

## HAS THE PANDEMIC CHANGED THE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS?

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**Abstract:** *The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic made us all live differently, both in our personal lives and at work. This challenge determined us to carry out, between 03/02/2021 – 03/28/2021, a study on the management strategies of state and private institutions during the pandemic. The purpose of the research was to identify employees' perceptions of the entity in which they work from the perspective of implemented management strategies, to see if there have been changes in them and to find out the level of knowledge of management strategies by employees.*

**Keywords:** management strategies, COVID-19, perception, organisations, work

**JEL Classification:** D230, H610, H830

### INTRODUCTION

Over time, the public administration has been too little concerned with the strategic aspects of its work. The relationship with the citizen and his treatment as a subject of administration was part of a larger vision that perceived the role of the public service as a mechanical application of the lines drawn by the bosses, who were the only ones able to develop policies and strategies. The accomplishment of the tasks stipulated in the job description was possible without having a long-term perspective, and this was one of the main criticisms brought to the traditional model of public administration.

In the current context, especially after the acceleration of digitalization and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the framework of the managerial philosophy began to change. The increase in speed due to the use of technology, the gradual change in the mentality of managers of public institutions, media pressure, excessive visibility on social networks lead to placing in the centre of attention the achievement of results for public institutions, and concern for long-term strategies is inevitable.

### 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The strategic dimension analyses the organization in its environment, specifies distinct objectives and goals, prepares the organization to face an uncertain future (Nutt and Backoff, 1992). Administrative institutions and officials are called upon to formulate strategies, objectives and priorities as an integral part of managerial activity. Strategic management concerns civil servants located in positions of responsibility, officials who must not only mechanically perform daily work but also relate to the general objectives of the organization. The activity of a public manager also consists in widening the immediate horizon in order to think in perspective the action of the entity he leads and to adapt to the new challenges. The directions dictated refer to, but are not limited to, digitization, debureaucratization, increasing the speed of response, the introduction and increasing use of the digital signature, the interconnection between institutions. It contains two major aspects:

- defining the objectives, strategy, structure and operating principles of this entity;
- measuring the impact, in space and time, of an important measure that is being taken.

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a study on the management strategies of state and private institutions during the pandemic. The purpose of the research was to identify employees' perceptions of the entity in which they work from the perspective of implemented management strategies, to see if there have been changes in them and to find out the level of knowledge of management strategies by employees.

The study was conducted free of charge for respondents, online, through the application esurveyspro.com, with the ID 473275, the unique ID 4ea6fa16-feec-49ac-b7b9-b6bed916c524 and the link <https://www.eSurveysPro.com/Survey.aspx?id=4ea6fa16-feec-49ac-b7b9-b6bed916c524>.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS/AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Statistical survey (selective research) is one of the commonly used observation methods when total observation is not possible or not economically justified (Zizi Goschin, 1999). For extensive prospecting of the organization, the questionnaire method is recommended. In writing the questionnaire, a simple and direct language was used, neologisms were avoided, it was wanted that the language used should not leave room for confusion or interpretations. The variant of a language mix was chosen, using specific expressions and concepts, as well as everyday language, especially because the field of activity is common to all respondents, so it was assumed that they are familiar with the terms in the system. The research was conducted online, because an important vector in ensuring the sincerity of the answers is represented by the place where the respondents are approached and their comfort. Increased attention was also paid to the way the questions were formulated and their order. The questionnaire used open / free questions, closed questions both dichotomous (which offers only two possibilities to answer) and trichotomous (which offers three possibilities to answer), identification questions, control questions (to check the fidelity / constancy of opinion), graphical scales of hierarchy. The identification questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire. In establishing the number of questions, the following were taken into account: the object of the research, the survey technique, the material resources available, the type of subjects to whom the questionnaire was addressed, the average time allocated for completing the questionnaire. The minimization of response distortions, which could damage the value of the results, was also taken into account. The graphic form of the questionnaire was created in order to facilitate the completion. Based on the information needed to be obtained, according to the purpose of the research, from the material and financial resources available, a questionnaire was designed with 27 questions. It was also desired that the time to complete the questionnaire be reasonable, in order to reduce possible negative attitudes, of refusal on the part of the subjects. The contact method used was non-existent. Thus, there was no possibility to ask helpful questions, the cost of administration was higher, the confidentiality granted to the respondent was 100%, not collecting data on their identity.

It was wanted to use a method of investigating people's opinions and knowledge in order to know the opinions and attitudes towards the hypothesis from which it was based.

In applying the survey, an attempt was made to minimize the number of errors, both systematic and accidental, by rigorously applying arithmetic and logic control.

It was also aimed at minimizing errors while respecting the condition of representativeness. In order to ensure the representativeness of the sample (selected from the crowd of respondents), by reducing the sampling error, stratification techniques were used resulting in a sample of 104 subjects. The size and representativeness of the sample are not related to the size of the population we are addressing, ie a sample of "n" subjects has "caeteris paribus", ie the same representativeness, regardless of the size of the population from which it was extracted (Andrei Novak, 2004). The trends found using this sample will be analyzed and will form the basis of further research. At this point, the findings are strictly related to the data set analysed. The data has been normalized, verified, there is no raw data, so the processing accuracy is good.

Authors such as Emma Bell and Alan Bryman (2007) state that the absolute sample size is more important than the relative size, relative to the entire research entity. Abdelmonem Afifi and Virginia Clark (2000) believe that the number of questionnaires should be 5 to 10 times the number of items to minimize errors. This research has a ratio of 3.85 times (104/27), which shows that there may be errors.

Subjects to whom the questionnaires were applied were classified according to:

- Gender (male or female);
- The environment in which he lives (urban or rural);
- Age (age ranges, as follows: 18-30 years, 31-40 years and 41-50 years, 51-60 years and over 60 years);
- Staff category (Fixed-term employee, Permanent employee, Employer / self-employed, Not working / another situation);
- The last form of education graduated (Secondary education (high school), University studies (college), Postgraduate studies (master's, doctorate, postdoctoral studies)).

Statistical hypotheses were formulated, and based on the answers in the questionnaire, these hypotheses were tested using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program.

The statistical hypotheses were defined as follows:

*The null hypothesis* (null differences hypothesis) -  $H_0$  = Regardless of gender, environment, age, staff category or the last form of education completed, the perception of management strategies in organizations is the same.

*Alternative hypothesis* (states that there is a statistically significant difference) -  $H_1$  = There are differences in attitude depending on different factors.

The hypotheses were verified by statistical tests performed using the SPSS application.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

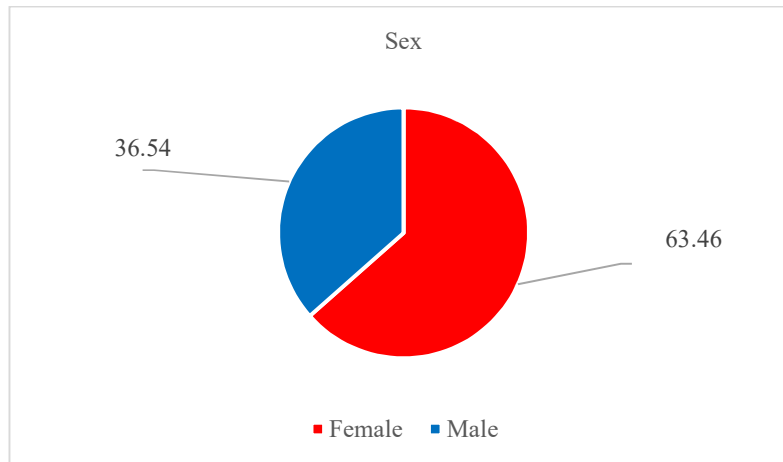
The method used was to interpret the results of the questionnaire through SPSS 27.

The study was applied between 03/02/2021 - 03/28/2021. It was wanted to measure, through an econometric instrument, the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on the management strategies in institutions. The questionnaire has a number of 27 questions, both open and dichotomous. We also used categorization questions, as can be seen at the end of the study.

In this field, a lot of research has been applied. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the whole world, so strategic crisis management has become an area of interest. Also, this research, mentioned in the bibliography, are a source of inspiration for those who want to adapt their model of strategies to the current context.

### 4. FINDINGS

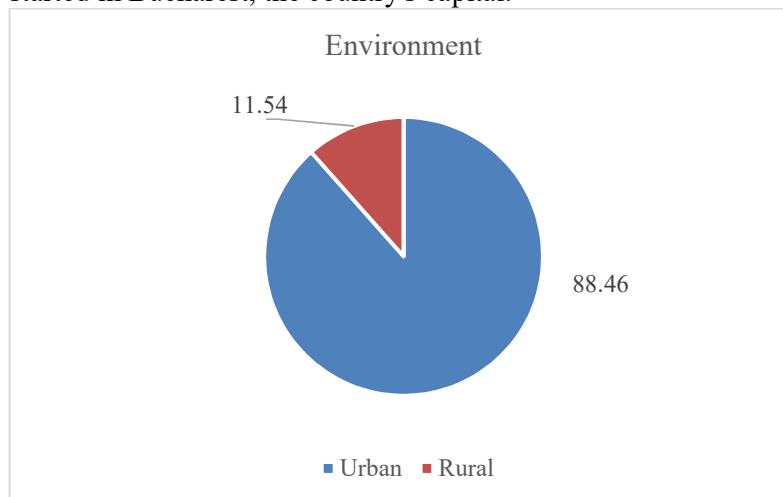
From a gender perspective, 66 respondents were female and the remaining 38 were male. It was not our choice. This sample of 104 respondents was given by the interest of people in this field and their willingness to respond to this survey.



**Figure 1. Share of respondents by gender**

*Source: author*

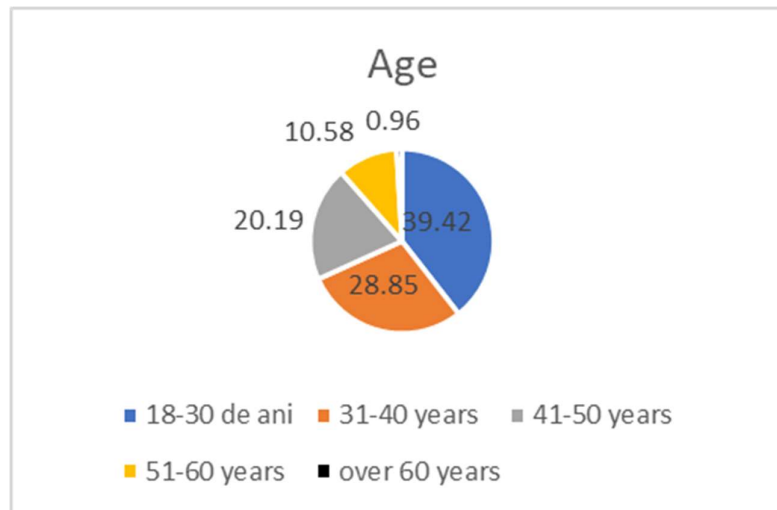
In terms of living environment, 92 respondents live in urban areas, the remaining 12 in rural areas. In Romania, there are a lot of people living in rural areas. The majority percentage is represented by urban dwellers, both due to trends in social movements and due to the fact that the study was started in Bucharest, the country's capital.



**Figure 2 - The share of respondents according to the environment**

*Source: author*

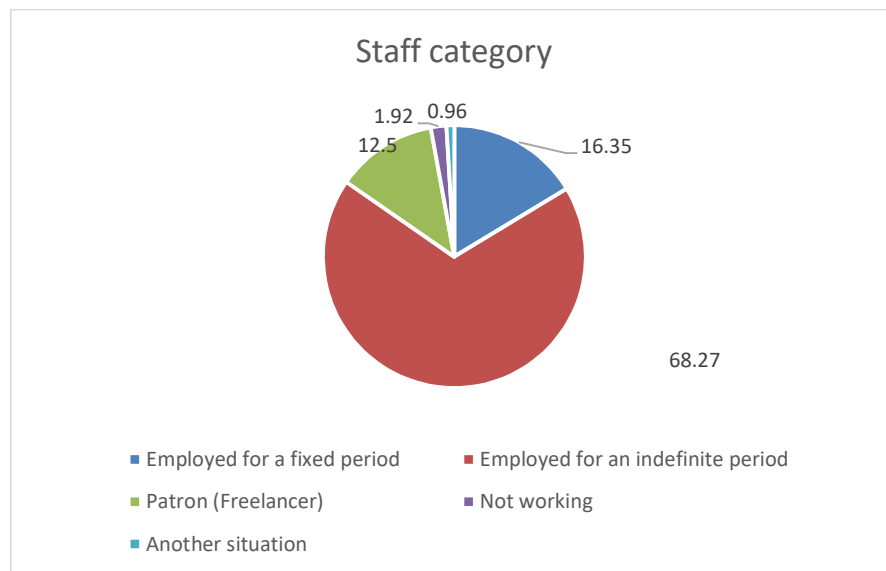
According to the age groups they fall into, we have. Notable in this chart is the presence and availability of young people to participate in the survey. We note that almost 70% of respondents are under the age of 40. They use the technology the most, it is known to them and it comes to them very easily. We also emphasize that over 60 years the percentage is extraordinarily low.



**Figure 3 - Share of respondents by age**

*Source: author*

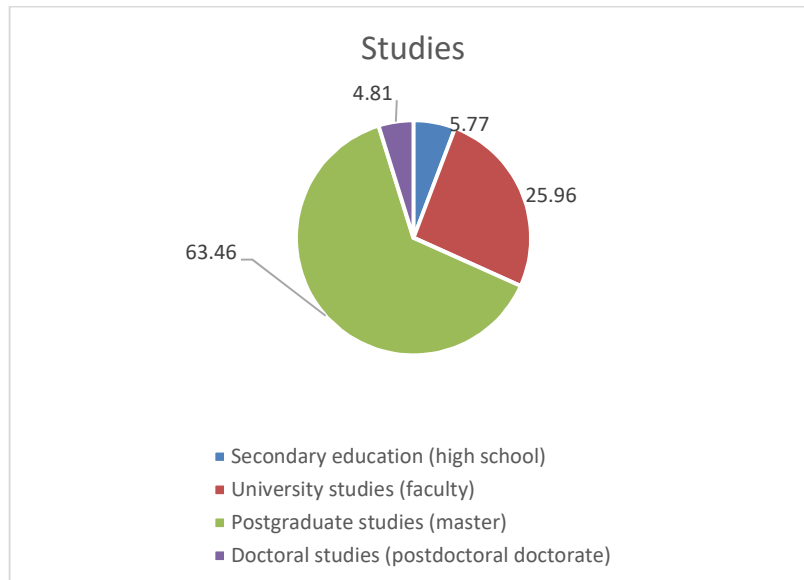
From the point of view of the category of staff to which it belongs, 17 respondents were employed for a fixed period, 71 for an indefinite period, 13 were self-employed (employers), 2 did not work and one was in another situation. We can see the low percentage of people who say they do not work. The percentage of people employed for an indefinite period is also significant. This aspect is desired by most people engaged in the field of work, because it offers a mental comfort, financial facilities, the possibility to make a loan.



**Figure 4 - Share of respondents by staff category**

*Source: author*

From the perspective of the last form of education graduated, 6 respondents had secondary education, 27 university studies, 66 postgraduate studies, and 5 doctoral or postdoctoral studies. The following chart shows the majority of people with master's degrees. That actually means specialization in the field. Of course, it means benefits at work, depending on the employer and the specifics of the activity.



**Figure 5 - The share of respondents according to studies**

*Source: author*

In the analysis and interpretation of the results, we found that 94 of the respondents (90.38%) know the expression “management strategy”, 5 (4.81%) - no, and 5 (4.81%) preferred not to respond to this question. Given the level of education and the environment in which they live, it is found that an overwhelming percentage know or have heard of the expression management strategies. The question asked through the questionnaire did not refer to a definition or understanding of the concept.



**Figure 6 - Share of respondents who know the expression "management strategy"**

*Source: author*

Regarding the application of management strategies in public institutions, 66 of the respondents (63.46%) believe that they apply, 20 (19.23%) do not agree and 18 (17.31%) chose the option of not reply.



**Figure 7 - Share of respondents who know the expression "management strategy"**

*Source: author*

When asked if they know the management strategies that are applied in the institutions where they operate, 69 respondents (66.35%) said yes, 19 (18.27%) that no, and 16 (15.38%) abstained. There is a similarity between the two questions analysed, so that almost all those who consider that there are management strategies in public institutions say they know them. Worryingly, about 33% of employees do not even know the strategies of the entities in which they operate and do not believe that they apply.

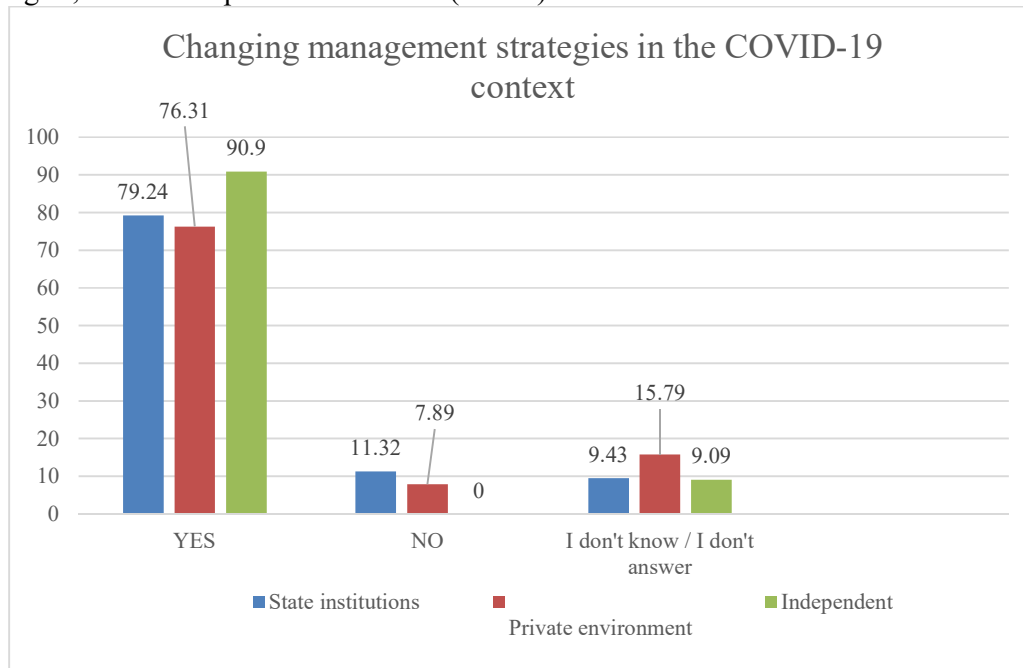


**Figure 8 - Applying management strategies in public institutions**

*Source: author*

Among the respondents working in state institutions (53 and 50.96% of the total survey respondents, respectively), 79.24% (42) consider that there have been changes in management strategies since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 11.32% (6) - no, and 9.43% (5) did not answer. Those who work in the private sector (38 - 36.54%) structured their answers as follows: 76.31% (29) stated that the entities in the private sector in which they work changed their

strategies, 7.89% (3) - no, and 15.79% (6) did not provide an answer. Those who work on their own (10.58% of the total respondents) had the following answers: 10 (90.90%) adapted their strategies, and one respondent abstained (9.09%).

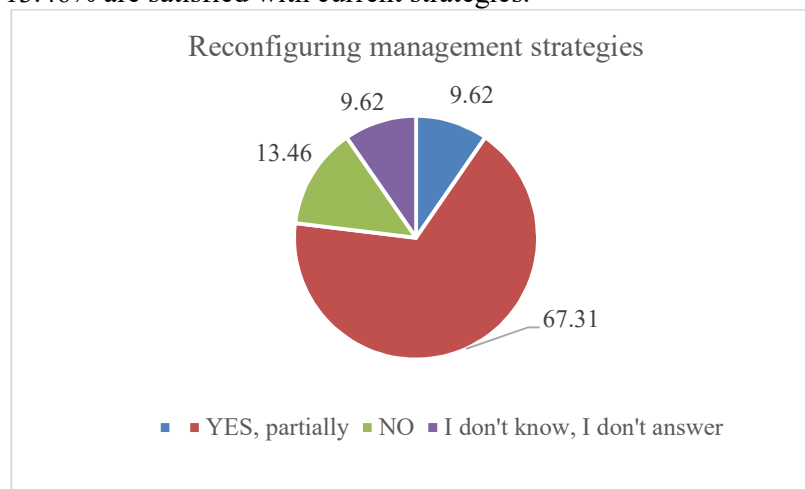


**Figure 9 - Changing management strategies since the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, depending on the institution**

*Source: author*

If we analyse as a whole, we will find that 78.85% of the total respondents consider that the institutions in which they work have changed and adapted their management strategies according to the new pandemic context.

Also, 76.93% of respondents reported that management strategies should be changed. This is worth noting, as we have previously found that they have already been modified or adapted since the beginning of the pandemic. However, 9.62% of survey participants stated that management strategies should be completely changed, 67.31% support only their adjustments, while only 13.46% are satisfied with current strategies.



**Figure 10 - Reconfiguring management strategies**

*Source: author*

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Using the SPSS 27 program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), we tested the statistical hypotheses formulated in the research. For this we used the methods of Testing Statistical Hypotheses for the difference of the means of two independent variables, One Way ANOVA, Stepwise for the construction of the Multiple Linear Regression Model and the Durbin Watson Test for the autocorrelation of the errors. Thus, the alternative hypothesis - Ic1 (There are differences in attitude depending on different factors) was validated and we can conclude that the model is significant.

Thus, we can conclude that, depending on the factors analysed (sex, environment, age, staff category and the last form of education completed), the attitude differs. The place where a subject carries out his activity is also significant.

This study also has a number of limitations, primarily due to the number of respondents. But, along with other studies in the field, it can be a complement or, why, a starting point, a challenge for managers or decision makers. Studies prior to 2019 do not exist, because then we were not talking about the Covid-19 pandemic. From the beginning of the pandemic until now, there has been a whole period of transformations and adaptations, both for individuals and for organizations. Adaptability is an essential condition for organizational survival.

Adaptability, connecting to the present and to new challenges are imperative activities for all institutions, whether we are talking about state institutions or those in the private sector. The mentality of human resources is changing, people's security has become more important, the retention of organizations is decreasing and therefore managers should adapt their management strategies constantly. The volatile and uncertain evolution of the pandemic, the restrictions, the appearance or disappearance of some trades impose these aspects.

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