Development Of Managers' Emotional Skills in the Context of Post-COVID Times: Lithuanian Case

Nijolė Petkevičiūtė, Asta Balčiūnaitienė
Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania
nijole.petkeviciute@vdu.lt, asta.balciunaitiene@vdu.lt

Abstract The emotional skills of managers and emotional environment suitable for productive results during the lockdown in organizations of Lithuania will be discussed in the paper. It is significant to raise managers' emotional capacity, to gain special skills and knowledge for successful collaboration and efficient results in online work during pandemic situation and post-COVID times. The goal of the paper is to explore managers and other employees' emotions. For this reason, it is very important that managers envisage how to develop their emotional skills, to motivate themselves and others in the context of online working during pandemic situation and post-COVID times. Research problem – managers lack sufficient knowledge and skills about the importance of emotional skills for communication during online working in the context of post-COVID times. Research methods – scientific literature analysis, quantitative (questionnaire) study, and descriptive analysis. The findings of the pilot study demonstrate that managers do not have enough understanding about the importance of their own and other peoples' emotional skills during online working and in the post-COVID times. What is more, the findings of the pilot study demonstrate that managers have deficiency of emotional intelligence and there are some challenges for its development.

1 Introduction

Navigating the world of necessary skills and careers has never been more bewildering in the digital age as it is in the 21st century. This issue is emphasized by researchers such as Susskind (2015), Mayfield (2014), Frey & Osborne (2017), and others. Of course, the economic, financial, political, cultural and other contexts in the world also have a profound impact on managerial work. Such an environment is not only important for current managers, but also for those of the future. According to the requirements of Industry 4.0, managers' skills are related to communication, management, leadership, creativity, flexibility, responsibility, inspiration, motivation, informatics and digital competence (Burtless, 2015; Oliver, 2020). Managers' skills are the ability to do what they are doing well, using their physical, mental, emotional and professional understanding, knowledge, and ways of problem-solving and decision-making (Hawksworth, Chan, 2015). Managers' skills are influenced by individual differences, emotional intelligence and individual personality traits.

The global pandemic (2019-2022) led to a new approach to the digital and responsive working environment. People became more sensitive and temperamental. Managers, therefore, should change their attitudes towards employees and pay more attention to their own and co-workers' needs and expectations.

The object of this paper is managers' emotional skills in the context of post-COVID times.

The aim of the paper is to identify the criteria of managers' emotional skills in the context of post-COVID times.

The problem of the paper: managers do not make ample use of emotional skills for effective organizational development in the context of post-COVID times.

Managers' skills for organizations' requirements are investigated using a scientific literature analysis and a quantitive study.

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2 Managers' work and emotional skills in post-COVID times

The 2021 analysis of the World Development Report (WDR) showed that anxiety about the sweeping impact of technology on employment is, on balance, unfounded. Rapid technological change, the pandemic, and the war environment create a new and sensitive work environment. Managers' traditional skills also require a new approach to organizational development in post-COVID times. Managers have to create a working environment based on trust and safety. It is important to structure managers' careers so that their work will be in demand in post-COVID times. There are some transfers poised to modify the nature of work itself after the pandemic in which new managers' skills become important. *The main skills of managers include communication, management (delegation, responsibility, time management, problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork), leadership, trustworthiness, motivation, inspiration, creativity, emotional sensitivity, intuition, critical thinking, and others.* All the aforementioned managers' skills are important, however, after the lockdowns managers found themselves having to develop their communication and emotional skills.

Managers' communication skills play a key role in organizational development. For a better psychological climate in the working environment, managers have to create a sensitive and non-intimidating atmosphere. Managers should motivate employees in order to increase their sense of well-being, thus leading to better productivity. The WDR 2021 notes that: '*The case of COVID-19 shows that boosting one can often have positive implications for the other...". (T*he 2021 World Development Report).

For most employees it is essential that they are able to use their talents and abilities in the workplace in the post-COVID times. It is also an opportunity to improve, grow, take on new responsibilities, increase one's power to take independent decisions after the lengthy lockdowns, and feel a sense of satisfaction. Employees have a clear understanding of this purpose and are enlightened by management as to how their roles help to achieve the company's mission (Joseph C., 2014).

The psychological climate in an organization is one that treats every employee fairly. It is important to create a good relationship between colleagues, employees, and their managers, in order to develop teamwork in the post-COVID times. All this is based on respect for employees as well as clear communication (subordinates should know what is expected of them, what requirements they have to meet, and according to

which criteria their work is to be assessed). Employees want to feel involved in the company, understand what the situation is, to participate in the planning and decision-making.

When managers communicate with employees, they gain valuable insights into the working atmosphere, such as learning about small problems before they can escalate.

Interpersonal communication reflects the interaction of managers' emotional capacity with employee behavior. Managers' communication skills are part of the chain of factors related to their emotional capacity. People's emotional capacity often determines the effectiveness with which they are able to making rational decisions. Managers may have full intellectual command of the principles of total quality management, yet still be emotionally incapable of allowing a subordinate to do things their own way (Argyris, 1964). Therefore, managers as good communicators are in charge of building up productive interpersonal communication and are responsible for the content of each message. Hence, they need a perfect combination of cognitive skills: speaking, active listening, writing, reading comprehension and critical thinking. Managers must delegate tasks and share information in different forms, such as written, spoken, and visual. For this reason, managers need to develop their competence of technical content creation. Thus, the competence of the digital creation of content has become very important. Moreover, managers need a high level of critical thinking and adaptability to fast changes and must possess the skills to not act as usual, but rather according to the situation 'here and now'.

Communication is extremely important for the delegation of different tasks and explanations about various activities. These actions are at the forefront in terms of managerial skills. The main managerial skills are problem-solving, delegation, responsibility, time management, and teamwork. In the post-COVID times, problem-solving has become a huge part of career development for managers. Career specialists help managers to grow their personalities via problem-solving and making informed decisions (Dislere, Vronska, 2020). The authors mentioned that during the pandemic, it would be good to help managers cope with a new situation, not lose focus and solve problems in a 'win-win' way. Nowadays, managers have to take into account that the world is changing and these processes are explicit in their and others' daily lives and work.

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One of the main activities of managers is to create professional relations with employees in post-COVID times. Managers need to discover what each employee enjoys doing most. Managers should ask themselves if they offer praise and positive feedback, create harmony, listen, motivate, reserve judgment, and treat everyone fairly and on the basis of merit. Managers' main responsibilities are clearly communicating tasks to employees, selecting the right person for each task, proactivity, and looking for opportunities not for problems. In the workplace, managers offer frequent and constructive feedback to employees. The purpose of the feedback is to help employees identify and understand areas where improvements are required as opposed to chastising them for mistakes (Joseph, 2014). Moreover, it is important that managers keep up their certainty level,- while guaranteeing everybody that accidents can happen and the imperative thing is to concentrate on the bigger work objectives. Moreover, the discovery of what each employee most enjoys doing will demonstrate that the manager trusts and has confidence in them, and will free employees up to concentrate on the most pressing assignments. Therefore, managers' trust in their colleagues is an indication of quality rather than a shortcoming. Assigning tasks to the appropriate divisions is one of the most imperative standout skills that managers can leverage for the effectiveness of the organization.

When talking about workplace attitude in contexts of uncertainty, it is important to understand the value of workplace relationships and communication between managers and employees as well as between managers themselves (Harrell, 2009). Most of the understanding of cultural and social surroundings comes from communication, and in order to ensure proper communication, employees must form amicable workplace relationships with their colleagues and employers. A certain level of understanding is required among employees and managers, not only to create a pleasant atmosphere but also for productive work. A lot of miscommunication can lead to an uncertain workplace environment, hence communication and relationships are extremely valuable attributes. Leading organizations practice strong core values based on integrity. These values need to be more than words in a human resources manual; management personnel should practice these values in daily functions and require all employees to do the same (Joseph, 2014; Makkar & Basu, 2019). The value system has become particularly significant in post-COVID times.

It is vital for managers to figure out how to conceive brand new ideas, make the most appropriate decisions, and steer their employees in the correct direction. Moreover, by having the capacity to allow employees to concentrate on the future objectives, managers need to ensure employees remain stimulated while maintaining their resourcefulness and vitality. It is essential that managers maintain the workplace mindset in harmony with the achievements of the organization (Iguodala-Cole, H. I. 2021). Managers must demonstrate positive emotional skills in post-COVID times. Empathy is a significant dimension of good relationships in the workplace and is an important part of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998, 2020). Employees' high self-esteem and awareness are an internal reference for managers, who should ensure that employees' defenses are minimized, they do not feel anxious in the workplace and are not afraid to ask questions, while also being open to communication. Managers could demonstrate high interpersonal competence and interactions dominated by positive regard, inquiry, acceptance of feelings, commitment to process, authenticity, honesty, desire for feedback, flexibility, appropriate assertiveness, and mutual trust. Managers have to understand the expression of feelings as valid communication and an emotional connection to actions. Managers' contact with others could be as recognition of inherent values of people and processes as well as the attainment of goals. Practice and open acknowledgment of ethics, integrity and positive regard could be the main agents in managers' work in post-COVID times.

3   Methodology

In order to analyze managers' emotional skills, a pilot quantitative study (questionnaire) was designed by the authors. Ninety-six managers from different types of organizations took part in the pilot research and answered the questionnaire expressing their opinions about the criterion of managers' emotional skills. The results were amended using MS Excel and descriptive analysis.

A quantitative research method enables information to be collected about managers' emotional skills and helps original facts to be discovered that are useful for interpretation and discussion. In the scientific field (DeFranzo, 2011; McLeod, 2017) there are mentions of some methods of quantitative information gathering: various forms of surveys (internet, paper, phone conversations, discussions, and others); systematic observations (DeFranzo, 2011); experimental methods (McLeod,

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2017). DeFranzo (2011) emphasizes that a quantitative method of data collection is more structured than a qualitative method because the former is related to numbers, logic, and an objective attitude. This method is applied to construe a phenomenon, to understand problems, and reveal causes, and at the same time is used for scientific discussion. The quantitative method (questionnaire) of the study was applied to find out about respondents' necessary emotional skills during the post-pandemic situation. To investigate respondents' attitudes toward the main criterion of managers' emotional skills necessary during the post-pandemic situation, a questionnaire containing ten questions was designed. The respondents were asked to answer the open and closed questions as well as some statements expressing their opinions of what emotional skills are the most important during the post-pandemic situation in Lithuania. The questionnaires were anonymous, the answers were marked by indicating numbers on a Likert scale (from 5 to 1, where: 5 – very favorable and 1 – not favorable).

4   Study results

In order to find out respondents' opinions about managers' emotional skills, they were asked to evaluate (from 5 to 1) which of the given emotional abilities are important for managers' work. The results revealed the fact that the respondents think that the biggest influence is managers' empathy to keep good relationships in the workplace (the average of the evaluation is 2.7) (Table 1).

Table 1: The results of the study into managers' emotional skills

Criterion	Number of Respondents (N)	Average (M)
Managers' ability to create psychological wellness in the workplace	96	1.5
Managers' sensitive and polite emotional tone	95	1.95
Managers' ability to control their emotions	96	1.84
Managers' ability to understand the mood and emotions of employees	96	2.31
Business communication demonstrates managers' respect for employees	96	1.62
Managers' empathy is a significant ability to maintain good relationships in the workplace	96	2.7

They also agree that it is very important to understand the mood and emotions of employees (2.31) as well as managers' sensitive and polite emotional tone (1.95) (Table 1).

The managers were asked to express their opinions about understanding employees' emotions and feelings. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Do you understand employees' emotions?

	No. of respondents	Percent
Yes	46	47.5
Partly	26	27.5
No	24	35.0

Among the respondents, 47.5 % stated that they understand their colleagues' and employees' emotions and can communicate with them in an appropriate way. However, 35.0% (Table 1) of the respondents said that they do not understand other people's emotions and do not consider it important. The findings reveal that managers lack emotional intelligence skills. Therefore, it can be stated that managers need emotional intelligence training so that they can be more sensitive with their colleagues. Some researchers, e.g. Makkar & Basu (2019) and Oliver (2020), support the importance of emotional intelligence development in the workplace.

5   Conclusion

The pilot study showed that there is room for the development of managers' skills and emotional capacity in the workplace. The pilot study on managers' emotional skills revealed which emotional abilities are important for their work. The study showed the fact that, according to respondents' opinions, the biggest influences are: *managers' empathy to maintain good relationships in the workplace* (the average of the evaluation is 2.7), *understanding of the mood and emotions of employees* (2.31), and *managers' sensitive and polite emotional tone* (1.95). Furthermore, it could be stated that managers' emotional skills and components such as empathy, a sensitive and polite emotional tone, and warm collaboration can be the main features of the development of managers' competence.

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The study has demonstrated that managers in Lithuania are not sufficiently prepared for the new post-COVID work environment and need to develop their emotional sensitivity. Based on the study findings there are some recommendations. First, by eliminating the use of unfamiliar and threatening communication in order to provide a trustworthy and user-friendly emotional framework. Second, building emotional capacity is a developmental issue. Third, looking at managers' and employees' emotional power as a source of human potential. Fourth, it would be useful if organizations start talking about encouraging emotional readiness throughout the company as opposed to curing the defensive practices of a troublesome few. If humanity had devoted even one-millionth of the resources we have used to develop rational technology to the development of emotional power instead, we would not now be faced with such grievous conditions of social and economic distress in the post-COVID times. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend and accept that human technological and rational abilities far outstrip their emotional sensitivity to use wisely. Thus, organizations must be more willing to invest in the development of employees' emotional power in these post-COVID times.

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