

The COVID-19 Impact Assessment on the Civil Servants Soft Skills

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Abstract: This article explores how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted government officials' performance and soft skills. It goes beyond a surface-level analysis, examining the profound influence on organizational processes and the psychological well-being of public service employees. Key soft skills—adaptability, communication, resilience, and collaboration — are highlighted for their unprecedented significance amid pandemic-induced shifts in working conditions and heightened stress levels. The research introduces a sophisticated mathematical model to quantify the relationship between employees' soft skills and the impact of COVID-19. This model facilitates a nuanced assessment, providing policymakers and organizational leaders with valuable insights to formulate adaptive strategies for personnel preparation. The article emphasizes continuous soft skills development, recognizing them as dynamic qualities requiring perpetual refinement. It underscores the crucial role of active support from government leadership in creating a conducive environment for soft skills growth, forming a holistic approach to fortify officials' resilience and adaptability. The article also serves as a springboard for future research, advocating for a deeper exploration of specific soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and decision-making under crisis conditions. Additionally, it calls for enhanced intervention strategies to address identified soft skill gaps within the public service sector proactively.

Keywords: Impact assessment, economic model, covid-19, soft skills, civil servants.

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on global societal, economic, and medical situations has been the subject of deep research for scholars from various fields of knowledge. However, it is only relatively recently that the importance of studying the pandemic's consequences for the effectiveness of government services and the activities of civil servants has received proper attention in scientific research.

Ensuring the uninterrupted operation of government institutions and providing high-quality public services is a key requirement for the stability of society and the economy in

times of crisis. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has presented a series of challenges that have forced civil servants to adapt their work to new conditions, including restrictions, quarantine measures, and a transition to remote work.

This situation has raised questions about maintaining the performance and quality of work of government officials in such complex circumstances. It is important to understand which specific factors influence the productivity and effectiveness of civil servants during a pandemic, which aspects of their work have changed, and what consequences these changes may have for the functioning of the state apparatus as a whole.

The absence of previous experience working in the conditions of a global pandemic, the need for a rapid response to new circumstances, changes in organizational processes and communication—all of these factors can impact the psychological state and motivation of civil servants, and therefore, their performance.

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Therefore, studying the impact of Covid-19 on the performance of government officials is a relevant task that can contribute to the implementation of scientifically grounded support and management strategies for the government workforce during times of crisis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of recent research and publications on the impact of COVID-19 on the performance of government officials indicates a growing interest in this topic within the scientific community. Researchers from various fields, such as public administration, occupational psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior, are focusing on different aspects of the pandemic's influence on the activities of government officials. Let's outline comprehensive and grouped research directions by Podolchak *et al.* (2022a), Duma and Khim (2019), Martyniuk *et al.* (2021a):

1. **Work Mode and Work Organization:** Researchers are investigating the impact of transitioning to remote work on the productivity, communication, and collaboration among government officials. They analyze the effectiveness of communication tools used in work processes during the pandemic.
2. **Psychological State and Stress:** Studies identify the pandemic's influence on the psychological state of government officials, including stress levels, fear, and uncertainty. They examine how these factors affect decision-making, productivity, and overall performance.
3. **Communication and Interaction:** Research explores changes in communication practices among government officials and their public communication in pandemic conditions. They consider the impact of remote communication on the quality of information exchange and decision-making.
4. **Leadership and Management:** Studies examine the role of leadership and management style during a crisis. They analyze how government leaders influence the motivation, effectiveness, and self-organization of government officials during the pandemic.
5. **Adaptation and Learning:** Research investigates how government officials adapted to new conditions during the pandemic and what learning and development strategies were employed to support their performance.
6. **Support Measures:** Studies analyze the effectiveness of measures implemented by authorities to support government officials during the pandemic, such as psychological support, working conditions, and access to necessary resources.

In summary, recent research and publications indicate the complex and multifaceted nature of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of government officials. These studies provide important conclusions and recommendations for improving management strategies, personnel support, and ensuring the effective functioning of government services even in times of crisis (Podolchak *et al.* 2021).

Recent research and publications have focused on understanding the quadratic model and mechanisms for assessing and overcoming the consequences of COVID-19 on the soft skills of human resources potential in Ukraine. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on economies worldwide, and Ukraine is no exception. Businesses and organiza-

tions had to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic, leading to an increased emphasis on soft skills among employees (Martyniuk *et al.* 2021b, Podolchak *et al.* 2022b).

One research direction involved assessing specific soft skills that were most affected by the pandemic in Ukraine. Surveys, interviews, and data collection from organizations were used to understand how the crisis influenced soft skills such as adaptability, resilience, collaboration, and communication (Podolchak *et al.* 2021).

The economic consequences of the impact on soft skills were also investigated. Researchers examined the relationship between soft skills and key economic indicators such as employment levels, GDP growth, and labor market dynamics. Understanding these connections provides insights into the overall productivity and competitiveness of the workforce in Ukraine (Sokil *et al.* 2022a, Sokil *et al.* 2022b).

In today's job market, soft skills are of paramount importance. Companies focus on developing them to enhance employee efficiency and task outcomes. Improving soft skills enhances corporate culture, market productivity, and competitiveness (Juhász *et al.* 2023, Akbar *et al.* 2021).

Intervention strategies have become a key focus of recent research. Developing mechanisms and interventions to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic on soft skills is considered crucial. Studies explored various strategies, including educational programs, mentoring initiatives, and policy recommendations to enhance and restore soft skills among human resources in Ukraine (Martyniuk *et al.* 2021a).

Significant research efforts were also directed towards digital transformation, accelerated by the pandemic. Researchers examined the connection between digital transformation and the demand for soft skills. Findings underscored how individuals with strong soft skills adapt better to digital work environments and effectively utilize new technologies (WHO 2020).

Additionally, valuable comparative analyses were conducted. By comparing Ukraine with other countries, researchers identified best practices and learned lessons. These comparisons explored the resilience of soft skills in different regions and the policies implemented to overcome the pandemic's consequences. Furthermore, government reports and initiatives in Ukraine provide valuable insights into current efforts to assess and address the impact of COVID-19 on soft skills (Al Sharari *et al.* 2022, Poulsen 2022).

Recent research and publications have not yet thoroughly explored the quadratic model and mechanisms for assessing and overcoming the consequences of COVID-19 on soft skills in Ukraine. The prolonged pandemic has presented unforeseen challenges for individuals, organizations, and the overall economy. Understanding the impact on soft skills is crucial for developing effective strategies to overcome the consequences and support the workforce in Ukraine (Tsygulyk 2022, Alrowwad *et al.* 2022).

3. THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the article is to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of government officials and to develop targeted approaches to

ensure the effectiveness and stability of government structures in changing conditions.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The economic model of the impact of COVID-19 on employees' soft skills can be viewed from various perspectives. Here are a few key elements of this model:

1. **Change in Work Environment:** COVID-19 has led to a significant shift towards remote work and changes in work processes. This may require new skills such as effective use of virtual communication tools, time management, and self-organization.
2. **Communication Challenges:** Reduced in-person interaction and increased virtual communication can affect employees' communication skills. The ability to effectively express thoughts, listen, and understand others may become more critical in remote work settings.
3. **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Remote work can complicate collaboration and teamwork. Processes like decision-making, idea sharing, and problem-solving may be less intuitive and require new virtual collaboration skills.
4. **Leadership and Management:** The pandemic conditions can pose challenges for leaders and managers. They need to adapt to changes, communicate effectively, and motivate their employees in a virtual environment.
5. **Self-Management and Resilience:** COVID-19 has introduced new stressors and challenges for employees. Self-management skills, such as stress management, maintaining productivity, and balancing work and personal life, may be crucial for sustaining employee effectiveness and well-being.

5. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Overall, COVID-19 requires employees to develop new skills and adapt to a changing work environment. Understanding and fostering the development of soft skills can help employees successfully navigate these challenges and remain effective in the new reality of work.

Building a mathematical model to determine the relationship between employees' soft skills and the impact of COVID-19 can be complex due to the subjectivity and intricacy of soft skill assessment. However, one can attempt to construct a simple linear model of dependence based on the hypothesis that soft skill indicators change as a result of the pandemic. For example:

$$SS = \alpha + \beta \times C_{19_{impact}} \quad (1)$$

SS – `Soft_Skills` represents the level of employee's soft skills (measured on a scale from 0 to 100 or using an appropriate scale); the parameters α and β are coefficients of the model that determine the initial level of soft skills and the degree of dependency on the impact of COVID-19, respectively; $C_{19_{impact}}$ – is the indicator of the impact of COVID-19 on the employee's soft skills (for example, a scale from -10 to 10 can be used, where negative values indicate a negative impact, and positive values indicate a positive impact).

It should be noted that this model is a general concept, and the coefficients and the form of the model may vary depend-

ing on the specific context and research. Additionally, it is essential to consider that measuring soft skills can be subjective and subject to a degree of inaccuracy.

For a more detailed model, one can consider using multiple regressions or other statistical methods. In such a model, additional factors that influence employees' soft skills during the COVID-19 pandemic can be included. Here is an example of a possible expanded model:

$$SS = \alpha + \beta_1 * C_{19_{impact}} + \beta_2 * Change_{inWorkEnvironment} + \beta_3 * CommunicationChallenges + \beta_4 * Collaboration_{andTeamwork} + \beta_5 * Leadership_{andManagement} + \beta_6 * Self - Management_{andResilience} + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

In this model, each additional factor (e.g., $Change_in_Work_Environment$, $Communication_Challenges$, $Collaboration_and_Teamwork$) represents a separate variable that influences soft skills. Each of these variables has its own coefficient (β_2 , β_3 , β_4), reflecting the degree of influence of that factor on soft skills.

Additionally, the model includes an additional term ε , which represents model error or factors that were not accounted for in the model.

This model can help quantitatively assess the impact of various COVID-19-related factors on the level of employees' soft skills. The application of statistical methods allows for analyzing relationships and determining the significance of each factor. However, it's important to consider that these models are built on assumptions and data limitations, so their results require further validation and interpretation.

6. DATA COLLECTION

For this research, a survey method was employed, involving the participation of 50 employees from various state institutions located in the Lviv region of Ukraine. Participants were asked to assess, on a scale ranging from -10 to +10, various indicators that influenced their perspectives following the implementation of quarantine measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These indicators encompassed the impact of COVID-19, changes in the work environment, alterations in communication, collaboration within teams, leadership and management, as well as self-management and responses to stressful situations.

The survey results are presented in Appendix (A). Furthermore, expert analysis was conducted to calculate coefficients (β_1 , β_2 , β_3 , β_4 , β_5 , β_6) reflecting the extent of influence of each factor on the development of soft skills. These coefficients were determined as the mean of 100% divided by 6, resulting in 16.7% for each factor. Additionally, through statistical error analysis, the value of ε was determined, representing the model's margin of error or the factors not accounted for in the model, which amounted to 0.2419.

The parameter α assumes a pivotal role within your model, serving to determine the initial level of soft skills and their dependency on the influence of COVID-19. By setting α to zero, you effectively establish the initial level of soft skills as

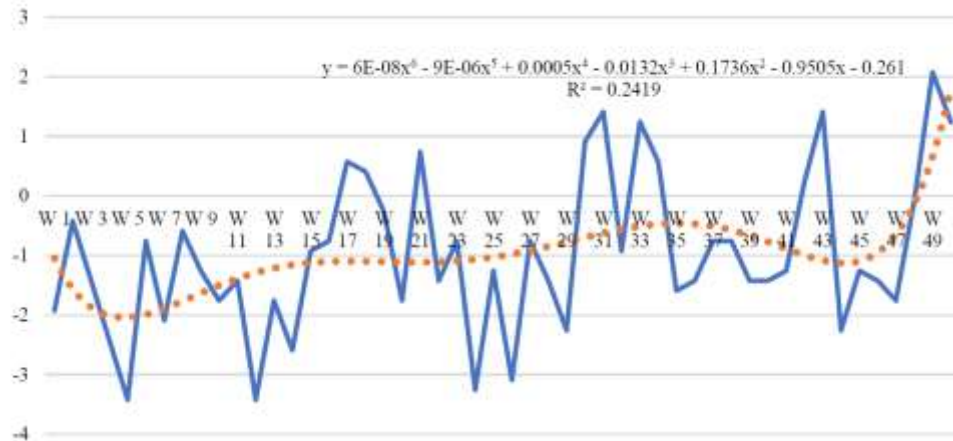


Fig. (1). Integrated visualization of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workers' soft skills (W - individual worker).

Source: compiled by the author.

zero and imply that initially, there was no impact of COVID-19 on these skills within your model.

This decision reflects your underlying hypothesis or assumption that, prior to the implementation of quarantine measures due to COVID-19, soft skills were either unaffected or minimally affected by these events. Consequently, any influence of COVID-19 on soft skills will be considered through the other coefficients ($\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$, and β_6), which determine the influence of specific factors such as changes in the work environment, alterations in communication, and more, on soft skills.

The parameter α can be set to various values depending on your theoretical foundation and research findings. If you believe that soft skills were at a high level before the implementation of quarantine measures due to COVID-19, we can assign a more positive value to α . Conversely, if the influence of COVID-19 was negative and significant, setting a lower value for α or taking it as zero may better reflect this in your model.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using Formulas 1 and 2, we conducted an analysis to determine the impact of COVID-19 on the soft skills of each of the 50 workers who were the subjects of our study. The results obtained were comprehensively presented and analyzed in Appendix (A). Fig. (1) illustrates crucial visual aspects of this analysis, depicting the influence that COVID-19 had on the soft skills of each study participant.

These calculations not only allow us to determine how soft skills have changed following the implementation of quarantine measures due to COVID-19 but also provide a deeper understanding of individual reactions and variations in impact among different participants. This contributes to enhancing our overall comprehension of the social and psychological aspects associated with the pandemic's influence on the professional development of workers.

In Fig. (1), integral indicators of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the soft skills of 50 employees are presented. It is noteworthy that these employees represent various state in-

stitutions, hold different positions, and bear varying levels of responsibility, resulting in diverse reactions to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The graph enables us to visualize changes in the soft skills of employees in the context of the pandemic's impact. Various trends and differences in reactions can be observed, as each employee had their unique circumstances and experiences. Disparities in initial levels of soft skills and individual characteristics contributed to varying degrees of pandemic influence.

The trendline on the graph indicates the general direction and magnitude of changes in soft skills under the influence of COVID-19. The constructed trendline is the result of a sixth-degree polynomial regression analysis, conducted using Excel software. This analysis allowed us to confirm the statistical significance and numerical estimation of the approximation error, reflecting the accuracy of the trendline as a tool for understanding the dynamics of COVID-19's impact on employees' soft skills in this study.

The conducted analytical analysis allows for a crucial conclusion regarding the impact of COVID-19 on employees' soft skills. Taking into account the integral indicator of soft skills assessment, two primary conclusions can be formulated:

1. If the integral indicator of soft skills assessment is less than 0, it signifies that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the employee's soft skills. In other words, the pandemic significantly deteriorated the level of these skills in the employee, and they may require additional support or development to cope with the effects of the crisis situation.
2. If the integral indicator of soft skills assessment is greater than 0, it indicates that COVID-19 did not have a strong negative impact on the employee's soft skills. This may imply that the employee managed to handle the challenges arising from the pandemic and maintained their soft skills at an acceptable level. This could be indicative of their adaptability and ability to work effectively in changing circumstances.

Therefore, the analytical approach allows for critical conclusions regarding the pandemic's influence on employees' soft

skills. Specifically, it helps determine whether these skills have been preserved or damaged as a result of the crisis situation. This information can be highly valuable for employers and organizations when developing strategies to support their workforce in times of instability.

To assess the impact of COVID-19 on employees' soft skills, we used an integrated indicator that allowed us to determine how this pandemic affected their productivity and social adaptation. The results of this assessment were reflected in the form of color-coded markings in Appendix (A).

1. Red Color: if the integrated score was less than -1.00, it indicated a significant negative impact of COVID-19 on the employee's soft skills. Employees falling into this category were marked in red. This meant that they might require additional support and psychological assistance to restore their productivity.

2. Yellow Color: if the integrated score was less than 0 but greater than -1.00, it pointed to a moderate negative impact of COVID-19 on the employee's soft skills. Workers in this group were marked in yellow. This meant that they might also need some support and psychological guidance to improve their condition.

3. Green Color: if the integrated score was greater than 0, it indicated that COVID-19 did not have a significant impact on the employee's soft skills. Professionals in this category were marked in green. This meant that they were able to cope with the challenges of the pandemic and continue to perform their duties at a satisfactory level.

This system helped us better understand how COVID-19 affected our employees' soft skills and categorize them based on the degree of pandemic impact.

8. CONCLUSION

This article analyzed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the performance of government officials. It was found that the crisis situation caused by the pandemic significantly affected organizational processes and the psychological well-being of government employees at all levels. Soft skills such as adaptability, communication, resilience, and teamwork gained special importance in the context of changing work conditions and stressful circumstances.

The calculations in Appendix (A) provide important insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' skills and adaptability. Based on this data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. 54% of employees, or 27 individuals out of a total of 50, were unable to quickly cope with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. These employees may face difficulties in adapting rapidly to new conditions, and their soft skills may develop slowly or remain underdeveloped.

2. Another 24%, or 12 employees out of 50, exhibited moderate levels of adaptability to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have the potential for improvement in their soft skills and can achieve better adaptation.

3. 22% of employees, which is 11 individuals out of 50, demonstrated the ability to quickly adapt to pandemic conditions and actively develop their soft skills.

These calculations reflect overall statistics that can be extrapolated to the entire population, including government officials. They indicate that the majority of the population and workers are experiencing difficulties due to quarantine measures and the pandemic, which may slow down the development of their soft skills. Only a fifth of employees show the ability to overcome all these challenges and adapt quickly to new realities.

The research has shown that the effectiveness of government officials depended on their ability to quickly adapt to new realities and effectively interact in the online environment created by the pandemic. The pandemic requires government officials not only to acquire new skills but also to be flexible and open to change. Leaders in government structures play a crucial role in providing support and planning adaptive strategies.

Considering the complexity and diversity of the pandemic's impact on government services, there are several directions for addressing this issue:

1. In-Depth Soft Skills Analysis: Research can be expanded to provide a more detailed analysis of specific soft skills and their impact on the performance of government officials. It is essential to understand how these skills interact in crisis conditions and how they can be developed.

2. Effectiveness of Interventions and Programs: Research can enhance intervention and program strategies to support government officials in crisis situations. This includes the development of innovative training programs, psychological support, and ensuring the necessary resources.

3. Comparative Analysis: Comparing Ukraine's experience with other countries can reveal best practices and provide an opportunity to find unique solutions. This will help build a more comprehensive picture of effective adaptation strategies.

4. Digital Transformation: A deeper investigation into the impact of digital transformation on the performance of government services can help identify technological innovations that contribute to increased productivity and adaptability.

5. Long-Term Consequences: It is essential to study the long-term consequences of the pandemic on the performance of government services. How will organizational culture, the role of government officials, and work approaches change in the future?

6. Economic Implications: Research can shed light on the economic implications of the impact on the soft skills of government officials on the overall economy, assisting in the formulation of policies to support competitiveness.

Overall, further research is of great importance for understanding the impact of crisis situations on government services and developing strategies for effective adaptation and support for employees in similar circumstances.

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