with respect to gender, generation, work experience, or place of residence in either 2023 or 2025 (all p > 0,05).

An analysis including the interaction effect of year × generation did not reveal a significant interaction for the core index (F(1,415) = 0,06; p = 0,80), indicating that the change in the index over time was similar across generational cohorts.

To verify the stability of the results, the extended version of the index was also analyzed. In 2023, its mean was M = 2,93 (SD = 0,87), and in 2025, M = 3,14 (SD = 0,81); reliability was good in both waves (α = 0,85; α = 0,83). The pattern of results remained consistent with the core index, indicating that the inclusion of the educational component did not alter the interpretation of the findings.

5. Disscusion

The results indicate a statistically significant, albeit modest, increase in the level of perceived managerial readiness (core index) between 2023 and 2025. This change was independent of the analyzed demographic characteristics, strengthening the interpretation that the observed effect is not driven by shifts in sample structure but may reflect a genuine change in the perception of supervisors' preparedness. At the same time, the influence of contextual factors - such as rising expectations toward leaders or cultural changes within organizations - cannot be ruled out.

The findings partially align with research on leadership readiness conceptualized as a psychological construct (Oppi et al., 2022; Thien et al., 2025). However, in contrast to many prior studies focusing on leader self-assessment (Mohamadamin, Shabila, 2025), the present study adopts the employee perspective in evaluating supervisors. The results suggest that perceived managerial readiness has a predominantly behavioral dimension - encompassing knowledge, preparedness, use of tools, and learning from mistakes - rather than being limited to motivational or identity-based aspects.

The analysis of the extended version of the index confirmed the stability of the findings. The inclusion of the educational component did not substantially alter the overall pattern of results, indicating that, from the employee perspective, direct experience of managerial behaviors plays a more critical role than formal development activities. The high proportion of missing responses in this area may further reflect limited awareness of development processes within organizations.

Returning to the core index, it should be emphasized that it constitutes the main methodological contribution of this study. Regardless of the results obtained for the extended version, the validity, unidimensional structure, and temporal measurement invariance of the simple perceptual index of managerial readiness were confirmed. The study thus addresses a gap in the literature dominated by complex, multidimensional tools by offering a synthetic measure that enables the operational assessment of individual managerial readiness. At the same time, the proposed approach shifts the focus from readiness understood as an individual trait toward readiness constructed relationally through employee perceptions.

From a practical perspective, this implies that perceived managerial readiness is driven primarily by observable behaviors in everyday work rather than solely by formal development activities. Monitoring this index may serve as a useful complement to traditional measures of training effectiveness and function as an early signal of leadership quality.

6. Limitations and future research directions

The study has several limitations that also define directions for further validation of the proposed instrument. First, the design did not involve tracking the same individuals over time but relied on two independent samples, which limits the ability to draw conclusions about changes at the individual level. Future research should therefore employ panel designs to examine whether and how perceptions of managerial readiness evolve among the same respondents.

In the case of the extended version of the index, a high proportion of missing responses was observed in the educational components, resulting in a substantial reduction in the number of analyzed observations. This may affect the stability of model estimates and limit the full interpretation of results for this version of the index.

The measurements were based exclusively on employee evaluations, without incorporating the perspectives of leaders or objective organizational indicators. The use of a single data source increases the risk of common method bias. Future studies should extend the validation of the instrument by examining its convergent and discriminant validity in relation to other measures of leadership, team effectiveness, and organizational climate. Additionally, the use of multiple data sources would allow for assessing the alignment between perceptual evaluations and actual organizational outcomes.

Furthermore, the sample consisted of management students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader employee populations with different levels of professional experience. Therefore, future validation efforts should include more diverse occupational groups and organizations representing different industry sectors.

Accordingly, the present study should be treated as an initial stage of validating a perceptual index of managerial readiness, the further development of which may contribute to the creation of a synthetic yet reliable diagnostic tool for organizational practice.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine whether it is possible to construct and empirically validate a simple, single-factor index of perceived managerial readiness. The results confirmed its stable factor structure, temporal measurement invariance, and good reliability. The index did not significantly differentiate demographic subgroups, while remaining sensitive to changes over time.

The study thus provides evidence for the feasibility of using a synthetic measurement tool that addresses a gap in the literature dominated by complex constructs. At the same time, it shifts the focus from leader self-assessment toward a relational and perceptual understanding of readiness, grounded in employees' experiences.

From a practical perspective, this implies that the assessment of managerial readiness does not need to rely solely on competency audits or formal participation in development programs. Instead, observable managerial behaviors play a key role in shaping employee perceptions. A simple perceptual index may support the ongoing monitoring of leadership quality as well as development and succession decisions, offering an efficient alternative to more complex models in contexts requiring rapid diagnosis.

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