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THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract. People believe that leadership is a way to improve their personal, professional and social lives. That is why there has always been an interest in this phenomenon. Researchers have tried to find out what characteristics differentiate leaders from other people and what qualities make them successful. The qualities of a leader - intuition and the ability to see the future, the ability to motivate and encourage employees - occur especially during critical crisis situations. They need to be able to identify and solve problems in a timely manner, and ultimately lead the organization in the right direction.

The current reality created by the corona virus, the massive scale of the epidemic and its unpredictability place great demands on leaders in their professional activities. As Vladimir Papava points out, it is true that the coronavirus by its very nature is primarily a medical problem, but it has created particular difficulties for the economy. In particular, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, it became necessary to minimize contacts between people, which is why many firms had to stop operating (Papava, 2020).

This sudden sequence of events, which develops rapidly, leads to a high degree of uncertainty, disorientation, a sense of lost control, and exacerbates emotional disorder. In such a situation, in order to maintain the organizational environment, great importance is attached to the leader, his / her personal characteristics and ability to lead the activity.

The aim of the paper is to determine whether Covid-19 had the desired characteristics of leadership and to determine whether the desired traits for leaders changed during the pandemic. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: to determine what importance is attached to the qualities of a leader in a pandemic, and to identify those traits that have become more important during a pandemic. The study identifies the challenges that leaders face because of the coronavirus. The analysis of these issues will help us to find the desired characteristics of a leader in the current reality and to develop recommendations for shaping the organizational environment in such a way that it is possible to implement effective leadership.

The results obtained will be valuable as they will enable people to find in pandemic conditions the ability to develop characteristics that will help them succeed in their careers and personal lives. Managers will analyze the qualities that will help them not lose the trust and respect of employees in a crisis situation, and with the help of which they will be able to save and move the organization forward. According to Peter Drucker, the results of creative activities of entrepreneurs affect not only the economy, but also society (Bedianashvili, 2017: 11), so successful leaders can be considered the basis of successful business, successful economy and the success of the country.

The reality created by the Covid pandemic has brought new demands on leaders. They should try to create a psychologically safe environment to enable employees to express their potential. In this new reality, leaders have a greater responsibility to protect employee well-being, ensure their involvement, productivity, and create an appropriate environment for the generation of new ideas.

Analysis of secondary data shows that the importance of resilience and compassion, emotional intelligence, increased during the pandemic. This suggests that in times of crisis, great attention should be paid to understanding the feelings and opinions of employees, to establishing a sincere relationship with them. The importance of effective communication has also increased. Expressing opinions openly and correctly became especially valuable for staff during a pandemic.

The second important finding presented in the paper is the reduction of the importance of technical skills and authority. As it turned out, during the pandemic period, there was a shift from relatively rigorous skills to more humane, milder skills and competencies.

KEYWORDS: LEADERSHIP, COVID PANDEMIC, LEADER CHARACTERISTICS, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS.

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ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND ASSESSMENT OF PANDEMIC IMPACT

The qualities that make a person a good leader can vary depending on the organization, the team, the work environment. Leadership also varies by style and, consequently, a leader with each style of management is distinguished by different characteristics. Every leader has a special style of leadership - according to Michael Burke, he is innate. Leaders realize their own style of management and try to align with its team. They learn about themselves, their management methods, and try to build relationships individually with each member of the team to inspire and motivate them.

In his paper, K.A. Hassan highlights the qualities of leadership that should characterize a good leader in the 21st century. These are:

- Honesty. Honesty is the integration of external actions and internal values. These types of leaders are highly ethical and believe that honesty, effort and reliability are the foundation of success. On the other hand, the organization, employees, those around them are somewhat a reflection of the leader, so when a leader attaches great importance to honest and ethical behavior, team members also share his or her actions and the organizational environment is significantly improved;
- Vision and inspiration. Leaders need to have a clear vision of the future, they need to know what they want to achieve and in what way they can achieve it. But the existence of a vision is not enough, the leader must convince, must inspire those around him to share this vision;
- Communications. A good leader is an excellent communicator. He has the ability to describe clearly and succinctly what he wants to do. These types of leaders interact with employees on a daily basis and in this way teach them to trust. They are also active listeners;
- Decision making and delegation of authority. The decision-making process combines different factors such as: knowledge, experience, competence, personality type, different environmental conditions and unforeseen failures;
- Courage. Leadership requires courage, and a leader needs courage to remain honest, to honestly share his views with those around him, to tell the truth, to deviate from established norms, to break the status quo. Courage is the power of faith to do things right;
- Justice and kindness. In a fair environment, people reward a leader with loyalty and honesty. A leader who is fair or impartial may not always make the best decisions, but he or she is highly respected for his or her fairness (Maxwell, 1998). Along with justice, compassion, humility, and kindness emphasize a leader's strength, not his weaknesses;
- Knowledge and competence. Acquiring knowledge

is a difficult and long process and cannot be completed without significant investment. Formal and non-formal education should be provided constantly to deepen knowledge. Competence does not mean that a leader should be the foremost expert in all areas of the entire organization, although he or she should be able to demonstrate competence;

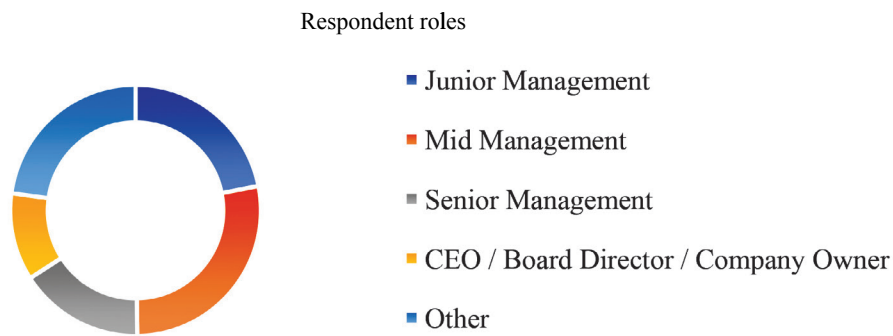
- Creativity: Creativity is the ability to think differently. This ability gives leaders the opportunity to see things that others cannot see, to discover new directions, new opportunities, and to give followers the impetus to pursue a new vision;
- Sense of humor and optimism. A sense of humor is vital to creating a healthy organizational environment. The leader must be able to relieve tension and boredom. Humor breaks the ice and immediately creates a sense of familiarity and intimacy for employees (Peters & Waterman, 2004). Friendship and extraversion, on the other hand, are positively related to leadership effectiveness;
- Intuition. Intuition plays a big role in making decisions in conditions of uncertainty. It has been proven that every successful leader possesses a certain power of intuition.

A manager can not be a leader if he does not have a high level of emotional intelligence, because it is very difficult to have a follower and influence employees, if you do not deeply and well understand other people's emotions and do not know how to influence them both consciously and subconsciously. (Kharkheli & Morchiladze, 2018: 83)

The new reality requires a new style of management from the organization, led by a fundamentally new type of leader, which should be characterized by three main features: caring for employees, caring for customers and caring for the community as a whole; Faith in tomorrow, faith in self and people; Calmness in thoughts, speech and actions (Mkheidze, 2016).

In 2018, just before the pandemic began, leadership development consultants Jack Zenger and Joseph Faulkman published the results of their research on the skills that leaders need to succeed in their positions. They asked more than 300,000 business leaders to learn from the 16 key leadership skills listed. The four best competencies were identified. After processing the obtained results, we were offered a dozen desirable qualities for leaders (Economy, 2018). These ten look like this:

- Employee motivation and inspiration;
- Honesty;
- Problem analysis and solution;
- Results management;
- Strong and fruitful relationships;
- Establishing relationships;
- Technical and professional knowledge;
- Strategic vision;
- Development of others;
- Innovations.

FIG. N1. Distribution of respondents according to the role performed.

Source: (Valentová, 2021).

The aim of the paper is to identify how these priorities changed, what types of skills became important during the pandemic, and what skills employees began to appreciate.

Today's reality, created by Covid Pandemic, affects all areas of economic and public life. Remote work shift also has an impact on organizational leadership. Leaders are the navigators of teams and organizations, so they need to be able to give employees the desired direction for their expectations. In crisis situations, leaders need not a predetermined response plan but the right behavior and thinking (Valentová, 2021). Covid Pandemic has enabled leaders to question the status quo and reconsider business approaches. The pandemic has also led to a reassessment of desirable qualities for leadership.

In the summer of 2020, the Global Alliance in Management Education (CEMS) conducted a survey of its members. The aim of the research was to identify the characteristics and characteristics of leaders that would be necessary for successful performance in the new reality. 1711 respondents from 71 countries participated in the study. The shows their distribution according to the role performed.

Respondents in the study were from different industries and sectors, such as: healthcare, consulting services, financial services, consumer goods markets, technologies.

The vast majority of respondents (87%) believe that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on business and teams and that the changes made will last a long time - in some cases permanently (23%). More than half (55%) believe that these changes will be both negative and positive. The majority of respondents are concerned about the negative impact of Covid-19 on income and employment, with short-term business losses, declining export volumes and falling demand.

The study aimed to identify the key traits of a leader that would be needed to move forward during a pandemic. The majority of respondents said that it was necessary to balance the characteristics of "traditional" leadership with more "humane" characteristics. While strategic vision and focus on outcomes still remained important characteristics, other traits such as empathy, communication skills, and resilience became more valuable than ever before.

In the research process, respondents had to select three key characteristics that would be important to a leader be-

fore and after the pandemic. The results obtained ranked the characteristics of the leader. The results are presented in the figure.

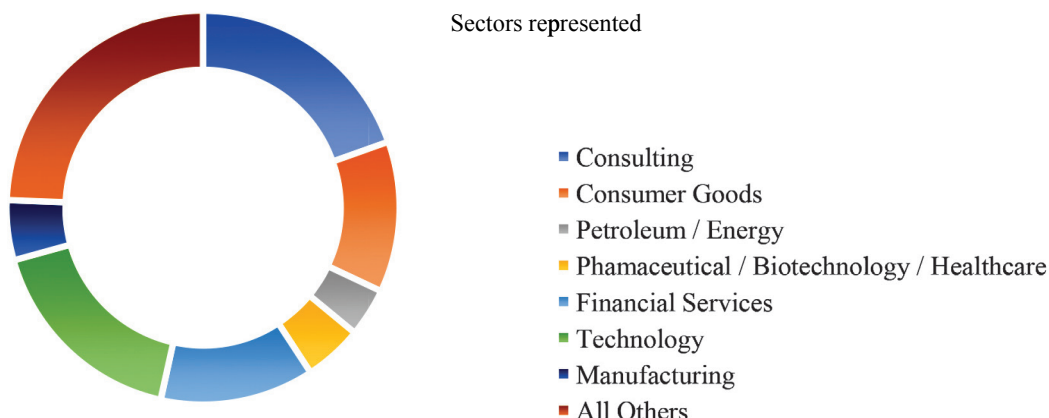
The results show that during the pandemic, the importance of resilience and empathy, emotional intelligence, increased. This suggests that in times of crisis, great attention should be paid to understanding the feelings and opinions of employees, to establish a sincere relationship with them. Organizations will be able to successfully deal with the current crisis situation if leaders listen and support employees. As the figure shows, the importance of effective communications has also increased. Communicating your opinions openly and correctly to employees has become especially valuable during a pandemic. To prevent the spread of the disease, many organizations have shifted their activities remotely, a move that in turn has facilitated the practice of using digital technologies to establish communication. Of course, such a style of communication makes it difficult to understand the feelings and attitudes of the participants in the communication process, therefore, the ability to communicate effectively is greatly increased in today's reality.

The second important result that this study has shown is the reduction in the importance of technical skills and authority. As it turned out, during the pandemic period, there was a shift from relatively more rigorous skills to more humane, milder skills and competencies.

The CEMS Alliance conducted a qualitative survey: expert panel discussions on findings and topics raised, and a series of interviews with CEMS corporate partners, business schools, and students planning to enter the employment market in the near future. As a result of these studies, it was found that:

- Basic human skills remain the main competence of leaders in the new reality created by the pandemic. These qualities include altruism and mindfulness;
- Investing in human capital in conditions of uncertainty should be a priority for leaders in order to achieve organizational sustainability and innovation;
- Leadership development should be focused on multicultural experiences and the creation of global networks.

FIG. N2. Distribution of respondents by sectors.



Source: (Valentová, 2021)

CEMS has also investigated the impact of the pandemic on the communications process. During the pandemic period, the communication process underwent significant changes, with people switching from face-to-face communications to digital, online communications. In this process, leaders are required to remotely and virtually manage relationships, to find new, different methods of company development, all of which, in turn, affect the quality of communications and relationships. According to the respondents, they will continue to communicate with colleagues as regularly as it did before the crisis, or more often. 35% of respondents thought that communication would become even more regular.

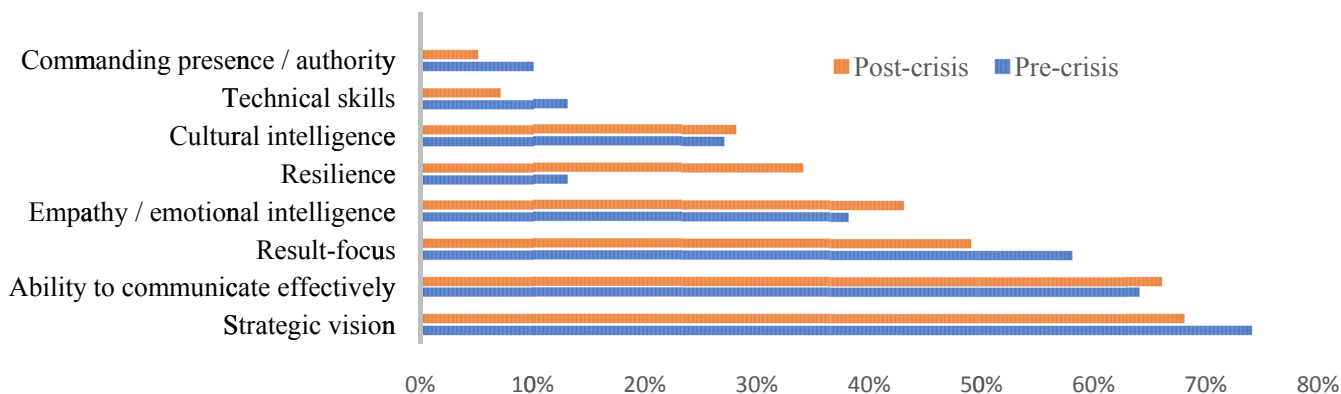
The CEMS study provides a critical insight into how managers around the world understand the impact of Covid-19 on their business, their prospects, and the ways in which leadership can be achieved in the post-pandemic future. Most managers believe that change will be long lasting and possibly even permanent. And it will focus on four main areas related to markets, communications, work ethic and work attitude. These are the areas in which a leader must work tirelessly. Success will be achieved by those who outperform their competitors and respond effectively to change.

It is clear that the policies pursued by the state during the COVID-19 pandemic also have a direct impact on organizational leadership. Lack of trust between managers and employees was caused by the practice of working from home. As a result, employee monitoring was intensified, leading to their irritability and stress. James Chen and Titima Stephan conducted a study to examine the influence of covid-19 factors on organizational leadership, trust, utility relationships, and social exchange relationships. They define communal relationships as relationships between friends and family. The relationship between employees and organizations is often defined as a social exchange relationship, since a social exchange relationship requires a comparative benefit between the giver and the recipient.

In the research process, Chen and Titima interviewed 220 managers from 4 countries around the world. Prior to the study, actions related to Covid-19 were divided into three groups of factors.

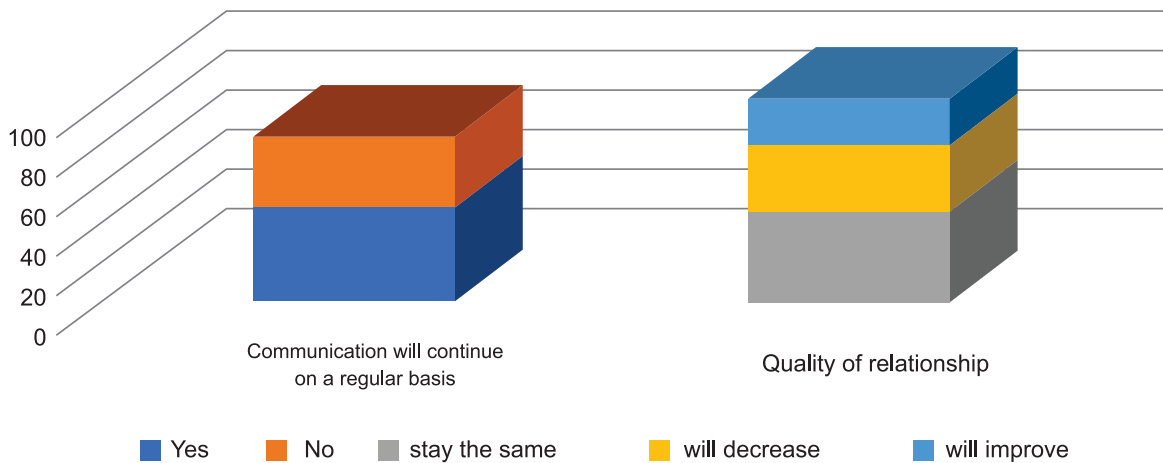
The study found that COVID-19 (F1) and (F2) factors increase the degree of leadership (leadership) in an organization when they are integrated with (1) trust, (2) utility, and (3) social exchange. These factors indicate that leaders during

FIG. N3. How leadership qualities are valued pre-crisis and post-Covid.



Source: (Valentová, 2021)

FIG. N4. Assess the quality of communications and relationships.



Source: (Valentová, 2021)

the COVID-19 pandemic must have good communication skills, the ability to respond quickly to change, be confident, be willing to help members of the organization, be able to inspire and motivate others, and empathize with followers. The results show that during the pandemic, the above factors had a positive effect on organizational leadership.

On the other hand, COVID-19 (F3) factors reduce the degree of leadership (leadership) in the organization. Quantitative analysis has shown that remote work reduces the quality of trust and relationships between employees and managers during a pandemic. Most managers find it uncomfortable to work remotely from employees as working from home leads to a lack of trust. For these reasons, relationships between managers and employees were damaged. Therefore, the leader should try to maintain a certain balance between control and trust. Prominent trust from leaders in a crisis situation can encourage positive relationships and lay the groundwork for effective performance.

Covid Pandemic has brought significant change to organizations and leaders. For these changes to be positive, effective leadership must be critical. Managers expressed a desire to better combine hard and soft competencies: they began to bring empathy, resilience, and communication to the forefront because qualities such as assertiveness, authority, and technical strength are no longer so valuable.

The reality created by the Covid pandemic has put new

demands on leaders. They should try to create a psychologically safe environment to enable employees to show their full potential. In this new reality, leaders have a greater responsibility to protect the well-being of employees, to ensure their involvement, productivity, and to create an appropriate environment for the expression of new ideas. To do this, the leader:

- Must work on themselves, ask themselves questions about how much employees are trusted, how much they are respected, whether it creates the best environment for employees to experiment, learn and develop;
- Must create a safe culture and environment. Remotely employed employees should face challenges and show confidence. Whereas, without the latter, establishing long-term and effective relationships is unthinkable;
- The pandemic has created unprecedented uncertainty. Team members have more mental and emotional stress than ever before, and this can lead to stress and overload. Therefore, leaders need to be tolerant of failure and make it a starting point for learning if they want to gain the respect and trust of employees.

Table N1. Factor groups.

COVID-19 (F1) factors	COVID-19 (F2) factors	COVID-19 (F3) factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Address changes effectively during a pandemic. •Moral support for employees. •Satisfy staff expectations •Care for staff during a pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Confidence in the actions of leaders. •Existence of effective communications with staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. •Confidence of leaders on the part of employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Quality of online communication by staff working remotely.

Source: (Chen & Sriphon, 2021)

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