

## **REVIEW**

**by Prof. Toni Bogdanova Mihova, PhD,  
Technical University - Sofia, Plovdiv branch**

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree " **doctor** "

by: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

professional direction 3.7. Administration and management

doctoral program Social management

**Author** : Dimo Zelev Zelev

**Topic** : Influence of leadership on the motivation of hotel employees in crisis and post-crisis conditions

**Research supervisor** : Assoc. prof Mina Angelova, PhD, University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

### **1. General description of the presented materials**

By order No. PD-21-1491 of 17.07.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Influence of leadership on the motivation of hotel employees in crisis and post-crisis period" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree " doctor" in field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.7. Administration and management, doctoral program " Social Management". The author of the dissertation is Dimo Zhelev Zhelev - doctoral student in part-time study to the department "Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics", with research supervisor Assoc. prof. Mina Angelova , PhD, rom Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" .

The set of paper materials presented by Dimo Zhelev Zhelev is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU, includes the following documents:

- request to the Rector of the PU to disclose the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work;
- CV in European format;
- protocol from the departmental council related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation work;
- dissertation work;

- abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- list of noticed citations;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents ;
- order No. PD-21-1491 of 17.07.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University.

The PhD student has attached four issues publications.

**Based on the review of the attached documents, I believe that the doctoral student has submitted the review materials necessary for the procedure, in accordance with the requirements.**

### ● **Brief biographical data of the PhD student**

The main stages of Dimo Zhelev's educational development are as follows:

- 2002 - 2006 - acquired a bachelor's degree in tourism at the University of Food Technology - Plovdiv;
- 2016 - 2018 - completed a master's degree in "Marketing" at "Paisiy Hilendarski" PU - Plovdiv, with a master's degree in economics - marketing;
- 2019 – 2024 - part-time doctoral student at the same university in the Social Management doctoral program.

Since 01.03.2005, Dimo Zhelev is the manager of the Digital Marketing Agency for the hotel sector, DRS - Travel EOOD, Plovdiv.

The PhD student has management skills and competencies as a manager of a digital marketing agency for creating the company's vision, hiring and selecting human resources, creating, offering and implementing successful services in the field of digital marketing in the hospitality industry, process management, business modeling, relationship with partners and key customers, work with institutions and others.

Dimo Zhelev has social skills and competencies. He participates as a speaker at national business conferences, at scientific conferences, and also teaches in the discipline "Software in Tourism".

**In conclusion of this section, I summarize that the doctoral student has extensive professional experience, directly related and corresponding to his educational development, which is an excellent prerequisite for in-depth research work on the topic of dissertation work.**

### **3. Actuality of the topic and appropriateness of the set goals and tasks**

The dissertation deals with an extremely topical management problem related to the study of the interrelationships between leadership and employee motivation in Bulgaria. in a period of crisis and in a post-crisis environment. In addition to being topical, the topic is also distinguished by its importance, given the cyclical exit of the Bulgarian economy from one crisis and the entry into another. The current reality in the business world is characterized by:

- uncertainty of the external environment, justified by strategic events - global pandemic, wars, environmental, political, economic and other events;
- a qualitatively different internal environment defined by the new digital reality.

It is these dynamic and unpredictable changes in the external and internal environment in which business organizations operate that necessitate the use of modern models of their management.

In the specialized scientific literature, the issues related to the various aspects of management during crises are considered, with priority given to the problems dedicated to the survival of companies and financial management. There is insufficient research on the different techniques of employee motivation in crisis conditions, where a qualitatively new management approach and leadership qualities are needed.

In this regard, the study of the influence of the leadership style applied by the leader during a crisis and in a post-crisis period on the level of motivation of the leader's followers in business organizations is an extremely topical problem in scientific and scientific-applied terms.

### **4. Knowing the problem**

The detailed literature review, covering 136 sources, the skillful systematization of the main theoretical concepts and views on the issue under consideration, as well as the precisely selected bibliography, prove the doctoral student's knowledge of the problem. Based on the mentioned argument, I think that the problem is known in the depth necessary for the development of a dissertation work .

### **5. Research methodology**

Different approaches and methods from economic management sciences and management psychology are used in the dissertation in order to prove or disprove the research thesis. The main approaches and methods that the doctoral student uses are quantitative, qualitative, systemic and situational approaches, as well as the methods - analysis and synthesis, theoretical, comparative, graphic, sectoral analysis, assessment of expert opinion, etc.

The study was carried out by means of a structured interview, and for this purpose a questionnaire was developed by the author, measuring the level of uncertainty of the environment, as well as the assessment of the leadership style from the perspective of the manager himself. With a second questionnaire, the level of motivation as well as the leadership style that characterizes their leader is investigated. In-depth interviews were conducted regarding the leadership style, the level of uncertainty in both periods, as well as the real problems facing the hotel.

In conclusion of this section, I summarize that the chosen research methodology allows achieving the set goal and obtaining an accurate answer to the tasks in the dissertation work.

## **6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work**

The presented dissertation includes 225 pages. The visualization of the information was done by means of 49 figures and 18 tables. 136 literary sources in Bulgarian, English and Internet sources are cited.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion and highlighting of results, appendices and bibliography.

In **the first chapter**, a comprehensive literature review of the categories of leadership, external environment, crisis and motivation is made. Traditional as well as modern theories and concepts are presented, analyzed and systematized, revealing the essence of the studied concepts. From a scientific point of view, the model of relationship between the theories of leadership, crisis and motivation is of interest, justifying the logical relations between the structural elements of the categories.

The strengths of high scientific value in this chapter are:

- examining the key categories in their interaction and relationships;
- creation of a system of criteria enabling the selection of an appropriate theory of leadership, allowing the implementation of research methodology to the highest degree;
- clearly expressed and substantiated author's position on the analyzed issues.

It ends with the formulation of conclusions on the considered problems.

The emphasis of **the second chapter** is the research methodology, based on the analysis of the presentations on leadership, crisis and motivation presented in the first chapter. A clear and precise justification of the use of quantitative and qualitative methods in the research was made, with the aim of establishing a relationship between leadership styles - transactional, transformational and non-interfering, on the one hand, and the motivation of employees during a crisis and in the period after it. on the other hand. The focus of this chapter is on the conceptual model covering leadership styles, motivational categories, and the selected crisis characteristic that enables measurement. The main highlights in the implementation of the specified model are as follows:

- two periods were established for the study - crisis and post-crisis ;

- presented the FRLM model for identifying and measuring leadership styles (transformational, transactional and non-interventional, as well as their nine characteristics) through a follower questionnaire examining styles for the two study periods;
- the need to create a motivation measurement questionnaire based on ten categories of motivational factors related to the two periods of the study is argued;
- the studied theories are highlighted .

The results of the research are presented and analyzed in **the third chapter**, which also contains the sectoral analysis of tourism and the hotel industry. To measure the leadership style of managers and its influence on the level of motivation of followers, primary data from surveys and in-depth interviews are used according to the methodology and methodology laid out in the second chapter. The extremely precisely developed analyzes of the results of the empirical studies, as well as their precise and clear presentation, are impressive.

The conclusion shows the summary of the implementation of the research objective of the study through the development of a methodology and methodological positions for the assessment of the leadership style in crisis and post-crisis conditions, as well as its approval. Based on the results of the conducted research, an applied model was successfully developed for the choice of leadership style by the manager in periods of crisis and post-crisis environment in order to increase the general level of employee motivation. I appreciate the highly formulated conclusions, as well as the specific recommendations made to the hotel industry, related to the behavior of managers in crisis and post-crisis conditions.

The above is sufficient reason for my categorically positive assessment of the balanced structure of the development, the carefully formulated goals and tasks of the research and their step-by-step successful solution to the achievement of the main goal.

## **7. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice**

I accept the information presented by the doctoral student for scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work. I highly value the following scientific and scientific-applied achievements:

### **Scientific and scientific - applied contributions of the dissertation work:**

- Systematization and enrichment of theoretical concepts and views regarding the categories of leadership, crisis, environment and motivation and, on this basis, a proposed model for the relationships between the elements of these theoretical categories.

- A conceptual model was developed, on the basis of which a methodology was created for researching the influence of the chosen leadership style on motivation during periods of crisis and post-crisis environment.
- The hotel industry in Bulgaria is analyzed in order to compare and contrast main indicators of the activity in the hotel industry, establishing phases of crisis and post-crisis environment within the period 2020 - 2023.
- An applied model is proposed for accommodation managers' choice of leadership style to increase employee motivation in environments with varying levels of uncertainty.
- Conducted a first study of leadership styles according to the FRLM model and the hotel industry and the tourism sector of Bulgaria as a whole.
- Formulated conclusions and specific recommendations to the hotel industry regarding managerial behavior in crisis and post-crisis conditions.

I consider significant achievements to be the personal work of the doctoral student. The conclusions and proposals in the dissertation present Dimo Zhelev as an erudite researcher with good theoretical training, with opportunities for creative generalizations and formulating solutions for practice.

### **8. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work**

The main problems of the research were published in four publications in proceedings of prestigious international scientific conferences. One of the publications is co-authored and three are independent. The proposed publications are proof of the good promotion of the results of the conducted research. The doctoral student's contribution to the publications is indisputable.

The total number of points is 35, with a minimum of 30 points required. The number and quality of the publications meet the requirements of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at the PU.

### **9. Personal participation of the doctoral student**

Dimo Zhelev's excellent theoretical training, practical experience in a real company environment, as well as scientific and research abilities are sufficient grounds for me to consider the scientific and applied achievements to be the personal work of the doctoral student.

## **10. Abstract**

The abstract is 32 pages long and characterizes the dissertation work in a synthesized form. It includes the main chapters, results of the research, conclusions, conclusion, contributions and bibliography. It objectively reflects the results of the research, it was developed in accordance with the requirements.

## **11. Critical remarks and recommendations**

The dissertation is a completed comprehensive study on the influence of the leadership style applied by the leader during a crisis and in the post-crisis period on the level of motivation of the leader's followers in business organizations, with an achieved goal, solved tasks and clear scientific and scientific-applied contributions.

I have no critical remarks about the materials presented.

**Question:** What is your assessment of the behavior of managers in the hotel industry during the crisis and post-crisis conditions related to the COVID 19 pandemic in Bulgaria?

## **12. Personal impressions**

I don't know the PhD student personally. After my careful acquaintance with the scientific work, I consider that its development is his personal merit. I highly appreciate the doctoral student's participation in the conducted dissertation research, and I consider the formulated contributions and obtained results to be his personal merit.

## **13. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results**

Based on the fulfilled goal of the dissertation work, I believe that the doctoral student has the potential to implement the following recommendations:

- To initiate meetings, seminars, round tables, discussions and other forums with the participation of business representatives in the city of Plovdiv, at which to promote the developed one a model for choosing a leadership style under environments with different levels of uncertainty.
- To deepen in his future research activities the studies of the problems in other sectors of the economy in order to reach more universal conclusions.
- To continue his publication activity in prestigious scientific publications with impact factor and impact rank in English.

## CONCLUSION

The dissertation *contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results that represent an original contribution to science* and **meet all** requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Dimo Zhelev Zhelev **possesses** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Social Management, **demonstrating** qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my *positive evaluation* of the conducted research presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and *I offer to the honorable scientific jury yes awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor"* to Dimo Jelev Jelev in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.7. Administration and management, doctoral program Social Management.

19.09. 2024

Reviewer: .....

Prof. Toni Mihova, PhD