



LSI

ARTICLE SUMMARY

Thinking and Behavioral Styles as Described by Self Versus Others: A Replication and Extension with Male and Female Managers.

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Thinking and Behavioral Styles as Described by Self Versus Others: A Replication and Extension with Male and Female Managers

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INSTRUMENTS USED: *LIFE STYLES INVENTORY™* (LSI) 1 & 2

The Study:

The *Life Styles Inventory* (LSI) is a personal styles feedback tool that is widely used in leadership and management development programs. Most of the studies carried out to date on its reliability and validity are based on early, paper-based versions of the inventory. In addition, the studies (which generally focused on managers) are based on samples that were almost entirely made up of male participants. The current version of the LSI typically is completed online rather than on paper. It includes minor modifications to or the replacement of approximately 10% of the original items. In addition, the percentage of female managers in the workforce—and in leadership and management development programs incorporating the inventory—is now far greater than it was in the past. These along with other changes underscore the need for a replication of the earlier studies using the current version of the survey and a recent sample consisting of both female and male managers.

Research:

The sample used for this study included 6,899 focal managers from a variety of organizations. Sixty-four percent (4,429) of them were male and 35% (2,386) were female; 1% (84) chose not to provide information about gender. The managers completed the LSI 1 Self Description as part of a workshop, public program, accreditation, or internal leadership or management development program. In addition, each manager selected at least 4 others (higher-level managers, peers, direct reports) to describe him or her. A total of 54,527 others (average of 7.9 per focal manager) provided descriptions by completing the current version of the LSI 2.

Findings:

The results of this study essentially replicated most of the earlier reliability and validity findings, but with a larger sample of female and male managers and a more recent version of the inventories used to gather information from self and others. Specifically, the findings:

- confirm the three-factor structure—Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive—identified by previous studies.
- show that the LSI's internal consistency reliability, construct validity, consensual validity, and criterion-related validity are either as strong or slightly stronger than reported in the early studies.

As an extension, the results of the additional analyses show that:

- The survey works as reliably for female managers as it does for male managers.
- The three-factor structure applies just as well to female as to male managers.
- Constructive styles are positively related to managerial effectiveness and Aggressive/Defensive styles are negatively related to the effectiveness of both female and male managers.
- Approval, Conventional, and Dependent Passive/Defensive styles may provide a slight boost to the effectiveness of male managers but not necessarily that of female managers.

Implications:

The LSI provides both female and male leaders and managers with a reliable, valid, practical, and effective alternative to the double-bind approach to self-development that plagues many of the prescriptions offered by writings based on gender and leadership research.

The consistently negative relationships between Aggressive/Defensive styles and effectiveness conflict with the idea that women may have to become more aggressive to be perceived as effective. They also run counter to the notion that aggressive styles detract from perceptions of the effectiveness of only female managers. Based on the results presented, it appears that neither women nor men benefit from relying on these styles as the modus operandi. More generally, if the reason or purpose for using the LSI is to strengthen or improve effectiveness, the findings consistently indicate that all managers should focus on strengthening Constructive styles.

[Contact us](#) or [visit our website](#) to learn more about the LSI.

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ARTICLE ABSTRACT

The *Life Styles Inventory* (LSI) is among the first and most widely used 360° feedback surveys for management and leadership development. The LSI measures 12 thinking and behavioral styles reflecting three, more general, personal orientations that are related to managerial effectiveness. Previous studies demonstrated the reliability and validity of an early version of the LSI, which was completed by both self and others using paper-based surveys. The current study replicates the original reliability and validity analyses with a data on a recent sample of 6,899 male and female managers and their respondents using the current, online version of the survey. Analyses on these data were conducted for the total sample and for male and female managers separately. The results of the current study confirm the three-factor structure—Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive—identified by previous studies. In addition, the current version of the LSI scales demonstrates levels of internal consistency reliability, inter-rater reliability, consensual validity (between and self and others), and criterion-related validity that are as strong or slightly stronger than those reported in earlier studies.

The results show that Constructive ways of thinking and behaving are positively related to the effectiveness of both male and female managers and that Aggressive/Defensive thinking and behavior detracts from their effectiveness. The results for Passive/Defensive thinking and behavioral styles and effectiveness are more complex and somewhat different for males versus females. The strengths and limitations of the study are discussed along with the implications for using the LSI in management development and in future research on gender and leadership.

Keywords

Life styles inventory; 360 feedback; Gender differences, Managerial effectiveness; Leadership development

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