

The impact of leadership on civil servants' resilience

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Abstract: Nowadays public institutions face more and more challenges and they must adapt and evolve in an environment defined by instability and changes. Civil servants' careers are affected by a series of particular factors like political instability, economic crisis, budgetary cuts or leadership changes. In this context, strengthening civil servants' resilience must be a priority for the public administration's leaders. If civil servants are resilient and surpass all the difficult moments from their careers, they also influence in a positive manner, the organizational resilience.

Starting from the literature regarding leadership and subordinates' resilience the present research analyses the leadership styles practiced in Romanian public administration from County level and the impact of leadership over civil servants' resilience. The main objective is to establish the existence of a direct relation between the leadership styles practiced and the resilience of the employees. The study also aims to analyze the top executives' capacity to building human resources' resilience.

The methodology of research consists of an opinion survey that has been conducted in the County Councils of Romania. The research is based on a questionnaire, built by the authors and administrated to the civil servants occupying executive and management positions. The questionnaire measured the practiced leadership styles and civil servants' perception of leaders' capacity to building resilience. The questionnaire measured three leadership styles: the transformational style, the transactional style, and one ineffective style, namely Laissez-Faire. The respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 their Directors'/General Directors' attitudes in a series of situations in order to establish the leadership behaviors exhibited predominantly by the studied leaders. Also, the civil servants were asked to express their opinions about leaders' attitudes in a series of difficult situations (considered shocks or stressors) faced by the respondents. The leaders' capacity of building civil servants' resilience was measured from four perspectives: the leaders' attitude towards personal problems, the leaders' attitude towards economic problems, the leaders' attitude with regard to economic problems affecting the institution and the attitude with regard to management changes.

The research revealed that the leaders from the studied institutions were perceived as being transformational and transactional leaders, who exhibited passive leadership behaviors to a low extent. Also, the majority of the respondents considered that their leaders had a supportive and understanding attitude in all the mentioned situations and helped them to continue their activities in an effective manner. The civil servants considered that their leaders had a more supportive attitude towards personal and professional problems than to economic problems and management changes. Regarding the impact of leadership exhibited on civil servants' resilience the results showed a positive relation between the two variables. A strong positive relation was found between the transformational leadership style and resilience. The study revealed that the leaders from the County Councils were perceived in a positive manner as being transformational and presenting all the necessary qualities for building civil servants' resilience. A strong positive relation was also found between the transformational leadership style and resilience. The findings are important in the context of administrative reform from two perspectives: transformational leaders make institutions more opened towards change and capable of adapting and evolving and resilient civil servants strengthen organizational resilience, making the public institutions more prepared for future shocks and unpreventable situations.

Keywords: *resilience, transformational leadership, Romanian County Councils*