

# **The effect of leader and follower humor on leader, team and meeting effectiveness**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the relationship between follower and leader humor and leader, team and meeting effectiveness. The goal of this study was to find out if leader and follower humor have different effects on leader, team and meeting effectiveness, and if leader humor stimulates follower humor. We used a video-observation method to monitor behaviors of 29 leaders and 405 followers during staff meetings of a large Dutch public sector organization. Surveys were used to measure followers' perceptions of leader, team and meeting effectiveness. The results showed a significant correlation meaning that follower humor has a positive effect on leader effectiveness. Moreover, two almost significant relationships have been found between follower humor and leader humor, and between follower humor and meeting effectiveness. These findings are being discussed at the end of the paper.

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## **Keywords**

Leader humor, follower humor, leader effectiveness, team effectiveness, meeting effectiveness.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Humor is fun and everyone is aware of the benefits of humor for our well being, that is why humor is used every day. A good understanding of the effect of humor in the workplace is becoming more important, because nowadays more people expect the workplace to be fun (Romero and Pescosolido, 2008). Humor has more effects on the working environment besides creating a fun and attractive environment. Studies have shown that positive humor (i.e., not sarcastic or making fun of someone else) reduces stress; makes people more receptive; and helps to ensure good communication (Morreal, 1991; Romero and Pescosolido, 2008).

Besides the importance of understanding the effect of humor in organizations, it is also important to understand the effect of humor in a group setting, i.e., staff meetings. To examine the effect of humor in a group setting thoroughly, the distinction between the effects of humor used by leaders and humor used by followers has to be made. Extant literature often tries to explain leader effectiveness by studying the behaviors of leaders; we would like to extend the research in this area by studying the effects of both leader and follower behaviors on leader effectiveness. "The significance of following for leadership means that our understanding of leadership is incomplete without an understanding of followership" (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe and Carsten, 2014).

The goal of this study is to examine the effect of humor used by leaders and followers in a team context. With this study we aim to contribute to the extant research by using using an unique video-observation method to examine the relationship between the use of humor in a team interaction setting and leader effectiveness, team effectiveness and meeting effectiveness.

In order to examine these relationships, the following research question is made:

*"What is the effect of the use of humor by leaders and followers on leadership effectiveness and team effectiveness?"*

## 2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

### 2.1 Leader effectiveness

To define leader effectiveness we use Colbert and Witt's definition of goal-focused leadership "leadership that uses policies and practices to communicate organizational goals and align employees' efforts with these goals" (2009, p. 790). An effective leader is effective in meeting organizational requirements and meeting in employees' job-related needs (Bass and Avolio, 1995). According to Bass and Avolio, a transformational leader exhibits charismatic behaviors, provides intellectual stimulation, wakes inspirational motivation by his followers and handles followers with individualized consideration (Bass and Avolio, 1997). Dubinsky, Yammarino, and Jolson (1995) explored relationships between personal characteristics and dimensions of transformational leadership and found that leaders use humor to develop relationships and relieve tense situations when desirable and appropriate, with humor that is respectful of others. They suggest that the more leaders use humor on the job, the greater is their ability to be charismatic and to inspire subordinates.

According to Romero and Cruthirds (2006) understanding the multifunctional role of humor in organizations is important when working with groups that are driven by the rules of human interaction. It is important to understand how this can contribute to effective personnel management in this context. They state that using humor in organizations can provide the organization valuable tools to manage effective communication and motivate staff; and that humor can be used to secure power and to reduce social distance between leaders and followers which contributes to leader effectiveness (Romero and Cruthirds, 2006). In their study Priest and Swain (2002) found a strong relationship between leader effectiveness and the use of humor by leaders. Their results showed that leaders are more effective when they are perceived to be humorous by followers, than leaders who are perceived to be not or less humorous. These results prove the existence of a relationship between leader effectiveness and the use of humor. We would like to extend this study by using an observational method next to questionnaires.

Priest and Swain (2002) suggest the relationship works both ways; effective leadership tend to create conditions under which good humor and good feelings prosper. They state that effective leaders are perceived to use amiable and good-hearted jokes to put people at ease, to control group moral by using humor and be able to see the point of jokes (Priest and Swain, 2002). Avolio, Howell, and Sosik (1999) found that the use of humor by leaders has a positive direct relationship with leader performance appraisal and unit performance. Their results showed a positive relationship between active leadership, transformational or contingent reward leadership and the use of humor. In their study a positive connection between employees' ratings of supervisors' use of humor and managerial performance was found. They also state that a transformational leader's use of humor enhances individual and unit performance and may signal to followers that they can handle what they see as out of control; these kinds of leaders build confidence in followers (Avolio et al., 1999). Leaders building confidence in followers and enhancing performance are effective leaders; building on the studies mentioned above, we think the use of humor by leaders has a stronger relationship with leader effectiveness than the use of humor by followers.

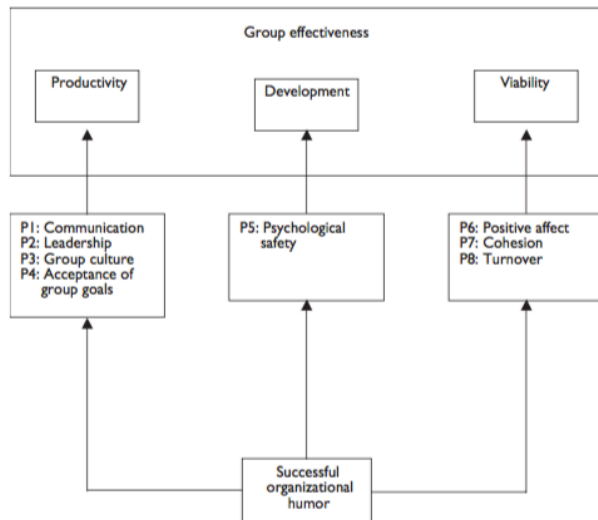
*H1: Leader humor has a stronger relationship with leader effectiveness than follower humor.*

### 2.2 Team effectiveness

Cameron and Green (2012) define a team as a group that is restricted in size and works together interdependently based on common overarching objectives in order to achieve its common goal. Usually, the different members of the teams are mutually dependent on each other (Spencer, 1993). In this research effective teams are defined with the three dimensions of effectiveness of Cohen and Bailey (1997). The first dimension is based on the team's impact on performance effectiveness that is evaluated through output quantity and quality, e.g., productivity, quality or efficiency. In the second dimension effectiveness can be assessed by the attitudes of team members, e.g., employee satisfaction or team commitment. The third dimension is based on behavioral outcomes, e.g., times absent, safety or employee turnover (Cohen and Bailey, 1997).

Romero and Pescosolido (2008) developed the Group Humor Effectiveness Model to explain the positive relationship between humor and group effectiveness. Their model is based on Hackman's (1986) framework of group

effectiveness. In this framework effectiveness is composed of three aspects, a. productivity, b. individual development and c. team viability (Hackman, 1986). Productivity is stated as the degree to which the group's product or service meets the needs of stakeholders, individual development as the ability of the individual to learn from his or her experiences within the group and from other group members, and team viability is the degree to which group members are able to continue working together in the future (Hackman, 1986).



**Figure 1** Group Humor Effectiveness Model (GHEM)

**Figure 1. Group Humor Effectiveness Model (taken from Romero and Pescosolido, 2008, p. 410).**

Assuming that humor is appropriate and well received, the model of Romero and Pescosolido explains the mechanisms by which humor contributes to group effectiveness. In this research we focus on the use of positive humor. One of the most important functions of humor in the workplace is the development and conservation of good relations with fellow workers (Holmes, 2000; Holmes, 2006). In her research Holmes (2007) provided evidence that humor contributes to the construction of effective workplace relationships and stimulates intellectual activity of achieving workplace objectives.

Humor is particularly relevant to today's workers, they expect work to be enjoyable and the workplace to be fun: humor contributes to employee retention and group viability by creating an attractive and fun work environment (Romero and Pescosolido, 2008). Romero and Cruthirds (2006) mention that humor facilitates honest and freer communication. Humor can be used to lighten the atmosphere at work, create an open voice climate and make it easier for followers to discuss their expected performance (Avolio et al., 1999). In this way humor contributes to team effectiveness, because followers have a more clear vision of what is expected of them. When followers work in an enjoyable atmosphere, e.g., where humor is allowed, team effectiveness might be higher than when followers do not enjoy their workplace. According to Romero and Cruthirds (2006) humor can also fix problems in the workplace and promote healthy social relationships. Hence, humor can stimulate higher levels of collective productivity (Avolio et al., 1999). Moreover Romero and Pescosolido (2008) suggest that humor can result in the reduction in social distance building closer relationships between leaders and followers and stimulating free communication within the group, which is in

accordance with high group performance. They suggest that leaders could manage group emotions with humor in order to achieve higher group performance. Building on these findings we propose:

*H2: Follower humor has a stronger relationship with team effectiveness than leader humor.*

## 2.3 Meeting effectiveness

To study the relationship between humor and meeting effectiveness, we defined meeting effectiveness by building on the work of Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, and Burnfield (2006). Meetings can be defined as purposeful work-related interactions between at least two individuals. Their interaction has more structure than a normal chat but less structure than an informational lecture from a leader to a follower. Meetings are important to achieve goals that are set, because meetings often integrate and coordinate work activities of employees (Rogelberg et al., 2006). It is important to spend time to increase meeting effectiveness because frequent bad meetings are likely to have lasting psychological effects on the employees according to Nixon and Littlepage (1992). The leader can make meetings more effective by making the meetings more relevant for employees (Leach, Rogelberg, Warr, and Burnfield, 2009; Nixon and Littlepage, 1992). The leader can also play the role of facilitator in meetings, because leaders have a higher attendance in meetings than non-supervisors (Rogelberg et al., 2006). Nixon and Littlepage (1992) state that effective meetings are a more satisfying experience than a frustrating one and that all members participate in effective meetings. According to Rogelberg et al. (2006) effective meetings provide people with an opportunity to acquire useful information, to meet, socialize, or network with people.

Lehmann-Willenbrock and Allen (2014) found that humor patterns are meaningfully related to team performance, both immediately and over time, and highlight the potential of humor as a positive team resource. Their research shows that humor patterns are related to team performance, not humor attempts by themselves (Lehmann-Willenbrock and Allen, 2014). We think our observational method can show that individual humor attempts contribute to team performance, because by using humor people can stimulate each other to use humor. When humor improves functional communication, i.e., the team communication process, in team meetings, it might also have a positive relationship with meeting effectiveness because communication is important in team meetings and in human interactions (Romero and Cruthirds, 2006). Avolio, Howell, and Sosik (1999) state that in contingent reward leadership behavior humor can be used to make sure followers really heard the message, i.e., making a joke to verify if someone really understood what just has been said, and therefore use humor as a contribution to meeting effectiveness. According to Romero and Pescosolido (2008) the use of humor creates an instance of agreement between two persons, which can eventually make persuasion easier. This can contribute to the effectiveness of a meeting. Drawing upon the results of these studies we hypothesize the following:

*H3: Follower and leader humor both have a positive relationship with meeting effectiveness.*

## 2.4 Leader humor and follower humor

In their study Lehmann-Willenbrock and Allen (2014) focussed on positive, well-intentioned humor in teams and by coworkers, rather than negative, sarcastic humor. In this research we defined humor with the Romero and Cruthirds' definition of organizational humor: "amusing communications that produce positive emotions and cognitions in the individual, group or organization" (Romero and Cruthirds, 2006, p. 59). The positive affect reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert, and is related to social activity and positive emotional reactivity. High positive affect is a state of high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988, p. 1063). If humor is a positive emotional reactivity, then it should increase the concentration and energy level.

According to Romero and Pescosolido (2008) group leaders can use humor to create an open environment in which all group members are encouraged to speak their minds. This could lead to followers being encouraged to speak their minds by using humor (and potentially lead to an open voice climate, where team members freely share ideas and information, because they feel positive).

Avolio, Howell, and Sosik (1999) examined how humor moderated the impact of leadership on individual and unit-level performance by comparing the use of humor in three leadership styles: transformational, contingent reward and laissez-faire. They state that a transformational leader's use of humor may reassure followers that he or she has enough confidence and control to joke about a stressful situation confronting them (Avolio et al., 1999). This implies that a relationship can be found between leaders using humor and followers using humor, the use of humor by leaders might stimulate followers to use humor. Building on the results found by Avolio et al. (1999), we hypothesize that the use of humor by leaders has a positive effect on the use of humor by followers.

*H4: Leader humor has a positive effect on follower humor.*

*H5: The relationship between leader humor and leader, team and meeting effectiveness is mediated by follower humor.*

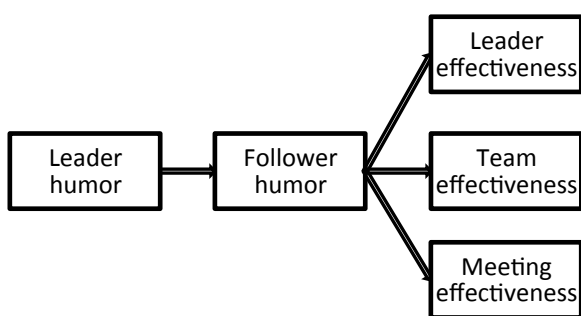


Figure 2. Theoretical model.

## 3. METHODS

### 3.1 Design of study

In this cross-sectional study design, two different data sources are used: (1) a reliable video-coding method that monitored followers' and leaders' behaviors during staff meetings, and (2) a survey that measured followers' perception of the leader.

The various behaviors of leaders and followers have been observed by systematic video coding. The survey measured the perception of followers about leader effectiveness, team effectiveness and meeting effectiveness. This variety of methods and sources reduces common source bias in this study (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003).

### 3.2 Sampling

The leader sample consisted of 29 leaders working in a large Dutch public sector organization. The sample was compromised of 20 male (69.0%) and 9 female (31.0%) leaders. The average age of the leader sample was 50.9 years old, ranging from 42 to 61 (SD=5.2). In total all 29 leaders filled in the questionnaires, which results in a response rate of 100%.

The follower's sample consisted of 405 employees, employed in the same large Dutch public sector organization. The sample was compromised of 261 male (64.4%) and 104 female (25.7%) followers. The average age of the follower's sample was 49.3 years old, ranging from 21 to 64 (SD=10.2). This is not a 100% response rate because 365 followers filled in their gender and 355 followers filled in their age.

Directly after the video recorded staff meeting both the followers and leaders were asked to fill in a questionnaire, including questions about the team meeting.

### 3.3 Measures

Leader effectiveness, team effectiveness and meeting effectiveness perceived by the followers were measured by the followers' ratings given in the survey. The frequency of humor used by leaders and followers was coded with the video-observation method.

### 3.4 Video observation method

During randomly selected staff meetings in the ordinary course of daily work 29 leaders and 405 followers were filmed. To carefully code and analyze these video recordings, we used the behavioral software program "The Observer XT" which has been developed by Noldus, Trienes, Hendriksen, Jansen, and Jansen for the analysis, management and presentation of observational data (Noldus et al., 2000).

Six third year students of the Bachelor International Business Administration and seven Master students of the University of Twente received training about the coding program and have coded the videos. In addition, the students learnt how to apply the 20-pages behavioral coding scheme within the software (Van der Weide, 2007). Clear instructions, the behavioral coding scheme and coding in pairs increased the accuracy of coding the different behaviors.

Pre-defined sets of behaviors were coded for each follower and leader to establish reliable and valid results, by means of the behavioral coding scheme. Per video two observers coded each video independently to avoid subjectivity bias; to determine inter-reliability the observers compared the results together and through the confusion error matrix by "The Observer XT". The inter-reliability was defined as the percentage of agreement of a specific code within a time range of two seconds. When disagreements or significant differences occurred the observers re-viewed, discussed and re-coded the affected fragment. The obtained average inter-reliability rate in this study was 95%.

Each time the team meetings were recorded by three video cameras, with each camera showing a different angle of the

group positioning; this was to ensure the best possible sight of the leader and follower behaviors. Erickson (1992) and Kent and Foster (1997) state that shortly after entering the meeting room, the presence of the camera is forgotten and leaders and followers behave naturally whereas observers who attend meetings often cause more obtrusive and abnormal behaviors of leaders and followers. Therefore in this study video cameras are used instead of outsiders sitting in the same room, observing the meeting and taking notes. By using video cameras observer bias is prevented and the meetings were able to take place without interferences.

### 3.5 Behavioral coding scheme

In order to capture specific leadership behaviors during the daily work practices a behavioral coding scheme has been developed (Gupta, Wilderom, and Van Hillegersberg, 2009; Nijhuis, Hulsman, Wilderom, and Van den Berg, 2009; Van der Weide, 2007).

Bales (1950) and Borgatta (1964) developed a solid base for the video coding scheme we used in this study. Both the authors observed, without using tape-recording devices, the interactions processes between leaders and followers in their early studies. They made a distinction between three broadly defined behaviors: neutral task-oriented behavior, positive-social emotional behavior and the remaining socio-emotional behavior. Bales' (1950) and Borgatta's (1964) exploratory work provided a practical scheme for the coding of a range of leadership behaviors (Yukl, 2002). Feyerherm (1994) added some task-oriented and social-oriented behaviors to the work of Bales and Borgatta (1950; 1964) and extended their work by using an experimental approach towards measuring the leadership behaviors. The coding schemes of Bales (1950), Borgatta (1964), and Feyerherm (1994) have two important commonalities. First, all three assess the directly observable behavior. Second, all three studies use behavioral schemes to code leader behavior in a group context (Avolio, Howell, and Sosik, 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1995; Pearce, Sims, Cox, Ball, Schnell, Smith, and Treviño, 2003; Yukl, Gordon, and Taber, 2002). In the development of the behavioral coding scheme the behavioral taxonomy of Yukl (2002) was used as well.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The objective of this study was to examine how humor could influence leader effectiveness, team effectiveness and meeting effectiveness. In addition, this study attempts to explain the relationship between a leader's use of humor and the follower's use of humor. We made use of the IBM program SPSS. Linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived humor by leaders and followers (both in terms of frequency) and leader effectiveness; team effectiveness; and meeting effectiveness. The Pearson correlation test was executed first: to examine if there is any significant correlation between perceived humor by leaders and followers (both in terms of frequency) and leader effectiveness, team effectiveness and meeting effectiveness.

## 4. RESULTS

Table 1 (on the next page) presents the correlation between the dependent variables leader effectiveness; team effectiveness; meeting effectiveness, and the independent variables: leader and follower humor. As the table shows, one significant

correlation has been found between follower humor and leader effectiveness ( $r = .320$ ,  $p = .091$ , 1-tailed). There are no significant correlations between leader humor and leader effectiveness, team or meeting effectiveness. The control variables are not included in the table because they did not show significant correlations with the dependent and independent variables.

Table 2 (on the next page) shows the multiple regression analysis between the predictors: leader and follower humor, and the outcome variables: leader, team and meeting effectiveness. In model 1 leader humor was the only predictor, in model 2 both leader humor and follower humor were the predictors. The control variables are not included in this table, but having included the control variables showed the same results. The duration of leader and follower humor showed no results, so we left duration out of the analysis and continued with frequency of leader humor and follower humor.

The multiple regression analysis showed no significant results. The ANOVA test for leader effectiveness results were Model 1:  $F(1, 27) = .813$ ,  $MSE = .367$ ,  $p = .375$  (n.s.) and Model 2:  $F(2, 26) = 1.574$ ,  $MSE = .350$ ,  $p = .226$  (n.s.). The results for team effectiveness were Model 1:  $F(1, 27) = .004$ ,  $MSE = .289$ ,  $p = .948$  (n.s.) and Model 2:  $F(2, 26) = .873$ ,  $MSE = .281$ ,  $p = .430$  (n.s.). And the results for meeting effectiveness were Model 1:  $F(1, 27) = .016$ ,  $MSE = .350$ ,  $p = .900$  (n.s.) and Model 2:  $F(2, 26) = 1.061$ ,  $MSE = .336$ ,  $p = .316$  (n.s.).

The results of the regression and correlation tests mean that hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3 have to be rejected. For hypothesis 1 (*leader humor has a stronger relationship with leader effectiveness than follower humor*) leader humor showed no significant correlation with leader effectiveness. The outcome for hypothesis 2 (*follower humor has a stronger relationship with team effectiveness than leader humor*) is the same, no significant correlation was found between follower humor and team effectiveness.

For hypothesis 3 (*follower and leader humor both have a positive relationship with meeting effectiveness*) the results showed no significant correlation between leader humor and meeting effectiveness. However the results showed a close to significant correlation between follower humor and meeting effectiveness ( $r = .268$ ,  $p = .160$ , 1-tailed). In spite of this finding, hypothesis 3 has to be rejected.

Hypothesis 4 (*leader humor has a positive effect on follower humor*) has to be rejected as well. However, for hypothesis 4 an almost significant positive relationship exists between leader humor and follower humor ( $r = .308$ ,  $p = .104$ , 1-tailed). This would mean if this relationship was significant, that leader humor leads to follower humor (or the other way round). Hypothesis 5 (*the relationship between leader humor and leader, team and meeting effectiveness is mediated by follower humor*) is accepted, because of the significant positive correlation between follower humor and leader effectiveness.

We can say that follower humor leads to leader effectiveness and, if the results were significant, we could say that follower humor mediates the relationship between leader humor and leader effectiveness and meeting effectiveness. We think that future research with a larger sample group can result in significant positive relationships. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next paragraph of this paper.

**Table 1. Pearson correlation.**

Variables (N=29)	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Leader effectiveness	5.21	0.60				
2. Team effectiveness	4.95	0.53	.55**			
3. Meeting effectiveness	4.72	0.58	.73**	.54**		
4. Leader humor	2.95	2.04	.17	-.01	.02	
5. Follower humor	0.51	0.42	.32+	.23	.27	.31

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

+ Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (1-tailed  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2. Multiple regression analysis.**

	Leader effectiveness		Team effectiveness		Meeting effectiveness	
Model	1	2	1	2	1	2
Leader humor Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	.17	.08	-.01	-.09	.02	-.06
Follower humor Standardised Coefficients (Beta)		.30		.26		.29
$\Delta R$ Square	.03	.08	.00	.06	.00	.08
R Square	.03	.11	.00	.06	.00	.08

\*  $p < 0.05$

Note:

Model 1: leader humor (predictor).

Model 2: leader humor & follower humor (predictors).

Outcome variables: leader effectiveness, team effectiveness, meeting effectiveness.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the extant theory of organizational humor but also to the theories about followership, by providing significant evidence for the positive relationship between the use of humor by followers and the follower's perceived leader effectiveness. "Followership research, consistent with Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) description of 'follower-based' approaches (p. 223), adopts the follower as the primary focus and explores how followership behaviors are related to organizational outcomes of interest (e.g., leadership, performance)" (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera and McGregor, 2010, p. 543).

Past researchers studied the importance of followership in leadership research (Carsten et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). "Without followers and following behaviors there is no leadership. This means that following behaviors are a crucial component of the leadership process" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014, p. 83). To understand leadership we must understand followership according to Uhl-Bien et al. (2014). In our

research we tried to find significant relationships by looking at both leader and follower humor; remarkably our results showed that follower humor contributes to leader effectiveness. We also found that leader humor and follower humor are close to significant correlated. Does this mean that leader humor leads to follower humor or the other way round? We think that follower humor mediates the relationship between leader humor and leader, team and meeting effectiveness because leader humor does not directly affect followers' perceived leader, team and meeting effectiveness in this study. However leader humor creates an atmosphere where followers are welcome to use humor and it reduces social distance between leaders and followers (Romero and Cruthirds, 2006). We believe that if our sample group had been larger, the evidence for the mediator role of follower humor would have been significant.

In literature about leadership effectiveness is a lot of focus on the leader and leader behavior; leadership effectiveness is explained from a leader-centric approach (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Our study showed evidence of the importance of studying follower behaviors in detail, with a focus on the relationship between follower humor and leader, team and



meeting effectiveness.

In our research the effect of follower humor seems to be stronger than the effect of leader humor on leader, team and meeting effectiveness. Based on the design of this study, we cannot draw firm conclusions regarding why we found follower humor to be more affective than leader humor; however, our findings do raise interesting questions regarding these effects. For instance, why is follower humor a stronger predictor than leader humor? Is humor contagious and/or perhaps habitual and/or reciprocal? For future research these questions are very interesting to answer.

Lehmann-Willenbrock and Allen (2014) state that future research could examine both positive and negative types of humor in a team interaction context (e.g., such as a meeting setting) nonverbal and nonintentional humor and the effect of the presence of supervisors in meetings on humor patterns. We did not study the effects of negative humor. It might be interesting to study the differences of the effect of positive and negative humor used by both leaders and followers. Maybe negative humor (e.g., sarcasm) is not positively related to leader, team or meeting effectiveness. Future sequential analysis can be practiced with systematic observation and trained observers (Bakeman and Quara, 2011); and the coding scheme could be extended with the distinction between positive and negative types of humor.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

One of the limitations of this study is the small sample size. Another limitation is that only one organization has been studied. The sample group consists of leaders and followers from a Dutch organization in the public sector. If the sample group included another sector, more organizations or international organizations, we would get a better view of how humor effects leader, team or meeting effectiveness in a group context. Also when more organizations are being studied, the larger the sample size with the number of followers, leaders and teams, which will increase the chance to obtain significant results. Besides the focus on one organization, this research is limited because the organization we studied is active in the public sector. When the focus of this study was on a company or a private sector organization the results might have been different. This study is also limited because we only studied positive types of humor.

A suggestion for future research is to examine whether leader humor leads to follower humor or the other way round. Or to examine why we experienced follower humor to be a stronger predictor than leader humor. It is important that future research on organizational humor is focused on follower behaviors, because many studies are already focused on leadership behaviors (Carsten et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Another possibility for related future research is to study the effects of negative types of humor (e.g., such as sarcasm) on leader, team and meeting effectiveness. It might be interesting to study the differences in effect of negative and positive humor used by leaders and followers. Also the use of humor in public sector organizations can be compared with

organizations in the private sector. Future research can also focus on the study of humor itself. It would be very interesting to get an answer on the following question "Is humor contagious and/or perhaps habitual and/or reciprocal?"

## 7. CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to examine the effect of humor in a team interaction setting on leader, team and meeting effectiveness. We examined if there was a difference between the leaders' and followers' use of humor. During this research we focused on the positive type of humor. This study tried to answer the following research question:

*"What is the effect of the use of humor by leaders and followers on leadership effectiveness and team effectiveness?"*

We answer this question with the significant finding that the use of humor by followers contributes to leadership effectiveness. Unfortunately we did not find significant results to give a reliable answer on whether the use of humor affects team effectiveness and if leader humor leads to leadership effectiveness. This paper could still be a good base for further research on follower behaviors in a team interaction context, because of the close to significant results on team and meeting effectiveness. More study can be done to explain leadership effectiveness from the view of followers. We conclude that more research on the behaviors of followers is needed.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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