



Research Article

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## Socio-Emotional Leadership Style as Implementation of Situational Leadership Communication in the Face of Radical Change

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### Abstract

*Leadership communication style plays an important role in managing an organization during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study investigated the leadership style applied in the event organizer industry to survive adversity during a pandemic situation. A qualitative approach is used in case studies of two event organizers in two big cities in Indonesia, namely PT Ikons Karya Kreasi, Jakarta, and CV Trigger EO, Medan. In-depth interviews were conducted as a data collection technique for each level of the company's top management and employees. The results showed that the situational leadership style applied in the two organizations differed according to the context and culture of the organization. The most important competence of the two lies in a leadership style that displays socio-emotional skills, is ready to face stress and adapt to changes in socio-cultural life quickly, and dares to take decisions to maintain the continuity of the company organizing business events.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, leadership, communication, socio-emotional leadership

### 1. Introduction

The covid-19 widespread and expansive scale of social and financial stun, which it bought, has profoundly transformed organizational cultures (Spicer, 2020). Yet, it is impacted organizational leadership (Chen, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost every business and industrial sector, including event organizers (Nurhayati et al., 2021). Restriction in holding events to avoid the crowd as one of the preventive actions to overcome the spread of the Covid-19 virus has had a significant impact on the run of event organizer business. Madray (2020) argued that the event

management or event planning industry is one of the most affected industries by this pandemic. This is because event management, or event organizer, is a business that provides events for people coming in enormous numbers to celebrate an occasion. He further reported in his study that the loss of more than \$666 million until April 2020 is recorded in the event industry due to cancellations. Daily fee workers associated with the industry, the small and medium occasion companies that do not have the target clients to supply such service endure more harshness of this pandemic. Thus, the primary effect of this harsh situation is the severe loss in business due to cancellations and postponements.

Event organizer businesses are suffering from tremendous capital deficiency to support in the long run; even though utilization of technology might assist the company to continue their administrations, they cannot supplant the income from the occasion at a huge scale in terms of cash and people affectation. Therefore, the organization has to make sure the operation remains active and effective by taking leadership and communication style into the essential factors to ensure the success and relevancy of the organization's work (Ayup et al., 2014). Moreover, pertinent leadership communication style plays a crucial role in managing an organization while facing a crisis, including this pandemic condition. Employees are important assets that an organization has. Therefore, engagement in teamwork is hugely vital for long-term organizational development (Chen, 2021). The Global CAD team (2020) proposed a methodological action plan for an organization to adapt during Covid-19. There are four-step plans aimed to enable a quick business response during the outbreak to make the organization more resilient, sustainable, and practical to run the business in the long run. The four-step plan consists of (1) Understand by demonstrating self-diagnosis to evaluate what the organization need for the particular period, (2) Plan by reviewing the available tools and define what works for your organization, (3) Act by developing an action plan through designing a short and mid-term action plan as well as a road map, and (4) Connect by reaching out the ecosystem and interact to support. These steps are reasonable to be acknowledged to adapt to the prevailing pandemic situation and ensure the business is surviving.

Talu and Nazarov (2020) studied the challenges and competencies of leadership in the Covid-19 pandemic. The study highlights the importance of leaders in implementing appropriate leadership styles during critical periods, i.e., the Covid-19 pandemic. A leader should consider the leadership style that best suits their subordinates' characteristics and the requirements of the job to ensure the harmony between those characteristics and the task is given. They further stated that leaders should train and inspire their subordinates by setting goals, seeking improvement in achieving excellent performance, and demonstrating assurance of subordinates' high-quality work standards in a challenging situation. Therefore, leaders should place the interests of others above their claim, possess intelligence and passionate steadiness, and focus on involvement and collaboration to convey leadership responsibilities and obligations to teams in solving complex, challenging circumstances. Good leaders need excellent leadership skills (Chen, 2021). A leader needs to utilize a variety of communication channels to deliver information while conducting business. Besides, leaders need to be creative and brave to improve long-term behavior patterns to go through crises professionally with understanding and compassion (Talu & Nazarov, 2020). Thus, adaptive leaders are prominent to benefit from current strategic opportunities and enforce new organizational responsibilities through innovation, and continuously adapt to the recent changes. When it comes to adapting to the prevailing condition, the situational leadership approach is one of the possible leadership styles explored. This study aims to contribute an idea of leadership style to manage an event organizer with effective communication to adapt and survive the pandemic. Accordingly, this study contributes to the research gap with regards to leadership communication in organizations specifically exploring the leadership in event organizer business.

This study investigates the leadership communication style implemented in event organizer business to survive the hardship during the pandemic. This study argued that it is essential to highlight how an event organizer organization could seek alternative sources of project and income when there is a restriction in public activity. Besides, being adaptive to the current challenging

circumstances is the key to survival. The offline events they usually held could be transformed into something more virtual and digital-based according to the present possible situation. Therefore, leadership communication style is one of the prominent matters sought to overcome the problem to ensure the organization could adapt to the current condition and ascertain subordinates to keep motivated. This paper focuses on applying leadership and communication style to overcome struggles in the event organizer business amidst the pandemic. This paper focuses on using situational leadership style to overcome struggles in the event organizer business amidst the pandemic. Two event organizer organizations in two big cities in Indonesia, namely PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi, Jakarta dan CV Trigger EO, Medan, have been selected as the research object.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Leadership and Communication

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others through their personality and skills to accomplish goals and directs the organization to make it more cohesive and coherent (Talu and Nazarov, 2020). Leaders are not always chosen and formally trained (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2016). Therefore, understanding their role as a leader and developing themselves to enhance the strength of their teamwork through effective communication and appropriate leadership style should be taken into account. Leadership is something learned whereby a leader's skills and knowledge are directly related to their attributes or trait; values, character, beliefs, and ethics. Additionally, leadership communication is not static or originating from a single source; it is fluid and dynamic shared among group members in the organization. With these considerations, thus, leadership communication, a leader's ability to lead, and communication in an organizational context should be evolving (Virgiawan et al., 2021). When it comes to communication in an organizational context, we could address the understanding of corporate cultures, which is enduring values, beliefs, assumptions, the signs and symbols of shared practices, and underlying assumptions of an organization (Verdu-Jover et al., 2017; Mansur et al., 2021). Disruption of organizational culture due to pandemic strike. To create efficiency and credibility, organizations must cultivate a culture of communication competence that enables leaders to communicate well with many different stakeholders (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014). Understanding the organizational culture could help understand the current condition, which may lead to adaptation to survival.

Cultures are constantly receiving environmental pressures that require continuous adaptation; they have the inherent attribute of change, which has been addressed as adaptive culture (Verdu-Jover et al., 2017). This concept can be adopted into the context of an organization whereby both internal and external situations may affect the shifting in the organizational culture, hence business operation. Therefore, being adaptive to the changes in culture in terms of business and organization should be addressed when discussion about leadership and communication occurs. Based on their study de Vries et al. (2010) stated that charismatic and human-oriented leadership are mainly communicative, while task-oriented leadership is significantly less communicative. They further explained that both charismatic and human-oriented leadership styles are grounded in the communication styles of the leader. However, task-oriented leadership, which is less communicative, represents organizational context rather than leadership style. Thus, a leader with a human orientation will be more communicative, which could be the basic foundation and strength in facing business challenges to survive.

Cetin et al. (2012) found that interactive leadership style and communication competency have a stronger relationship with job satisfaction. They further argued that effective leadership and employee job satisfaction are the foundation aspects for organizational success. In this case, employees are seen as the essential asset in an organization. A competent leader administers guidance for the organization and leads subordinates to attain the desired goals. Ayub et al. (2014) discuss the function of communication to assure effective leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century organization.

They stated that future leaders must ensure their subordinate staff is treated as comrades in an organization they belong to. Therefore, the consistency of the leader would determine staff motivation and performance. When it comes to steering the organization, setting direction is a principle undertaking in leadership. Additionally, leadership is strongly related to core communication skills, managerial communication skills, and corporate communication skills owned by the leader, hence supporting the organization's run. Thus, situational leadership is the combination of both directive and supportive dimensions and each of these is to be implemented appropriately based on a given situation (Mulyana et al., 2019).

The leader's communication style in dealing with the change process is done to overcome the resistance of subordinates by influencing their affective commitment to change (Lou et al., 2016). Furthermore, in leadership practice, they argued that subordinates' commitment to change is usually viewed as necessary for successful organizational change. To increase the affective commitment of subordinates to change, a leader must communicate effectively with oriented toward expectations, subordinates, and support. Referring to that matter, the leader should consider applying multiple styles. Besides, leaders should also provide continuous support during the change process, which could assure the subordinates see themselves benefited by engaging in the change. Similarly, Lou et al. (2016) further explain that a change leader must consider the possibility of resistance to change by subordinates. Resistance to change is caused by the fear felt by subordinates that can harm their lives. The communication model guides the communication process among leaders, which requires different skills (Ayub et al., 2014). In this study, the discussion will be concentrating on the application of the situational approach. The situational practice focuses on the usefulness of the situation about leadership.

## 2.2 Situational Leadership

Situational leadership is the development of the leadership style proposed by Hapsari et al. (2021) to assist practicing managers and administrators in determining what leadership style is suitable at a particular time. This theory is based upon an interplay between (i) the amount of direction a leader gives to subordinates, (ii) the amount of socio-emotional support a leader provides, and lastly (iii) the maturity level that subordinates demonstrate on a specific task given. Hersey further explained that situational leadership theory could be employed practically by leaders or managers to develop their human resources, subordinates in ongoing organizations. The understanding of situational leadership has relation to adaptive leader behavior, which could be understood within a concept that the more a manager adapts their style of leadership behavior to meet the particular situation. The need of the subordinates, the more influential the leader tends to reach personal and organizational goals (Riyanto et al., 2021). Effective leadership is the backbone of any organization (Ayub et al., 2014). This leadership style is applied appropriately in a given situation (Ghazzawi et al., 2017).

To support the application and importance of situational leadership, Thompson and Glaso (2015) conducted a study to test situational leadership theory from three perspectives. First, they argue a practical implication from their study that both leaders and subordinates need to identify subordinates' competence and commitment by covering them as individuals and groups, further discuss similarities, differences, and attempt to agree upon the determination of the recognized competence and commitment. This idea has affected the implementation of situational leadership style in an organization. Leadership style has been widely known as the factor influencing employee productivity. Based on this point of view, Ghazzawi et al. (2017) stated that a situational relationship has a positive relationship to employee productivity. It is a leading model that incorporates both directive and related dimensions. Each is applied correctly in the appropriate situations. A significant variable in the leadership style adopted by a manager is the nature of the subordinate staff, which Hersey and Blanchard promote this view. They present a form of situational leadership based on the readiness level of the people they intended to influence (Mullins, 2005). Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory proposes a taxonomy of four leadership styles for specific situations

(Thompson & Glaso, 2015).

Furthermore, to explain the readiness level of subordinates, it is best to define readiness in context first. Enthusiasm is the ability and willingness to finish a specific task. Readiness is explained based on the following levels:

R1: Low follower readiness is defined as those who are unable and unwilling, and their motivation and commitment are low; also incapable and insecure

R2: R2: The low to moderate category for follower readiness is defined as those who are able but unable, and have the motivation to try but are unable; those who believe in dying but can't

R3: Medium to the high category for follower readiness, which is defined as those who are able but unwilling and who is the ability to apply their knowledge; those who are capable but insecure

R4: R4: High follower readiness is defined as those who are capable and confident, have a strong desire to achieve, are competent and optimistic

### 2.3 Social and Emotional Skills

Some references write about social and emotional concepts, among which written by Upadhyaya (2008), who said that "emotional intelligence is an ability to express, manage and control emotions of self and others," which means is emotional intelligence is an ability to experiment regulate and control one's own emotions and other. Therefore, emotional intelligence becomes a determinant of one's personality. Someone who has intelligence emotional will be able to face the problem that happens in life because usually, people who have emotional intelligence are aware of their emotions, able to grow motivation in themselves because he is permanently moved to do activity well and want to achieve their desired goals, and can express feelings well self-control is powerful. Then, another meaning emerges from Arora (2017) that emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize one's feelings for yourself and others, in motivating yourself and managing your own emotions well, and in doing social relations. According to Zeidner (2009), "emotional intelligence is the ability to know emotions of self and others, understand emotions and emotional language, able to manage the emotions of self and others, and use emotions to facilitate cognitive and behavioral activities".

## 3. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach with multiple case studies. A qualitative case study approach can be applied to answer the how, why and what questions in exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive research involving contextual conditions with limited information related to the subject of investigation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study is best applied in this study due to the nature of the research problem, whereby the case study could accommodate the exploration of an in-depth understanding of multiple cases focused on this study. This research comparatively analyzes the leadership style of the two selected event organizers operating in two big cities in Indonesia, i.e., Jakarta and Medan. PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi, Jakarta dan CV Trigger EO, Medan are selected based on similar characteristics of having a turnover of more than 5 billion Rupiah. In addition, both companies usually handle at least ten clients yearly to organize various events such as gatherings, weddings, birthday parties, exhibitions, and many more with six years of experience. Thus, purposeful sampling is employed in identifying the research object in this study. In-depth, interviews were conducted as data gathering techniques among top management level and employees of the respective companies. Top management of both organizations have been selected as the key informants for this study; EE – the owner of PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi, HA – Account Manager of PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi, and AN – owner of CV Trigger EO. An in-depth understanding of the cases is conducted through five steps; (i) determine if the research problem is best examined using a case study approach, (ii) identify the intent and cases for the study as well as case sampling procedures, (iii) data collection procedures were developed extensively, from various sources (iv) analytical approach was used to develop case descriptions based on contextual and up-to-date information (v)

report the interpreted meaning of the case and lessons learned by using case assertions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, data were analyzed and discussed based on exploring the practical communication approach and implementation of situational leadership.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The presentation of the results and discussion will start with a brief description of both organizations; PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi and CV Trigger EO. PT Ikons Indonesia is an event organization company predominant in the business horizon as well as its financing. PT Ikon Kerja Kreasi has established its marketing communication strategy by activating words of mouth among the clients and utilizing multiple platforms for media promotion. Roughly, PT Ikon Kerja Kreasi could earn approximately 400 million Rupiah monthly net income. The second company in this study is CV Trigger EO, established for over 13 years as a private-run business located in Medan, South Sumatra. Before the pandemic hit this event management business, CV Trigger EO has a turnover of nearly 2 billion Rupiah, which could be considered extravagant numbers. They usually carry out four to six events in a month. The above description presents a company overview to give context regarding the business they have been operating. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore how the leaders have addressed pandemic issues that impacted the organization. Furthermore, discussion during the interviews has been brought up the communication strategy they have been applying to acknowledge the business situation and how to overcome it. Additionally, the foundation of situational leadership theory was reflecting how the discussion was guided. Thus, this research could analyze and discuss further leadership and communication styles taken by the leaders in handling this harsh business situation. The result of this study will be presented based on two categories of discussion (i) effective communication: building trust and strengthening resources capacity, and (ii) situational leadership: A combination of the directive and supportive dimensions.

##### 4.1 *Effective Communication: Building trust and Strengthen Resources Capacity*

Speaking about effective communication, the discussion during interviews has focused on building trust and strengthening resources capacity, i.e., human resources. The attempt of leaders to understand the prevailing situation that affects the company and understand their subordinates' characteristics has been highlighted. This effort has brought the leader to identify the strength to fit with the current business opportunity. Therefore, a new business plan should be proposed, and reaching out to the possible counterpart for the plan's realization should take place. Results and discussion regarding this category will be presented in four main discussion themes, as follows:

###### *(1) Understanding the situation and subordinates' characteristics*

PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi tried to detect the impact of the pandemic, which triggers initial adaptation whereby mapping financial adjustment by rationalizing employee's performance with the task given. The intriguing adjustment taken by PT Ikons Karya Kreasi was that they did not downsize the number of employees.

EE – Owner PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi

What did we take as company policy since the announcement of PSBB (Large-scale Social Restriction) in March (2021)? We did not want to be reckless. Initially, we decided to perform Work from Home (WFH) until Hari Raya Idul Fitri. After that, we tried to discuss and negotiate with some of our staff to schedule office hours, Alhamdulillah that's what we implement up till recent times. The office will be operated on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.

The organization leader has identified the prevailing situation and tried adapting to changes in organizational culture or atmosphere due to the Covid-19 pandemic with a participative approach, i.e., discussing and negotiating with the employees.

HT – Account Manager PT Ikon Karya Kreasi

I was worried about the Covid-19 condition. However, I am sure there's a consequence that the



company does not pay up your full salary, yet surviving is the priority. We are worried we cut 50% of the employee's salary, then decrease to 30%, and eventually none. However, luckily, we have never been to that worse condition, we have sustained and revived.

CV Trigger EO, on another side, has stated that they have an initial detection regarding pandemics that affect the business. As an event organizer, CV Trigger EO uncovers the procedure to endure the hardship situation in the industry amidst a pandemic with various possible challenges. Therefore, they have prioritized mapping some adjustments regarding financial and rationalization towards employee's workload, which is similar to what has been done by PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi. However, CV Trigger EO has decided on a different adjustment movement for they give flexible options to the employees, not exclusively to attach with the company. The opportunity given was taken due to lessening the operational burden to the company, as well as providing more space for the employees to focus on their undertakings. Regarding the location of the business, Jakarta and Medan have different demographical backgrounds that affect the regional minimum wage standard and standard of living. Therefore, the economic challenges are more affected by the company which operates locally. In this context, CV Trigger EO experienced a more significant pandemic impact than PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi, specifically regarding employees' welfare and future careers. It is understood that since the beginning, employees of CV Trigger EO have had other side jobs such as owning a business, becoming a freelancer, gas salesman, and so forth.

AN – Owner CV Trigger EO

This pandemic is astonishing. The first and foremost is the lack of jobs. Thus, I exempt the employees/team from having their own business/side jobs, which they have had since the beginning they affiliate with us. Their primary income indeed has a shortfall. If there's event-related work, I will contact them.

The early phase of adaptation experienced by CV Trigger EO towards pandemic does take a lot of energy. They concentrate more on the continuity and sustainability of financial sources. Due to the absence of event-related jobs from the Medan area specifically or the Sumatra area in general, they could undertake only one or two projects. Therefore, they have a drastic financial shortfall in 2020 which eventually affected employment significantly. This is the point whereby a difficult decision should be made that they could not permanently preserve their employees. However, they cultivate communication with them and participative engagement with employees' conditions. Thus, they exempt the employees/team from having their own business/side jobs.

(2) *Reviewing available human resources and tools to fit the current business opportunity*

The participatory approach in PT Ikons Karya Kreasi is considered prominent, mainly to undertake specific action by the company to prevent more severe crises in the future. Therefore, the current public communication could accommodate building a relationship that possibly contains concern and reduces damage. However, the situation is inevitable. Due to that matter, a crisis communication plan is one of the essential matters to be addressed to handle the crisis. PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi has decided not to downsize the company. However, they have to adjust the working hours due to payment adjustments that should be made. The hardship condition is overcome by reducing 50% of the wage payment under mutual agreement between the managers and employees. Therefore, the participatory approach is seen to be implemented in this case.

EE – Owner of PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi

The team has agreed to have a 50% payroll deduction in April, May, June, July, August, September, October 2020. As a consequence, we are not coming to the office daily. So that this decision has only reduced the personal cost as meal and transportation allowances. Yet, we eventually ask them not to come to the office due to the lack of activity that we could do. With the decision, they can still do their work at home. As the owner of this company, this decision has been made to make sure that my employees feel comfortable with the situation.

Convenience and assurance of the employees are taken as the priority concerns in PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi. Therefore, crisis communication developed by top management toward the employees is participatory communication. This communication pattern is considered appropriate in times of

change/crisis due to high sensitivity amongst individuals that might trigger misunderstanding, miscommunication, and even resistance feedback if the communication pattern is more towards an authoritarian approach. Therefore, a participatory could accommodate the hardship situation whereby all organization members could take part in giving their views to make sure that understanding of the present situation could be achieved. CV Trigger EO has decided to plan business aside from the ones that they are usually undertaking. The planning was conducted within two phases (1) early pandemic, around March and April 2020, financing inventory taken place as a priority; including revisiting debt inventory, (2) revisiting the run of the coffee shop which was considered promising in the current situation.

AN – Owner CV Trigger EO

From the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic until the present when this is the second year of the pandemic, it is getting tough that there is no event-related job. So if there is a project, it is more about the production with a minimum budget.

CV Trigger EO could not avoid the fact that downsizing should be considered a rigid arrangement during this challenging period. The unfortunate condition is a significant cause of financial distress in the company. Due to the organization's inability to fulfill the full salary, thus discretion towards employees' attachment to the company is the best solution for the time being. Therefore, they can still be working somewhere else to accomplish their financial needs, yet they will still engage with the company for future event-related jobs.

*(1) Developing an action plan to accommodate the current business situation: adaptive to the current situation by transforming the usual offline events into online or virtual ones.*

Control towards what should be done is part of the strategy of the company. Therefore, meetings and discussions are usually conducted every Monday morning. The debate will not only cover top-down issues or unilateral planning conveyed by the top management; however, it is beyond exploring creative ideas among the employees to develop possible recovery movements for surviving and preserving the company's reputation.

EE – Owner PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi

The meeting is usually initiated with confiding in among the employees. As the leader, I will throw a question, "okay, what business do you have? Could you please explain to the rest of the team?" Therefore, sharing among the individuals becomes an effective way to control for it is supporting trait to one another. Control here is managing working hours, including external activities. I emphasize the health care and safety concerns more because it is an important asset that we should acquire. Besides, I also emphasize the importance of intensive communication with subordinates. Communication could be conducted through a phone call, WhatsApp group conversation, and so forth.

The participatory communication style is the best fit for PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi in handling communication crises due to pandemics. Therefore, both leaders and subordinates attempt to carry out effective communication through various possible mediums to solve the problem faced by the company.

HA – Acc Manager PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi

I once had a thought, where would the company be heading to? Let us try to offer (a project) to our clients. Starting with health protocol merchandise with the packaging, we can start with doing this plan online, for we are actively communicating for brainstorming, so what can we do about this? What should possible we sell? Every individual gives their valuable input.

When it comes to controlling, it is somewhat priority taken in CV Trigger EO. In economic difficulty during a pandemic, it is crucial to minimize the crisis that impacted the company. The choice available and eventually accepted in the company is to alter the employability status from permanent to freelance mode. However, CV Trigger EO has never disclosed its decision regarding the alteration of employment status. The leader fully carries control due to a lack of bureaucracy and considering the company's shortfall of full-time employees. Yet, this organization is still operating with a few projects and productions, such as organizing the virtual event, installing LED, and a few



other exhibits. Control that the company takes is aimed to boost the promotion and company existence in the business. The marketing communication movement is conducted by the company leader, maintaining the communication with clients as well as marketing purposes.

AN - Owner CV Trigger EO

I usually send texts through WhatsApp to clients and say hi. Asking how they have been doing in Jakarta? Whether they have an event to be held or not. It is basically to keep the company existing in the business.

The company leaders take one-way communication patterns as linearly dominant as the communication style in facing this pandemic. At CV Trigger EO, even though the participatory nature is not implemented, the communication pattern they applied is beneficial for fast and effective decision-making. In this sense, it is understood that the heart of the decision taken by CV Trigger EO enables the leader to become a center point in the company's run, approaching prospectus clients, seeking project opportunities, and ensuring the existence of the company in the business. Once the leader could get a project, they would inform the subordinates or employees for further action and teamwork. In this condition, being central and dominant is possibly done, and it is strategic due to the early decision explained regarding alteration of employment status for all subordinates.

(1) Reaching out to internal and external ecosystems to support the action plan.

In the recovery stage of the business, it can only be done gradually, for the Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing. However, with the agile crisis detection and backup business plan made during the early pandemic, projection and strategic steps carried out by PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi have become the best solution they could take so far. Moreover, intensive participatory communication could accommodate the circulation of information and strengthen their business plan through collective ideas. Familiarization of each individual in the company has also adapted their attempt to solve the current business challenges.

Strategical steps taken by PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi are aimed to rectify economic or financial recovery to survive the pandemic. The strategic actions have resulted in several worthwhile projects, especially the expansion of the virtual event or meetings arrangement. Leveraging virtual meeting applications has been made virtual event projects possible to be conducted. Therefore, starting from the particular virtual event held, clients automatically promote the company's performance to others through word of mouth. This eventually becomes the new gateway for a new beginning of virtual event management held by the company. First, they started the virtual event work with PT FIF Group, followed by Astra Group.

HA - Account Manager PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi

We did organize a virtual exhibition for FIF Group which involve Astra Group, thus, all Astra Group see the event and were attracted. Then we got a brief regarding the event of AHM, that's what happened.

However, for CV Trigger EO, the recovery path begins with business diversification away from the company's prominent role as an event organizer. The company divides the office into two distinct business areas; event organizers and coffee shops. This transition shows a leadership style that can change employees' mental concept to become coffee shop sellers as an alternative short-term financial solution. Furthermore, this business is even better. This happens because in running an alternative business, creativity and competence as an expert in the event organizer business can collaborate. So that the role as a professional event organizer is still taking part, CV Trigger EO has done several virtual events and is doing production. At the same time, other employees focus on their own business, including being freelancers. The CV Trigger EO leader uses his social media accounts for branding, updating the company's business. Reposting the projects they have done before is one of the recovery efforts to ensure the company's existence. Further discussion will be presented based on the situational leadership approach regarding the combination of directive and supportive dimensions in leadership. The meeting will be presented as fluidly as possible, comparing the two companies in handling the crisis during the pandemic.

#### 4.2 *Situational Leadership: Combination of the directive and supportive dimensions*

Further discussion will be presented within the foundation of situational leadership theory as the guideline. Situational leadership is the combination of both directive and supportive dimensions and each of these is to be implemented appropriately based on a given situation (Mulyana et al., 2019). The assortment of individuals with varying personalities and diverse backgrounds have emerged as influential leaders in various conditions. Epitropaki et al. (2017) revealed that someone who becomes a leader has responsibility for the group he leads, and then influences their attitudes and behavior. In PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi, the leader approaches all the employees with a participatory communication style. The decision has been made due to the organization's condition to retain their employees even though the decision to deduct about 50% of the payroll has to be made. However, the leader of CV Trigger EO has decided on a different communication approach for the company members, i.e., a one-way communication approach as linear dominant. This decision was taken due to the company's unable to preserve their employees as full-time workers. Yet, the communication pattern the leader applied is beneficial for fast and effective decision-making.

When it comes to the discussion regarding an interplay between (i) the amount of direction a leader gives to subordinates, (ii) the amount of socio-emotional support a leader provides, and lastly (iii) the maturity level that subordinates demonstrate on a specific task given, both companies have shown different communication approach as well as the different decision in a way to survive the pandemic. It is due to the nature of the company; the scope of the business horizon. It is also essential to prepare the readiness of subordinates, which is regarding the ability and willingness to finish a specific task and their ability to face the prevailing situation.

A leader demonstrates situational leadership to guide, implement, direct, encourage subordinates to achieve intended goals, and empower their ability by combining the current situation regarding leader and subordinates' behaviors in facing the harshness of the pandemic which hit the business hard. Discussion of the situational leadership implementation will be presented based on the following four aspects:

#### 4.3 *Telling: guiding, directing vs. Participating: encouraging, problem-solving*

Organizational leadership is important for developing constructive and effective communication by adopting a social and cultural lens (Keyton, 2017). Understanding the organizational culture could help understand the current condition, which may lead to adaptation to survival. The openness of leaders to accommodate communication between the top management level and subordinates, in some way, could be implemented to gain various insights from all organizational members. This has been reflected by the decision taken by the leader of PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi. Therefore, guidance and direction are decided based on comprehensive discussion and deliberation from all the company members. Guiding and directing are also made in CV Trigger EO at different levels. For example, with regards to the company's financial condition and the potential that all employees have, the leader gives adequate space for the employees to not fully attach to the company to develop and expand any potential that they have. This decision is due to the company's inability to retain all employees as full-time workers for financial difficulties. However, this decision is valid and fair enough for the present situation. Yet, the leader works hard to make sure that the company's existence is still in the business market to get an event-related job possibly.

#### 4.4 *Selling: explaining, persuading vs. Delegating: observing, monitoring*

The development of effective communication in both companies has brought the team into a good relationship when it comes to working. The involvement of every member in the company has made PT Ikons Kerja Kreasi achieve mutual understanding and decision to make sure the company gets back in the event organizer business. In this sense, every individual in the company is part of the

progression. In a way, this takes into account the leader's role in giving a comprehensive understanding of the current company and business situation. Besides, the leader has given the trust to the employees to take part in facing challenges. In other words, the readiness of employees in this company is considered high as they take part in the process and are willing to perform. From other perspectives, a leader in CV Trigger EO has a different approach to explaining and persuading all company members. Being realistic about the economic condition and understanding the employees' characteristics is the most convenient decision that should be taken to make all employees understand the current situation and assure them to stay with the company whenever the condition gets better. Therefore, the leader redoes the marketing and branding movements while approaching clients to get more projects. The subordinates in this organization could be considered as having high readiness as well. However, it could be interpreted from a different perspective. They have the ability and willingness to survive the condition, yet on another level. They are doing their own business or some other work for survival, and at the same time, they are informally taking part in the company for freelancing positions. This could also be defined as those who are able and willing and have the ability and commitment to perform. Leadership communication is not static or originates from a single source, and it is fluid and dynamic shared among group members in the organization (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2016). This has been proven from the findings in this study that the communication style in both companies is changed due to crisis. The thing that becomes the benchmark is that they could achieve communication among company members effectively that could accommodate them in handling situations and challenges.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the situational leadership style is suitable to be applied in event organizer companies by considering the characteristics of the organization. The situational leadership style can accommodate the role of leaders to change their strategy based on the current situation adaptively. Furthermore, through the application of situational leadership style, leaders can manage effective communication between subordinates to ensure solid teamwork by (1) understanding the situation and characteristics of subordinates, (2) reviewing available human resources and tools to match current business opportunities, (3) develop an action plan that accommodates the current business situation, and finally (4) reach out to the internal and external ecosystem to support the action plan. Lastly, as the conclusion of this paper, situational leadership is applied differently according to the culture and nature of the organization. The most important competence of both lies in a leadership style that displays good social-emotional skills, is ready to face stress and adapt to the rapid changes in socio-cultural life and dares to take decisions to be able to maintain the business continuity of the event organizer company. Research has limitations that only focus on investigating leadership styles in certain events that have an impact on the relationship between superiors and subordinates. For future research, it is also important to investigate how the behavior of subordinates themselves in dealing with a rapidly changing situation has an impact on the way they communicate with leaders and changes in socio-cultural life.

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