# HUMOR AS INDIRECT INFLUENCE MANAGEMENT TOOL

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### Abstract

Purpose of this field study is examining the effect of managers' sense of humor on employee's perceived supervisory support and wiliness to involve in work.

Design of research – two source of data collection: managers complete sense of humor measures, their subordinates – sense of humor and two psychological climate scales – perceived supervisory support and wiliness to involve in work. Because of weak factor structure of Latvian version of sense of humor measures and clause focus, this measures was combined together, made new scales: social, coping, aggressive and self-defeating humor, dislike of humor. To prove first hypothesis about manager's sense of humor association with employee's perceived supervisory support and involvement, correlation was carried. To answer second hypothesis about differences among manager's and employee's sense of humor, controlling gender and age, analysis of covariance was used (ANOVA).

Findings – association among manager's sense of humor and their subordinate's perceived supervisory support and involvement, was found. Was found that manager's in sense of humor score higher then employee's do.

Limitations of research, first, managers' sense of humor were collected by self –report, more precise, if subordinates rate them. Second, didn't the controlled gender composition within work teams, could be differences how female (males or mix) subordinates rate their managers – females or males.

Social implications – to develop managerial tools, by which manager can influence subordinates in soft, indirect manner, what work environment makes more positive and employees will be more motivate to bring their best to getting team goals done.

Originality, comparing with other studies, in this one covariates – age and gender are controlled. Second, research done in real work environment, people  involved – real managers and their subordinates.

*Keywords:* Sense of humor, Leadership, Psychological climate, Supervisory support, Involvement
*Classification:* research paper

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humor is recognized that serves a number of important and "serious" psychological functions. Martin (2007) classifies these functions into three categories: (1) *cognitive and social benefits of the positive emotion of mirth* (e.g. Isen, 2003); (2) *uses of humor for social communication and influence* (e.g. Mulkay, 1988); (3) *tension relief and coping* (e.g. Kuiper, Martin and Olinger, 1993; Martin et al., 1993). These alleged benefits of humor have led some scholars to look closer at organisation context, to focus their attention upon major traditional organisational themes, such as leadership, job satisfaction, and team work in relation to humor. Research, so far mostly of the qualitative variety, has shown the importance of humor's role in management, for example, by demonstrating that managers can use humor as a tool for many purposes: to strengthen social norms and thereby indirectly exert control over others' behaviour (Langa and Lee, 2010), to convey implicit messages in an indirect manner, to influence people toward reaching the team target (Mulkay, 1988; Tingley, 2002), and to facilitate employees' creative thinking and problem solving (Morreall, 1991). Even though research is limited, within the contemporary industrial organisations there is a growing belief that managers' sense of humor, along with other abilities, can promote effective leadership (e.g. Avolio et al., 1999; Lemer, 2003; Decker and Rotondo, 2001). Leaders play a major role in group regulation and influence upon group members (Peterson and Behfar, 2005), and research demonstrates the impact of leadership on the psychological climate in work groups (e.g., Kozlowski and Doherty, 1989; Scott and Bruce, 1994, Dragoni, 2005). Moreover, a leader's personality potentially plays an important role in the team, for example through the relationship of leader's emotional intelligence with the unit's psychological climate (Klem and

Schlechter, 2008), which in turn suggests a possible relationship between managers' sense of humor and the psychological climate within work units, because sense of humor is closely related with emotional intelligence (Yip and Martin, 2005). This research concentrates on one of psychological climate dimensions, that of workers' perceived supervisory support. Supervisor support can be defined as the degree to which supervisors value subordinates' contributions and care about subordinates' well-being (Kottke and Sharafinski, 1988). Research has demonstrated that higher supervisor support can enhance employees Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (Podsakoff et al., 2000), which can be defined as an employee's behaviour that is beneficial for the maintenance of the organisation's social system (Organ, 1997). Thus, group climate in general shows association with some important organisational features, such as accident rates (Zohar, 2000), customer satisfaction, and financial performance (Schneider and Bowen, 1985; Schneider, White and Paul, 1998).

Past studies of humor in organization tended to be qualitative, which has limited interpretation. As Martin (2007) noted, "little psychological research of any kind has been conducted on the general topic of humor in the workplace" (p. 361). This study tries to fill this gap by examining the connection between the manager's sense of humor and the workers' perceived supervisory support. It is expected that managers' use of the more adaptive types of humor in communication with subordinates would increase employees' perceived supervisory support, and that negative sense of humor would decrease the perception of support by supervisors.

It's known that emotional intelligence is related to leadership (Parvesh and Gopal, 2010), but theoretically and practically important to understand how humor relates to aspects of leadership, such as emotional intelligence. Therefore, in this study we measure emotional intelligence of managers and employees to determine humor and emotional intelligence relation and difference between managers and employees in these relations.

Finally, the existing research on humor in leadership has for the most part been conducted in the United States and other English- speaking cultures. This research extends the study of humor and leadership to a diriment cultural context, that of Latvia in East Central Europe.

## 2. HUMOR RESEARCH IN THE WORKPLACE

The Oxford English Dictionary defines humor as "…quality of action, speech, or writing which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun." It goes on to say that humor is also "the faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject" (Simpson and Weiner, 1989, p. 486). Humor scholars and researchers (e.g. Martin, Kuiper, Ruch) have focused on humor's benefits for health,– in stress management, enhancement of well-being, and counteracting depression, but little attention has been paid to humor in work environment, especially in its possible benefits for management.

Humor research in the workplace is a relatively new topic that has only recently begun to be investigated (Duncan and Feisal, 1989; Duncan et al, 1990; Hatch and Ehrlich, 1993; Collinson, 2002). In the past two decades, there has been a growing interest in potential applications of humor in a variety of workplace domains, especially in interpersonal communication and in particular, relationships between managers and employees.

Davis and Kleiner (1989) stated that managers use humor to achieve three aspects: 1) stress reduction in the workplace, 2) helping employees understand management concerns by enhancing communication patterns, and 3) motivating followers. Orben (1985) suggested that the use of humor has a direct effect on the level of satisfaction experienced by individuals.

## 2.2. HUMOR IN LEADERSHIP

What is the effect of humorous conduct on the effectiveness of leadership? Effective leadership involves the ability to influence others and maintain communication, and guidance in striving to reach the organization's goals (Daft, 2000; Yukl, 2006). Humor does not make a leader effective per se, but somehow leaders with higher sense of humor are perceived differently from those with a low sense of humor. For example, supervisors with a high sense of humor were rated by their supervisees as having generally more positive leadership characteristics compared to supervisors whose ratings of sense of humor were low. Employees whose supervisors had a high sense of humor also reported greater job satisfaction (Decker, 1987). Similarly, Priest and Swain (2002) found that military cadets rated particularly good leaders as having a significantly warmer, competent, and positive style of humor, whereas poor leaders were rated as having a colder, inept, and mean-spirited humorous style. Decker and Rotondo (2001) reported that managers' use of positive humor was associated with more successful task and relationship behaviours and with greater overall effectiveness whereas use of negative humor was related to lower ratings on these measures of managerial competence.

In relation to gender differences, male managers were rated as using humor, both positive and negative, more than female managers, but associations between humor and leadership competence were found to be stronger for female than for men (Decker and Rotondo, 2001). Female's positive humor, compared to that of men, was more strongly positively associated with leadership skills, as perceived by employees, and the use of sexual or offensive humor was more negatively related to perceived leadership in female than in men (Decker and Rotondo, 2001).

## 2.3. MANAGERIAL SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Managerial support is a part of psychological climate. Psychological climate, in general refers to the shared perceptions by the members of an organization of the types of behaviour s and actions that are rewarded and supported by the organization's policies, practices, and procedures (Schneider, 1990). Some scholars distinguish organisational climate, referring to organisational attributes in a collective description of organisational practices and procedures, from psychological climate, pertaining to individual attributions in describing the same environment (James and Jones, 1974). Others state that both kinds of climates are based on perceptions that individuals have of their environment which they believe to be factual and intersubjective (Joyce and Slocum 1982). Psychological climate possesses measurable, enduring qualities, which influences the behaviour of individuals in the organisation (Field and Abelson, 1982). Knowledge an organisation's climate is important as it allows one to understand an individual's behaviour so that he or she can be managed effectively and efficiently (Tustin, 1993).

To measure psychological climate scholars have identified a variety of overlapping dimensions, which, according to Litwin and Stringer (1968), share the following features: (1) *structure* (perception of formality and policies in the organization), (2) *challenge* (perception of challenge and opportunity for sense of achievement), (3) *reward and support* (focus on positive reinforcement rather than punishment), and (4) *social inclusion* (sociability, belonging, and group membership). Campbell *et al*. (1970) suggest: (1) *autonomy/control*; (2) *degree of structure*; (3) *rewards*, and (4) *consideration, warmth and support*. As can be seen, Supervisory support is a constant feature that has been incorporated into the newest measures (Kopelman, Brief and Guzzo, 1990; Koys and DeCotiis; Patterson et al., 2005), which is – why it was chosen for this research, the other reason being that this research is focused on humor's effects in communication, and perceived supervisory support can only occur in leader-follower communication. Managing subordinates by giving support through a positive, constructive and helpful attitude, managers keep in mind and convey the organizational goals that they want to reach. Supervisor support can be defined as the degree to which supervisors value subordinates' contributions and care about subordinates' well-being (Kottke and Sharafinski, 1988). A number of scholars have suggested that supervisor support may

enhance employees' job satisfaction. For example, Eisenberger and Rhoades (2002) maintained that supervisor support may increase employees' job satisfaction through the mechanisms of satisfying employees' socioemotional needs, raising employees' performance– reward expectancies, and signalling the availability of needed help.

## 2.4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADER'S SENSE OF HUMOR AND MANAGERIAL SUPPORT

In the nineteen-sixties it was suggested that leaders transmit their values and goals through the climate they create (Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1960), which was demonstrated in more recent research on leadership's impact on organizational climate (e.g., Scott and Bruce, 1994). Naumann and Bennett (2000) have referred to managers as "climate engineers". Leaders influence individuals' perceptions of organizational climate in two ways, first - through a social learning process – in the course of which group members interact with the leader and observe what important for him or her and what his or her focus is (Bandura, 1986). Thus, group members' behaviours are transmitted by leaders to group members through signals about what is expected and valued in the organization (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994; Schein, 1992).This mode of influence is inherent in the fundamental management functions, those of organizing, leading/controlling and motivating (e.g. Yukl, 2006). The second mode of influence pertains to – *how* a signal is sent. That feature is related to the leader's communicative abilities and thereby to the manager's leadership style. Thus, the quality of leader-member communication is sensitive to the psychological climate dimension of supervisory support. House (1989) (cited in Cilliers and Kossuth, 2002) divided managerial support into four components: informational, appraisal, instrumental and emotional. Recent research (Klem and Schlechter, 2008) supports the idea of importance of managers' communication skills whereby leaders with higher emotional intelligence promote higher organisational psychological climate. In the same manner, sense of humor may be linked to psychological climate and especially to perceived supervisory support because – humor improves communication. Moreover, sense of humor has been found to be related with emotional intelligence (Yip and Martin, 2005), which is why it is important to disentangle the triad of psychological climate, sense of humor, and emotional intelligence,– In this study humor's effect on supervisors' support is investigated by controlling for managers' emotional intelligence.

**This Study Tested hypothesis**

(H1): Managers with higher positive sense of humor, subordinates rate higher perceived Managers support and Involvement to work.

(H1): There are differences between managers, employees, gender and age in a styles of sense of humor.

## 3. METHOD

**Participants**

Two sources of data were collected, from front line managers and their subordinates.

Managers: all together 259: females (n = 136, age M – 40,33, SD – 10,07) and male participants (n = 123, age M – 38,90, SD – 8,88). Data collection was restricted to front-line managers who actually supervise employees, and only employees with no supervisory responsibilities were included in the study.

Employees: data on the psychological climate were collected from 802 employees, with approximately 3 to 4 from each unit, females (n = 588 age, M=37,53; SD=11,30) and males (n = 214, age M=37,18; SD=11,86). Some employees (n = 594) as well, filled sense of humor questionnaires.

Organizations: in research include 259 organizations, only one unit from each organization was chosen for inclusion in this study. All of the companies were located in Riga, the capital of Latvia,

and were engaged in service.

### Procedure

First, organizations were selected from address book, end asked for participation in research by telephone with short explanation of focus – psychological climate with motivation to give feedback of results in it.

Two sorts of data were combined: first, in organization selected manager completed the humor questionnaires (Humor Styles Questionnaire and the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale). Second, after manager complete questionnaire, his(her) subordinates was asked to participate in research, after agreed, completed Organisational psychological climate measure scales – the Supervisory Support and Involvement, as well sense of humor and emotional intelligence measures. Third, data from workers, belongs single unit was calculated by Cohen's kappa coefficient of agreement Supervisory Support Scales was median taken and put against manager's data, so against concrete managers' data (sense of humor and EQ) were median of Supervisory Support of his(her) work unit.

## 4. MEASURES

**Humor Styles Questionnaire** (HSQ) was developed by: Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003) and was translated into Latvian and adapted for the Latvian population by Roze (2007). The HSQ consists of a total of 32 self-report items assessing four different styles of humor, two of which are adaptive and two of which are maladaptive. Each dimension is assessed by 8 items, rated on a 7-point Likert scale that ranges from (1) "totally disagree" to (7) "totally agree." The four humor styles are:

1) Affiliative humor (adaptive other-focused) taps the tendency to say funny things, to tell jokes, to engage in spontaneous witty banter to amuse others, to facilitate relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tensions. It is exemplified by the item: "I laugh and joke a lot with my close friends."

2) Self-enhancing humor (adaptive self-focused) assesses a humorous outlook on life and the tendency to be frequently amused by the incongruities of life, and to maintain a humorous perspective even in the face of stress or adversity. An example of self-enhancing humor is: "Even when I'm by myself, I am often amused by the absurdities of life,"

3) Aggressive humor (maladaptive other-focused) involves the use of sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, ''put-down,'' or disparagement in humor , all of which are seen as means of enhancing oneself at the expense of one's relationships with others. The following item provides an example of aggressive humor: "If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it,"

4) Self-defeating humor (maladaptive self-focused) attempts to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one's own expense as a means of ingratiating oneself or gaining approval, allowing oneself to be the ''butt'' of others' humor, and using humor as a form of defensive denial. "I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh" is an example of this style of humor.

Testing factorial structure of Latvian version of HSQ, find out, that it is somehow different from original (3 items filed another factors).

**Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale** (MSHS) was devised by Thorson and Powell, (1993) and was translated and adapted for the Latvian population by J.Roze (2007) .The MSHS is a self-report scale consisting of 24 statements rated by respondents on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Eighteen statements are positively-phrased and six are negatively-phrased to control for response-set bias. The MSHS has four subscales that distinguish between 1.) humor production (overt use of humor in social situations), 2.) coping humor (trying to see the funny side of things), 3.) humor appreciation (liking humor ), and 4.) humor attitude (approving of humor).

**Develop new Sense of Humor measure**. In this study, factorial structure of both measures not satisfied, especially – MSHS, what is appear in other studies (e.g. Kuiper N.A. et al., 2004). HSQ

Latvian version of questionnaire structure is somehow close to original, but, because of both measures close in structure (has two scales in common – social and coping humor), it gives possibility to combine them together with Exploratory factor analysis five factors was discovered. Somehow they similar privies scales, but have series changes, for example – Social humor scale mostly formed by MSHS, what means that items from HSQ, which privies form Affiliative humor scale, didn't get wait enough, to form this factor. In result, was developed new 5 scales: Social humor (MSHS 11 items, α = .92), Coping humor (HSA 8 items, MHIS – 5, α = .86), Aggressive humor (HSA 7 items, α = .72), Self-defeating humor (HSA 6 items, α = .71), and Dislike of humor (MHIS – 2 items, HSA – 3, α = .74).

**Organizational Climate Measure (OCM)** was developed by Patterson with colleagues (2005), and was translated and adapted for the Latvian population by J.Roze (2010). OCM consists of a total of 82 items with 17 items per scale, each of which was rated on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It assesses the psychological climate in a social unit by means of the following two scales –Supervisory Support (SS) (consisting of 5 items, α =.85, example: "Supervisors here are friendly and easy to approach") and Involvement (I) (consist 6 of items, α =.86, example: "Management involve people when decisions are made that affect them").

# 5. RESULTS

To answer on hypothesis (**H1**), was made correlation between the managers' five styles of sense of humor and employee's perceived SS. and I. ascertained for male and female managers separately.

As we can see (see 1 table), the relationship between the manager's sense of humor scales and SS and I scales exist, and correlations somehow different between gender. For female – managers, employee's perceived SS negatively associated with manager's Dislike of humor ($r = - .18$, $p = 0.05$) – as female – leaders more like humor, the higher subordinates perceived SS from female manager. Employees wiliness to involve (I. scale), don't correlate with any of female - managers sense of humor style.

For male managers, employee's perceived SS, is associated with manager's Social humor ($r = .19$, $p = 0.05$) and employees I scale positively associated with manager's Social humor ($r = .21$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively – Dislike of joking ($r = - 0,21$, $p < 0,1$) – employees who higher rated perceived supervisory support and willingness to engage in the work, their managers rated higher their social humor and more like of humor (for employees I).

Table 1

**Correlation between Humor styles, Supervisory Support and Involvement**

| Gender | Scales | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Female (n=136)** | | | 1. Support | 32.91 | 5.81 | | | | |
| | 2. Involvement | 30.28 | 3.88 | .53 | | | | | |
| | 3. Social humor | 44.46 | 8.82 | - .11 | - .10 | | | | |
| | 4. Coping humor | 53.03 | 10.79 | -.05 | -.14 | .61 | | | |
| | 5. Dislike of joking | 20.04 | 7.23 | - .18 | .01 | - .54 | - .54 | | |
| | 6. Aggressive humor | 21.01 | 7.25 | - .01 | .02 | .18 | .06 | - .05 | |
| | 7. Self-defeating humor | 20.46 | 6.97 | -.07 | -.05 | .36 | .34 | - .14 | .10 |
| **Male (n=123)** | | | 1. Support | 32.41 | 5.56 | | | | |
| | 2. Involvement | 29.83 | 4.49 | .70 | | | | | |
| | 3. Social humor | 45.19 | 8.51 | .19 | .21 | | | | |
| | 4. Coping humor | 51.60 | 11.02 | .07 | .08 | .61 | | | |
| | 5. Dislike of joking | 19.43 | 6.94 | - .11 | - .21 | - .60 | - .42 | | |
| | 6. Aggressive humor | 23.81 | 7.36 | .03 | .04 | .07 | .02 | - .01 | |
| | 7. Self-defeating humor | 19.27 | 7.74 | .03 | .10 | .32 | .49 | - .23 | .36 |

To answer second hypothesis (H2), an analysis of covariance was used to asses difference among employees and managers level of sense of humor styles (Social humor, Coping humor, Aggressive humor, Dislike of humor and Self-defeating humor), controlling gender and age. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was checked and it's met (Leven's test for dependent variation from $p = .11$ till .93). Box's Test, assumption of Equality of Covariance Matrices, as tested and it's met ($p = .16$).

Results indicate (see table 2 and 3) that after controlling age, interaction Position x Gender, no difference were found among sense of humor styles. Its mean, that necessary to look on subeffects separately. First of all – age, its right, that we use it as covariate, because it shows in three sense of humor style. Younger people higher estimate their Social humor ($F(1,853) = 5.33$, $p < .02$), more like humor (Dislike of joking, $F(1,853) = 6.46$, $p < .01$), more use aggressive humor ($F(1,853) = 2.72$, $p < .00$).

Results show gender difference in two sense of humor style – females score higher in Coping humor ($F(1,853) = 4.20$, $p < .04$) and lower on Aggressive humor ($F(1,853) = 9.68$, $p < .00$), than males do.

And managers estimate their sense of humor higher in Social humor ($F(1,853) = 12.54$, $p < .00$), Coping humor ($F(1,853) = 7.07$, $p < .01$) and more like humor ($F(1,853) = 7.94$, $p < .01$), than employees do.

Table 2

**Means and standard deviation groups of employees, managers, age and gender for sense of humor style**

|  | Position | Gender | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social humor | Employees | Female | 43,20 | 9,31 | 451 |
|  |  | Male | 40,71 | 9,74 | 143 |
|  | Managers | Female | 44,56 | 8,74 | 136 |
|  |  | Male | 44,98 | 8,49 | 123 |
| Coping humor | Employees | Female | 51,17 | 10,24 | 451 |
|  |  | Male | 47,16 | 11,34 | 143 |
|  | Managers | Female | 53,16 | 10,88 | 136 |
|  |  | Male | 52,49 | 11,04 | 123 |
| Dislike of joking | Employees | Female | 20,50 | 6,96 | 451 |
|  |  | Male | 22,11 | 7,65 | 143 |
|  | Managers | Female | 19,84 | 7,22 | 136 |
|  |  | Male | 19,62 | 6,98 | 123 |
| Aggressive humor | Employees | Female | 23,02 | 7,22 | 451 |
|  |  | Male | 25,27 | 6,84 | 143 |
|  | Managers | Female | 21,19 | 7,13 | 136 |
|  |  | Male | 23,64 | 7,19 | 123 |
| Self-defeating humor | Employees | Female | 20,79 | 6,28 | 451 |
|  |  | Male | 20,62 | 6,27 | 143 |
|  | Managers | Female | 20,46 | 6,84 | 136 |
|  |  | Male | 19,64 | 7,36 | 123 |

Table 3

**Difference between managers' sense of humor styles and employees, controlling for age, gender**

| Source | | df | M | F | Sig. | eta$^2$ | Observed Power[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Social humor | 1 | 430,41 | 5.33 | .02 | .01 | .63 |
| | Coping humor | 1 | 172,73 | 1.51 | .22 | .00 | .23 |
| | Dislike of joking | 1 | 322,38 | 6.46 | .01 | .01 | .72 |
| | Aggressive humor | 1 | 1017,99 | 2.72 | .00 | .04 | 1.00 |
| | Self-defeating humor | 1 | 123,89 | 2.79 | .10 | .01 | .39 |
| Position | Social humor | 1 | 1013,24 | 12.54 | .00 | .03 | .94 |
| | Coping humor | 1 | 807,43 | 7.07 | .01 | .01 | .76 |
| | Dislike of joking | 1 | 396,06 | 7.94 | .01 | .02 | .80 |
| | Aggressive humor | 1 | 25,12 | .51 | .47 | .00 | .11 |
| | Self-defeating humor | 1 | 90,15 | 2.03 | .15 | .00 | .30 |
| Gender | Social humor | 1 | 99,27 | 1.23 | .27 | .00 | .20 |
| | Coping humor | 1 | 479,93 | 4.20 | .04 | .01 | .53 |
| | Dislike of joking | 1 | 45,44 | .91 | .34 | .00 | .16 |
| | Aggressive humor | 1 | 475,80 | 9.68 | .00 | .02 | .87 |
| | Self-defeating humor | 1 | 20,65 | .47 | .50 | .00 | .10 |
| Position x Gender | Social humor | 1 | 162,95 | 2.02 | .16 | .00 | .29 |
| | Coping humor | 1 | 267,59 | 2.34 | .13 | .00 | .33 |
| | Dislike of joking | 1 | 61,29 | 1.23 | .27 | .00 | .20 |
| | Aggressive humor | 1 | 0,30 | .01 | .94 | .00 | .05 |
| | Self-defeating humor | 1 | 6,62 | .15 | .70 | .00 | .07 |
| Error | Social humor | 469 | 80,81 | | | | |
| | Coping humor | 469 | 114,24 | | | | |
| | Dislike of joking | 469 | 49,90 | | | | |
| | Aggressive humor | 469 | 49,13 | | | | |
| | Self-defeating humor | 469 | 44,35 | | | | |

a. Computed using alpha = ,05

## 6. DISCUSSION

Association between managers' sense of humor and employees perceived supervisory support and wiliness to involve, is not strong as, but is usual for two source correlation, compare with one source. But nonetheless, it's proven that managers' sense of humor is associated with subordinates' perceived supervisory support and involvement, which, with caution, could be applied on psychological climate in general. That's supports of opinion and privies research about humor importance as one of the aspects of organizational social environment "health". These results are

compatible with the findings that support and understanding by supervisors tends to be associated with higher scores on positive indicators of life quality by employees (Moen and Yu, 2000), and with their greater job satisfaction (Decker, 1987).

Found age and gender differences in sense of humor not new on research field (e.g., Dyck and Holtzman, 2013; Martin et al., 2003). Even in everyday life we can notice, that younger people more involve humor in communication and man more like putting down humor.

That's interesting finding, that managers more often use humor, then employee's dose. In quasi experiment design it's difficult to define influence direction, e.g., workers put on managerial position because of they have higher sense of humor or they develop it, when they get the position, but it's more likely second version. Many authors mentioned that humor is good tool to control situation and show status (e.g., Hoption, Barling and Turner, 2013).

Female managers sense of humor association with psychological climate not as strong as it for male managers. Findings are inherently inconclusive, although they may suggest possibilities and stimulate productive speculation. According to Eagly and Karau (2002) and Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2002), managers' role tends to be perceived and described in terms of traits that are closer to the male than female stereotype. Men tend to gravitate to roles which allow them to exercise authority, power and domination. As a possible result of this trend, male managers are perceived as more dominant, which in turn gives males more influence in the group, compared with female managers (Carli, 2001, Rudman and Kilinski, 2000). Meta-analytic research demonstrates (Eagly and Karau, 2002) that subordinates tend to undervalue their female managers' abilities and, possibly may not appreciate their communication and humor skills. As a result, subordinates may not register the effect of female managers' humor upon the psychological climate of their company.

Consequently, employees may not perceive female as leaders because they expect leaders not to limit themselves to positive humor (Decker and Rotundo, 2001), but to use a direct and even humiliating style of humor. For example, humor may be used to indicate that an employee has stepped out of line and that this kind of behaviour is unacceptable in the work group (Terrion and Ashforth, 2002). This may be the reason why there is relationship between humor and psychological climate in men; men's level of aggressive humor is significantly higher, which is in accord with the results of other investigators (for example, Martin et al., 2003; McGhee, 1979; Pollio and Edgerly, 1976). It follows that humor is an auxiliary means for men to be more authoritative and charismatic, which is supported by the results of leadership research (for example, Priest and Swain, 2002) that found that leaders endowed with a sense of humor are perceived as more effective.

The effect of the leaders' sense of humor effect on employees may be traced to the following facets:

(1) At the psychophysiological level, laughter activates brain centres associated with the experience of pleasure (Gervais and Nelson, 2005);

(2) As an indirect mode of influence, humorously couched critical and other negative comments are more readily accepted and less likely to be resented (Mulkay, 1988); and

(3) Persons with a higher sense of humor are perceived more favourably than persons whose sense of humor is low. There is research support for these expectations, for example, in demonstrating that goal attainment is facilitated by humor (Decker and Rotondo, 2001).

Further research needed to pinpoint the mechanisms of humor that affect management – humor effect on perceiver.

## 7. CONCLUSION

At the most general level, it can be concluded that managers' sense of humor matters in promoting the positive aspects of psychological climate, especially supervisory support, as perceived by employees. However, the impact of the sense of humor is neither uniform nor simple, and its effect upon the psychological variables is mediated, above all, by gender, age and possibly –

experience. The style of humor is also important, with positive and negative humor producing different and often divergent effects. The nature of the present study, which employed a quasi-experimental design, does not make it possible to determine causality, but it does appear that the role of the sense of humor in shaping the psychological climate of the workplace is noteworthy. Thus, the findings of the present study both corroborate and extend the results on the role of the sense of humor in male managers (e.g. Dragoni, 2005) and its contribution to more effective leadership (Decker and Rotondo, 2001).

This result underlines the importance of giving authority and credibility to emotions within the leader-followers dyadic relationship within the organizational context.

## 8. LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTION

First, in this research data about managers' sense of humor were collected only by means of self -report measures. Employees' ratings of managers' sense of humor should be obtained in continuing this line of investigation. Second, the gender composition within work teams and in the entire pool of employee participants should be ascertained and included in the research design of future investigations. Specifically, four groups should be constituted: male employees rating female managers, female employees rating male managers, female employees rating female managers, and male employees rating male managers. Mixed gender composition within the work group may also be relevant to include as a variable in future studies.

Third, it should be kept in mind that the present study was conducted in Latvia, but most of the research findings and theoretical formulations on which the present project is based originated in Western Europe and North America. International replication and extension of the procedures and findings of this study is highly desirable, eventually followed by hypothesis-driven cross-national comparisons.

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