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'Lockdown probation leaders' and fundamental human needs

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Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in March 2020 disrupted the lives of all citizens of the planet causing many deaths around the world (Wise, 2022). Nations responded in various previously unthinkable ways namely closing borders and businesses, and confining citizens to their homes. Whilst all countries imposed restrictions of some kind to prevent the spread of infection and enforced them using different styles of authority, the Scottish Government imposed the lockdown in the form of national guidance (The Scottish Government, 2020) to "stay at home" except for specified purposes such as exercise, shopping for food and other basic items, and where there was non-compliance it was enforced by a policing strategy of "Engaging, Explaining, Encouraging, and (only where that failed), Enforcing". Like most non-critical activities, Scottish probation offices were closed, and essential personnel and their staff were required by their employing local authorities to, where possible, work from home. In these circumstances, Scottish probation services and their staff had to innovate (Martin & Zetler, 2022), in particular by working remotely (Dominey, Coley, Devitt & Lawrence, 2021; Phillips, Westaby, Ainslie & Fowler, 2021), whilst being isolated from each other and working in conditions that were highly uncertain, alarming, and indeed, life threatening. This has raised questions regarding how Criminal Justice managers reacted.

Good management is essential to staff well-being (Harms, Crede, Tynan, Leon & al, 2017). It reduces turnover (Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, Van Quaquebeke et al., 2012), increases commitment (Bass, 1985) and facilitates acceptance of change (e.g., the implementation of Evidence-Based Practices: Aarons, Ehrhart & Farahnak, 2014).

Good managers are those who display positive personality traits and behaviour, and who, ultimately, meet the human needs of their staff (Northouse, 2016), these being needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Staff who benefit from such managers are more motivated, go the extra mile, report stronger intentions not to leave their jobs, and suffer from fewer physical symptoms or stress (Otis & Pelletier, 2005). Managers who attend to the wellbeing of their staff are particularly important in psychologically challenging professions such as corrections.

The Covid pandemic was one of the biggest challenges that humanity has had to face since WWII, and it particularly challenged workplaces, including prisons (Dünkel, Harrendorf, van Zyl Smit, 2022) and probation (Dominey, Coley, Devitt & Lawrence, 2021; Phillips, 2021- also see the Special edition of the Probation Journal, Volume 68 Issue 4, December 2021). No study has, however, thus far addressed the management style which was needed in times such as this. This is not surprising: the probation literature tells us very little about probation management other than its importance in change implementation (Taxman & Belenko, 2012). A rather unique American study has documented which management style dominates in probation (Lee, Koenigsberg, Davidson & Beto, 2010).

As part of a wider study, focusing on both French and Scottish probation during the lockdown (Author 1 & Author 2, 2022 a & b) it was recognised that the role of managers in negotiating the lockdown and supporting staff was of critical importance and so, when the Scottish interviews began, we asked all our participants: 'what makes a good manager at a time like this?'

The following article innovates in drawing upon the management literature, which has typologised good management and its attributes, and the self-determination theory literature, because it defines fundamental human needs. It is also unique as participants were interviewed whilst they, and the interviewers, were experiencing the lockdown. As part of a larger study comparing French and Scottish probation during the pandemic, this article focuses on Scottish probation adds to its originality in that probation in Scotland is a rare surviving example of probation and post-release supervision being

provided by community justice social workers employed in local authority social services departments. As we shall see these features of Scottish probation (Sturgeon & Leygue-Eurieult, 2020) were particularly crucial in allowing probation staff to adapt and thrive and, in particular: embeddedness within a wide range of local authority services; strong values such as social work and care; and management recruited from the ranks.

The literature

The literature suggests that institutions can either aggravate practitioners' malaise or, on the contrary, enable people to overcome hardships, grow professionally and self-actualise (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Replicating a parallel study on difficult prison environments (Author 1, Ricciardelli & Thomas, submitted), this research also draws on the literature for both self-determination theory and management. The former serves as a more comprehensive framework which has theorised and provided empirical validation of a model of human motivation and fundamental human needs. The latter allows us to distinguish between different forms of management, and their respective strengths or weaknesses. Combined, these two strands show which type of management is needed, particularly in times of crisis.

<u>Self-determination theory</u>

Since we ask which type of management probation officers need during an acute worldwide crisis, we turn to a largely supported empirical theory: self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Validation studies have consistently shown that other than immediate needs, such as food, water, air (Maslow, 1943, 1954), and safety (Doyal & Gough, 1991), humans have three main needs, within which most sub-needs can be classified. These are: autonomy; competence; and relatedness. These needs reflect 'in the deepest sense, the essence of human thriving' (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 5). These needs are both independent (they impact wellbeing separately) and linked. For instance, individuals feel more competent if they benefit from more autonomy and more related if their autonomy and competence is nurtured in their professional capacity.

SDT is the most extended model of human motivation and has been tested and validated in a large array of domains, and inter alia, in sports, education, and management (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It also provides empirical validation for existentialist needs in the workplace. In particular it shows that leaders must listen to, care for and about, and respect their staff (this going for relatedness). It shows that managers must refrain from overly controlling attitudes, be collaborative, give choice, and nurture agency (thus satisfying the need for autonomy). Lastly, according to SDT, managers must provide clear rationales for their decisions and guidelines and trust their staff's skills, competence and adaptability (thereby satisfying the need for competence) (Sheldon & Joiner, 2013).

Thus, SDT overlaps with management theories. Indeed, SDT explains why transactional leadership, which, as we shall see, relies on monitoring, and sanctions or rewards, does not work and, for its more positive forms (relying on rewards) only works in the short term and reduces autonomy by externalising motivation (Gagné, Deci & Ryan, 2017). It also explains why transformational leadership produces the best outcome as meta-analytically documented (Judge & Piccolo, 2004): it supports each of the fundamental human needs: self-efficacy (competence), sense of belonging and community

(relatedness), and empowerment agency (autonomy) (Hetland, Hetland, Andreassen, Pallesen, et al, 2011; Mayer, Bardes & Piccolo, 2008; Kovjanic et al., 2012).

We are not aware of any study which has thus far drawn upon SDT to investigate probation and criminal justice social work leadership. It has, however, been utilised in police studies when, a Canadian team found that the more police officers felt that their need for autonomy was supported by their institution and management, the less they were prone to professional stress (Otis & Pelletier, 2005). Similarly, Lynch and colleagues found that the more autonomous psychiatric institutions felt, the safer they felt and thus, the less they were susceptible to use restraints with their patients (Lynch, Plant & Ryan, 2005). Lastly, in prison settings, Slate and Fogel found that autonomy and competence supportive (participative) leadership reduced staff stress levels and staff attrition (Slate & Vogel, 1997). Local management itself (in this case prison governors) who feel their own hierarchy respects their autonomy, also suffer from less stress (Leip, Stinchcomb & Schiff, 2017; Schiff and Leip, 2019).

This literature is important as it suggests that probation practitioners might also be able to cope better if their fundamental needs are respected. Precisely, SDT has been tested during the first Covid lockdown. A Serbian study of 965 participants found that during the crisis, autonomy and relatedness were key to coping, whilst competence and relatedness thwarting caused distress (Šakan, Žuljević, Roković, 2020). Another study found that when public health restrictions were explained in an autonomy-supportive, caring and competence-respectful way, it predicted intrinsic compliance and, as expected in view of SDT theory and literature, led to greater and longer-term adherence (Martela, Hankonen, Ryan & Vansteenkiste, 2021). Thus, SDT is equally applicable in conditions of stability in the workplace as well as during critical periods.

Leadership literature

The term 'management' refers to the tasks embraced by managers, while the term leadership, which is preferred in the leadership literature refers to the skills and ethical orientation expected of senior staff in charge of frontline practitioners. Management is, therefore, a descriptive and generic term, whilst leadership implies positive attributes. Managers perform executive, human resources and paperwork tasks; they do not lead individuals and groups. During times of crisis such as a pandemic where routine responses can no longer be applied by managers to meet organisational objectives leadership is emphasised as a means to navigate uncertainty and instability. Leadership studies focus both on the character of the group within which the leader influences his/her staff and the personality (or "character of") and behaviour of the leader who is called upon to exercise influence. (Northouse, 2016).

The first modern typology of leaders was presented as early as 1939 by Lewin, Lippitt and & White. Lewin and colleagues distinguished between democratic, authoritarian, and laissez-faire leaders. Much later, Burns (1978) and Bass (1985, 1990) built on this initial formulation and categorised forms of leaderships as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. This represents the current dominant model (Bass & Baggio, 2006; Northouse, 2016). Empirical validations of this model have consistently found that laissez faire was the most ineffective form, followed by transactional leadership, this, both in terms of job performance (Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee & al., 2020), well-being and job satisfaction (Dumdum, Lowe & Avolio, 2013). The most effective is therefore transformational leadership (TL).

Laissez faire leadership represents a form of disengaged management. The manager refuses or is unable to guide or support his/her staff and is rarely seen. This is the most detrimental form of leadership as it leaves staff with no help, guidance, or direction. In times of crisis, this is expected to be even more detrimental than in less challenging times (Mullins, 2020).

Transactional leadership is loosely based on traditional authoritarian parenting styles, and operant conditioning, as it uses monitoring, sanctions, or rewards, to try and shape individuals' behaviour. In some cases, monitoring and sanctions are privileged; in others, rewards are used more frequently. Self-determination theory explains why these forms of leadership do not work, or do not work beyond the existing sanctions and rewards: motivation is externalised and is thus short lived and contingent (Kohn, 1993). Staff thus managed will do the minimum required; nothing more (Kahai, Sosik & Avolio, 2003).

Conversely, transformational leaders (TLs) are true leaders. They are competent, inspirational, charismatic, and reliable. They problem-solve, make decisions, are collaborative, facilitate personal and professional growth, are intellectually stimulating, goal oriented and provide individual consideration to their staff. It should not come as a surprise that TL produce the best outcomes, reduce stress (Chin, 2007; Harms, Crede, Tynan, Leon & al, 2017) and increase staff satisfaction (Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Dumdum, Lowe & Avolio, 2002). Indeed, in SDT terms, TLs tap into competence, autonomy and relatedness (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Kovjanic, Schuh & Jonas, 2013; Lai et al., 2020). TLs themselves have personality attributes and traits which make others feel autonomous, competent, respected and connected. They are inspirational and forward thinking (Cohn, 1998, Powls, 1990; Wright, 1991), this latter trait being particularly useful during crisis. Additionally, TLs are intelligent, self-confident, determined, sociable, have integrity (Northouse, 2016) and human and spiritual qualities (Fairholm, 1998).

To be transformational, TLs need their own hierarchy to comprise fellow TLs (Trépanier, Fernet & Austin, 2012) and an organisation which attends to their fundamental human needs. (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Importantly, in view of the critical crisis context where our study took place, studies have found that when prison officers have TLs, they suffer from less job-related stress (Cullen, Link, Wolfe & Frank, 1985; Waters, 1999; Armstrong & Griffin, 2004).

There has, unfortunately, been very little literature regarding which type of management dominates in offender supervision. To our knowledge, very few studies have measured the three main forms of leadership. Lee and colleagues found that, in U.S. offender supervision, TLs were dominant (Lee et al, 2010). Conversely, In New-Zealand it has been suggested that the currently dominant probation model is one which favours over-controlling forms of bureaucratic management rather than (TL) leadership (Dale, 2006). A similar model dominates in hyper-centralised and bureaucratic France, where micro-management and track and trace practices thwart the need for autonomy (Garcia, 2014). Nonetheless, we do know from other literature more loosely defining optimal management, that TL like practices are essential to innovation implementation (Taxman & Belenko, 2012) and, conversely, that leaders' unsupportive attitude, traits and behaviour are related to sub-optimal implementation (Bonta, Rugge, Bourgon & Wanamaker, 2019).

During critical times, it has been suggested that staff need 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). There are, however, very little differences between TLs and servant leaders; but for servant leadership literature's greater emphasis on foresight, decision-making, care, and community building. It is indeed possible that in times of crisis group cohesion, humanity and closure become more salient than autonomy and competence.

The management literature proposes a further model, that of adaptive leadership. Adaptive leaders mobilise their staff 'to tackle tough challenges and thrive' (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009, p. 14). In Heifetz's (Heifetz, 1994) model, the leader is not the saviour, but is the one who mobilises others to face hard realities and motivates them to continue doing their work, whilst trusting them to do so. S.he is a decision-maker, meaning that s.he makes the technical decisions necessary to face the problem and fix the issues that come along. S.he is encouraging and creative. S.he 'gets on the balcony' and is present, flexible and responsive. S.he regulates distress by creating a safe 'holding' environment, providing direction and protection, and regulating personal distress, whilst protecting those on the margin.

<u>Combining the models</u>

A study comparing French and Canadian expectations of their management, using both management theories and SDT has confirmed the relevance of both SDT and management theories in challenging environments (in this case working in a high security prison setting). French and Canadian correctional officers aspired to competence, autonomy and relatedness along with the attributes of both TL and servant leadership. However, they also needed their leaders to reduce uncertainty (Herzog-Evans, Ricciardielli & Thomas, submitted). The need for (cognitive) closure (NFC: that is the need for information, guidance and reassurance to reduce uncertainty: Webster & Kruglanski, 1994; Higgins & Kruglanski, 2000), becomes particularly acute in contexts where one's safety is at stake and uncertainty is high as was the case during the Covid pandemic (White, 2022).

On this basis we elaborated an analytical grid for our data, built on the three SDT needs, whilst also including the management literature, and, within the first, a focus on stress reduction through NFC. Within this combined model, competence therefore includes: the manager's capacity to make decisions that reduce uncertainty; respect and trust in the abilities of their staff; being a role model to staff; and having the overall ability to motivate staff to achieve professional goals and values. Autonomy includes non-controlling or punishing attitudes, and is not based on rewards, but on relationships. It manifests itself in collaborative stances. Relatedness supportive management is present, responsive and hands on; it gives staff members individual consideration, respect and care and is community building. Additionally, relatedness supportive managers have good communication skills.

Methodology

This study is unique among other covid-probation studies inasmuch as all our interviews took place during the lockdown. It was important to us to capture the lived experience of Criminal Justice Social Workers (CJSW) and their managers at that very moment. Recent literature showed that when restrictions were eased or lifted, institutions resumed previous modus operandi and people also appeared less resilient (Dominey, Coley, Devitt & Lawrence, 2021; Phillips, Westaby, Ainslie & Fowler, 2021). Our interviews were conducted from 4 June (week 11 of the Scottish lockdown) to 22 June (week 14) shortly before the restrictions were reduced (on 3 July 2020). They took place via Webex, Teams, or Zoom.

The 26 participants were recruited through social media, email, and by word of mouth. The sample comprised 11 Managers, of which 2 had supervisory responsibility for other managers, and 15 CJSW.

It included city, semi-urban, rural, remote-rural and island-based staff, representing 11 of the 32 local authorities.

All participants were given information outlining the purpose of the study before the interviews were scheduled. They gave their informed consent and none of them withdrew from the study. Interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the original recordings were then destroyed. To safeguard anonymity, names or other identifying information were carefully removed from the transcription. Participants were identified by a letter and a number. The manager cohort are identified in what follows as 'M + number' and the social workers can be identified by 'SW + number'. Ethical permission was given by the second author's (Scottish) institution.

The data was coded using the NVIVO software. A number of consistent and strong themes emerged in this process of analysis which are consistent with both the SDT and management literature. This paper is in fact based on a broader comparative study of French and Scottish probation during the lockdown. During the French interviews which took place first the issue of management, which was not part of the initial interview grid, was increasingly raised as important by French probation officers. We therefore decided to add the open question: 'What makes a good manager at a time like this?' to our interview grid as we began the Scottish interviews.

Findings

During the lockdown, and having to work from home, probation officers faced many challenges (Dominey et al, 2021; Phillips & al., 2021). To a significant degree, how they adapted to these challenges would depend on their manager's skills and personalities. Following the aforementioned analytical grid, we analyse how CJSW staff perceived their managers during the lockdown of March – July 2020

Competence

The first two components of competence, derived from the leadership literature, relate to managers' own competence. Good managers, that is TLs are expected to *make decisions* whenever necessary. During a crisis the ability to make decisions – 'command' in military terms (Brunacini, 1985; Keegan, 1987) – does become salient as our data confirms. They also confirm that the reason why command is expected is because practitioners need uncertainty to be reduced.

But for SW10 whose management required their staff to take all their laptop and phone home each night from the beginning of February, i.e. before the lockdown, our interviewees did not expect their managers to have made preventive decisions, even though, in view of the Chinese situation, it was, in hindsight, only a matter of time before the pandemic would reach European shores.

At best what CJSW wanted from managers was to act quickly once the national guidelines were issued and the crisis appeared inevitable. Almost all of our interviewees were in denial of the coming storm and it was their managers' decisions to close shop, following national guidelines, which forced them to face reality. SW3 received an instruction to reduce client contact and hygiene regimes were introduced in the office. SW5 noticed offices closing in the neighbouring authority. SW6 with hindsight, noticed changes to familiar management practices. For SWs 8, 9, and 16, with pre-disposing health conditions their introduction to the new reality was brutal when they were told in advance of

national guidelines to work from home. Thus, some took managers' decisions to implement the national guidelines as brutal and unexpected.

> Ehmm, I remember the day… and then we were asked to leave work… and it was just "go home!" and I was like "what do you mean go home?!" … And I was like "WHAT!?". It was all very strange and that was my moment of panic really.' (SW 10)

As regards the managers, those in our sample were divided in their awareness of the unfolding crisis. Whilst there was clear evidence of strategic planning taking place in the weeks up until March, this seemed to be closely guarded. Personal and professional exposure to insider information seemed to be the determining factor in whether our managers were able to prepare themselves or their team for the crisis. M11 has a close friend who is a micro-biologist who over many weeks before the lockdown had been warning her that the pandemic would reach European shores. In response, M11 reorganised her team into two groups and insisted on workstation cleaning measures. This would be met with disbelief and even mockery. Other managers who did not have access to such information were either informed of the magnitude of the situation by external events or were caught out completely. For M6, a manager in an urban setting, it was the cancellation of St Patrick's Day that first shifted her perspective, and three days before the lockdown, it was the absence of a familiar queue of traffic during her walk into work:

> And I got into work and I felt really, really upset… Actually, I feel upset thinking about it [now]… and that was the day for me that I was like, "there's something not right with the world". (M6)

For M7, a senior manager, her awareness of the gravity of the situation did not strike until two to three weeks *following* the lockdown:

> If you're talking about the penny dropping, as in "oh my god, this is going to be, not for a couple of weeks"… Ehmm, I would say it probably took about two or three weeks.

Overall, then, managers did their best and implemented national guidelines at speed. Like parents protecting their children in similar circumstances, leaders were then expected *to reduce the level of uncertainty* experienced by their staff. To counteract the initial anxiety and disorientation, as much as to ensure continuity of service, managers were expected to provide goals and new routines. Managers are part of institutions and much depends on these institutions. The French leg of the study showed that sluggish procedures due to bureaucracy and transactional management styles made it difficult to adapt (Herzog-Evans & Sturgeon, 2022 a). Conversely, in Scotland, as early as March 2020, some local authorities began to make plans to maintain service. Our manager participants gave us examples of laptops being sourced and computer capacity being diverted from one local authority service to another to meet demand. At an operational level, things were therefore highly fluid.

Nonetheless, the prospect of change usually raises uncertainty levels and our managers were aware that they would have to help reduce anxiety, uncertainty and fear. This anxiety due to uncertainty was a continual feature as services moved through lockdown.

> We need to be mindful of the fact that staff will have anxieties. There will be staff who have barely been out of their house for three months you know…, haven't been going to the shops… We need to be mindful coming out of this and how people are going to cope. (M9)

Guidance and goals are key to the reduction of uncertainty levels and thus, to closure.

> And you want direction. And you want to know what... (SW3)

> What was beneficial was, the guidelines and the expectations were laid down very quickly about what was expected of us at that time. (SW6)

As immediate issues (health, safety, IT equipment, and so on) were addressed, and service became more stable, managers then turned to continuity of service. They had to decide what constituted essential probation (Herzog-Evans & Sturgeon, 2022 b), which needed to be salvaged. Part of the answer resided in determining where the priorities lay (Viglione, Alward, Lockwood & Bryson, 2020), notably regarding risk levels and offenders' needs.

> The amount of lists that we have is endless: from MAPPA lists to Caledonian [domestic abuse] lists, to high-risk lists… (M8)

This quote reveals that some of the priorities were institutionally set. Indeed, every institutionally recognised high risk category would be placed at the top of the list. Overall, our SW sample pointed to either high reoffending risk categories as measured with the LS-CMI or to specialised categories such as sexual offending or domestic abuse, or high welfare need. Despite these institutionally determined priorities CJSWs enjoyed high level of discretion in determining who stood out as needing more support or supervision.

The Covid-19 lockdown ripped up patterns of working that had been established for over a hundred years (Herzog-Evans & Sturgeon, 2022 b; Martin & Zettler, 2022) and the lockdown of individuals and families in their homes meant that staff, including managers, had to be allowed to improvise. Indeed, a key TL competence attribute is *flexibility* and the need for flexibility appeared to be particularly salient during the lockdown. Managers certainly understood this:

> I think that everyone will have needed something different…. There's one person in my team who was very newly qualified with this [the lockdown] happened…, there is this person in my team who really struggled with technology... There are people in my team who have small children in the background… A good manager balances the work stuff, makes sure you've got support there, checks in with how you're doing personally but doesn't have a one size fits all. (SW15)

Our CJSW interviewees did identify that their managers were indeed flexible.

> The guidelines and approaches were laid down very quickly… but… If I wanted to work from home and it was better for the team; "just go ahead and do what is necessary... (SW6)

Flexibility was thus needed to adapt to staff's needs, but also to ensure continuity of service. Thus, good managers accepted outside the box thinking, creativity and innovation:

> A lot of things that had been talked about or we had raised in the past of possible ways of working that were always dismissed, were suddenly being implemented. (SW12)

> She's [manager] quite good at trying to look at new ways of working… (SW9)

And in relation to meeting service user needs', SW9 explained that his manager allowed him to go and buy not only groceries, but also tobacco for a vulnerable offender. This example is indicative of the social work values at the heart of Scottish probation. Precisely, *moral and value alignment* is a key element of the action of TL managers. As we have seen, at the beginning of the lockdown, the Scottish managers' first intention was to manage the urgency and individual and professional stress of their staff. These were challenges that our managers faced whilst providing leadership from home. Value alignment was also reflected in how the aforementioned priorities were set. In view of the social work ethos of Scottish probation, those were vulnerable individuals.

We found out feet and actually thought: "right, what are we doing here?" Then it progressed... we started doing home visits... for those that we were really concerned about their welfare. (M11)

For their part, however, managers expressed that providing a sense of future direction (the goal components of TL competence) was difficult in view of the prevailing uncertainty.

I've made it very clear to the team, I don't know what it is going to be look like but what we do know is that it will be different... but we need to move forward, and that is the reality for us. (M5)

Consequently, TL managers are first and foremost leaders (Northouse, 2016) and *role models* (Weber, 1922; Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

I think for me…, the management is easy ... It's about the leadership aspect of it and how to get your team on board. (M11)

Key to getting the team on board is to respect their autonomy.

Autonomy

The very label, 'self-determination', indicates that autonomy is the core concept in the SDT model (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomy is supported through a variety of professional stances, and, in particular, through *collaboration*. Here TLs will involve staff in decisions that concern them by valuing staff perspectives, listening to concerns, and taking both into consideration (Forner, Jones, Berry & Eidenfalk, 2020).

We came to a consensus [as to what was achievable], probably not at the start, but in the middle of the phase into April when you were working with them as a group, rather than as individuals. (M5)

Similarly, CJSWs appreciated to seeing their autonomy respected and, this is linked for their managers to trusting that they are competent and able to cope:

She allows me to have my own autonomy and she, she totally trusts me so, I feel I just need to check in with her… (SW 3)

Also key to autonomy is the absence of controlling behaviour including micro-managing. Controlling management is extremely detrimental to workforce motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The SDT literature documents that TLs are the exact oppositive of controlling managers (Deci, Olfasen & Ryan, 2017). Our social workers spoke about two important aspects of trust that their managers demonstrated towards them: trust that work was being done despite the disruption caused by other demands such as children or the pressure of the moment, and trust in the judgement of the front-line CJSWs on ways of working and professional decisions.

I guess…, trusting us to get on with your job but knowing that that doesn't mean that we're all going to be sitting at the computer at the same time anymore, because other responsibilities, you know, that people have got… So, not, not micro-managing. (SW15)

Lastly, we examined whether managers nurtured and contributed to relatedness during the first lockdown.

<u>Relatedness</u>

Our data suggest that, overall, during the crisis, relatedness became one of the most salient SDT need. As they became socially isolated or at least cut off from their colleagues, managers and service users, CJSW needed this loss to be compensated.

Real TLs are hands on and present, highly attentive to needs, and responsive. This was the strongest theme in our interviews with front line staff commending their first line managers for being there for them, communicating regularly, and meeting a range of needs.

> Yeah, I just wanted them to be kind of "be there" and not kind of, disappear and… our manager has absolutely been there… at any time of the day, or evening should we need him so, it's just been great. (SW14)

That SW1 living alone and in a flat did not escape the attention of her two direct line managers one of whom would message her regularly 'even at night and at the weekend' to wish her well and ask if she wanted to chat. Her other line manager who lived nearby invited her to his garden for tea.

> I know how lucky I am to have that… The main thing that managers need to be is accessible. (SW1)

Even those operating at a slightly more formal level met CJSW's expectations in ways that went beyond usual requirements:

> I know if I said to her "look, can we have fortnightly supervision just now, instead of having if each month?", that would not be a problem. (SW8)

Being hands on and responsive also meant being ready to meet a whole range of practical requirements to adapt to the new work context:

> "Can I get a mouse?", "a keyboard", or…, "a chair from the office"? So, we have been largely able to accommodate those. (M6)

One dimension of management responsivity brings us back to the Need for Closure. NFC theory shows that in uncertain times, individuals may seek information more systematically with the end goal of reaching cognitive closure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). During the lockdown, managers thus became an important source of information, to the point where M8 stated that this represented 'the biggest percentage of [their] work'.

> What they were looking for initially was someone to relieve their anxieties, someone to give some answers to the whole millions of questions that they had… (M2)

Managers responded by giving information in the form of newsletters or summaries, and by convening team meetings. With deadlines still to meet at the early stage 'adaptive leaders' offered information regarding how to do 'business as usual' (M1), thereby provided comfort in continuing in the routine of familiar tasks.

The difference between middle and local management, on the one hand, generally credited with some qualities, and more distant or more senior management being generally considered as disconnected

and uncaring, has been documented in the corrections literature (Herzog-Evans, Riccardielli & Thomas, submitted). In the present study, we encountered a similar dichotomy. If, for the most part, local agency managers remained responsive and supporting, conversely, more senior managers were not. This, however, existed prior to the pandemic.

> Even when we're in the office together he is distant from the team. He is not a leader in any respect, hides away in his office... (SW2).

A manager can only be considered as being a TL if s.he is present, whether, in the prison context, seen on the landing, and in the probation context, seen in the office, and interacting with CJSW. During the lockdown emergency this lack of senior manager presence was felt particularly strongly and, more than ever, diminished their credibility.

> We are really the ones on the front line... Higher up management you go, they are not really there. They are sitting at home, and fine. (SW2).

In reality, though, senior managers were working hard but this would only be acknowledged by the CJSW who could 'see it' with their own eyes:

> I can see her in here with her flip charts and her continuous Skype calls and such like, just trying to sort things out. (SW11)

In fact, some managers, whether senior or middle managers were pushing themselves too hard. The very heavy cost of leadership was indeed the strongest theme with 9 of our 11 managers coded with no less than 38 references.

> It was about five weeks ago and I was just like, really done with it all... this really sucks, and I hate it! (M6)

> I've not really worked at home very much. Ehmm, but I, I, I feel fatigued, and tired, and worn out so now I'm taking a day a week at home. I feel burst" (M4).

A relatedness supportive TL is one who builds more than just team work; s.he *builds* (or maintains) *a community*. This is what the managers whom we interviewed endeavoured to do by establishing formal connection with staff and between staff through Teams and WhatsApp.

> When this all started, we set up a WhatsApp group.... As a kind of wellbeing thing. You know, rather than it being around work it was more "how is everyone doing?" and a kind of a bit of banter. (SW2)

For this, managers had to suddenly embrace, organise and master IT. This represented a huge task, reflecting their adaptation skills.

> I think that in the early days the IT issues were humongous! Oh, my goodness! I have never spent so much time on the phone to people... (M6)

In order to maintain the connection with and between staff, whilst providing guidance and direction, managers had to deploy *special communication skills*. All our manager interviewees used very pragmatic, at times creative, communication techniques to manage disorientation (with no less than 25 references in our code book). Our interviewed CJSWs valued clear communication about service

requirements. More than making the machine work, they also needed symbolic demonstration that out of sight did not mean out of mind. For instance, in response to this need, every day during the first twelve weeks of the lockdown, the senior manager of SW14 sent a briefing to staff which was at times 'extraordinarily serious' at other times 'witty', and sometimes contained poems of quizzes.

A relatedness supportive TL leader also focuses on individuals and provides them with *individualised consideration and care*. Again, our interviewees were very satisfied with their front-line managers in this regard.

> She's been really good and understanding. (SW2)

> ... everybody gets individual supervision (SW8)

This was a very was a strong theme in our interviews with frontline staff, which certainly contributed to their ability to cope and their overall positive attitude:

> And she very much puts family [first]. She is always checking in about how I'm coping, how my family are... She's been brilliant! (SW3)

It likewise was a strong theme with 9 of the 11 interviewed managers, who understood that they needed to help staff to manage their emotions.

Whilst psychological care was prioritised and available in all cases at line manager level, meeting the physical needs of staff was less uniform. Responsibility for failures in this aspect was located with more senior managers because resolving issues of this kind required access to buildings and to purchasing items which cost money and may take time to arrive.

> We can't pretend the physical environment's fine here... There are people here who are sitting at breakfast bars, on backless chairs... I felt that I and other union colleagues had to push hard to get senior management to understand that, actually, for people with pre-existing, and without pre-existing health problems, not having equipment was a huge, huge problem. (SW15)

Discussion/Conclusion

Overall, we saw that Scottish CJSW credited their managers with most of the attributes of TLs as conceptualised by the management literature (Burn, 1978; Bass, 1985, 1990) whilst satisfying every single SDT need. They were competent, goal oriented, hands on, present (but for senior managers), and community building. During the crisis, they went above and beyond 'just' TL to satisfy the needs of their staff (Mayer, Bardes & Piccolo, 2008), by being particularly caring and community supportive and, crucially in these uncertain times, by providing as much cognitive closure as possible, even at a cost to their own wellbeing. In essence, they were 'servant leaders' (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977), or 'super leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 196), and 'adaptive leaders' (Heifetz, 1994), i.e. the very type of managers the literature shows are necessary in disaster situations. Indeed, not only did Scottish managers display all the best management attributes in general, but also, key to the crisis, they kindly encouraged their staff to face reality, led, listened to and cared for individuals. They also gathered and united the crew thereby keeping the boat afloat.

The SDT need for relatedness was undoubtedly more salient, perhaps because the lockdown diminished sources of relatedness (Dušana, Žuljevi & Rokvić, 2020). However, another possible explanation can be found in the social psychology of emergencies. In times of acute crisis, humans

tend to show more solidarity, communion, cooperation (Helsloot. & Ruitenberg, 2004) and kindness as if they were one unique human group (Jetten, Richer, Haslam & Crywys, 2020). Similar to our qualitative findings, Eichnauer and colleagues found that in acute crisis contexts, such as the Covid pandemic, relatedness did take precedence (Eichenauer, Ryan & Alanis, 2021) and that autonomy and competence, if still very important, took a temporary and relative backseat.

Things could very well have gone another way had it not been for the exceptional qualities of Scottish probation management. Indeed, when facing threat (that is a major and unanticipated threat to the system or individuals' survival with little time to react: Hermann, 1963), managers often adapt by becoming overly controlling. This phenomenon has been labelled the 'threat-rigidity hypothesis' (Staw, Sandelands & Dutton, 1981). Recent quantitative research indicates that Covid may have caused a lot of threat rigidity in workplaces (Stoker, Garretsen & Lammers, 2021).

If Scottish probation produces such good management, particularly at a local non senior level, it is probably in view of its locally embedded nature, making it more adaptive and flexible. Indeed, the general leadership literature has suggested that smaller "flat organisation" with less hierarchical levels tend to produce more flexible and autonomy supportive management styles (Fedczuk, 2017). There is also evidence that in times of crisis, hands on leaders who 'get on the balcony' are required (Heifetz et al., p. 263). This cannot happen if there is too much distance between leaders and their staff. Our results can additionally be explained by the fact that managers are recruited from the ranks; not externally amongst bureaucrats as is the case in other jurisdictions. Recruiting from the ranks and being locally embedded probably the extremely nocebo impact of the McDonaldisation of public services, including social work (Dustin, 2007). Precisely, social work was maintained during the crisis, ensuring continuity of service in adaptive leadership terms, and in alignment with the heart and soul of Scottish CJSW.

Our study has evident limitations. In view of its ad hoc, qualitative nature and limited sample size, it cannot be generalisable. It suffers from selection bias, since all our interviewees volunteered. It pertains to one jurisdiction only, Scotland, since the French, and earlier, leg of this comparative study did not fully investigate the issue of management, which emerged gradually.

Nonetheless, our study is unique inasmuch as it was conducted in the very eye of the initial lockdown. We know that following this first lockdown, much of 'return to normal' has meant a return to bureaucratic, more controlling institutional functioning, on top of the still very present health crisis (Author 1 & Author 2, 2022 a). Indeed, as soon as the first lockdown restrictions began to ease practitioners complained more and were more stressed out (Dominey et al., 2021). Our work is thus a snapshot representing a very peculiar historical period.

Moreover, where our study is unique is that it focuses on management and draws upon two very solid literature domains, that of leadership and that of self-determination theory, a theory of fundamental human needs. This theoretical underpinning gives more strength to our conclusions. They are indeed fully coherent with these two strands of literature. Ultimately, humans who face crisis need to connect, to care and be cared for, and to see their high levels of uncertainty reduced. This is an important lesson in view of the very uncertain times our modern world is currently facing and will continue facing in the coming years.

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