

WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS? A META-ANALYTIC INVESTIGATION ON FIRST-LINE AND MID-LEVEL LEADERS

ABSTRACT

Does first-line and mid-level (FLML) leaders' age matter to their leadership effectiveness? Different and even competing theoretical perspectives were proposed to understand the role of leaders' age. Empirically, disparate findings were reported, and equivocal implications were provided. Surprisingly, with the work force getting older and increased attention to age in the workplace, we have no synthesized knowledge on *whether* older FLML leaders are more or less effective than their younger counterparts, let alone *why* or *when* older FLML leaders are more or less effective. To fill this critical void, we drew from the leadership literature and meta-analyzed relations of FLML leaders' age with widely studied leader and follower work outcomes given that FLML leaders not only perform their own tasks but also shape followers' work outcomes. Meta-analytic results based on 217 studies reveal that FLML leaders' age had a negative and weak relationship with their own task performance and positive and weak relationships with key follower (e.g., follower task performance) outcomes. Our moderation analysis results suggest these relationships were largely generalizable across various conditions. Moreover, FLML leaders' age consistently showed indirect effects on leader and follower work outcomes via leader traits (e.g., task competence) and behaviors (e.g., contingent reward).

Keywords: Leader age, Leadership effectiveness, Follower performance, Meta-analysis