

## RESEARCH ON THE PERCEPTION OF ROMANIAN PRE- UNIVERSITY TEACHERS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN E-LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

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### **Abstract:**

*E-leadership research has evolved significantly in recent times, influencing the development of the education system, which has been affected by the effects of the pandemic. In order to keep up with the changes, teachers have had to adapt to the ever-changing requirements and opportunities. The topic of the paper refers to the perspective of Romanian pre-university teachers regarding the connection between e-leadership and motivation. The reason I chose to do this research is because e-leadership is a current topic. On the other hand, I am a teacher in the pre-university education system and I started my teaching activity in the middle of the pandemic and I can say that it was a real challenge for me to integrate remotely into a new team. Therefore, I found it opportune to study this subject, the paper being based on the identification of the main advantages and barriers of e-leadership in motivating employees. For this, I will look for the answer to the research question "What is the perception of pre-university teachers regarding e-leadership?", by sending a questionnaire among teachers. To answer this question, I carried out a quantitative research of a structured survey type, based on a questionnaire with 16 items, addressed to pre-university teachers, regarding the link between e-leadership and employee motivation. This survey was conducted online, in 1st-4th November 2022, through Google Forms, and I processed and interpreted the obtained data, using Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software. I hope this paper will be useful to all those interested in this topic, especially PhD students and leaders who want to deepen this topic.*

**Keywords:** e-leadership; motivation; high-school education

**JEL classification:** I23; M10; M54

### **1. Introduction**

E-leadership is a relatively new interdisciplinary research subfield that grew out of earlier studies of leadership and related concepts in technology management and administration. It is based and developed through research in business, educational technology, leadership and information sciences (Jameson et al., 2022).

Motivation refers to the way in which people manage to achieve their goals, the leader being the one responsible for maintaining a high level of employee motivation, which brings long-term benefits for the organizational and personal environment (Săseanu and Toma, 2019).

This work is based on the identification of the main advantages and barriers of e-leadership in motivating employees. The topic of the paper refers to the perspective of Romanian pre-university teachers regarding the connection between e-leadership and motivation. The reason I chose to do this research is because e-leadership is a current topic.

On the other hand, I am a teacher in the pre-university education system and I started my teaching activity in the middle of the pandemic, and I can say that it was a real challenge for me to integrate remotely into a new team. Therefore, I found it opportune to study this topic in more detail, the work being based on the identification of the main advantages and barriers of e-leadership in motivating employees.

## **2. Literature review**

As Roman (2019) claims, e-leadership involves the development of skills to improve organizational functioning in the online work environment.

After reviewing the specialized literature, I found that one of the most current and accepted definitions of e-leadership by researchers is the one stated by Avolio (2014) who presents it as a process of social influence supported by ICT (information and communication technology), which can produce a change in the attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior and performance of those led.

As Pitanken and Kazi (2021) explain, digitization has influenced the work environment by creating the possibility for organizations to work remotely and was able to assert itself when, in the first part of 2020, the World Health Organization declared that we are dealing with a global pandemic (WHO, 2021).

I agree with the statement that the pandemic period has been a challenge for humanity, with all areas affected to some extent by the effects of the restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus. It seems that one of the most affected areas was the field of education, consisting of millions of active students and teachers who previously had classes in their institutions and due to the pandemic, remained isolated at home (Selvaraj et al., 2021).

In order to obtain a mechanism suitable to the pandemic context, online teaching has become a viable way, with certain limits (Mishra, Gupta and Shree, 2020). The best of my knowledge, the employee motivation affects the competitive advantage and the organisational success. As Gitlab (2020) said, almost one third of the employees that work remotely sees motivation as a challenge in the online environment. To maintain a high level of performance we need effective leadership, so leaders need to attempt gaining as well as adapting new skills to lead and motivate their employees virtually.

## **3. Research methodology**

For this paper, I have analyzed the impact of e-leadership on the motivation degree of teaching staff, which is based on the following research question: What is the

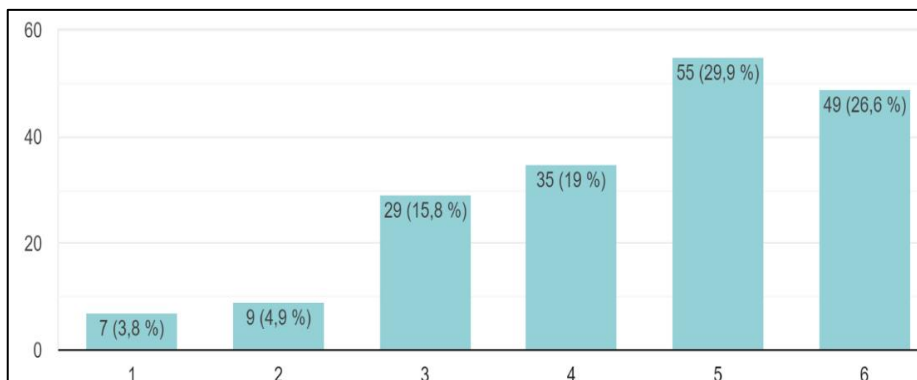
perception of pre-university teachers regarding e-leadership? To answer this question, I carried out a quantitative research of a structured survey type, based on a questionnaire with 16 items, addressed to pre-university teachers, regarding the link between e-leadership and employee motivation.

This survey was conducted online, in 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> November 2022, through Google Forms, and I processed and interpreted the obtained data, using Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software. The first 7 questions have the role of outlining the profile of the Romanian teacher, by obtaining the identification data of the respondents, and the following are carried out according to the proposed objectives: determining the main advantages and barriers of e-leadership in motivating teachers in the pre-university education system, establishing the degree of e-leadership motivation of teachers and identifying the most used types of e-leadership motivation for teachers.

#### 4. Findings

After applying the questionnaire, I obtained 184 valid answers from pre-university teachers. After analyzing the identification questions, I found that the majority of respondents are women (89.6%), from the urban environment (60.7%), aged between 40-49 years (41%), with an educational experience of over 20 years (51.9%), with 1<sup>st</sup> teaching degree (54.1%), who teach about subjects from Language and communication (24.6%) and Technology (19%) curricular areas in high school education (53%).

As can be noticed in Figure 1, regarding the question related to the degree of motivation during the online period, it seems that most of the respondents gave the grade 5 out of 6, in a proportion of 29.9%. The mean score was 4.4 with a standard deviation of 1.3, reflecting a high degree of motivation. It seems that the teachers were quite motivated in this period full of challenges.

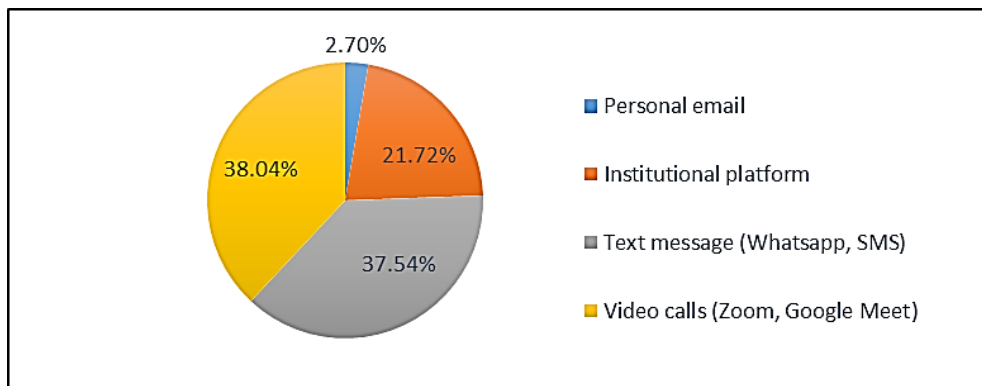


**Figure 1:** Degree of motivation during the online period

Source: Own processing from Google Forms

In Figure 2, I tried to represent the most used means of communication with management staff during online, video calls (Zoom, Google Meet) ranked first, with a percentage of 38%, and personal email came last, with only 2.7%. These results

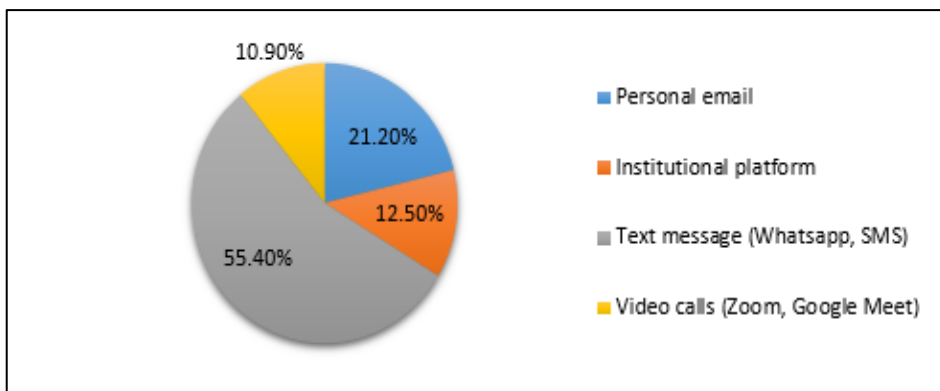
show that probably a video call is one of the simplest and most intuitive, not needing special training before using it. Also, email is quite difficult to follow and does not offer the advantage of transmitting information in real time, as is the case with online video sessions, when we can receive and send feedback on the spot.



**Figure 2:** The most used means of communication with management staff during online

Source: Own processing in Excel

The most preferred means of communication are shown in Figure 3 and is represented by text messages, in a proportion of 55.4%, followed by video calls, with only 10.9%. This highlights the fact that not everyone is comfortable with the option of online meetings. The method preferred by teachers is convenient, but comes with the disadvantage of the intervention of misunderstandings that are difficult to clarify through text messages.

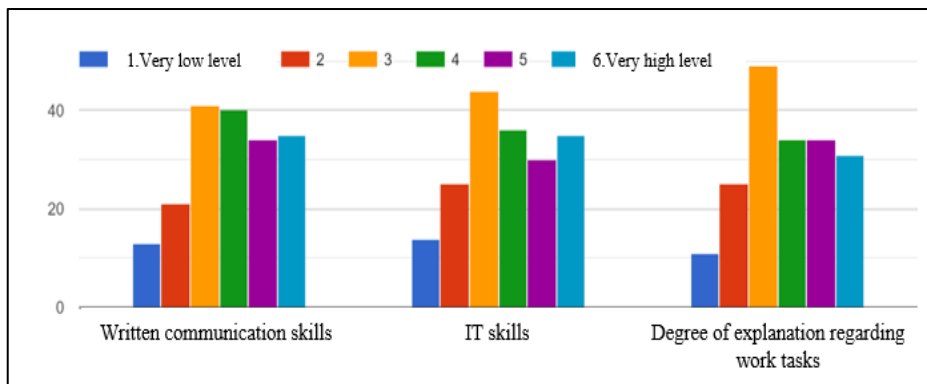


**Figure 3:** The most preferred means of communication with management staff during online

Source: Own processing in Excel

Taking into account the results from Figure 4 about the teachers' assessment of the level of management staff's skills during online classes, I found that written communication skills (Mean = 3.92; StD = 1.493), IT skills (Mean = 3.79; StD =

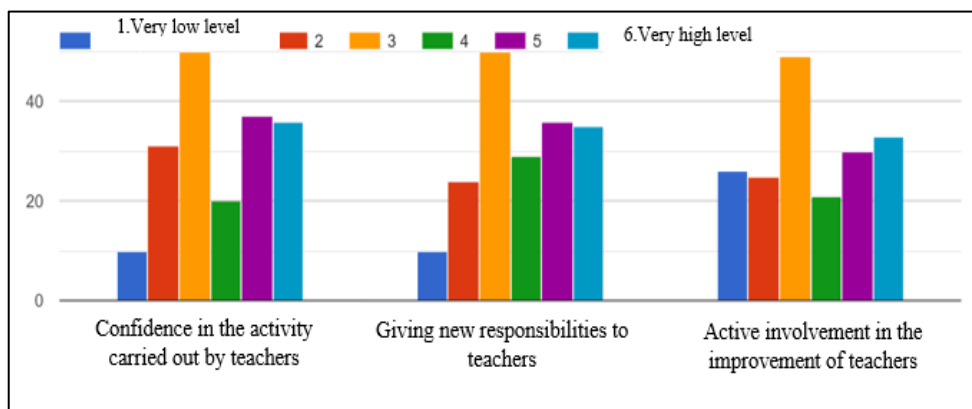
1.534) and the way of explaining regarding work tasks (Mean = 3.80; StD = 1.478) did not convince the teachers and were appreciated at an average level. E-leadership requires these skills, and their lack can be a barrier to motivating employees.



**Figure 4:** The teachers' assessment of the level of management staff's skills during online classes

Source: Own processing from Google Forms

I can say the same about their attitudes highlighted in the Figure 5, the trust in the activity carried out by teachers (Mean = 3.83; StD = 1.552), the granting of new responsibilities (Mean = 3.89; StD = 1.498) and the active involvement in the improvement of teachers through courses (Mean = 3.57; StD = 1.662) also obtained average values, as expected. Ideally, these skills and attitudes should be improved in order to turn them from barriers to advantages.



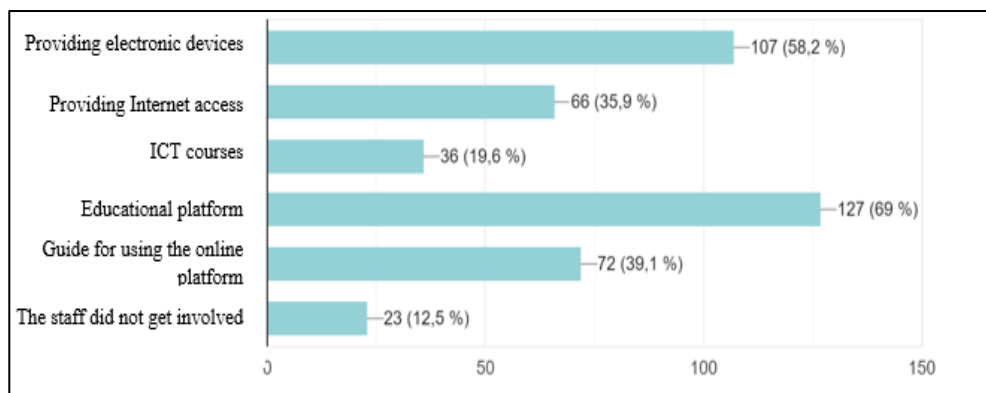
**Figure 5:** The teachers' assessment of the level of management staff's attitudes during online classes

Source: Own processing from Google Forms

I pointed out in Figure 6 that the management was involved in providing the necessary support for conducting online classes by providing electronic devices

(58.2%), providing access to the Internet (35.9%), ICT courses (19.6%), educational platform (69%) and the at least one guide for using the online platform (39.1%).

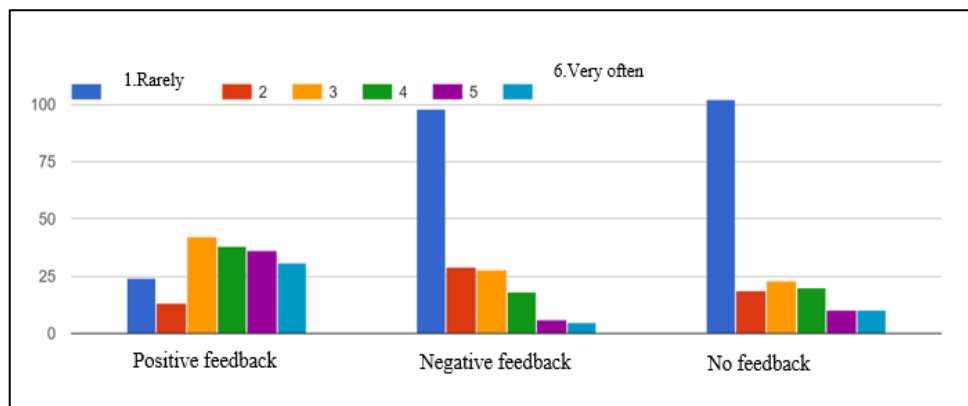
I believe that all these actions together could support the online activity, and the directors who implemented them, certainly had adequate results, their lack representing weak points with a major impact on the level of education in the respective institution.



**Figure 6:** The management staff involvement in providing the necessary support for conducting online classes

Source: Own processing from Google Forms

In Figure 7 I presented the management staff feedback and it can be observed that teachers received positive feedback normally. Also, teachers rarely receive negative feedback or no feedback. It is probably much easier to give a positive feedback than a negative one, if you don't want to demotivate the staff.



**Figure 7:** The management staff feedback

Source: Own processing from Google Forms

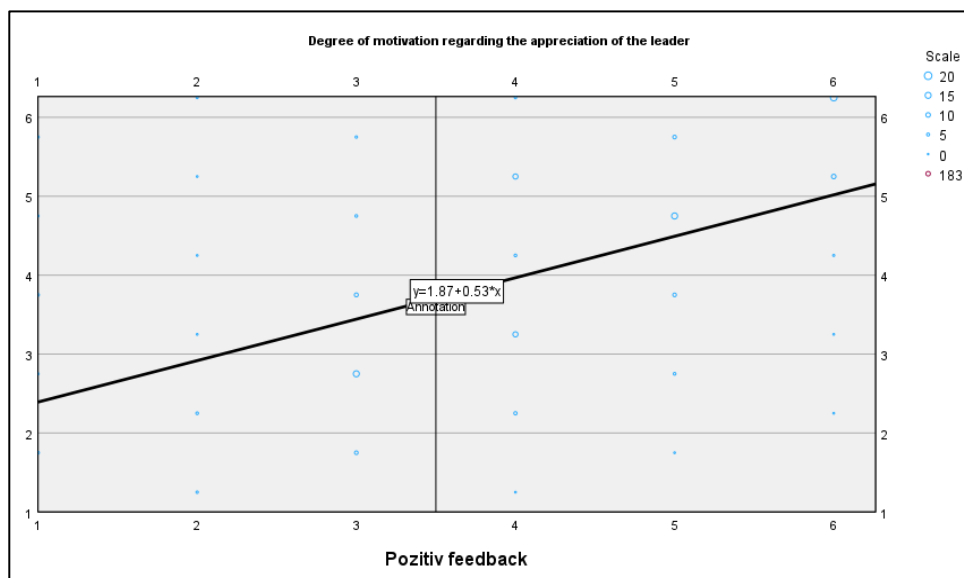
By asking the teachers how much they agree with the following statements regarding their motivation, we can extract the main advantages of e-leadership,

such as: through e-leadership we learn to adapt more easily to the changes that have occurred, we can develop personally and professionally, we can assert ourselves and get involved in the activities.

About the degree of satisfaction with the activity carried out during the online classes, it seems that the score is somewhere around 4 in almost all cases, which reflects a good level of teacher satisfaction.

Analyzing the results from Figure 8, it appears that there is a direct, linear connection between the degree of motivation regarding the leader's appreciation and the positive feedback he states.

Regarding the negative feedback, it seems that it appears less often than the positive one, the leaders being quite diplomatic when giving feedback to the teaching staff, the average of the answers being around a grade of 2.



**Figure 8:** Linear regression between motivation and positive feedback  
 Source: Own processing in SPSS

Analyzing the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.509$ ), it appears that there is a reasonable relationship between the positive feedback that management expresses and how valued teachers feel. It is interesting that each variable does not significantly influence teachers' motivation, but, cumulatively, they increase motivation. For example, teachers who declare that they easily adapted to the changes, claim that they have developed personally and professionally ( $r=0.78$ ). Also, those who got actively involved had the chance to take part in decision-making ( $r=0.675$ ) and received new responsibilities ( $r=0.694$ ).

Teachers say that they feel appreciated when they can develop personally ( $r=0.608$ ), when they can adapt to the environment governed by changes ( $r=0.668$ ), when they can participate in decision-making ( $r=0.750$ ), highlighting a high correlation between these variables. The probability of error ( $p$ ) is 0.001,

which highlights a highly significant link between the positive feedback of leaders and the motivation degree of teachers.

## 5. Conclusions

Among the main advantages of e-leadership we can list the fact that we learn to adapt more easily to changes, we can develop personally and professionally, we can assert ourselves and get involved in additional activities, while barriers such as IT and communication skills can represent real barriers in the smooth development of e-leadership.

Moreover, one of the most important factors in e-leadership is providing positive feedback, as people need appreciation to be productive. It seems that the teachers were motivated during the analyzed period, but there is always room for improvement. Of course, teachers' motivation is also influenced by intrinsic/extrinsic expectations, such as financial remuneration, which are not directly related to leaders' decisions, but this can be the subject of future research.

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