



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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MASTER'S THESIS

<i>Adaptyvios lyderystės taikymas skatinant darbuotojų įsipareigojimą perėjimo prie nuotolio darbo laikotarpiu</i>	<i>Application of adaptive leadership practices to promote employee commitment in transition to remote work</i>
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SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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APPLICATION OF ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO PROMOTE EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN TRANSITION TO REMOTE WORK

MA thesis supervisor – Partnership Assoc. Prof. Eglė Daunienė

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Short description of MA thesis: The question concerning employee commitment has always remained relevant for organizations since committed and motivated employees appear to be one of the most valuable assets that companies can obtain. In the times of the global pandemic and, consequently, remote working conditions, this topic is even more concerning.

At the same time, even though there are few practical investigations of adaptive leadership practices and their effectiveness during such rapid changes caused by the pandemic, it is especially relevant to clarify and research adaptive leadership practices and the influence they might bring to promote employee commitment.

Aim and Objectives: The purpose of this study will be to explore a variety of approaches and practices applied by project managers and which of these practices they find the most efficient to promote their team members' commitment in transition to remote working conditions caused by the quarantine restrictions.

The main objectives of the research include the following steps: to perform literature analysis on main adaptive leadership competencies and their impact on employee commitment that would result in creating a research model for the further empirical investigation; to determine the importance of adaptive practices of the leader under remote working conditions; to empirically identify fundamental adaptive leadership principles and challenges as well as the impact they made on the team members and derived from theoretical results of the research and empirical findings come up with recommendations and conclusions

on the application of adaptive leadership to promote employee commitment during the transition to remote working conditions.

Methods and Results: It was decided to choose the qualitative method that encompasses gathered information from different sources and social contexts for this research purpose. The data was gathered with the help of semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire based on six adaptive leadership competencies, and an organizational commitment questionnaire.

As a result, the final results represented two points of view: project managers and their team members. It helped to assess the efficiency of certain practices more objectively and introduce a realistic view on the transition to remote working.

Main conclusions: The research findings disclosed and explained the effectiveness of the six leadership competencies in the context of promoting employee commitment in transition to remote work.

In addition, the interviewed project managers provided a more detailed explanation of what actions in practice they perform in the course of adaptability. As concluded from the empirical research, all practices have a common point that is directly connected with communication, and it aims to establish more reliable connections with team members. It means that project managers regularly conduct meetings with their teams in formal and informal formats and encourage employees to actively voice their concerns and opinions to create a comfortable working environment and build loyal relationships within the teams.

Employees stated that when they are heard and feel their value in the project, their motivation to contribute and commit increases, leading to the conclusion that protecting leadership voices from below has a significant impact on their commitment. Both employees and project managers stated that it would be impossible to deliver projects successfully and continue basic working without effective communication within the team, for example, informal team meetings, one-on-one conversations, and daily stand-ups in transition to remote working conditions processes.

SANTRAUKA

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS VERSLO MOKYKLA TARPTAUTINĖS PROJEKTŲ VADYBOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMA

STUDENTAS IRYNA KANIUK

ADAPTYVIOS LYDERYSTĖS TAIKYMAS SKATINANT DARBUOTOJŲ ĮSIPAREIGOJIMĄ PERĖJIMO PRIE NUOTOLIO DARBO LAIKOTARPIU

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Darbo aprašas: Klausimas apie darbuotojų įsipareigojimą organizacijoms visada išliko aktualus, nes atsidavę ir motyvuoti darbuotojai yra vienas vertingiausių įmonių, kurias gali įgyti. Pasaulinės pandemijos laikais, taigi ir nuotolinio darbo sąlygomis, ši tema kelia dar didesnę nerimą.

Tuo pačiu, nors praktinių tyrimų apie adaptyvios lyderystės praktiką ir jų efektyvumą per tokius sparčius pandemijos sukeltus pokyčius yra nedaug, ypač aktualu išsiaiškinti ir iširti adaptyvios lyderystės praktikas bei jų galimą įtaką darbuotojų įsipareigojimui skatinti.

Tikslas ir uždaviniai: Šio tyrimo tikslas bus iširti įvairius projektų vadovų taikomus metodus ir praktikas ir kurios iš šių praktikų jiems atrodo veiksmingiausios skatinant savo komandos narių įsipareigojimą pereinant prie nuotolinių darbo sąlygų, kurias sukelia karantino apribojimai.

Pagrindiniai tyrimo tikslai yra šie: atlikti literatūros analizę apie pagrindines adaptyvios lyderystės kompetencijas ir jų įtaką darbuotojo įsipareigojimui, kuri leistų sukurti tyrimo modelį tolimesniam empiriniam tyrimui; nustatyti lyderio adaptacinių praktikų nuotolinio darbo sąlygomis svarbą; empiriškai identifikuoti esminius adaptyvios lyderystės principus ir iššūkius bei jų poveikį komandos nariams ir remiantis teoriniais tyrimo rezultatais bei empirinėmis išvadomis, pateikti rekomendacijas ir išvadas dėl adaptyvios lyderystės taikymo skatinant darbuotojų įsipareigojimą pereinamuoju laikotarpiu. nuotolinėms darbo sąlygoms.

Metodologija ir rezultatai: Šiam tyrimo tikslui buvo nuspręsta pasirinkti kokybinį metodą, kuris apimtų iš skirtingų šaltinių ir socialinio konteksto surinktą informaciją. Duomenys buvo renkami naudojant

pusiau struktūruotus interviu, klausimyną, pagrįstą šešiomis adaptyvios lyderystės kompetencijomis, ir organizacinių įsipareigojimų klausimynu.

Dėl to galutiniai rezultatai atspindėjo du požiūrius: projektų vadovų ir jų komandos narių. Tai padėjo objektyviau įvertinti tam tikros praktikos efektyvumą ir realiai pažvelgti į perėjimą prie nuotolinio darbo.

Išvados: Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė ir paaiškino šešių vadovavimo kompetencijų veiksmingumą skatinant darbuotojų įsipareigojimą pereinant prie nuotolinio darbo.

Be to, kalbinti projektų vadovai išsamiau paaiškino, kokius veiksmus praktiškai atlieka prisitaikymo metu. Remiantis empiriniu tyrimu, visos praktikos turi bendrą tašką, kuris yra tiesiogiai susijęs su komunikacija, ir siekiama užmegzti patikimesnius ryšius su komandos nariais. Tai reiškia, kad projektų vadovai reguliariai rengia susitikimus su savo komandomis formaliu ir neformaliu formatu ir skatina darbuotojus aktyviai reikšti savo rūpesčius ir nuomones, kad sukurtų patogią darbo aplinką ir užmegztų lojalius santykius komandose.

Darbuotojai teigė, kad kai yra išgirsti ir pajutę savo vertę projekte, didėja jų motyvacija prisidėti ir įsipareigoti, todėl galima daryti išvadą, kad lyderystės balsų apsauga iš apačios turi didelę įtaką jų įsipareigojimui. Tiek darbuotojai, tiek projektų vadovai teigė, kad būtų neįmanoma sėkmingai įgyvendinti projektų ir tęsti pagrindinio darbo be veiksmingos komunikacijos komandoje, pavyzdžiui, neformalių komandos susitikimų, individualių pokalbių ir kasdienių atsistatymų pereinant prie nuotolinio darbo. sąlygų procesai.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL: Adaptive leadership

EC: Employee commitment

IPMA: International Project Management Association

KPIs: Key performance indicators

NGOs: Non-governmental organizations

PM: Project manager

INTRODUCTION

Relevance

Commitment to the project goals and motivated team members have proved to be one of the critical determinants of project success (Murphy et al., 1974; Walker et al., 1997). Therefore, the need for this study to be conducted has arisen in order to discover and analyze how adaptive leadership influences employee commitment in transition to remote work.

Since organizations are in demand of their employees' involvement to conduct projects, employees should stay committed not only to the organizations on the whole but also to the projects specifically (Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012; Wasti & Can, 2008).

When investigating the question of employee commitment to projects, it is essential, first of all, to identify key concepts. One of them is project management – “a systematic process used to initiate, plan, execute, control, and close a project to meet defined objectives.” (Mulcahy, 2006, p.9)

Even though the importance of loyal workers seems to be clear for every company, employees under different circumstances tend to change companies, seeking better opportunities, in this way creating a problem towards loyalty. Moreover, actively engaged employees are more relevant than ever before. Furthermore, this engagement of committed employees, especially in the pandemic situation, has proven to help organizations remain more resilient (Harter, 2021).

In addition, the role of adaptive leadership should also be taken into consideration as a crucial factor impacting the loyalty and commitment of the employees since it is a practice that was proved to be efficient when it comes to adjusting to various challenges a company can face (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Moreover, according to the World Economic Forum, in the nearest future, practically half of the employees will have to face the need to improve and even wholly reskill how they are currently performing tasks. As the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report states, specific skills will take over by 2025, along with new technology adoption. Among them, these are connected with problem-solving, self-management, and working with other people to take the leading positions (Whiting, 2020). What is even more interesting, the same source also suggests that in 2022 such skills as manual dexterity, management of financial resources, technology installation, etc., will concede to analytical thinking, innovation, creativity, and active learning.

Taking into consideration this information, it becomes clear that the need for adaptability and innovation increases as well as companies determined to outperform in the future should refer to these upcoming trends.

Without a particular setting, it would not be possible to fully process and analyze the interrelation of adaptive leadership and employee commitment. According to some studies, remote work and isolation have led to the negative perception of work in terms of personal attachment. In this research, the transition from face-to-face work to a virtual one will be considered (Wang et al., 2020).

On the whole, even though there appears to be a certain amount of research done considering these factors separately, the question of how companies adapt to changing working conditions has not been broadly discussed yet due to its newness. Moreover, the inconsistency between the current leadership skills applied and the ultimate goal of boosting employees' work operability and commitment in remote work is a field of interest for many organizations as they start to search for more effective and adaptive practices of dealing with issues and challenges.

The increased resignation rates caused by lack of motivation, heavy workload, and, more importantly, reduced employee commitment in remote working conditions pose a threat to the organizational progress and welfare (Chugh, 2021). Therefore, in order to avoid and prevent mass resignation, it is crucial for leaders to adapt quickly to changes and understand what practices are the most useful ones.

The commitment of employees can be seen as a fundamental challenge. Therefore, the way leaders sustain and manage it as well as how they look for new ways of adjustment when facing burdens, should be examined.

Research gap

Even though the question of employee commitment has already been raised in numerous researches (Allen, N.J & Meyer, 1990; Mathieu et al., 2015; Mueller et al., 1992), there are very few empirical findings on adaptive leadership and its connection to employee commitment.

In addition, with the recent shift to remote work, it is essential to investigate whether and how leadership influenced the level of employee commitment during the transition to the new working conditions.

Problem statement

The quarantine requirements have created unique challenges for the companies to adjust to. Due to its newness and not known before conditions, organizations had to become even more flexible and adaptable. Therefore, it requires managers in organizations to apply new leadership practices that would enable quick adaptation in unclear situations. As a result, the need for investigation of adaptive leadership practices arises.

The research problem of the thesis is to analyze and identify practices and tools that adaptive leadership suggests project managers apply altogether with the effect they have on keeping the employee committed.

Object

The process of applying adaptive leadership practices by project managers effectively within their teams in times of unpredictable working conditions is an object of this study.

Subject

The subject of this research can be defined as practices that adaptive leadership identifies as effective with their impact on sustaining and supporting employee commitment in transition to remote working conditions.

Research Question

The following research question was raised in this paper in order to examine and investigate the research problem:

How will employee commitment be affected by adaptive leadership practices during the transition to remote work?

Research goal

The purpose of this study will be to explore a variety of approaches and techniques applied by project managers, their effectiveness and influence on promoting employee commitment in transition to remote working conditions caused by the quarantine restrictions.

At this stage of the research, the adaptive challenge will be generally defined as an attempt to explain the connection and possible effects three main concepts (adaptive leadership, employee commitment, remote working performance) have on each other.

Objectives

- To perform literature analysis on main adaptive leadership competencies and their impact on employee commitment that would result in creating a research model for the further empirical investigation;
- To determine the importance of adaptive practices of the leader under remote working conditions;
- To empirically identify fundamental adaptive leadership principles and challenges as well as the impact they made on the team members;
- Derived from theoretical results of the research and empirical findings, come up with recommendations and conclusions on the application of adaptive leadership practices to promote employee commitment.

Research methodology

This research proposal decided to choose the qualitative method that encompasses gathered information from different sources and social contexts.

In this case, on the one hand, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with project managers, and, on the other hand, for members of these project managers' teams, a questionnaire with statements and open-ended questions will be used.

This approach is supposed to provide more detailed information in order to complete the whole research.

Key Words: adaptive leadership, employee commitment, project management, remote work.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

1.1 Role of the organizational commitment

1.1.1 The core of organizational commitment

Plenty of theories that dwell upon organizational commitment confirmed that employee commitment and work effectiveness depend on various factors. Mindfulness, psychological well-being, and demographical characteristics such as gender, age, education, and social status are vital (Hofstede et al., 2010).

At the same time, other studies provide the explanation behind employee turnover rates and their direct connection with organizational commitment (Mathieu et al., 2015).

In addition, it is asserted that the more workers are committed, the more loyal to the company they are. Moreover, they share the same organizational values and associate and relate themselves according to the aims this organization pursues. As a result, there are practically no reasons for them to quit.

Steffen Raub investigates in his research how the behavioral commitment of workers could be increased. Later on, after conducting two studies, the research suggests that both attitudinal and behavioral commitment levels of employees towards the organization are enhanced due to the involvement of workers in the company's philanthropy (Raub, 2017).

Therefore, the problem of rational and effective personnel involvement in current conditions is becoming more and more popular. It is especially relevant for the current situation with the pandemic, which increases demand for employees being involved in the working process.

While analyzing the process of managing employee engagement and commitment in modern companies, several problems can be identified:

- the problem of defining the very concept of "involvement and commitment";
- the problem of employers;
- the problem of finding mechanisms for the development of involvement and commitment is closely related to improving the company management system, the development of motivational mechanisms, and incentives (Gromova, 2018).

In order to summarize the information above and clear out the idea of commitment, the following definitions were gathered in the table below.

Author	Definition
Cambridge Dictionary	“Willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something that you believe in.” (Commitment Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.)
Mowday, Porter, and Steers	Mowday, Steers, and Porter defined commitment as “The relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization.” (R. T. Mowday et al., 1982, p.27)
Markovskaya	“The set of attitudes of an employee regarding his further stay in the company.” (Марковская, И. М, 2010, p.68)
Meyer and Allen	“A psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization.”(Meyer & Allen, 1997, p.11)

Table 1. Definitions of commitment

Source: adapted by the author

Considering all the given definitions, we may conclude that, on the one hand, they might imply various categories and come from different fields. On the other hand, however, organizational commitment definitions share the following common characteristics: willingness to stay in the company, involvement within the organization, and a conscious decision to work for the organizational well-being.

Still, the concept of organizational commitment is rather compound. Therefore, it demands a further observation and measurement discussed in the following subchapter.

1.1.2 Theories on organizational commitment

Many researchers have discussed organizational commitment from quite a few different perspectives. This topic raised interest back in the previous decade (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mowday et al., 1979; Reichers, 1985). However, even more modern analysts pay attention to the problem of employee commitment (Bulut & Culha, 2010; Cohen, 2017; Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Taking into account such interest, it might be concluded that currently, the core issue of organizational commitment has not lost its relevance due to the awareness of the importance of the human factor in the success and efficiency of the organization (Juaneda-Ayensa et al., 2017).

Getting back to the concept and the initial idea, back in 1960, Howard S. Becker introduced his Side-Bet theory. According to his theory, loyalty is the result of a certain “bet” that a person makes, linking their activities and actions with external interests. Commitment arises when these “additional stakes,” such as job-related skills, age, or other factors, are pooled and perceived by an employee as a cumulative investment in the organization, rewards, or judged to be less costly than similar work elsewhere. In disloyal behavior, employees risk being left without “additional pay,” which encourages them to work correctly. Thus, according to the behavioral approach, rationalistic motives of employees lie like the phenomenon of personnel loyalty (Becker, 1960). It is essential to note some criticism of this theory (Ritzer & Trice, 1969). The main point was an empirical finding that did not prove the relationship between organizational commitment and a set of mentioned variables.

In spite of that fact, later in 1982, based on Becker’s findings, Mowday, Porter, and Steers investigated the idea of behavioral commitment. They concluded that this type of commitment describes situations when an employee is stuck in the organization and the way they manage it (Mowday et al., 1982).

At the same work, the authors also discuss the notion of attitudinal commitment, which is in some aspects opposed to the behavioral commitment since the first deals with alignment with the company’s goals and employees’ identification in the relationship with their organization. Despite such differences, authors come to the following conclusion: “As suggested earlier, decisions characterized by high behavioral commitment should also lead to greater attitudinal commitment.” (Mowday et al., 1982, p.53)

1.1.3 Project commitment

The growth of an organization lies in its long-term work on improving all the ongoing problem-solving processes. Such development appears to be a strategic move that enables improving working conditions and overall growth of organizational effectiveness. As a result, the level of employee commitment and job satisfaction increases (Buvik & Tvedt, 2017).

According to Richard Mowday, when team members believe unconditionally in the project values and what is to be achieved ultimately, and once they are willing to remain involved in the process, it can be defined as a commitment to the project (Mowday et al., 1979).

As some researchers claim, even though employee commitment to projects is instead a complex notion that correlates with different factors such as inter-team coordination and team leader's behavior and encouragement, it is seen as a significant factor influencing the whole performance of the project. (Ehrhardt et al., 2014; Hoegl et al., 2004)

“A project is a unique, temporary, multi-disciplinary and organized endeavor to realize agreed deliverables within predefined requirements and constraints.” (IPMA, 2015, p.27)

The importance of project management for the company comes to the following reasons (Kerzner, 2003; Project Management Institute, 2018):

- To remain more stable and encourage growth;
- To increase project effectiveness;
- To analyze and monitor potential risks;
- To manage resources efficiently;
- To reassure project success;
- To adapt to changes quickly

As IPMA suggests, to keep employees committed within the project, it is crucial to inspire them by setting a clear vision and objectives, therefore, remaining committed yourself (IPMA, 2015).

1.1.4 Commitment measurement model

Even though there appeared to be different attempts to create a commitment measurement model (Buchanan, 1974; Gouldner, 1960), the three-component model designed by Meyer and Allen is used more commonly (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

As mentioned before, the dividing of commitment to affective, normative, and continuance was first introduced and based on Meyer and Allen.

Affective commitment reflects a person's desire to work in an organization once individual goals and values overlap in specific ways with the goals and values of the organization. In other words, people want to stay with the company because they accept the ideas, mission, vision, and core values of their company and strive to contribute to making this mission a reality (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Thus, it usually comes to the acceptance of the basic rules and ethics of the organization, for instance, such as the quality of products and services provided, the relationship between top managers and subordinates, recognition of the employee's needs, work-life balance, etc. (Rhoades et al., 2001)

As a result, the higher the affective commitment level, the better employees can relate and connect with the organization on the emotional level as well as identify themselves with their company.

Normative commitment reflects a person's willingness to work in an organization due to psychological connection and contribution from managers and colleagues. The formation of high regulatory commitment is facilitated by situations when the company takes care of its employee: helps in adaptation and training; creates conditions for career growth; assists in solving various particular problems, etc. Naturally, in response to this concern, the employee develops a feeling of gratitude and responsibility to the company's management. It becomes even more vital if at work a person has developed friendly informal interpersonal relationships with colleagues (Allen, N.J & Meyer, 1990; Allen & Meyer, 1996) .

All these factors eventually lead to a severe psychological barrier for a person to leave the company and make them stay in it.

Continuance implies the level of commitment that makes employees feel that leaving the organization is not beneficial to them. It is a degree that is based on the advantages acquired as a result of a long-term stay in the organization, due to which leaving the company may be unprofitable for the employee, so they stay in the company because it is beneficial (Mowday et al., 1982).

Porter developed a 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire in 1974, (Porter et al., 1974) but later in 1990, Meyer and Allen improved this model by adding more statements and specifying original ones (Allen, N.J & Meyer, 1990).

It aims to assess employees' behavior and attitude towards the organization and how they perceive their working environment overall as well as their professional future.

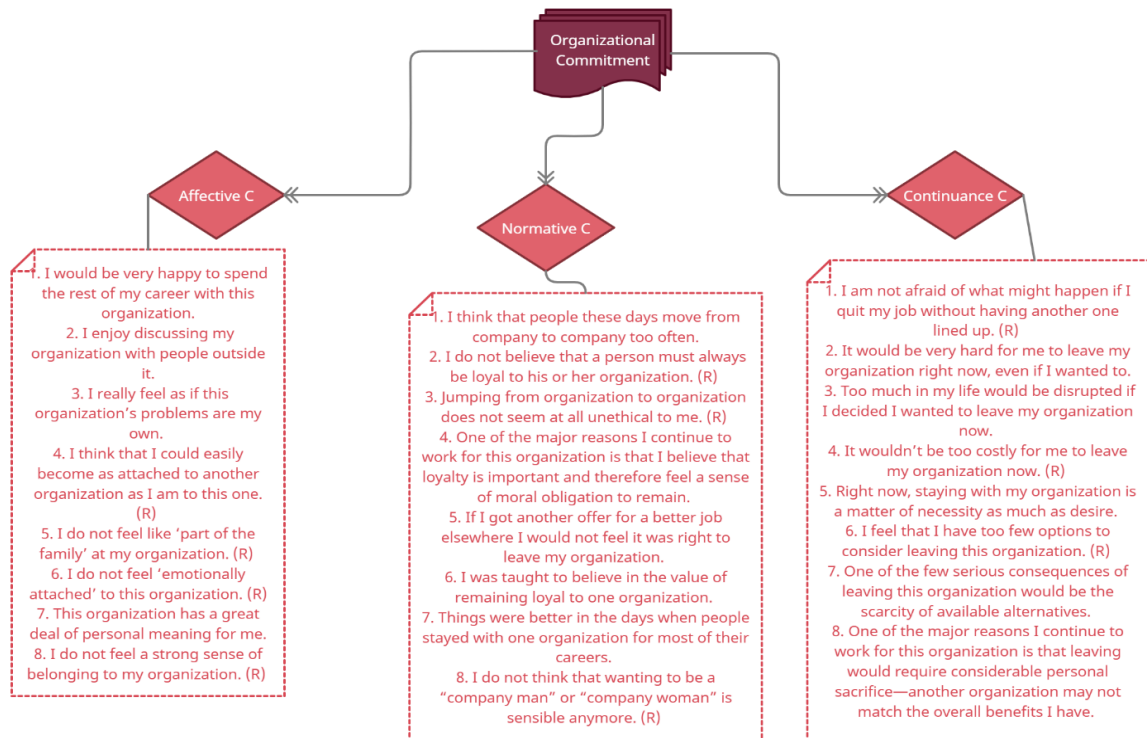


Figure 1. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)

Source: (Allen, N.J & Meyer, 1990)

1.1.5 Summary

On the whole, the importance of organizational commitment suggests the ultimate goal to stick to a certain course of activities. That is why companies pursuing financial growth and turnover stability usually put efforts to promote and encourage organizational commitment among their employees. Without any doubt, committed employees will be definitely more productive and will engage faster and efficiently in the activities to strengthen the company's ambitions and long-term goals.

If earlier interpersonal relations within an organization were strictly formal, which maintained a minimum level of employee commitment, nowadays, through informal relationships, team leaders contribute to the implementation of entirely different motives of employees, from the satisfaction of the work performed, being in a team, interaction with the manager to the self-development, self-realization, achievement of success, which strengthens the commitment of the organization's personnel.

In addition, some of the key measurements on employee commitment in project management introduced by IPMA, such as clear goals communication, involvement of people in making decisions and

planning stage as well as taking seriously contribution of each person, may eventually enable employees to build stronger and more trustworthy connections and, as a result, boost projects performance outcomes.

On the whole, employee commitment is investigated since it is a problematic matter for project managers, especially nowadays. It has become significantly challenging to sustain and support a high level of employee commitment in such uncertain periods as transition to remote working conditions.

1.2 Engagement and loyalty vs. commitment

1.2.1 Scales of engagement

Back in 1990, Kahn introduced his three dimensions of employee engagement, and after that, the topic started being investigated more seriously (Kahn, 1990). Based on the same work, these dimensions include physical, cognitive, and emotional types of engagement.

The emotional factor refers to the feelings of loyalty, devotion, and positive attitude to the organization; the cognitive aspect manifests itself in processes of division and acceptance of organizational values, goals, norms, rules, procedures, and decisions; and the physical aspect involves intention, willingness to act in a certain way (putting physical and mental effort to the work).

After Kahn, there were other attempts to measure engagement. For instance, the ISA engagement scale was developed by Soane (Soane et al., 2012).

According to this scale, employee engagement consists of the following concepts (Soane, Truss, Alfes, Shantz, Rees, & Gatenbytt, 2012):

- Intellectual engagement – the level to which employees are involved in working processes and means of improving them;
- Affective engagement – the extent that implies positive emotions and feelings towards one's job and place;
- Social engagement – the level of connectedness with the working environment and colleagues.

Schaufeli and Bakker developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale that helps when it comes to assessing work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Even today, it is considered one of the most commonly used scales. Its key elements are:

- Vigor – reflects a high level of energy, the employee's readiness for significant efforts, perseverance when difficulties arise in work;
- Devotion – characterized by a commitment to work, a sense of the value of their work, inspiration and pride in the work;

- Absorption – describes complete concentration and immersion in work, change in the perception of time, feelings of happiness, lack of desire to be distracted from work or to stop it.

1.2.2 Relevance of employee loyalty in the organization

In order to understand how loyalty and engagement differ from organizational commitment, first of all, it is important to understand how they are identified in various resources.

Engagement	Loyalty
Engaged: “involved in activity”(Engaged Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster, n.d.)	Loyal: “faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution, or product” (Loyal Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster, n.d.)
“The positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p.74)	„Employees not harming their colleagues or the firm which employes them“ (Coughlan, 2005, p.45)

Table 2. Comparison of engagement and loyalty definitions

Source: adapted by the author

Summing up, the word “loyal,” in its primary meaning, implies earnestness. From here, it is possible to conclude that loyalty in terms of organization will mean alignment to the norms as well as values, reliable behavior in the organization by the staff.

As Abraham Carmeli notes, an employee who considers themselves loyal may not strive to develop the organization. They might formally fulfill their duties and perform everyday tasks. However, there is no certainty it will lead to high achievements (Carmeli et al., 2011).

On the whole, even though employees might behave in accordance with the rules set by a particular organization, but at the same time, they do not necessarily take active actions to contribute and make sure their organization thrives since there is no emotional component.

1.2.3 Summary

Commitment to the organization implies a few ideas, from involvement and loyalty to the identification with the company's values.

The concept of commitment includes the following elements: agreement and support of the principles underlying the work of the company, understanding, and support of the goals of the company; deliberate actions in the interests of the company; sharing values, norms, beliefs, basic assumptions underlying organizational culture; compliance with the rules, obligations, including informal ones in relation to the firm, management, employees and other subjects of interaction; interest in results and the desire to improve them.

In addition, even though the concepts of employee engagement, commitment, and loyalty have overlapping features but still the idea of employee commitment differs from the organization's values and interpersonal setting domination.

Besides, due to the new changing working environment, project managers need to pay special attention to the way they lead and adjust to the situation to keep their employees committed to the ongoing projects.

In order to measure employee commitment, a basic scale Organizational Commitment Questionnaire will be used to assess and analyze workers' attitudes and behavior towards the organization. In addition, in order to understand how employee commitment correlates with adaptive leadership practices, a few additional questions will be asked to the same team members to conduct a complete empirical study.

1.3 Adaptive leadership

1.3.1 Leadership overview

Overall, a leader can be seen as a person who has the ability to influence the behavior of individuals or groups of people in order to achieve specific goals (Hughes, 2009).

According to IPMA, leadership is defined as one of the people-oriented competency elements that ensure guidance and direction as well as application of necessary managerial styles and skills in compliance with a situation (IPMA, 2015).

At the same time, according to the KLC Leadership Framework, leadership is mobilizing people to make progress on complex, adaptive challenges. Leadership is seen as one of the success factors and is critical to the success of organizations (Nixon et al., 2012).

When discussing the idea of encouraging and leading others, then the question arises if the path of a traditional manager is already not relevant. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to understand that modern organizations operate in a highly dynamic external environment characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, variability, and complexity (Jabnoun et al., 2003; Sia et al., 2004).

On the whole, a few terms, such as management, leadership, authority, etc., are often used interchangeably. However, there is a difference between them.

With the acquisition of formal authority, the leader receives some power. However, it does not necessarily mean that employees require authority. It is imperative for a manager to encourage others and lead them not from the power position, but be charismatic and influence your team members as a personality (De Vries, 1999).

The leader's power is manifested in the fact that he largely depends on the positions, salaries, promotion in the hierarchy, access to social benefits of subordinates. But in many cases, subordinates have power over the leader because they largely depend on his awareness, informal contacts in the team, and others.

It is best for an organization when employees with a higher position who are in power are also able to lead others. In addition, in practice, it is proven that when a person with authority leads from the position of personal power rather than applying methods of organizational power, the organizational commitment of employees, their performance, and job satisfaction is more likely to increase (Lunenburg, 2012).

In this case, only wisdom, balanced behavior of the leader, the ability to use all the achievements of modern management can stabilize the situation.

Over the past years, there has been a tendency to empower employees rather than simply give them direct instructions. Even though a higher involvement of employees in the organizational projects should not be seen as the only possible resolution of all organizational problems, it still remains a significant contribution to its welfare (Hollander & Offermann, 1990).

In addition, management that is carried out with the help of functions and methods of efficient communications by making meaningful and crucial decisions as well as building reliable connections may eventually positively contribute to the performance (Jabarzadeh et al., 2019). Therefore, to govern, it is vital to influence and inspire others and also make sure employees may trust their leader so he or they may rely on them instead.

The question of leadership has become even more relevant during the pandemic outbreak. As some resources state, keeping employees motivated and committed and making sure the team follows life-work

has proved to be crucial for the employees' mental state and the company's performance level (Wolor et al., 2020).

1.3.2 Key principles of adaptive leadership

Kouzes and Posner made a critical point on adaptive leadership. The authors point out that even though the content of what it means to be a leader has remained the same over the decades, the context has changed drastically (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Nowadays, issues that modern companies and the global community are dealing with seem to be more complex and demand a broader approach to their solution (Reichers, 1985). These unique times unraveling now have never been seen before, and consequently, there is no ready instruction on how to manage work processes. As a result, a leader who can not only cope with these problems but also adjust and adapt to the changing environment while quickly fixing them is very much needed.

Moreover, the ability to be flexible and adaptable is perceived as one of the most effective skills leaders may require, even though most of them face the difficulty of enabling and implementing these skills (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Wilkes et al., 2011).

And that is why, exactly adaptive leadership, which concept was introduced by Heifetz and Linsky, plays such an important role in the modern era. According to the mentioned researchers Heifetz and Linsky, "Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle through challenges and thrive"(Heifetz et al., 2009, p.2)

However, for the adaptive leadership concept, it is important to differentiate between technical issues and adaptive challenges. As its name suggests, adaptive issue demands a more agile and flexible approach while technical ones imply certain limits.

In the Figure below, the main differences between technical and adaptive challenges are explained in more detail by the author based on the previous researches:

Adaptive Challenge	Technical Challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No ready solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous similar experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable and complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to identify and solve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solved through people's changing their way of thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key role of the Authority to deal with problems

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires constant learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More traditional and resilient to changes

Table 3. Differences between adaptive and technical challenges

Source: made by the author

One more important point when talking about adaptive leadership is how it manifests itself and stands out among others. According to Heifetz and Linsky, leadership is proactive; it is action rather than a nominal concept (Heifetz et al., 2009). This means that being a leader revolves around serving the purposes of others to meet the final goal, and it is definitely not about authoritarian tendencies.

Another interesting approach that shares certain similarities with Heifetz and Linsky’s theory but still differs from it is the KLC Leadership Framework (Kansas Leadership Center, 2019).

In this investigation, researchers went even further, claiming that “anyone can lead,” and they also introduced four critical categories for successful and efficient adaptive leadership.

Diagnose situation

As it was mentioned before, understanding and analyzing current issues with other influential factors are the first thing leaders should do. At the same time, people become the most crucial part, even more, important than the content of the problem.

Manage self

In order to manage others, it is vital to be able to manage yourself. As the framework suggests, one needs to begin with identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, stepping out of the comfort zone, and, even more importantly, taking care of your own needs to encourage others.

Energize others

At its core, leadership implies inspiring others. However, in order to do it effectively, one should pay attention to the team members’ needs and make sure they feel belonging and accepted. Even when it comes to losses or failures, they need to be communicated and ultimately turned into lessons learned.

Intervene skillfully

Getting things changed requires intervention. With the capability to analyze and observe, the principle “intervene skillfully” refers to making well-grounded decisions that would lead to higher engagement and curiosity of employees. However, at the same time, leaders should make sure that team members are empowered and able to make their own conscious decisions

Northaus designed the model of adaptive leadership that is commonly used nowadays, however, based on Heifetz’s work and is referred to as Six Adaptive leadership competencies (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Get on the balcony

It refers to the idea of the team leader taking a step back to assess the situation's adaptive difficulties. Essentially, it enables a leader to analyze and comprehend the project's challenges.

Identify the adaptive challenge

It means to acquire the ability to see the difference between a technical and adaptive challenge and, based on that, come up with an appropriate solution.

Regulate distress

It is vital to aspire and direct team members and at the same time bring resilience to the team in order to move together to the solution

Maintain disciplined attention

It is much more effective to put all the efforts and focus all the attention on the findings of solutions to the problem rather than try to find someone guilty.

Give the work back to the people

In order to avoid micromanaging others, the best practice would be to trust team members with more responsible tasks to develop their confidence and highlight their importance as team players.

Protect leadership voices from below

This one means to give a chance to all employees to contribute the final result and basically make sure their voices are heard.

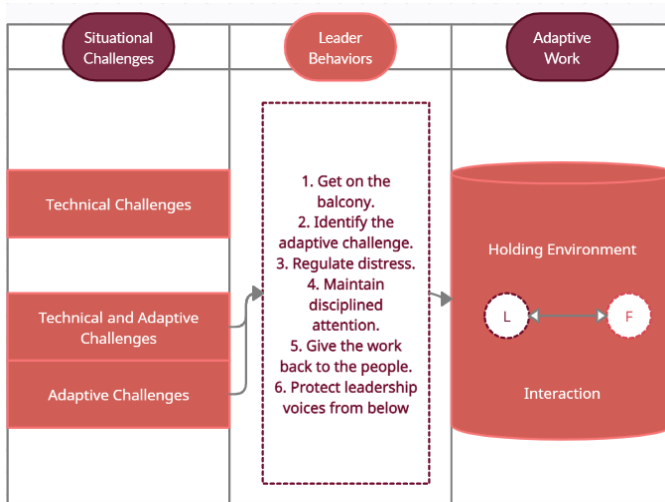


Figure 2. The framework of six adaptive leadership competencies

Source: (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997)

1.3.3 Summary

Summing up, the leadership in the era of change needs to be examined and learned even more closely.

Back in the times of industrialization, it was important for workers to accumulate knowledge and stick to a repetitive routine while following instructions from above. But current conditions demand to excel in soft skills.

In addition, even though the concept of adaptive leadership appears to be complex and encompasses different ideas, it must not be seen as a technical discipline. Its concept relates to the idea that it is not about one person who is a leader but the course of actions taken. As Heifetz mentions: “You need to be able to do two things:

- (1) manage yourself in that environment
- (2) help people tolerate the discomfort they are experiencing“ (Ronald Heifetz et al., 2009, p.17)

Last but not least, since the working conditions are changing rapidly, they influence the leadership practices demanding them to be more flexible and adaptive.

On the whole, it might be concluded that even though KLC Leadership Framework and Six Adaptive leadership competencies models are represented separately with different points, but at the same time, it is possible to track the overlapping elements. Nevertheless, it seems more reasonable to stick to Heifetz’s model for this research study and further empirical investigation due to its more influential scientific contribution.

It is possible to assume that adaptive leadership implies practices that can be efficiently implemented in uncertain working conditions of transition caused by the global pandemic. And since remote work may increase the risk of employees losing their commitment, it is essential to analyze how project managers as leaders of their teams apply adaptive leadership practices to keep their employees committed.

As a result, in the empirical part of the thesis, employees will be asked whether the project managers of their teams utilize and deploy adaptive leadership practices from the model mentioned above.

1.4 Remote work conditions and settings

1.4.1 Remote work

“Remote work refers to organizational work that is performed outside of the standard organizational confines of space and time.” (Olson, 1983, p.182)

The investigations carried out during the pandemic regarding the opinions of employers and personnel of organizations about the experience gained from remote work made it possible to identify certain groups of its negative and positive factors. The main problem for all was the shortcomings of the organization of the remote work process, which affected the efficiency of labor; the main advantage was the economic side of the work format. (Galanti et al., 2021)

Even though remote work appears to be a relatively new concept, it must be noted that another term – telework or telecommuting is used, and this term may represent various settings where workers are partially remote.

This notion was firstly introduced by Jack Nilles back in the 1970s as the response to the changing work settings, and Nickels was the first to notice that it was not necessary to keep employees in their workplaces all the time (Nilles, 1996).

At the same time, even though both terms “remote work” and “telecommuting” are very often put in the same context and used interchangeably, it is crucial to point out that there is a difference between these two notions. According to Nilles (Nilles, 1988), the latter term refers to the working conditions where the employees are partially involved in working in the office. Some researchers also suggest that telecommuting is one of the forms of remote work (Mokhtarian, 1991).

The format of working from home appeared to be an effective way of performing work duties back in 2020, when the pandemic started. In the beginning, it proved to be not only efficient in terms of health-related issues but also in overall organizational performance.

At the same time, some scholars stated specific underlying issues coming along with companies' transition to being partly or wholly remote (Galanti et al., 2021; Toscano & Zappalà, 2020).

Among the main challenges are mentioned the following:

- low motivational rates among employees;
- stress;
- social isolation.

One more critical problem when organizing a remote workplace can become a distinction between the working time and personal life of the employee. The absence of this balance between personal life and work may pose a threat to the efficiency of an employee (Muralidhar et al., 2020).

With traditional organization labor for office, employees have been established clear landmarks of the beginning and the end of the working day, as well as regulated all breaks during working time. With an insufficient organization of the remote workflow employees, there is a situation at which working time

frames may be blurred. Remote employees might overwork much more, resulting in adverse effects and on their work (Malyshev, 2020).

Therefore, it brings up additional issues for leaders to regulate such problems, making sure the transition to new working conditions.

1.4.2 The impact of Covid-19

In the first half of 2020, the world economy was perceived as disadvantageous and associated, first of all, with uncertain financial consequences (Kanapickiene et al., 2020; Morikawa, 2020).

The results of the study suggest that the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world economy. Each country will directly or indirectly experience the negative impact of the coronavirus on its financial and economic system (Долбенева, 2020). The outcomes of the situation still need to be assessed and analyzed in order to understand the whole picture and make predictions on how the situation is going to reveal itself in the future.

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has demanded from the governments of many states to introduce unprecedented measures to limit and prevent the spread of the virus (Adekunle et al., 2020; Testori et al., 2020).

According to the recent studies, apart from the global economic crisis, one more outcome of the pandemic is its influence on the workers' day-to-day activities, including employee job satisfaction, their commitment level to the organization, and overall the psychological state (Narayanamurthy & Tortorella, 2021; Shan & Tang, 2020; Wolor et al., 2020).

On the whole, it is claimed that new working conditions such as, for example, inability to work in the office in combination with other pandemic-related restrictions have a negative impact on the employees' mental state. In addition, from a psychological factors perspective, the current situation creates even more stress to the employee's daily activities, thus, influencing the whole organization (Yu et al., 2021).

What is even more disturbing, the mentioned resource states that these individuals that used to be more active and hard-working before the pandemic has suffered a more negative effect on their moral state (Karpova, E. Nikolaeva, 2020).

However, there is also another approach concerning this topic where researchers see more positive outcomes of the work-from-home agenda. These findings state that not only did the pandemic not prove any negative consequences on the working routine, but also the remote working conditions improved the performance of employees (Narayanamurthy & Tortorella, 2021).

At the same time, it is crucial to point out that regardless of whether this effect is seen as positive or negative, a lot of resources highlight the importance for the companies' successful performance to keep their employees satisfied, motivated, and committed during the online working (Sapta, 2021; Shan & Tang, 2020).

In other studies, the employee satisfaction and commitment, examined with the view of the COVID-19 influence, showed the following results: the more employees are satisfied, the more they might help organizations to be resilient and stress-tolerant (Shan & Tang, 2020).

1.4.3 Summary

Due to the highlighted problems in organizing remote working conditions (insufficient attention from management, lack of personal communication, keeping work and life balance, motivation of a remote employee), it seems to be crucial to notice on time the outcomes of new workplace organization and find a proper solution to it.

All these findings lead to the conclusion that team leaders need to come up with more flexible solutions in the time of pandemics in order not to lose employees' motivation and to increase their commitment level.

The theoretical model

After conducting the literature analysis and investigating critical concepts of the research, it is possible to come up with the theoretical research model based depicted below. At the same time, it is vital to notice that this model requires further investigation and will be completed after performing the empirical investigation.

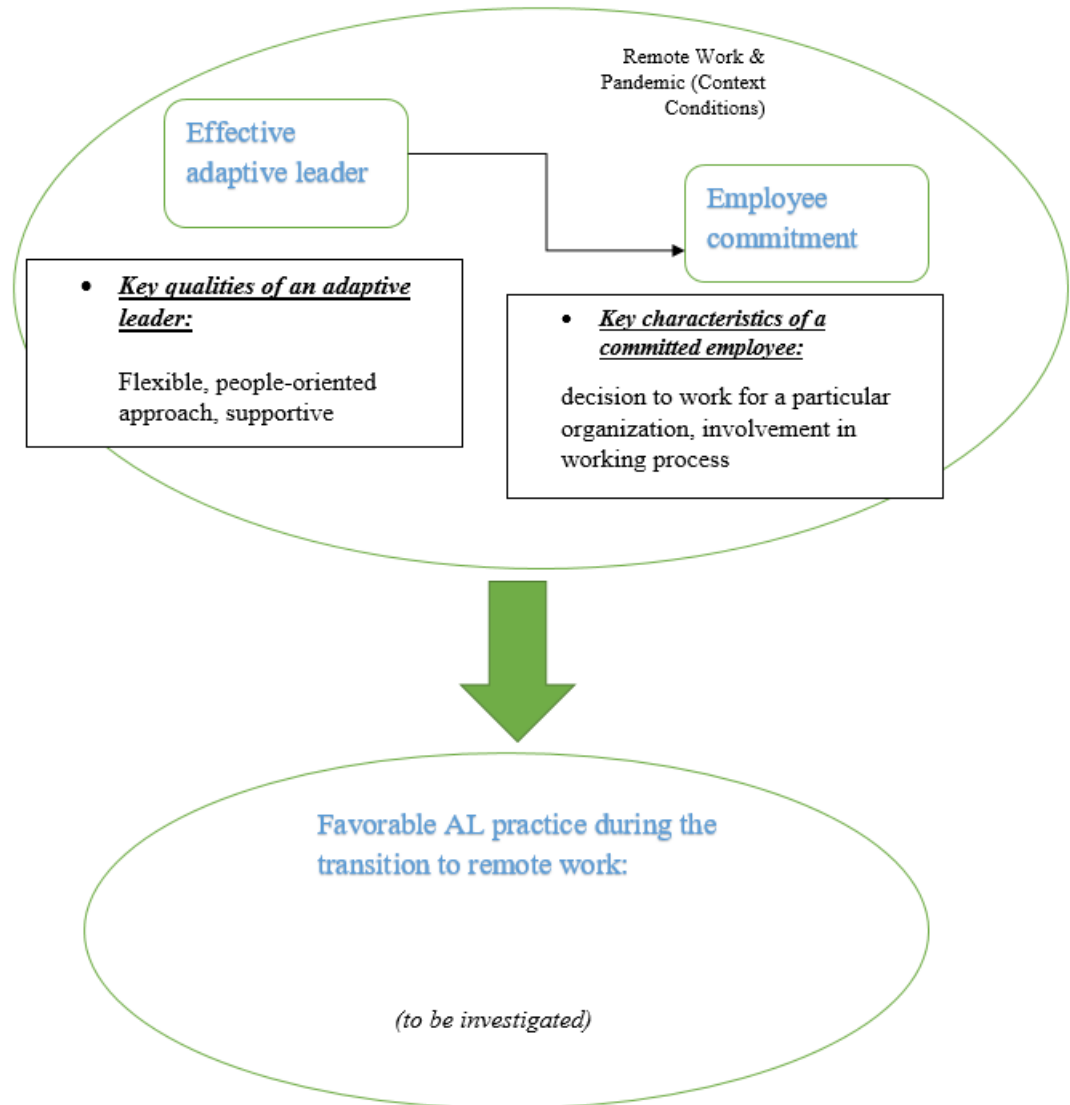


Figure 3. The theoretical research model

Source: created by the author

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Methods

There are three types of research methodologies that are widely used in studies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Researchers decide which approach is most efficient to utilize based on both content and research topic. It is also crucial to examine the data employed and the study's field while selecting a method. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that except for the description of the methods used, it is crucial to explain the reason for a chosen method.

In order to answer the research question that requires a more descriptive approach as well as a deep understanding of key concepts, the qualitative research method will be used.

Below, a more detailed overview of qualitative and quantitative methods is introduced by the authors with the theoretical background developed by such researchers as (Brannen, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kumar, 2011) and others.

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Main questions	Why? What is the reason behind the phenomenon?	How often?
Aim	Descriptive; Creating/ specifying theories/ hypothesis	Testing; Summarizing statistically stage of already mentioned theories/hypothesis
Object	Individuals, small focus groups	A large number of respondents
Data collection	Open-ended questions (interviews, focus groups, narratives, etc.)	Closed questions (surveys, questionnaires, etc.)
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep and complex investigation of the problem; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity • Shows frequency of certain phenomena

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owns more insights and details useful for further investigation 	
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More subjective, therefore, may lack scientific accuracy; • It takes more time to process and analyze 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More technical, thus, does not take into consideration • the flow of the respondents' thoughts • Requires more resources • Some valuable information might be missing

Table 4. Main differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods

Source: adapted by the author

The following research question was raised in this paper in order to examine and investigate the research problem:

How will employee commitment to the projects be affected by adaptive leadership practices in transition to remote work?

Research goals

The purpose of this study will be to explore a variety of approaches and techniques applied by leaders and their relation to the team members' commitment in transition to remote working conditions caused by the quarantine restrictions.

At this stage of the research, the adaptive challenge will be generally defined as an attempt to explain the connection and possible effects three main concepts (adaptive leadership, employee commitment, remote working performance) have on each other.

Objectives

- To perform literature analysis on main adaptive leadership competencies and their impact on employee commitment that would result in creating a research model for the further empirical investigation;
- To determine the importance of adaptive practices of the leader under remote working conditions;

- To empirically identify fundamental adaptive leadership principles and challenges as well as the impact they made on the team members;
- Derived from theoretical results of the research and empirical findings, come up with recommendations and conclusions on the application of adaptive leadership practices to promote employee commitment.

2.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative method

On the whole, this method is applied to investigate ideas, beliefs, and experiences of other individuals by utilizing different forms of data collection such as focus groups, literature overview, interviews. Basically, gathered and later interpreted information is ultimately supposed to explain how and why certain phenomena happen (The SAGE Encyclopedia, 2008).

As it was mentioned above, the research question of this paper is “How will employee commitment be affected by adaptive leadership practices during the transition to remote work?”

From this, it might be concluded that in order to answer the central question of the investigation, it is necessary to obtain information from project managers and their employees on how they perceive the variables (employee commitment to the projects and adaptive leadership practices) in the context of transition to remote work due to the global pandemic.

It is believed that with the help of qualitative research (namely, by getting the answers from the in-depth structured interviews and a questionnaire), the experience of the research participants will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, thus, fulfilling the main goal and objectives of this paper.

Research design

Based on Creswell’s suggestion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), the research design is the way and guide on how to answer the research questions by investigating and weaving all the fundamental concepts together.

In addition, Saunders highlights the importance of understanding the difference between research design and tactics on how to proceed with the research itself. For instance, the latter implies much more specific steps to answer the research question, such as the choice of data collection techniques, while research design is a more general overview and guide to navigate through the paper (Saunders et al., 2007).

Since in this research, it was decided to utilize qualitative research, in which the relationship between two variables (adaptive leadership and employee commitment to projects) are discussed, it is reasonable to stick to explanatory studies. Explanatory studies help to provide more insight into the topics and phenomena

that have not been widely investigated before and have very little empirical data. That is why it is used for this research to investigate mentioned above research question.

For this research paper, data triangulation was chosen, which includes information obtained from many sources and social situations.

In this scenario, on the one hand, semi-structured interviews with project managers were performed to figure out their vision on employee commitment and adaptive leadership. On the other hand, the same qualitative method of structured interviews (but with another set of questions) with members of these project managers' teams was undertaken. In addition, team members were asked to complete the OCQ questionnaire to provide their perspectives about employee commitment and adaptive leadership.

Method of data collection

All the data was collected through the primary resources in the form of semi-structured interviews as well as a questionnaire.

The reasoning behind choosing the semi-structured interviews lies in the range of advantages it has (Веснина & Долгина, 2015).

First and foremost, they help to navigate through different points of the subject, thus, discovering new concepts.

Second of all, semi-structured interviews let participants voice their opinions and points of view, consequently allowing an interviewer to gather more information.

Last but not least, interviews, especially semi-structured ones, enable broadening of horizons on the topic, therefore, profoundly understanding the topic.

Overall, it is also worth mentioning drawbacks of this method such as difficulty in controlling the flow of a conversation, potential influence on an interviewee by an interviewer, and bulk of adding extra information that is not going to be efficient for the research. At the same time, despite certain disadvantages, for this research paper advantages of the chosen method of data collection outweigh.

A questionnaire, on the other hand, in the course of the current research, enabled employees to confirm or disagree with opinions provided by interviewed project managers. Team members were asked to use the Likert scale to react to the statements provided as well as simply indicate if a specific practice often takes place in the working environment.

Besides, they needed to answer open-ended questions since the main goal of the investigation focuses on the qualitative method of gathering data.

The questions concerning adaptive leadership and employee commitment for both project managers and employees are modified and rely on the six adaptive leadership competencies and organizational commitment questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability

Validity is a significant factor in the truthfulness and accuracy of the final results. In addition, it becomes even more relevant for the qualitative research that is considered to be subjective (Brink, 1993).

However, according to some scientists, validity itself does not test anything, but it rather represents "...the extent to which the interpretations of the results of a test are warranted, which depend on the test's intended use..." (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008, p.2278)

Two perspectives on validity: (Kumar, 2011)

- Is the research investigation providing answers to the research questions for which it was undertaken?
- If so, is it providing these answers using appropriate methods and procedures?

Reliability is also the extent, but it shows the degree to which the same results will be expected from different researches with the same or similar instruments (Thyer, 2009). It is also represented as a valuable tool to avoid subjectivity and biases (Noble & Smith, 2015).

In the current research, validity and reliability were ensured by setting specific criteria for the participants to ensure that data gathered could be applied to align with the research aim and objectives and relate to the main question.

Besides, after the interviews, project managers were asked to confirm the validity of the interpreted data to avoid misunderstanding and eventually to make sure the research question would be answered fully.

Sampling

The main focus in the sampling part is to obtain information on the experiences and approaches of project managers and the members of their teams. However, one thing worth mentioning is the naming of the positions. In this research, the terms "project manager" and "team leader" are used interchangeably. Even though in some companies there is no such naming as the position of the project manager but rather a team leader, their roles, functions, and responsibilities turned out to be the same.

With the intention to reach a saturation point, 10 Project managers/ Team leaders were selected for this research. The primary way to contact participants was a snowball method that enabled them to reach out not only to project managers but also to team members.

The interviews were conducted in several ways:

- face-to-face meetings and online with the help of such platforms as Microsoft Teams and Zoom for project managers/team leaders. In both cases, interviews will be recorded;
- employees (team members) were contacted online by emailing them a link to the questionnaire.

Criteria for PMs/TLs:

- 3+ years of PM/TL position
- Experience in international projects
- Experience in leading projects during the pandemic partly/entirely remotely
- Experience in applying adaptive leadership practices
- Leading a team of at least three team members

Team members of the mentioned PMs/TLs' teams

Countries: Lithuania, Ukraine

The representatives of the mentioned countries were chosen because of the reasons that are described in detail below.

First of all, in order to identify and assess how adaptive leadership practices influence employee commitment in remote working conditions, an international choice of investigated countries seems more reasonable and insightful.

The second reason narrows down to the similarities in conducting the process of transitioning from offline working conditions to remote work in the investigated companies. It means that all project managers from the researched companies have experience either in working on international projects or in operating internationally.

Data and content analysis

In the qualitative approach, all the gathered information that needs to be analyzed usually requires interpretation of interviews and open questions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). That is why the first step taken was a transcription of the semi-structured interviews.

In the research, all the participants' answers from interviews and the questionnaire were later divided into subcategories that disclose opinions of project managers and their employees and are marked as *Subcategory: Project Managers' perspective on practices applied* and *Subcategory: Employees' Perspective*. In the empirical findings, there is also a *Theoretical category* that shows the main adaptive leadership competencies on the basis of literature analysis. The combination of practical sub-categories and the theoretical category in one table shows different perspectives on the same concepts and enables to draw conclusions.

Ethical issues

Absolute anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. No companies or participants' names will be revealed. The marking of interviewees was conducted through code names (e.g., PM 1, PM 2, E1, etc.)

The recordings of interviews were conducted only with the permission of participants. They will not be disclosed to the third parties and were used to avoid misinterpretation while analyzing the results and transcriptions.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

After conducting the research with the help of a qualitative approach, the data from 10 interviews with project managers and team leaders were gathered. In this chapter, all the information will be analyzed, and the final outcome, as well as findings and conclusions will be presented.

The purpose of the investigation was to discover what adaptive practices project managers find the most effective and implement on a regular basis in order to keep their team members committed to the project during the transition to remote working conditions.

In addition, the objective was to determine the importance of the adaptive skills of the leader under remote working conditions.

Empirical findings represented in this chapter are based on the main research question (*How will employee commitment be affected by adaptive leadership practices during the transition to remote work?*) and are supposed to deepen literature analysis provided before as well as to clarify the theoretical background in the field of employee commitment and adaptive leadership.

The interpretation of collected data was analyzed from two different perspectives. On the one hand, there were ten project managers who agreed to share their experience in applying adaptive leadership practices in remote work settings. In the form of semi-structured interviews, some of the questions that they answered were based on the adaptive leadership model, while others were constructed in accordance with the current working conditions and theoretical background on employee organizational commitment.

On the other hand, in order for the research to be complete and avoid biases, one team representative of each interviewed project manager or team leader was asked to complete the questionnaire on the same concepts: adaptive leadership, organizational commitment, and remote working conditions.

All the participants were selected from different fields (IT sector, NGOs, Digital Marketing, and Localization companies) on purpose. Such variety is believed to detect how leaders in different areas apply adaptive practices and whether these practices can be universal and implemented in any field and how they can impact employee commitment to projects for team members who are involved in.

All answers that were collected on adaptive leadership, employee commitment, and remote working conditions were analyzed from the point of view of both project managers and representatives of their teams. Questions and statements are modified from the adaptive leadership model and organizational commitment questionnaire.

3.1 Project managers' perspective

3.1.1 Analysis of adaptive approach and main practices applied by project managers

As it was mentioned before, the empirical investigation of the research question and main concepts heavily relies on Heifetz's model with its six main adaptive leadership competencies.

Get on the balcony

The application of the first competency of getting on the balcony was investigated through the following question for project managers and team leaders – *Why is it important (if you think it is) to step back in challenging situations to see the bigger picture and assess the challenge?*

The aim of this question was to check if taking a more distanced view on the problem to connect missing detached points and to observe new ways and solutions proves to be efficient in challenging situations. Also, participants were asked to provide an explanation of the importance of the practice.

On the one hand, the majority of interviewees expressed strong approval and support of this practice:

- *“Only by seeing the bigger picture you can see the best solution” (PM1)*
- *“In order to see and find a right solution for the whole project, you need to stop and see what is missing. And when you are working a lot on a challenging situation, at some point, you will stuck, and you will start losing the main (core) idea of it and start concentrating on small, often irrelevant issues.” (PM2)*
- *“When you're in something unpredictable, and there is quite often rush, or panic, or both, you cannot afford to pause to look what's happening. And very often, it results in mistakes because people under stress make mistakes. That's human. So it's very important to make some pauses and to see where we are...” (PM6)*
- *“Obviously it's important to have an overall view because in everyday life you have actually lots of emails, calls ... so you tend to lose the vision of ultimate goal by focusing on routine tasks” (PM7)*
- *“I believe it is not only important, but it is one of the main tasks of a PM since they navigate team, apply another way of dealing with situation...” (PM10)*

On the other hand, one of the project managers pointed out that this approach might need to be utilized carefully in order to be beneficial. As he claims: *“...while organizing an event, for, example, you can't just stop and step back; it may lead to losses...” (PM9)* Even though from the personal practice of this respondent, it looks as if it was not always reasonable to implement “getting on the balcony view” to the full but this respondent usually tries to stick to the mentioned approach and with crucial principles of observation.

It is also worth mentioning an explanation that participants 7, 8, and 3 provide while describing the reason why getting on the balcony view should prevail in the organizations. According to them, a project manager is a vital bond that connects higher authority of the project and regular employees (“...as a team leader you usually represent middle management...” (PM7))

Without that link, the whole project workflow might be inefficient due to the miscommunication between sides:

- *“I think it is important because the project manager is the person who usually gets tasks from higher managers and delegates parts of the project to the team...And that is why I think it is important to take a step back and see the bigger picture when managing between both parties. I need to hear both opinions and try to see how they overlap or how it can be merged, or what we can do better or differently.” (PM9)*
- *“...so the leader is this link that connects all points in the project since he/she sees this bigger picture and can understand and later explain the process step-by-step to set the clear goal.” (PM3)*

In conclusion, when it comes to the observation and stepping back from the challenge, the empirical investigation and all the shared experiences helped to clarify and deepen the theoretical background of this competency.

On the whole, the opinions of respondents helped to identify practices and divide them into the following subcategories showed clearly and eventually identified the following practices:

- Pausing to observe all the aspects of the project process;
- Stopping briefly to deepen into the core of the ongoing problem;
- Connecting smaller-scale objectives and tasks of the project with a bigger picture of large-scale organizational goals.

Identify adaptive challenge

This competency is about a leader’s ability to distinguish between a technical problem that implies already known ways of dealing with processes and adaptive challenge that requires new solutions. As a result, the next question – *Can the adaptive approach be applied in all situations, or is it not compatible with all challenges?* – was supposed to give a more practical overview of this competency and introduce participants’ experience in order to see why it is critical to navigate through adaptive and technical challenges and if there is a chance that only one of them can be utilized.

Overall, all participants strongly agree with the fact that the adaptive approach does not necessarily mean universality and cannot be described as applicable to any problem. At the same time, there are still slight differences in the answers, especially in how they perceive both adaptive and technical approaches.

For instance, a few participants expressed the point of view that what approach to use highly depends on the project, the context, and what outcomes are ultimately expected. They also mention that if everything went smoothly and proved to be efficient in the past, they would instead not change the procedures.

It means that **sustaining recognized means of conducting work is needed with technical issues:**

- *“It really depends on the task/project. If we have done something like that before and it turned out effective, I don't see the point of changing anything.” (PM4)*
- *“Again, the challenges are different. There are some predictable challenges, for example, that every second week, you deliver a software product to your end-users. So this is something that you plan and definitely get ready beforehand. And if something unpredictable happens ... you just learn as it goes.” (PM6)*
- *“I think there are technical issues, so there is no place for adaptation in the sense that there is something that has to be done in a very specific way because we have to still go with the baseline scope, timeline, budget. Of course, when there is something new and undiscovered...and there are enough resources, then we can give it a try. So again, the balance.” (PM7)*
- *“I'm not sure if the adaptive approach is that universal as it seems to be in theory since sometimes there're some tasks that simply need to be done. For example, documenting our process progress. And I think that it is very hard to adapt, and honestly, I don't really see a point of changing well-conducted processes.” (PM8)*

From this information, we can come up with the conclusion that the answer to the initial question is very much contextual and subjective when it comes to a project's variety.

In addition, project managers, while sharing their experiences, gave some key factors and criteria that can help to define what team leaders should look at when identifying a challenge and, consequently, choosing the approach.

As the research suggests, it is crucial to understand and **observe clearly your working field** (*If the final product is expected to be adaptive and creative and the client also requires it, for example, an advertisement, a show, adaptive approach really helps. However, once talking about technical tasks, such as surgery, teeth industry, I don't think that people would like to risk their health and to have adaptive approach once risking their lives” – PM7*)

In addition, it is also quite essential to **refer to the people** – preferences of the end-user and your team members as well because, as PM9 clarifies: *“...Plus, there are some rules and conditions required by the end-user that you simply cannot change. When it comes to people, However, it's different - the leader has to be flexible and adapt due to the fact everyone is individual and requires a unique approach.”*

Besides, navigating through with expected outcomes of the project and resources also may lead you to the correct answer. **In case of resource or time restraints, it is beneficial to stick to the familiar ways of working:** *“What I mean is that looking for new ways and approaches may look like the best solution and have a very high popularity, but in most cases, there are no enough time and resources for that, especially when your end-user expects the product as soon as possible, so it makes more sense to use something that already proves to be effective in the past.” (PM10)*

During the investigation of this question, it turned out that a combination of both approaches has fair chances to lead to not only the project success but also to keeping a golden medium when navigating and mentoring the tasks among employees: *“For me, the best way to manage all the operations is to combine both technical and adaptive approaches. Otherwise, you can miss on some crucial parts project consists of. Cause when you think about a successfully delivered project, it is usually a skillful combination of a few different perspectives (approaches)” (PM2)*. Besides, a technical challenge is seen as something that employees and their team leaders might deal with on a daily basis, that is why after identifying it, it is easier to face something unknown: *“Technical approach is a base while the adaptive approach is something on top of that, so this mix allows to be more flexible. Without having a stable (technical) background in certain operations, it is hard to move on and adjust something more adaptable” (PM3)*

Summing up, the experience of team leaders and project managers helped to identify that the adaptive approach cannot be applied in all situations. Therefore, it is not compatible with all challenges.

That is why from the investigation, it is possible to conclude that the competency of identifying the adaptive challenge can be classified and broadened with the help of the following practices:

- Maintaining known ways of work performance should be applied to technical issues that are predictable
- Limitation of resources requires the application of well-known practices of conducting work processes;
- Taking into consideration people, you are working with;
- Observation and identification of the working field.

Regulate distress

Initially, when Heifetz was describing the principle of regulating distress, the main point of this competency was for a leader to find out and manage the stress of the whole team when it comes to changes. Since people rarely are willing to reconsider the usual and known methods of conducting tasks (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

It becomes even more relevant now under the conditions where for more than a year, companies have been massively transitioning to remote work. That is why the question to project managers was the following – *How do you regulate stress within your team?*

One of the participants admitted: *“Stress for me is one of the biggest problems as for a team leader due to a lot of responsibilities and I always try to be enough, meaning helping my team and managing my tasks.”* (PM8). At the same time, another project manager, number 10, concludes that *“I guess no one has the right answer.”*

From that, it is possible to draw a conclusion that the topic of stress is very to the point. First of all, in order to deal with stressful situations and regulate them, a team leader should be able to manage himself/herself. Second of all, the fact that there is no correct answer does not mean there is nothing to be done about this issue. It is, in fact, quite the opposite – it implies that there is no standard and universal solution. Thus, it brings us back to the adaptability, ability to adjust, and readiness to look for creative solutions.

Before moving on to ideas on how project managers regulate stress within their teams, it is also essential to provide an overview, suggested by one of the participants, of the main factors that allegedly might cause distress to the whole team.

The first one is a postponement of the tasks and later than expected results delivery. *“It may happen due to different reasons that very often are beyond team members ‘area of power.’”* (PM9). Secondly, the *“team is not involved in resolving project problems due to lack of interest”* (PM9). And the last one mainly relates to the miscommunication within the team and establishing trustworthiness in the leader-employee relationship: *“A team member is not willing to talk openly”* (PM9)

All the information gathered during the structured interviews with project managers demonstrates a variety of possible methods of regulating the distress that is mentioned below.

Conducting **meetings** that would encourage team members to share their worries and express their opinions or doubts concerning the project workflow: *“The most useful practice so far is Scrum retrospective to ensure the team can trust you and each other. Besides, it is vital because it helps to develop and maintain trustworthy interpersonal relationships in order to know and understand who you are working with”* (PM10)

A few participants also pointed out that they regularly implement feedback sessions during formal or more informal meetings: *“I think that constant catchups and feedback sessions are the best stress regulators, once people are allowed to say their worries and issues, and they are heard.”* (PM5); *“I noticed*

that hearing feedback also helps my team since they see their work from another perspective and receive a more complete view of the progress.” (PM8)

Another vital factor that enables stress within the team to be released is making sure your team members get along with each other and can rely on one another. In order to reach this high point in teamwork, team leaders mentioned that it is easier and more efficient to do so during team buildings and **informal gatherings** beyond work: *“The second part is organizing activities with your teams (e.g., games, parties, personal talks, etc.)” (PM2); “if possible, meet with your team offline in a more informal environment to get to know each other better and remind yourself why you liked this job/team in the first place.” (PM9)*

There are some cases when the level of stress within a team reaches a pretty much critical level. In such cases, in order to avoid burnouts or to deal with them, it is recommended for a team member to take some **days off**: *“If I notice a person experiencing physical or emotional reactions to stress, I agree on a day off/earlier leave ... and after he/she comes back we usually come up with a plan on how not to repeat mistakes that caused the stress. If the day off is not possible because of workload, then distribute the workload and make them more available for a break.” (PM1); “I faced the situation when the person became disinterested in doing certain tasks because of burnout. When it already happens, you can't do a lot, except for probably giving some days off to the person.” (PM7)*

Also, as the investigation proves, a project manager should monitor not only tasks performance and whether their team meets a deadline but the **well-being of team members** as well: *“...Make sure that you monitor the stress level. And if you see that one or a few persons are really tired, you should just advise them to take a day off and sleep or do some things that would allow them to relax.” (PM6)*

No matter how many innovative techniques and methods are utilized by team members, they are more likely not to work out. The commitment of employees comes, first of all, from the commitment of a project manager. It implies **showing the employees personal interest** in what the project manager does: *“Being a good role model. I never show panic to my team whatever happens during the project, so I want them to treat their tasks in the same way.” (PM4)*

Participant number 6 also explains how the situation with the pandemic proved the importance of staying committed to what you do and leading your team by taking active actions: *“Last year COVID caused my team a lot of stress. We were releasing a lot of systems that would enable people to get registered for vaccination. And there were many stressful situations when the team had to stay up until 2-3 am... it is crucial to lead by example. So if the team sees that their team leader finishes work at 5 pm and goes to have fun or goes to spend time with his or her family while the team should work long hours, it wouldn't work*

like that.” That’s also how this participant explains why no one left the project during these challenging times.

In continuation of the critical situation, the same project manager mentions why a **result-oriented approach** plays such an important role while managing stress: “...*you should definitely make sure they understand why they are making all the sacrifices. Because they need to see the perspective, they need to know that it's not going to be forever like that. And they need to see what's their result of that.*” (PM6)

Last but not least, planning and **having a plan B** can prevent and save the whole team from unnecessary worries: “...*often it's caused by the incorrect plan of the day. So sometimes it's also smart just to go through the day planning with a person.*” (PM7); “*When it comes to my team members, some ongoing deadlines might cause stress, but again with a good planning stage, we have something more stable to lean on. So even at early stages of a project, I am trying to create plan B or take into consideration different groups of possible risks.*” (PM8)

After analyzing the answers of all the participants, it becomes evident that in spite of the fact that each project manager/team leader uses different unique approaches, one common feature of all them is **communication**: “*Firstly, to regulate stress within your team, you need to communicate with your team. Because if team members shut down their minds from you, it is hard to manage anything. That's why the first phase is communication*” (PM2); *Communication is obviously the key. For example, if a team member is struggling. I encourage them to book a short call with me to talk it through. It's even more important if an employee is rather introverted and doesn't share a lot during general team meetings.*” (PM3)

The ability to listen to your team and talk to them as well as your team doing the same eventually results in an encouraging and friendly environment where employees feel protected, heard, and, consequently, ready to reach set goals: “...*talk and communicate with your team, explaining why certain tasks are important since their performance very much depends on how they feel about work.*” (PM9)

Overall, the problem of regulating distress in the team still remains an ongoing issue for most project managers. As they pointed out, there are several practices that can be adopted, and all of them aim at improving the interpersonal relationship by effective communication skills:

- Conducting informal gatherings/online activities and formal meetings to encourage a safe and supportive environment;
- Taking care of the well-being of employees by giving days off as well as providing support and readiness to back them up;
- Being a role model by showing the commitment to the project;

Maintain disciplined attention

Maintaining disciplined attention means keeping your employees focused and engaged. The question *“To what extent are you involved in the establishing adaptive culture in your team?”* is accompanied by the addition *“(i.e., making sure employees remain committed to performing routine tasks/ to resolving challenging situations)”* since it was in the course of the research interest to specify and deepen into different possible situations.

Everyday tasks

Participant number 1 finds proper **scheduling** the most effective method since it had already proven to bring positive results: *“When I became a team leader, one of my responsibilities was to monitor and remind PMs to do their routine task, but there was not a strategy to these responsibilities. So I implemented a statistical approach and a schedule of mentioned monitoring. And now I monitor weekly/ monthly if the regular tasks are done on time, their KPIs depend on performing all assigned tasks, and they know the exact deadline until when they have to show results.”*

Variety of additional project management **tools** and resources to control and monitor: *“...using different tools (such as Asana). I think that the adaptive culture within the team can be reached when a leader keeps track of employees' performance to understand how they deal with tasks.” (PM3)*

At the same time, even though another participant fully supports the same ideas on implementing a range of relevant tools and methods by saying that: *“All the adaptive frameworks (Scrum, Kanban, etc.) help to deal with routine tasks and improve performance.” (PM10)*, they also point out the necessity of utilizing them efficiently. To use and apply the tools correctly, a project manager should refer to his/her team: *“But again, it depends on each team individually what and how to use them and, on the other hand, it depends if leader realizes their purpose and how to implement it practically. What I do is to listen to my team and their needs and try to correlate the value of any adaptive practice/process with real people.” (PM10)*

Being a **proactive analyst** and detecting your team activity: *“On routine tasks, I include their analysis on weekly meetings, one-to-one sessions or once analyzing personal development plans.” (PM5)*. However, it is crucial not to confuse tracking and support provided to your team with micromanagement and excessive monitoring: *“Honestly, it took me some time and life experience to trust my team to stop checking them and monitoring them even when it is not needed. So I'm just doing the weekly check or if it's something really important, which can influence a team, at the end of the day.” (PM7)*

Keeping **balance**: *“I'm actually the person who creates most of the challenges. Because I definitely know most of them. But my goal is to see that the team is balanced, that some of them get to work more,*

some of them get to relax, and then they switch places. So that not the same people overwork all the time even if I need to make them take vacations.” (PM6) This aspect may also involve taking breaks: “I’m just trying to encourage my team not to forget about small breaks or changing people’s tasks so one person could experience different tasks and shift from one activity to another.” (PM8)

Challenging situations

In most cases, even when being in a challenging situation, it is vital to keep in mind the **result-oriented mindset**: *“My involvement is rather result-oriented, and I also try to check how my team reacts to one or another adaptation.” (PM2)*

Involving your team and therefore showing them on practice that their role in the project is essential and they are values is another approach in this situation: *“These situations involve more complex overview, meaning that not only I, as a PM, make a decision, but also my team takes part in the discussion.” (PM4)*

What is especially crucial for team leaders to realize and remember is that they are **working with people**, not processes: *“And I try to stick to the idea that it’s not people who are guilty, it’s processes. So you definitely have to work with people but fix processes in order to be able to accept adaptive challenges because when you resolve them, everyone just gets back to their routine. And that’s very reassuring.” (PM6)*
“I’m involved in a way that I am managing the team who are doing main parts of the project, and when they are not sure how to proceed, we can come up with an alternative solution. So I would say it’s a middle-level involvement.” (PM7)

Showing **support** may not only develop trustworthiness in relationship with team members, but it will also enable them to make firm decisions and avoid the fear of making mistakes: *“It’s crucial to agree from the project planning stage on the responsibilities of each team member, their readiness to deal with a challenge and also ask them “How can I help you?” if something is not going the right way for them to understand they have support, not just control” (PM9)*

Next, there are also a few opinions which show that it is crucial not to be too much involved in controlling the team but instead **assist and monitor**: *“I believe a team leader shouldn’t be involved in this process too much. They should check the results because the main idea of working on the project is result-based ...” (PM2)* *“I do not like close monitoring on this. I like when people take their own responsibility and initiatives on making manuals, organizing an internal meeting or even talking with clients.” (PM5)*

On the whole, as it turned out from the research, maintaining disciplined attention may presuppose and involve a variety of practices and techniques depending on the situation.

At the same time, all of them are based on proper communication, support, and people-oriented mindset, and they can be categorized in the following types that sum up all the practices mentioned earlier by project managers:

(Everyday tasks)

- Proper planning of the workflow and daily tasks to ensure work-life balance;
- Analysis of the project process with the help of project management tools.

(Challenging situations)

- Monitoring and supporting team members;
- Stress on people, not on the processes.

Give the work back to the people

This principle seems to be extremely valuable and helpful to implement because it presupposes that a leader gives their team to take more responsibility for the project. It helps to mobilize team members and divide the work. Based on that, the following question was raised: *What do you usually do to encourage your team member to be more independent in decision making, and how do you react if they make mistakes?*

The initial idea behind the question was to clarify and investigate how participants react to the mistakes of their employees and to what extent they rely on and trust people who work with them.

One of the first things a good team leader should do is to realize that without **trusting** and supporting your team, nothing will work. As an example, participant number 6 shared their experience on the topic during pandemic crisis: *“...One important thing I realized as a leader is that I definitely need to have help, especially if I go on vacation or I get sick. Because for example, when I had COVID, I worked through all COVID, and that's why it was really long because I didn't have time to recover. And that was probably the last drop when I understood that something had to change. If you saw my calendar, you would get confused because I usually have three-four meetings in parallel. And I cannot attend all of them physically.”*

Without any doubts, for employees, it is essential to feel independent, but they should also fully realize the **responsibility** that comes along with it: *“Even though I allow and encourage my team to be more independent in decision-making, but I also explain the responsibility behind it.” (PM2)* *“I try to encourage my team to be more independent, but my goal is also to create ownership mindset within the team which means taking responsibility for their own actions and developing the ability to deal with consequences.” (PM3)* *“I try to never decide for them if it's not a situation that needs my decision. But in our work, it's very important to understand how decisions are made” (PM1)*

Some participants also voiced certain concerns when it comes to the word “independence,” and that is why they would rather stick to the statement: **Initiative over independence:** *“I try to encourage my team*

members to be more autonomous rather than independent. Because in our organization we believe that the best way to learn is through guidance and mentoring.” (PM8) “It’s a tricky question since sometimes any independence is limited to the customer’s initial requirements. Also, independence may cause workovers, and doing something extra is not always a positive thing since it takes valuable resources. That is why I encourage my team to be initiated in the first place. I emphasize the importance of voicing their ideas and can guarantee my support, but that idea should align with business goals, strategy, and objectives and it also should be more or less planned and thought through.” (PM10)

When it comes to the mistakes, all participants were of the same opinion that this process is inevitable and quite normal. There is nothing unusual, surprising or bad about it, however, “...it also depends on the level of an employee or a type of mistakes, so this acceptance (of a mistake) can be in different forms.” (PM2) “Mistake is not a problem; the problem is if someone doesn’t admit them.” (PM9)

Overall, in spite of the fact that in the literature analysis, the necessity of employee independence is highlighted, as the empirical research has proved, it is even more important for both project managers and employees to acknowledge the cost of it and all possible consequences.

From the opinions shared by the interviewees, it might be concluded that the following adaptive leadership practices are the most efficient and applicable in the competency of giving work back to people:

- Providing independence to employees should be ensured by their understanding of the degree of responsibility that comes with it;
- To work effectively, it is crucial to learn to trust the team;
- The initiative is more efficient and resultative than independence;
- Mistakes are a part of the working process; however, with high dependency on the employee’s position.

Protect leadership voices from below

In order to complete the research, the question “As a team leader/PM, how can you make sure everyone in the team gets a chance to contribute, and everyone’s opinions/voices are heard?” was asked. Importance of team leaders understanding what authority is and how to be influential is crucial as it has a direct impact on team members. As Heifetz suggests, a leader is not a job position but rather an action (Ronald Heifetz et al., 2009).

In the case of this research, by asking the mentioned question, it was vital to establish what practical actions project managers do and whether it helps them to support the level of employee commitment.

Before diving into the main practices applied by team leaders, it is worth mentioning the explanation of one of the project managers who pointed out why the principle of protecting leadership voices from

below needs to be implemented: *“It starts with me understanding that as one person, I cannot come up with many various and efficient ideas, so I definitely need to include my team so that they realize their value and importance.” (PM9)*

As the results show, most participants mention that **conducting meetings** on a regular basis with their team eventually leads to a better understanding of employees’ needs and pains. Also, it might even bring the team closer to each other:

- *“Every day we have a morning meeting to share/ talk about our issues/concerns/ ideas.” (PM1)*
- *“To make any decision or accept any ideas, we organize meetings, inner team discussions.” (PM2)*
- *“On a daily basis, the whole team discusses the agenda for the day where everyone needs to contribute and share on the progress...” (PM4)*

Next, even though many participants pointed out meetings, still they also differ, depending on the format project managers decide to apply. Respondent number 10, for example, refers to personal team leader-employee meetings: *“One of my main responsibilities is to conduct one-on-one sessions with a different frequency depending on the time a team member spent in this position.”*

Some other suggestions include: daily team stand-ups: *“Every day we have a morning meeting to share/ talk about our issues/concerns/ ideas.” (PM1)*; informal discussions: *“...we are trying to spend more time together in different informal meetings and play games so that everyone feels comfortable with each other...” (PM3)* and voting sessions: *“We usually have voting, and it is the easiest way to track that...” (PM5)*

As project manager number 6 points out, it is crucial to **look for a good match for your team** while interviewing a potential employee: *“Initially, I try to select to my team people who care.” (PM6)*

The initial stage of making sure people are heard, and their opinions are taken into consideration also *“... starts with me understanding that as one person, I cannot come up with many various and efficient ideas, so I definitely need to include my team so that they realize their value and importance” (PM9)* which means **project manager has to establish why it is necessary.**

Turning down a team member’s offer correctly in a way that does not discourage them to contribute in the future and try again is another example of how to make sure voices from below are protected and supported: *“When people offer something, even if it's something you don't agree will work out, you can just thank them for contributing and sharing. But if you disapprove of the idea, you need to give an argument why it's not going to work and make sure your employee understands that you still want to hear their idea in the future.” (PM7)*

Finally, from all the gathered information, it is possible to draw a conclusion that by protecting leadership voices from below, project managers do not lose time and waste their effort but even vice versa – by admitting that they need help, they empower their team members and “push” them to step up and act. In this way, they also develop a deeper connection. Participant 10 mentioned: “...*During these meetings, I am an active listener, and after the meeting, I am an active doer, which means summarizing the feedbacks/ideas, creating action items, and applying received information to make our lives happier.*”

The suggested answers of project managers in relation to the competency “Protect leadership voices from below” have contributed to the following subcategories of main effective practices used by them:

- Constant meetings and catch-ups (including daily stand-ups, one-on-one discussions, and informal online calls) as the main tools to maintain connection in interpersonal relationships;
- Identification of the team value and role in the working process;
- Refusal of team members’ ideas should be made in a respectful and supportive way with the explanation provided to encourage the further contribution of employees.

3.1.2 Commitment

In the scope of literature analysis, a variety of definitions on what commitment or organizational commitment represent. As it was already mentioned before, they all have certain common characteristics, such as the desire to stay in the company and readiness to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of an organization.

During the investigation, while answering the question “*How do you define employee commitment?*” some of the respondents pointed out that the term “employee” is not relevant anymore for their teams/organizations: “*prefer not to use the word “employee” (PM9)*, and they usually stick to other wordings, for instance, team members, team or team mates: “*In our company, we do not address team members as employees.*” (PM10)

Factors suggested by PM 6 that impact employee commitment:

1. Setting and external factors: “*...efforts that are made by the environment, the project manager, the leader.*”;
2. Internal components: “*...certain self-interests, financial motivation, development, motivational challenges, etc.*”;
3. Interpersonal interactions: “*personal circumstances: the surroundings, working environment, the team.*”

Overall, participants, while expressing their opinion, stated the following signs of a committed employee:

Goal-oriented and showing results: *“I guess these people are really committed to the goal, and the most important factor is that they're motivated to do something, and they are giving feedback, and maybe some notes on what we can do better. They come to the meetings not because they have to do it; otherwise, the boss will not be satisfied but to participate in the meetings by contributing and expressing the interest in the project.” (PM8)*

These key characteristics often overlap and coincide with the signs of actual progress and contribution of employees: *“...to see this commitment..., we need to compare what was before that employee and how the situation looks like after their contribution.” (PM2)*

Loyalty to the beliefs: *“I would also be able to relate this concept with trust, mutual understanding, and honesty” (PM5), reliability:* *“I can define it as the completion of the workflow of the project plan that was set up before. If an employee is committed, they will try to be efficient and reliable in terms of their responsibilities.” (PM4) and trust* in a leader: *“...they trust you (in case there is a problem, they do not hesitate to ask for help when needed).” (PM3)*

In conclusion, when it comes to the comparison of theoretical background and real-life experiences, it is possible to draw a conclusion that they do not fully align with each other. While theoretical definitions of employee commitment specify and clearly state such factors as the willingness to stay with a company, project managers and team leaders do not mention this criterion when expressing their point of view on how they define employee commitment.

However, it becomes obvious that, as the previous research suggests, motivation to contribute along with the readiness to take responsibility for delivering tasks are empirically proved to be key characteristics of high employee commitment.

Talking about the connection between adaptive leadership and employee commitment, the views on this issue slightly differ.

On the one hand, some project managers are convinced that these two concepts belong to different categories: *“To be honest, for me, these are two different categories, even though they do overlap at some point.” (PM10), and this connection “depends on people to a great extent.” (PM9) “First of all, it depends on a person (both an employee and a leader) because their cases when it doesn't matter how much of a good leader you are, if an employee is initially not interested in staying committed to the project and putting effort in it, there is very little you can do about it.” (PM2)*

On the other hand, a vast majority of respondents confirm that well-applied adaptive leadership practices eventually might guarantee the increase in employee commitment:

- *“If you are a good leader with the mentioned abilities to take your team's point of view into consideration even in unusual and challenging settings, employees themselves become more interested and willing to commit (when they see their work and contribution matters).” (PM4)*
- *“Only a leader can show competency and empathy can ensure employee commitment.” (PM1)*

At the same time, both sides admit the importance and positive influence of adaptability: *“Everyone wants to go with trends and now agile, adaptability, step out of the box approach is really valued in all sectors, including and tech, and if you cannot be adaptive, no one will stay. You simply lose talents because of being rigid.” (PM5)* *“From my personal experience as an employee and as a leader, it is very important to have the skill of adjusting and flexibility.” (PM7)*

Summing up, what was interesting for the investigation was the fact that some of the respondents were sure that these concepts could actually influence each other: *“The more adaptive leader is, the higher chances that the employees will be committed because it is the way of understanding each other, so one can increase another” (PM3)* *“From my personal experience as an employee and as a leader, ... The relationship between adaptive leadership and employee commitment to projects is very tight, and the right leadership practices positively influence the level of commitment and vice versa. As an employee, ... if your team leader is ready to listen to you..., then, of course, you're going to be more committed both to the project and to the company. On the other hand, if employees make an effort to contribute and give multiple times really nice ideas that eventually lead to good results, the team leader can even change their opinion on how they perform certain tasks, and it shows them what works with their team and what is not.” (PM7)*

Summary

One of the summarizing questions participants were asked (*Which adaptive practice (from the discussed above) do you find the most useful one/ you use most frequently and why?*) was supposed to help to deepen and clarify their experiences even in more detail. The most important practice that defines the ultimate success is communication: *“...for me, communication is the key. To ask people how they feel during a weekly meeting or one-to-one. I like empathy and that everyone should be heard – that also helps me to listen and to get new ideas towards better job implementation, or overall, management.” (PM5)* *“So I'd point out self-management, flexibility, and communication as main factors here.” (PM6)* *“I would say it's giving your team more freedom and avoiding micromanaging because it's something that again brings us back to communication.” (PM7)*

After discussing the main principles of the model, it is essential to start with the view of team leaders and project managers on the critical characteristics of an adaptive leader. When it comes to being adaptive in a leadership position, respondents pointed out the following key characteristics:

- flexibility: *“I am flexible to the changes as well as to the people I am working with. And more importantly, I am flexible for people to help them to fix their current issues” (PM2);*
- being able to adjust: *“Not being adaptive means not being able to fit in the working environment, which eventually can end up in loss.” (PM5) and being ready for changes: “As a result of so many alterations, we had to change methods. We were adjusting our work by some other methods like lean development, for example, that helped us to react quickly and to deliver quickly and to learn from our lessons quicker than we did before.” (PM6);*

On the whole, all participants also highlight the importance of implementing and applying adaptive practices, especially in times of changes: *“Very important as working with different teams on every project is highly dynamic and requires intensive adaptation skills.” (PM1), and some even compare the adaptive approach to the improvement: “Seeking the improvement is obviously beneficial. And I understand adaptive approach as an improvement since it challenges you but at the same time eventually leads to positive outcomes.” (PM4).*

At the same time, as it was determined earlier, not all cases require an adaptive approach. That is why, for a leader, it is crucial to navigating and asses each situation individually: *“I like the example about the army: when you are in the army, you will not be adaptive. And you will not be working with adaptive leadership ... So where I was heading to is that it all depends on the situation you're operating in.” (PM6)*

In the process of interviewing, respondents were asked if they could share anything else on the topic they felt was important and was not mentioned before. The answers might differ depending on the differences in personal experiences. However, there are a few common points and key findings:

- As it was already discussed, **communication** is the main success determinant not only for establishing the relationship within a team but for every aspect of the work on a project: *“Communication is the key, and everyone should be heard. Because if you think that you are a leader / PM and you are the best, you are the worst already.” (PM5) “Keeping your team committed and being a good leader means understanding the work ethic and having communication skills. It's so easy, and it doesn't cost anything to be a human and nice person.” (PM7)*
- Constant learning and **self-development** that also involves being a role model for your team: *“It's crucial never to stop learning and figuring out new information.” (PM1) “I try to work on myself first, then my team is willing to do follow my lead in order not to fail me.” (PM9) “The answer is to*

lead by example. It's not only about work leading, but it is also about the lifestyle. If you are active and you manage at least three things: work, studying, and some fun, then why not share it with your team and your employees.” (PM6)

3.1.3 Remote Working

Since the topic of remote working has become even more relevant for the past year due to the pandemic, it was crucial to include it as a setting when talking about adaptability and employee commitment.

The question raised, *“What do you do on practice to adapt to the changing working conditions? (i.e., transitioning from offline to remote work),”* was aimed at analyzing employee commitment and how it can be influenced by adaptive leadership practices applied by project managers in remote working conditions. Below there are main methods and practices outlined.

Environment a safe and encouraging place for employees to express their point of view: *“...create the environment when team members can interact with each other, get to know each other better (especially, if new employees who started working during the pandemic) by signing them to perform some tasks together, organizing meetings in small groups.” (PM2)*

Team building events: *“...team building events, for example, made a big difference and put a bit more of stress on the team leaders and HR department since I believe building informal connections within the team is one of the success criteria of the project.” (PM3) “And we try to meet as much as possible offline, hiking in the mountains, for example. I guess you just pay like put more effort into communication than before because you have it differently.” (PM6) “...Also, team buildings and workations come in handy because offline events are definitely much more effective.” (PM10)*

Informal activities online: *“I like to organize “coffee breaks,” and sometimes we even include “quiz sessions” to make the day more fun. I think once teammates stick with such traditions and feel the team, they are more loyal, and what I realized that these practices make themselves to be more involved as well” (PM5) “We put special attention to very simple but nice things like playing games together, spending time after work just talking, Secret Santa tradition, etc.” (PM6) “Twice a week we have more informal online meetings where we discuss even non-related to job topics.” (PM10)*

Planning of the daily tasks: *“...And also proper planning of everyday routine helped to keep life-work balance and avoid burnout. However, frankly speaking, I think it would be easier to keep people committed in a face-to-face environment.” (PM8)*

Even though it has been almost two years of transition, **some still struggle** with establishing a well-organized working routine: *“Experiencing offline working in comparison to online seems to be more productive and, to be honest, even after more than a year of transition, we as a team and personally I, we are still trying to figure out how to reach previous results and stay more committed to the project.”* (PM4) *“Not going to lie that it was a very stressful breaking point that interfered immensely with my working and personal schedules.”* (PM10) **while for others it is productive:** *“What is interesting, I would even say that people got more responsible than before because when they were in the office, they had a lot of fun. They were often distracted from work.”* (PM6) And even trying to keep this type of work possible for the future: *“Talking about the future, we are trying to make sure that we still have some offline space for our people to come back to when COVID passes. But we definitely also try to prepare for having people working remote at least for some time. So we definitely try to see if we can afford that and in some cases provide them with better laptops, for example, or if they want to work while being on vacation, they can be available longer. And usually, people say yes. So we tried to find some trade-offs in the situation.”* (PM6)

Summing up, despite minor differences in practices and approaches, it is evident that on the whole, the base for all them is **communication:** *“Firstly, to manage a project and team in any conditions, a leader should be good at communication.”* (PM2) *“...small talk and communication that ensures the team spirit and more trustworthy relationships within the team.”* (PM9) *“What helped to stay on track was improving communication and keeping in touch with each other.”* (PM10)

3.2 Employees’ perspective

3.2.1 Leadership

Similar to the interviews with project managers, the questionnaire based on the adaptive leadership model was created in order to see another perspective.

The statement *“My team leader manages to see the bigger picture and assess the situation on the whole when a challenge/problem appears.”* Implies the usage of getting on the balcony principle, and most respondents agreed with that, except for numbers 7 and 8, who neither agreed nor disagreed. It can be explained by the fact that their team leaders said that project managers are linked to higher management. That is why for the team members, it is harder to see if their team leaders simply follow instructions or assess processes themselves.

Most employees mention the following: *“My team leader tries to implement new ways of dealing with challenges.”* that it happens often. Those who see it as a time to time action are participants E3 and E7.

The same respondents did not express agreement or disagreement concerning the principle about distress regulation (*“My team leader makes sure that team members avoid being stressed/burnout”*), while others ultimately agreed with the statement.

When comparing these answers with the ones given by project managers, it is possible to presuppose that since their team leaders perceive a technical challenge more like a base (PM3) or they do not often see a place for adaptation if the old methods are working good and claim they did not deal with stress-causing severe challenges (PM7), they do not probably fully see the pictures and communicate enough with the team.

On the one hand, all employees often claim, *“when working in the project, it is clear for me what my goals and responsibilities are.”*, at the same time, later some of them (E2, E4, E9) express willingness for their team leader to improve the way they deliver information and set the goals: *“He is not very good at explaining. Therefore, some practices could be good.”* (E2)

When it comes to giving work back to people, both sides project managers and employees share similar views. Employees confirm that if mistakes happen, their team leader: *“...just points at those mistakes and tries to make sure it won't happen again. Everyone makes mistakes, that's okay, no punishment here.”* (E3)

The research has also proven the methods of shadowing and close monitoring to limit employees from becoming more independent while reacting to the statement, *“My team leader encourages me to be more independent in decision making.”* Only two participants neither agree nor disagree (E1 and E8). And coming back to the interviews, exactly PM1 and PM 8 mentioned applying shadowing and close guidance and mentoring as methods to learn.

All participants expressed agreement not only that *“It is important for a team leader to be flexible and be able to adjust to the changing working environment.”*, but also that the methods that their team leaders use help them to contribute and freely say their opinion (*“As a team member, I feel heard and supported when it comes to expressing my opinion or making a contribution to the project.”*)

In addition, the participants were asked to name essential qualities of what they believe a good leader can represent. Even though there were ten employees overall but these are the most common answers: empathetic and human (E1, E2, E4, E5, E7), flexible (E8, E9, E10), supportive (E3, E4, E7) owns good both communication and managerial skills (E3, E6)

Last but not least, employees also expressed their opinion on what their team leaders can improve concerning their leadership. As the results show, it is pretty essential to be more specific when explaining and dividing tasks (E1, E4, E5, E6, E9) and develop soft skills (E3) as well as gain more experience (E3).

3.2.2 Commitment

Affective commitment measures psychological bond or attachment to the organization. (Coleman et al., 1999) Based on that, employees were provided with the following statements: *“I am attached to my organization and feel like a part of a family in my working environment.”* *“I see myself working in my organization in the long term perspective (10+ years).”*

Whilst team members agreed with the first sentence that the environment they are working in gives them the feeling of comfort and family, the second one turned out to be less effective since employees mostly neither agreed nor disagreed with that.

Normative shows if an employee feels strictly obliged to remain within the team/organization: *“I would leave my organization for a better position in another company if there was a chance.”* *“The feeling of loyalty and commitment to my organization and ongoing projects prevents me from leaving the job.”*

The findings do not fully show clarity on these questions. On the one hand, practically everyone agrees with the second statement that the commitment keeps them working in the organization. However, at the same time, some of them would leave their organization for a better position.

The possible conclusion may mean that staying committed to the ongoing projects prevents employees from quitting, but it is relevant until they see a better opportunity.

Continuance deals with losses and benefits of staying or leaving the company: *“I have concerns that once leaving my organization, I will lose a lot of opportunities and will not be able to find a better position.”* *“Staying in my organization and performing ongoing tasks in projects is rather a necessity for me than the sincere desire to work here due to the lack of other alternatives.”*

By disagreeing with the first statement and agreeing with the second one, it became clear that employees are not afraid of leaving their organizations as they believe there will be other options, and also it highlights their honest desire to be a part of their current teams not because of necessity.

Similarly to the answers of project managers, most participants claimed that adaptive leadership practices have the potential to positively impact employee commitment (E1, E2, E4, E5, E7, E8, E9), while the rest also mentioned that one could influence another and vice versa: *“They are interconnected because even the best leader is not good enough without his team, but also a team needs a good navigator to improve workflow.”* (E7)

When asked what they think their team leaders do to keep them committed to the company, employees shared the following views:

Giving feedback: *“I think gathering the feedback counts, and it is done for seeing gaps, which has to be improved.”* (E1) *“Praises, highlights my strong sides.”* (E3)

Perks and bonuses: “...gives bonuses.” (E3) “...different ... activities help as well as extra days off or bonuses.” (E4) “...extra days off if there is too much work” (E6)

Informal meetings: “Team-building! Always cool to get to know your colleagues, and to feel at ease around every member of the team.” (E2)

Creating a positive and inspiring working environment: “I think I am committed to the company because of my team and the working environment.” (E4) “encouraging and positive attitude within the team” (E6) “...thinks about all the possible ways of my development (including career change), tells me about the opportunities I can use within the company and creates a career plan with different outcomes.” (E9) “...always honest, shows support and trust, motivates to work” (E10)

3.2.3 Remote working

Team members and their commitment have been very much impacted during the pandemic, as was discussed previously. That is why it was crucial to attach the question for them to describe their experience in (transitioning to) remote working conditions? (*What did your leader do on practice to adapt to the changing working conditions? (i.e., transitioning from offline to remote work?)*)

Despite the initial suggestions that the transition to remote working would decrease the motivation to work, someone enjoyed the change: “Personally, I enjoy working at home though the process of transitioning was rough in terms of getting a good Internet connection at home. That was the main concern.” (E2). This answer makes more sense when compared to the response of PM2: “...leader should be good at communication, making sure everyone can openly provide their opinion... and to create the environment when team members can interact with each other” On the whole, it means that with the individual approach and communication, it is possible to secure ongoing progress within team work.

Still, there were others who quickly realized the struggle of the transitioning: “It was quite difficult to feel the connection with other team members and be a part of the community.” (E8) “. Later, it became complicated to keep the balance between work and home” (E4).

And again when comparing these feedbacks with project managers’ views (“Experiencing offline working in comparison to online seems to be more productive and, to be honest, even after more than a year of transition, we as a team, and personally I am still trying to figure out how to reach previous results and stay more committed to the project.” – PM4), it becomes evident that the issues brought by the pandemic still remain unresolved for many companies and take more time than it was expected.

At the same time, employees also pointed out primary practices that, from their perspective, are the most efficient:

Meetings and retrospectives: *“She set up daily/weekly sync to discuss any issues/problems/concerns/lifestyle events.” (E3). “My team lead was very into constant catchups once trying to realize my struggles, and I think that our communication became more natural” (E5)*

Informal gatherings: *“I can say that our TL tried their best to make us a team (e.g., playing games during breaks, making time to have informal meetings, etc.)” (E8) “my team leader often organizes informal calls, so we did not lose the connection” (E10)*

Scheduling: *“my team leader helped to establish and organize working schedule” (E4)*

3.3 Summary and findings

As the results of the empirical research show, the adaptive leadership competencies were disclosed to be helpful and applicable in transition to remote working conditions. All of them are implemented by project managers. However, not all of them use these practices in the same way or in accordance with what the theory offers.

In order to demonstrate where empirical research findings align with the literature analysis and where they do not fully match, the table below was designed.

The first three categories coincide with both points of view, and project managers even broaden the initial concepts with more practical actions.

Theoretical category	Subcategory: Project Managers’ perspective on practices applied	Subcategory: Employees’ Perspective
1. <u>Get on the balcony:</u> Stop in action to gain a more complete perspective; be more agile;	<p>Observation and monitoring project processes on the whole:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pausing to observe all the aspects of the project process; • Stopping briefly to deepen into the core of the ongoing problem; • Connecting smaller-scale objectives and tasks of the project with a bigger picture of large-scale organizational goals. 	Agree

<p>2. <u>Identify adaptive challenge:</u> Distinguish among complex problems technical and adaptive challenges to find the most efficient solutions.</p>	<p>Conducting work based on the challenge identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining known ways of work performance should be applied to technical issues that are predictable • Limitation of resources requires the application of well-known practices of conducting work processes; • Taking into consideration people, you are working with; • Observation and identification of the working field. 	<p>Confirm that adaptive approach is not always applied</p>
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Table 5. Summary of findings (1)

Source: created by the author

The third competency of adaptive leadership is tightly connected with the outcomes of the transitioning to remote working conditions as its theoretical aspect provides straightforward guidelines on how to deal with stress once it appears and uncertain conditions of work caused by the pandemic, as project managers mentioned, definitely led to the increased distress within the teams.

Theoretical category	Subcategory: Project Managers' perspective on practices applied	Subcategory: Employees' Perspective
<p>3. <u>Regulate distress:</u> Keeping your team balanced, productive, and prepared for the changes</p>	<p>Stress on people and their well-being in the organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting informal gatherings/online activities and formal meetings to encourage a safe and supportive environment; • Taking care of the well-being of employees by giving days off as well as providing support and readiness to back them up; 	<p>Agree that meetings, team buildings, professional and experienced teams help to avoid stress</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a role model by showing the commitment to the project; • Careful planning of daily tasks to keep a work-life balance. 	
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Table 6. Summary of findings (2)

Source: created by the author

The next principle of maintaining disciplined attention is supposed to give more clarity to the ongoing processes and engage team members in work. However, even with already implemented practices, employees later in the questionnaire mention that in the remote working conditions without contact, it would be great if their team leader were even more specific and clear on both task division and responsibilities in the team.

When it comes to the encouragement of team members to be more independent, not all project managers expressed the absolute approval of usefulness, explaining that being initiative rather than independent may prevent extra work, burnout, and other undesirable consequences.

Theoretical category	Subcategory: Project Managers' perspective on practices applied	Subcategory: Employees' Perspective
<p>4. <u>Maintain disciplined attention:</u> Keeping your employees focused and engaged by setting clear tasks and goals.</p>	<p>Assigning specific tasks individually while monitoring and supporting employees:</p> <p>(Everyday tasks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper planning of the workflow and daily tasks to ensure work-life balance; • Analysis of the project process with the help of project management tools. <p>(Challenging situations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and supporting team members; • Stress on people, not on the processes. 	<p>Mostly it is clear about the goals, but employees have expectations of receiving more clarity.</p>

<p>5. <u>Give work back to people:</u> Giving your team more responsibilities and dividing work, taking into consideration possible mistakes</p>	<p>Mistakes and independence of employees as a part of the working and learning processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing independence to employees should be ensured by their understanding of the degree of responsibility that comes with it; • To work effectively, it is crucial to learn to trust the team; • The initiative is more efficient and resultative than independence; • Mistakes are allowed to happen, however, with high dependency on the employee’s position. 	<p>Mostly agree Mistakes: Try to find the core, fix, prevent</p>
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Table 7. Summary of findings (3)

Source: created by the author

The last principle of adaptive leadership and the behavior of leaders during the pandemic appeared to share one vital feature in common, which is communication practices, for example, stand-ups, one-on-one meetings, and others. In both cases, in order to reach a desirable outcome, project managers needed to listen to their team members and reflect on the situation happening around them.

Theoretical category	Subcategory: Project Managers’ perspective on practices applied	Subcategory: Employees’ Perspective
<p>6. <u>Protect leadership voices from below:</u> Listen to your team, giving a chance everyone to be involved and contribute</p>	<p>Implementation of various communication formats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant meetings and catch-ups (including daily stand-ups, one-on-one discussions, and informal calls) as the main tools to maintain connection in interpersonal relationships; • Identification of the team value and role in the working process; • Refusal of team members’ ideas should be made in a respectful and supportive way, with 	<p>All agree</p>

	<p>explanations provided to encourage the further contribution of employees.</p>	
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Table 8. Summary of findings (4)

Source: created by the author

One more aspect to discuss is the influence of adaptive leadership practices on employee commitment. As the initial research model and theoretical background suggested, the first has a direct impact on the latter and may promote it. Besides, it turned out that Not only Adaptability as a critical factor increasing employee commitment but also adaptive leadership and employee commitment may influence each other Good leader with the adaptive approach may increase employee commitment and also interconnected

Employee commitment may also have an influence on adaptive leadership. And eventually, it makes sense, especially if to look at the initial meaning of adaptiveness. Overall, the behaviors of employees may suggest and cause the changes and provoke adjustment of the leaders.

Summing up, in the second research model below, all the experimental data gathered is represented, and in comparison to the first model, it is more complete and shows the full overview and answer to the initial research question of the investigation.

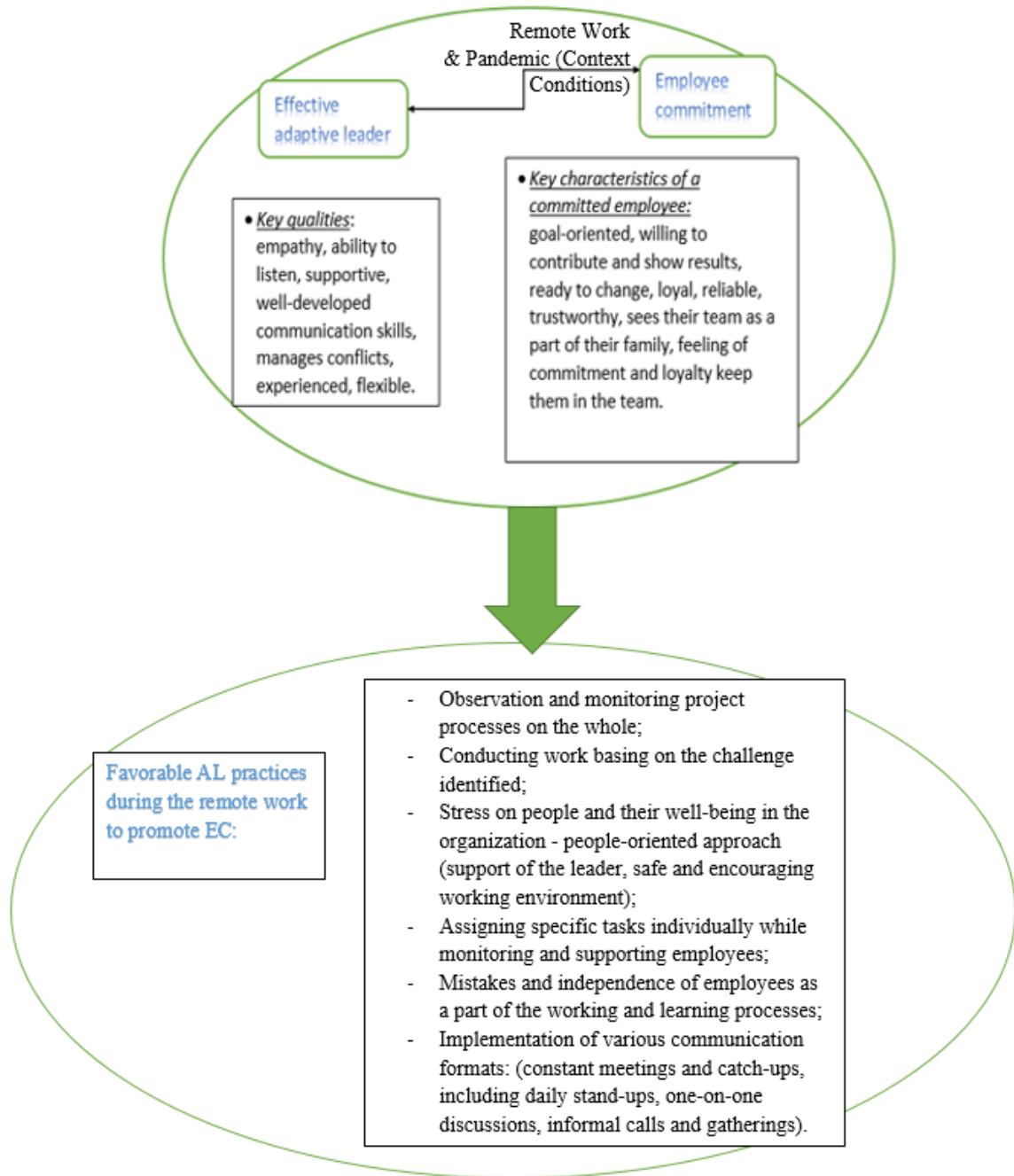


Figure 4. The practical research model

Source: created by the author

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The initial purpose of the study was to clarify and reveal what adaptive leadership practices project managers as leaders of their teams apply in order to keep their employees committed, especially in the current working conditions such as remote working due to the global pandemic.

In order to fully assess all main concepts, in this research, the organizational commitment model and the adaptive leadership model were adapted.

The research findings disclosed and identified the effectiveness of the six leadership competencies in the context of promoting employee commitment in transition to remote work since all respondents confirmed that they are actively implementing these principles in a particular form, even though the practical application of them might not fully align with the initial theory.

In addition, the interviewed project managers provided a more detailed explanation on what actions in practice they perform in the course of adaptability and identified a common point – communication that has the purpose of establishing long-lasting and reliable connections with their team members. It means that project managers regularly conduct meetings with their teams in formal and informal formats and encourage employees to actively voice their concerns and opinions to create a comfortable working environment and build loyal relationships within the teams.

. Employees stated that when they are heard and feel their value in the project, their motivation to contribute and commit increases, leading to the conclusion that protecting leadership voices from below has a significant impact on their commitment. Both employees and project managers stated that it would be impossible to deliver projects successfully and continue basic working without effective communication within the team, for instance, informal team meetings, one-on-one conversations, daily stand-ups in transition to remote working conditions processes.

Besides, all participants expressed their opinions on the definition of a committed employee. It helped to clarify and deepen the theoretical definitions discussed in the literature analysis, pointing out that employee commitment is expressed not only through the decision to work for a particular organization but also contribute, make positive changes, and, most importantly, pursue a goal. The research also showed that nowadays, some organizations tend to avoid the term “employee” and stick to the wording “team member.”

Last but not least, the initial theoretical research model presupposed that in remote work conditions, effective adaptive leadership practices might positively influence and increase employee commitment.

However, as some participants have claimed, there is another relationship – from employee commitment to the leader’s behavior. It means that both concepts can influence each other.

Recommendations

The research was conducted in a few different sectors, such as the IT sector, Digital Marketing, NGOs, and others. That is why the research results can be interpreted as more general practical insights. Therefore, each unique case and situation should be taken into consideration separately.

Still, there are some recommendations that project managers might consider when dealing with employee commitment in remote work.

First of all, even though all six leadership competencies were identified as effective and should be implemented regularly, it is crucial for project managers to align them with a specific team and peculiarities of an ongoing project.

Secondly, as leaders of their teams, project managers need to pay attention to building genuine and reliable relationships with their team members to improve work performance and the level of their commitment.

Lastly, making sure employees' opinions are heard and they are enabled to contribute and see the value of their work was discovered as the effective practice of adaptive leadership.

Limitations

Despite all the measurements taken to prevent inconsistencies, the research still has certain limitations.

First of all, due to the qualitative method applied, the data gathered might be more subjective, especially when taking into consideration that semi-structured interviews enabled participants to express a variety of opinions based strictly on their individual experiences.

Secondly, as the setting of the researched concepts is something new, one and a half years for tracking, experiencing, and investigating the consequences of the pandemic might not be enough to evaluate the valuable practices fully.

Finally, the research was limited to the perception of two countries only. That is why further investigation might see the point of including more international participants.

Implications for further researches

The current research provides a theoretical background for the topic connected with remote working in times of global pandemic and practical implications on how team leaders and project managers deal with it. In addition, it also shows the most efficient ways of applying adaptive leadership practices, confirmed by the team members.

Further studies may also take a closer look at the quantitative approach in order to assess and measure the frequency of adaptive leadership competencies implementation, meaning how often they are used and how often they can be identified efficiently.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Category	Questions
Introductory questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you define employee commitment? 2. What does it mean to you to be adaptive as a leader?
Get on the balcony	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Why is it important (if you think it is) to step back in challenging situations to see the bigger picture and assess the challenge?
Identify the adaptive challenge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Can the adaptive approach be applied in all situations, or is it not compatible with all challenges?
Regulate distress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How do you regulate stress within your team?
Maintain disciplined attention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. To what extent are you involved in establishing an adaptive culture in your team (i.e., making sure employees remain committed to performing routine tasks/ to resolving challenging situations?
Give the work back to the people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What do you usually do to encourage your team member to be more independent in decision making and how do you react if they make mistakes?
Protect leadership voices from below	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. As a team leader/project manager, how can you make sure everyone in the team gets a chance to contribute and everyone's opinions/voices are heard?

Self-managing	9. How important is it for project managers to obtain and implement adaptive leadership practices regularly?
Pandemic & Remote Working	10. What do you do in practice to adapt to the changing working conditions? (i.e., transitioning from offline to remote work)
Summing-up questions	<p>11. Which adaptive practice (from the mentioned above) do you find the most useful one/ you use more frequently and why?</p> <p>12. What, in your opinion, is the connection between employee commitment and adaptive leadership?</p> <p>13. What, if any, additional (not mentioned before) practices do you apply to boost employee commitment?</p> <p>14. What else would you like to share from your personal experience on this topic?</p>

Table 9. Interview questions for project managers

Source: created by the author

ANNEX 2

Category	Questions
Commitment	<p>Affective Commitment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you feel attached to your company and as a part of the family? 2. Do you see yourself working in the company in the long term (10+ years)? <p>Normative Commitment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Would you agree to you to leave your current organization for a better position?

	<p>4. Could you agree that the feeling of loyalty and commitment to your company prevents you from leaving the job? Continuance Commitment</p> <p>5. Do you have concerns that once leaving your organization, you will lose a lot of opportunities and will not be able to find a better position?</p> <p>6. Can you say that staying with your organization is rather a necessity because of a lack of alternatives than the sincere desire to work there?</p>
Get on the balcony	7. Does your team leader manage to see the bigger picture and assess the challenging situation on the whole?
Identify the adaptive challenge	8. Does your team leader try to implement new ways of dealing with challenges? How?
Regulate distress	9. Does your project manager make sure that team members avoid being stressed/burnout?
Maintain disciplined attention	10. When working on the project, is it clear to you what your goals and responsibilities are?
Give the work back to the people	<p>11. Do they encourage you to be more independent in decision-making?</p> <p>12. If a mistake in the working process happens, how does normally project manager react, and what are their first steps?</p>
Protect leadership voices from below	13. As a team member, do you feel heard and supported when it comes to expressing your opinion or making a contribution to the project?
Pandemic & Remote Working	14. Could you describe your experience in (transitioning to) remote working conditions?

	(What did your leader do on practice to adapt to the changing working conditions? (i.e., transitioning from offline to remote work)
Summing-up questions	<p>15. What are the key qualities of a good leader?</p> <p>16. What, in your opinion, is the connection between employee commitment and adaptive leadership?</p> <p>17. Is it important for a project manager to obtain and implement adaptive leadership practices regularly?</p> <p>18. What do you think your team leader is doing to keep you committed to the company? Do you believe it is useful?</p> <p>19. How can they improve their leadership practices?</p>

Table 10. Questions for employees

Source: created by the author