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DOI: 10.38173/RST.2023.26.2.10:93-108

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Section: Social Sciences

Issue: 2(26)/2023

Received: 29 August 2023	Revised: 15 September 2023
Accepted: 28 September 2023	Available Online: 15 November 2023

Paper available online [HERE](#)

ROMANIAN CITIZENS' PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IN THE POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD

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ABSTRACT:

THIS PAPER PROPOSES TO ANALYZE THE PERCEPTION OF ROMANIAN CITIZENS REGARDING GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IN THE POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD, IN THE PERIOD MARCH 2022-MARCH 2023. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY IS TO IDENTIFY THE POSITION OF CITIZENS TOWARDS THE LEADER, THE EXPECTATIONS ON WHICH HAVE THEM AND THE WAY IN WHICH THEY PERCEIVE HIS BEHAVIOR. IN THIS CONTEXT, IT WAS CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO CHOOSE A REPRESENTATIVE CASE, NAMELY THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA, THROUGH THE PERSON OF PRIME MINISTER NICOLAE-IONEL CIUCĂ. THE DATA COLLECTION METHOD INCLUDES CONDUCTING A NUMBER OF 25 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, WITH PEOPLE BELONGING TO THE BUCOVINA, MOLDOVA, ARDEAL, BANAT, OLTENIA AND MUNTENIA REGIONS. THESE SIX REGIONS PRESENT A REPRESENTATIVE AREA THAT CAN LATER BE EXTRAPOLATED TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL. THE METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS WILL BE REVEALED THROUGH INDUCTIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS, THROUGH WHICH, FROM THE STATEMENTS OF THE RESPONDENTS, WE WILL ARRIVE AT THE CODING OF THE INFORMATION, AND THEN AT A GENERIC THEME. THE ANALYSIS WILL INCLUDE, IN CONCRETE, THE CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEADER AND THE FOLLOWERS AND THE COHESION AT THE LEVEL OF THE WORK GROUP. BUT EVEN MORE SO, THE WAY IN WHICH THE LEADER'S BEHAVIOR CAN METAMORPHOSE DEPENDING ON THE CONTEXT OF THE EVENTS. THE LINE OF RESEARCH WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO THE SYSTEMATIZATION OF CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEADERSHIP DURING THE PANDEMIC AND POST-PANDEMIC, IF APPLICABLE.

KEY WORDS: LEADERSHIP, RESILIENCE, COMMUNICATION, PERCEPTION, POST-PANDEMIC.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a context of perpetual changes and metamorphoses, it is necessary to study the core that cause splits in Contemporary History. Understanding the current styles and trends, the involvement of their members, their perceptions, the connecting elements between them, but especially the impact on civil society. The issue that we want to address in this case study aims to carry out an analysis that has as a case study an institution, in the public sector from the perspective of government leadership in the perception of citizens.

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This paper aims to analyze the perception of Romanian citizens regarding the government leadership in the post-pandemic period, in the interval March 2022-March 2023. The purpose of the analysis of this period, which starts from the lifting of the state of alert on the territory of Romania, will include 1 year in which we will identify how the citizens will categorize the leadership and the government leader. The objectives of this research study are to integrate the institution within a leadership style, to identify the position of the citizens towards the leader, the expectations they have and the way they perceive his behavior. In this context, it was considered necessary to choose a representative case, namely the Government of Romania, through the person of Prime Minister Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă. The motivation for choosing this topic is provided by the fact that it represents a novelty and actuality element, on which no significant analyzes have been carried out at the level of Romanian society, let alone local, in terms of epistemological and empirical knowledge in generic terms. The study highlights a particular note in the field of political sciences, and the knowledge of some apparently political matters that take place behind closed doors, represents an imperative pillar to be scored.

Regarding the Theoretical Framework of the work, it can be stated that the specialized literature aimed at leadership in the public sector, which we have consulted, is sophisticated at the theoretical level, nuanced at the conceptual level and argued at the empirical level. Both the literature review and the theoretical framework will accurately highlight the narratives of "*Leadership vs. Management*", "*Transactional style vs. The transformational style*", "*Institutional Theory*", but also conceptualizations related to "*perception*".

In this context, it is imperative to also present the sometimes more technical side of the body of the work, namely the research methodology that represents the method of projection of the study and the way of working. As for the data collection method, it includes a number of 25 semi-structured interviews, with people from the regions of Bucovina, Moldova, Ardeal, Banat, Oltenia and Muntenia. These six regions bring to the work an area of representativeness that can later be extrapolated to the national level, so by asking more people from different areas of the country, with different social status and education, then we can extrapolate. The hypothesis from which we start highlights the fact that the post-pandemic period brings with it a series of transformations at the policy level, with leaders having innovative visions and citizens feeling closer to the institutions. The data analysis method will focus on inductive thematic analysis, through which, from the statements of the respondents, we will arrive at the coding of the information, and then at a generic theme. Referring to the Analysis, it will include citizens' perceptions of the leader-follower relationship and the psychology of the leader's political behavior. But even more so, the way in which the leader's behavior can metamorphose according to the context of the events, making a comparison between the leadership during the pandemic and the post-pandemic one. The research thread will ultimately lead to the systematization of citizens' perceptions, the degree of trust in the authorities and the way in which they relate to the leader, in the leader-state-citizen symbiosis. At the same time, a crystallization will be attempted in the process of identifying the differences between leadership during the pandemic and post-pandemic, if the research leads to it.

Looking at any type of work as an ensemble is beneficial and necessary at the same time, so structuring it into well-defined sections is a strong point. In the first part, the first chapter of the work "Theoretical Chapter" is found and highlights the theoretical framework, the review of the specialized literature and the analytical framework, being somehow the more technical part of the work and the starting point in the research carried out. The second chapter of the work is the "Methodological" one, covering the selection of cases, data

collection methods and data analysis methods. "Analysis" represents the last chapter of the paper, addressing the perception based on the presentation of the data, the results and the interpretation of the data, the perceptions of the surveyed employees regarding the leadership style they have identified in the institution they belong to. In addition to these delimited sections, at the end of the paper there are the emergent "Conclusions", the limits of the research and the future directions of research, but also the related "Bibliography" which represented a real support in the conduct of the research.

2. THEORETICAL CHAPTER

The specialized literature that we consulted and based on which we created the research study is vast, sophisticated at the theoretical level, nuanced at the conceptual level and argued at the empirical level. The above-mentioned stages will be gradually completed within the ongoing research, precisely in order to go through each dimension of the terms and provide the proper context for understanding the terminology used. This includes concepts, theories, numerous avenues of analysis, relevant data and information, aspects of notoriety, but also particularities specific to each chosen level. But before delving into the secrets of the research that we have presented in the paper, it is imperative to identify the theoretical framework of the paper through the prism of key concepts and narratives.

2.1. Review of specialized literature

Part of the research preparation process is passing through the narrative filters of the research topic, a way of highlighting how others have thought and written about the topic and how this knowledge can be used to develop and refine your own research ideas. In addition to the own thinking and analytical sense that we will put into practice in the research, we need to carry out a review of the various forms of literature that are relevant to the research topic. If we were to offer an initiatory definition, the literature review is the preliminary stage of the process of thinking and preparing for research. Despite the confusion between this and the theoretical framework, methodologically speaking the limits of one and the other are clear. If in the theoretical framework we enunciate definitions about those concepts, in the review of the specialized literature we observe what has been written about them. The critical perspective of these theories is another strong point of the research, because the way in which we look at the theories, assumptions or narratives invoked is not the usual one, but the critical point of view makes its presence felt.

Following the review of the specialized literature aimed at the analysis framework, we notice that there were a wide range of theorizations, conceptualizations and assumptions that it is imperative to pay attention to in terms of leadership styles in an organization or institution. It is a key starting point to consult what has been written about the topic in question, what other authors have addressed, and furthermore, what this research study brings to the academic environment, and not only from the perspective of perceptions. Thus, at the beginning of the process we will refer to the secondary sources that we have studied in terms of books, collective volumes, scientific articles, official websites of the competent institutions, the primary sources, represented by the questionnaires that we have made. In order to identify a certain style at the level of the organization, through projects and events, leadership initially transcends an interpersonal side between the leader and followers, with the aim of creating a better connection and a more efficient process. The finished product highlights the related style, but more than that, it's important to know how you get there. So, at the level of a team, bridges are created with the person of the leader who motivates his followers, provides congruence and highlights others in worthy contexts, and not only.

Leadership vs. Management

If we were to look at the picture as a whole, we would be tempted to associate the whole process with a kind of planned administration in which, thanks to a prior structure and organization, well-established procedures are carried out within organizations. Including in this case the public administration that includes all the activities that are carried out in a certain space under the supervision of an authorized institution, having the necessary autonomy [1]. But if we focus our attention on working tools, communication with citizens, human and material resources or management style, we will easily identify notable differences between leadership and what we call management. Synonyms and differentiations are visibly emphasized between the two concepts, thus, none of them can be avoided in the theorizing of the concepts.

In order to have a parallel between the two terms used, we will use a mirror perspective using the statements of one of the luminaries of leadership studies. Warren G. Bennis, who claims: "The manager manages, the leader innovates; the manager is a copy, the leader is the original; the manager maintains, the leader develops" Bennis (1989). What is revealed from the previous statements highlights management in the form of skills through which a defining process is built in a logical and chronological manner that leads to the achievement of initially set objectives. Instead, within leadership, the desire for metamorphosis and innovation is synthesized in the form of the need to know people, their motivation and inspiration, through discovery, and not through expected things.

Transactional leadership/transformational leadership

The issues concerning leadership, the "cause-effect" relationships that are established between them are strongly exemplified due to the implementation measures and their repercussions. However, the research topic that we have chosen to debate in this context is one that makes the transition from the systemic to the individual level. Continuing on the same note that we mentioned at the beginning of the paper, our goal is not to exhaustively address this topic, thus we will not refer to extra elements, except in conceptual terms and related definitions. The contextualization of the research subject is an imperative framework to approach, because it highlights the circumstances in which it takes place, the factors that influence it and the capabilities it has in its truthful metamorphosis.

"Transactional leadership manifests itself in terms of gain from both the leader and followers in terms of demands and rewards" [1]. Followers receive certain appreciative results when their work and results are in accordance with the leader's wishes. Typically, "transactional leaders set explicit, work-related goals and the rewards that can be expected as a result of successful performance, this is not done proactively and in close cooperation with each team member" [2]. Regarding the establishment of objectives at the level of the organization," these are consistent with the specifics of the institution/organization, not with the characteristics of the employees at the individual level" [2]. Three components of transactional leadership can be found in the literature: the first of these is contingent reward, which presents an exchange process between leaders and followers in which followers' effort is exchanged for specified rewards; management by exception and laissez-fair.

There are methods by which the leader can establish an effective relationship with the followers, both in the case of stimulation in the activity, but also of the monitoring of the activity they undertake. A first method is contingent reward, known as conditional reward, in which the terminology of the name implies, the leader offers rewards in exchange for accomplishing certain tasks. This fact leads to the improvement of the work process, but also of the finished product, on the other hand, " emphasis is placed on the personal development

of employees and high performance is encouraged" [3]. A second method is "management by exception which can take two forms: the active form or the passive form" [3]. As for the active form, the leader channels himself on the task and objective, continuously following the work process, while the passive form is defined by the leader's checking of the finished product. The third method is laissez-fair which manifests itself through non-involvement in management e means obtained by default. "The leader avoids providing guidance and support, shows lack of concern for what followers are doing, and abdicates responsibilities" [3].

As for transformational leadership, it is perceived by critics as "elitist and even anti-democratic". The way of reporting to followers, solving problems, radical directives or positioning the leader above the followers, offering them different solutions, can be attributed to Weber (1947). The significant particularity of the work is highlighted by the systemic approach it presents through the references initiated in the work, references highlighted in a different way than those encountered so far. The usual way that we found in the specialized literature in the empirical use of the terms symbolized a rather ambiguous note of explicability, however, in this work we can observe an innovative perspective with the help of which we discuss imperative aspects of the context to which reference is made. "Transformational leadership has much in common with charismatic leadership, but charisma is only one part of transformational leadership" [4].

The charismatic factor of transformational leadership could influence the strategy, the mechanism by which with the help of some means one wants to reach a goal, which represents a defining factor [5]. " Leaders belonging to this style are seen as symbols of success, development, mission accomplishment, creating a vision of possibilities for their followers" [6]. The transformational leadership style accentuates the feeling of satisfaction in work and results, even more so in the case of high performance of followers [7]. However, the ideational space is far from being reached, a wide range of criticisms being brought to the address of transformational leadership, being viewed generically as " smoke and mirrors", being a style that presents itself well, that forms happy followers, but that does not reach group performance. Clarity is the point on which most critics lean, as they argue that the concepts and terminology used are ambiguous and difficult to implement empirically.

At the same time, it is argued that "between leadership and management there would not be very big differences, and an effective transformational style would mean a similar management", [8] which would mean that the transformational style acquires too many characteristics. At the same time, the transactional leadership did not "escape" from criticism either, being categorized as not in accordance with the wishes of the employees, not positioning their values and interests in the first places [9]. Transactional leaders, by contrast, may induce more stress because they emphasize management by exception or in case of sanctions, leading to frustrations or low self-esteem [10].

2.2. The theoretical/conceptual framework Leadership in the person of the leader

To begin with, it is necessary to outline some explanations at the level of the concept of leadership, which in itself signifies a process through which two components are highlighted: purpose and means. The journey traveled by a leadership process is a broad one, and what is established between the established objective and the mechanisms by which to reach that point is based on vision, communication, influence and flexibility. At first glance, it would seem like a string of terms belonging to the psychological field, which define traits, attitudes, skills or tools, but they outline the framework of what we will later call leadership

style. The understanding of this concept can be ambiguous, since there is no universally valid definition applicable to all fields of study. Thus, whether we are talking about psychology, sociology, political science or even the business environment, leadership is interpreted in different ways, but keeping its palpable essence related to the basic term "laeder", which means path.

Leadership, *grosso modo*, is the key piece of a puzzle, metaphorically speaking, found at the level of an organization, be it public or private. It outlines the main pillars in the formation of a vision, the scoring of some objectives, the shading of some values, "the creation of related strategies, but also mechanisms of metamorphosis into empirical events", finally [11]. If the explanation of the process has been defined in some places, it is also considered imperative to understand the "actors", generically expressed, who take part in it. Extracting meanings of the name it bears, in this conglomerate we meet the leader, defined as the person who influences, and a series of followers, known as "followers", who follow him.

Transactional style and transformational style

James MacGregor Burns implements a different approach in his work in which he defines two ways of leadership: transactional and transformational. While authors such as Burns view the two styles in notable interdependence and symbiosis, the perspectives of others, such as Bass and Avolio, do not, but instead reveal significant differences. But, before we rush into positioning one or the other as the defining styles, old forms or new in approach, it is imperative to allocate a series of notorious definitions that includes both.

"The leader gets things done by making and delivering on promises of recognition, raises, and advancement for employees who perform well. Instead, employees who do not do a good job are penalized" [3]. Transactional leadership is viewed as a social exchange process that the leader undertakes with followers [12]. The leader provides a series of directions, offers advice, rewards, all in exchange for the provision of services from the followers, without the creation of deep interpersonal relationships. This can be realized through the prism of the fact that the values with which he works are not metamorphosed or improved, the innovation or the inoculation of risk not feeling its presence. Thus, followers do not necessarily feel stimulated, encouraged or exposed to a process of continuous training and subsequent performance, but in a form of lack of provocation [12].

The prerogative of conceptualizing this niche belongs to Bass, thus starting from what Bass (2005) claims in the work "Transformational Leadership", "The transformational leader increases the intrinsic value of achieving the goal.", notable aspects can be defined. It has the ability to penetrate beyond the extrinsic motivations of monetary rewards or praise, but provides a framework in which the leader contributes to the personal evolution of his followers. Moving beyond specifying and clarifying the goals of a transactional leader, the transformational leader presents the values in the goals. Achieving goals becomes more meaningful and consistent with followers' self-concepts. Also emphasized by the transformational leader is the importance of purpose as a basis for group identity, further connecting self-identity with group identity [3].

First of all, a defining element within the transformational style is represented by charismatic leaders [3]. Transformational leadership divided into a charisma factor combined with individualized consideration and an inspirational-intellectual stimulation factor, focusing on the creation of high-quality interpersonal relationships. In addition to the communication or trust factors, a series of multilateral relationships between emotional intelligence and the dimensions of transformational leadership emerge between the leader and the followers. In this case, the ability to understand one's own emotions, but also those of others, is

emphasized, which leads to the feeling of empathy. Second, transformational leadership is considered to be directly proportional to followers' motivation, satisfaction, willingness to make an extra effort, and the perception of the leader's effectiveness [13].

Referring to the conceptual side, in the case of transformational leadership the leadership is charismatic and the followers seek to identify with the leader and imitate him. The leader inspires followers with challenge and persuasion, providing both meaning and understanding, leadership is intellectually stimulating, expanding followers' use of their abilities. Finally, leadership is individually attentive, providing followers with support, mentorship, and coaching. Each of these components can be measured with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), as argued by [14].

Perception

Perception can be defined as “our recognition and interpretation of sensory information” [15]. This is “the main form through which man comes into cognitive contact with the world around him” [16]. Psychologically speaking, man goes through a series of stages when he comes into contact with things, events, people [15]. In terms accessible to everyone and without leading the discussion into a psychological context that is difficult to penetrate, according to the psychological cycle, at first man comes into contact with the outside through sensation, this being the process by which the first stimuli are sent to the individual, stimuli that inform him for seconds about the data in front of him. Going through this process, we move towards what perception means, that is, the way in which we interpret the information we receive, synthesize and systematize it, understand it, and begin to form opinions about the event itself.

Finally, representation aims at the process by which the applicability is included in the empirical scheme, and the individual passes through the filter of the mind his own information and puts into practice what he understands [17]. Sensation is a movement, Hobbes believes, and perception a sequence or combination of movements, inner, conscious phenomena (for example, the sensation of heat) being nothing but illusions, therefore devoid of interest. Thus, it can be stated that perception is a primary form through which the individual achieves cognitive contact with the world, but one superior to sensory knowledge.

Resilience

The concept of Romania's resilience is approached in a double key: “the inherent capacity of entities - individuals, communities, regions, the state - to resist and adapt in an articulated manner to violent events, causing stress, shock, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on the one hand, and the ability of these entities to quickly return to a functional, normal state, on the other” [18]. Amit Sood, MD, Executive Director of the Global Center for Resilience and Wellbeing states that resilience “is your ability to withstand adversity and bounce back and grow despite life's setbacks” [19]. Resilience thus opens up to a problem-space where the social domain and environmental governance are reconfigured around cyber-value and strategies and rationalities are projected [19].

2.3. Analytical framework

In this section we will capture the complex picture of what we are about to analyze, as there is no possibility to do it elsewhere. It is important to keep a clear line between “what we do” and not “how we do it”, the latter being found in a special section devoted to research methodology.

The analysis will be based on a foundation that captures the theoretical perspectives on the research work through the lens of the leadership styles approach, and at the empirical level based on the 25 semi-structured interviews, conducted with people from six regions of the country. The important purpose is to capture perception Romanian citizens regarding government leadership in the post-pandemic period. In the first phase, the focus will be placed on a short comparison between the government leadership from the pandemic period and the post-pandemic one, focusing on the way of communication, the relationship with the citizens, but also how close they felt to the leader/institution. This perspective will also be taken up during the pandemic period, the interest being placed on the psychological side, the level of adaptability to the new normality, post-pandemic communication, sources of information and the identification or not of a crisis at the level of government leadership.

3. METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the study of research methods or, more formally, a "contextual framework" for research, a coherent and logical scheme based on viewpoints, beliefs and values, which guides researchers' choices [20]. This refers to the principles, procedures and practices that govern research, which must be structured according to a logical and chronological plan that we follow throughout the research, starting from planning and conducting the research study, drawing conclusions and disseminating the related results [21]. Epistemological positions can lead to possibilities of using other research methodologies and data collection and analytical methods [22]. While qualitative and quantitative methods are usually associated with particular theories of knowledge, research using a mix of methods is becoming more common, and qualitative and quantitative data can be worked on in a multitude of ways [21]. The collection of data represents par excellence a defining stage in the research, being the basic point of the entire analysis that we are going to carry out.

3.1. Data collection method

The motivations behind choosing qualitative research over quantitative research refer to the fact that qualitative research is an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches and methods found in the mysteries of life and social sciences. [2. 3]. The information or data collected and analyzed is primarily (but not exclusively) non-quantitative in nature, consisting of textual materials such as interview transcripts, field notes and documents. In general terms, the interview is a qualitative method that mainly highlights the verbal description of real-life situations. It describes the phenomenon in a specific context, interprets processes and meanings, uses concepts theoretically and seeks to "understand" the phenomenon. The interview is a data collection method that facilitates communication, and helps deliver an effective message, whether in physical or online format. It allows the interviewer to elicit information, feelings and opinions from respondents using questions and an interactive dialogue [24].

The data that we will obtain are primary, essentially raw, not being metamorphosed, finished or passed through other filters to change their substance or meaning, but only highlight the experiences of citizens, on a subjective and individual level. This is an active method of data collection, in which the speech should not be monopolized, its purpose being to help you in the collection. Considering the fact that there is no certain type of ideal, predetermined or recommended interview for various categories, we will try the technical construction and then the applicability of an interview whose answers will help me in research, this being the main purpose. In order to achieve the most efficient, transparent and at the same time sustainable process, we will record the interview and then transcribe it. The

data collection method includes conducting a number of 25 semi-structured interviews, that took place physically, with people belonging to the Bucovina, Moldova, Ardeal, Banat, Oltenia and Muntenia regions, aged between 19 and 66 years. In this way, we will have an easier control and access to the information provided by the interviewees, thus we will keep "alive" the framework that we are going to analyze [24].

3.2. Data analysis methods

Following the data collection process, which took place in May 2023 through the interview method, it is imperative to go through the next stage, namely that of identifying and explaining the use of the analysis method. For the research in question, we considered it necessary to use the inductive thematic analysis, which refers, above all, to the familiarization with the selected documents and the frameworks to be analyzed, not already having the themes, the codes and the theme being derived from the text, in my case from the interviews carried out. Following a chronological course of analysis, from the level of sentences that we will identify in the interviews, we will arrive at a series of codes, and finally, to those codes we will assign the related themes. After identifying the theme, the data analysis will be carried out in a manner that captures the transition from the general to the particular.

At the beginning of the analysis, the first stage will be the transcription of the recorded interviews. This fact leads to a more efficient understanding of concepts, the creation of sharp analogies, but also the identification of perceptions over time, just as the research study aims to do. On this note, we consider extremely important the existence of a material, in concreto, on the basis of which you can carry out your analytical study, specifying that all the personal data of the interviewees will not be found anywhere in the transcripts, as they are confidential.

In this sense, this factor of uniqueness that highlights, in addition to perceptions, experiences and feelings, a culture of security and a security education meant to talk about the level of knowledge of culture and civic education that Romanian citizens have, is quite complex and exhaustive in an analysis. Thus, with the aim of not oscillating between knowledge and ignorance, meanings and misunderstandings, after reading each question and the related answers we will make a process of simplifying the information, an extra-summary, to help me reflect the essence of the information transmitted. This procedure is called "coding" and represents the extraction of some main ideas that emerge from the answers of the interviewees, simplified ideas to which the so-called specific "coding" is attributed, a fact that makes it easier to perceive some target information that is of interest to my field of study.

"Coding is a heuristic way, that is, of discovering the meanings of individual sections of data" [23]. . These aspects can be signaled from the moment the filmmaker notices the fact that the interviewee uses certain terms or emphasizes some ideas, which he later notes down. "Just as a title represents and captures a book or the primary content and essence of a film or poem, so a code represents and captures the content and essence of a primary date" [23]. Following this process, it is imperative to finalize through a series of themes that are arrived at from the totality of the completed codings, themes that will reflect the perceptions of citizens, their experiences, but also the knowledge they have about the significant events that they spent in different forms.

Referring to the method of data collection used in my research study, namely the interview, we considered it necessary to use inductive thematic analysis, because the mechanism of reaching information is a much easier one. With the help of the interview, a wide opening framework is provided for the respondent, who has the freedom to freely

express all his feelings and knowledge. The interview is one of the main data collection methods used by social researchers, providing the opportunity for direct interaction between the researcher and the research participants. From this knowledge, benefiting from a wide range of perspectives and assumptions in which they explore, we will extract recurrent themes that will have a symbolic character and express the true quintessence of the research.

In the entire framework of the research we sought to generate knowledge and highlight new ideas, even themes for reflection, but not to test theories or start from preliminary themes that in the end we find associative or not with the answers I - provided the respondents in the data collection process. All of these steps represent bridges between the narrative-descriptive framework offered by the interviewees, predominantly of subjectivism and passed through their own filter of perceptions, and the analytical framework aimed at the objective understanding of their experiences.

4. ANALYSIS

The general framework of the research study goes through significant metamorphoses and evolutions during the process of data collection and analysis, the transitions from the general to the particular, the nuance of the data and their analysis leading to an easier understanding of the whole context. The phenomenon that concerns citizens' perception of post-pandemic government leadership comprises a specific niche, but at the same time complex through the prism of the dynamics, subjectivity and relativity of the interviews conducted. The perspectives of the respondents are multiple, they include opinions from both ranges, reasoned, with a critical spirit, operationalizing institutional management rationally but also emotionally and reflecting on them.

The research framework will be supported by the conducted interviews, thus we will start by interpreting the answers provided. Respondent 5 states that "The leader does not inspire me to develop, does not communicate well enough for me to understand the information", by coding "non-involvement in the evolution of citizens", reaching the theme "motivational lack of inspiration". The interpretation could be extremely generic without knowing the empirical context of the events, without having a concrete case study or truthful facts to base these statements and values. But, looking at this percentage, it can be stated that the leader does not inspire his citizens, does not stimulate them, does not encourage them to evolve not only professionally, but also personally. Whether we are talking about extroverted or introverted citizens, they will turn to the leader's charisma, the way he conveys information, his simple presence to get inspired and get out of their comfort zone and the naturalness of things.

Having some logic and chronology between them, the statements transcend one another, so the following statement of respondent 7: "The leader is a role model (personal, professional)". The coding of this statement is extracted by the "power of the leader's influence", concretizing in the theme "Idealized influence". Mimicry is a common form, because instilling a position, values, interests is a well-rooted process in people. The leader is a role model, both professionally and personally. In itself, any person who calls himself a leader should benefit from citizens who, in addition to admiration, could nurture some imitation, perhaps even at an unconscious level [3]. The appreciation vis-a-vis the leader is quite high in this case, the employees borrowing or even appropriating a series of values presented by the leader and with which they identify, transforming him into a reference point [25].

"The leader does not communicate his expectations, needs/desires, future plans " by coding "non-transmission of desired/targeted standards/objectives", extending the theme

"motivational lack of inspiration". The communication component is an extremely important one in interpersonal relationships, with the aim of transmitting ideas and information. In addition to these, the leaders are presented either through comparison, speech, clothing, which brings an element of novelty to the paradigm. Moreover, within the relationship created between leaders and citizens, communication is the key to opening some bridges, through which the leader can inspire and stimulate from an intellectual point of view [26]. In addition to classic communication, in which the leader projects the entire process of the project thread, the vision, the objectives, the strategic perspectives, there is also the component that highlights the expectations that the leader has. It is extremely important that each of the parties knows from the beginning how and where they rank, what are the expectations, what responsibilities they have to assume, and what decisions to make. All this is not self-directed, but citizens have the opportunity to decide and think for themselves, which leads to an efficiency of the whole process, which is a typical feature of transformational leadership. In the present context, however, we mainly observe a degree of mimicry and less lack of initiative or change, things being led on a straight line, which proves to us that we are rediscovering a transactional leadership.

Another statement that we can analyze under the magnifying glass of the research and which belongs to respondent 17 was: "The leader does not have a clear understanding of where we are going", by coding in "lack of leading direction" arriving at the theme of "lack of idealized attributes/traits". Respondents feel that their leader does not have exclusive control over the work they do, knowing exactly what their goals and ultimate goal are. He does not have an overall vision, typical of the transformational style, the leader does not take risks and does not use the inspiration and motivation that he can instill in his employees. Citizens do not see in it, metaphorically speaking, a source of inspiration and knowledge, either due to the lack of experience in the field (being a former career soldier), expertise and assimilated level of knowledge, or through the very position it occupies at the hierarchical level [25].

In this case, it can be added, the statement belonging to respondent 15 "The leader shows how to look at problems from new angles", coded in "finding solutions", so that then the significant theme is "intellectual simulation". Respondents unanimously stated that expectations from their leader were to more effectively manage post-pandemic resilience. The issue of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine brought with it the approach of a complex agenda that dynamizes the subjects to another level, the post-pandemic crisis, the individual security, the medical safety of the citizens being obviously neglected in their understanding. The limitation at the level of communication, nicknamed by respondents "wooden language" exists in normative and legislative cases, with the aim of not jeopardizing the institutional image, the decision-making process, public policies and the appearance of an illegitimate authority. According to what was previously argued, citizens do not see charisma and empathy in the person of the leader.

"The leader makes me a citizen whose opinion matters," is another statement by which the leader shows interest in the mood and emotional comfort of employees. Coding in "creating comfort", we arrive at the theme of "idealized behavior", some see charisma, caring and empathy in the person of the leader. While R10 agrees with the above, R22's opinion is that the leader lacks empathy, uses wooden language and does not think about the impact his speech has on the citizens. In the same note, the statement "In my mind the leader is not a symbol of success and achievement" is added. This can be coded in "the leader is not an example to follow", reaching the theme "lack of motivational influence", which means that some citizens do not appreciate his professional achievements. Moreover, they do not assign

the term symbol to it, which means that it is not related to a person who has a referential position for them.

Looking at things from a different perspective, we invoke those supported by respondent R8, which provides another facet of perceptions regarding the leadership style's ability to manage things in the post-pandemic period. He claims: "I believe that the leadership style was flawed, because it did not react promptly to the new challenges, and the vulnerabilities in the health, political, economic, military system had their say...". He adds that the outbreak of the war in Ukraine has considerably changed the agenda, and interest in the resilience process has been halted. At the same time, respondent R2 claims: "This passage made me believe that the virus no longer exists or maybe it never existed, it made me wonder if there is a specific date when it disappears and like me we think there are many people who they feel upset." It is observed that a state of insecurity and confusion has set in among the citizens, due to the fact that their perceptions have centered around the fact that the virus no longer exists. Analyzing this positioning, we consider it useful to bring back to the discussion the issue of security/civic culture among Romanian citizens, which invokes ambiguities in discerning the virus's distaste for its continued existence, but the need for protection in a free space. In this sense, it can be stated that we encounter the lack of resilient emotional intelligence as a reference theme that describes an essential characteristic of the leadership style.

5. THE LIMITS OF RESEARCH

Following the previously stated conclusions, we identify a series of limits of the work that we noticed during the research and that refer to the elements that we were not able to analyze extensively. These happened from the perspective of perhaps the subjectivism identified in the writings of some authors, the level of knowledge that we have assimilated regarding this subject, but also the significant volume of information, but also the dynamics of the events that happened in an interval short of time. It can be confessed that the literature was not a generous one regarding this case study, and the availability from the scientific papers, online archives of the competent institutions was not the easiest process. But reading some magazines, newspapers or online communiqués and especially conducting the interviews represented a series of data that we could collect and use without the appearance of gaps, but even in an extremely efficient way.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

However, all these gaps represent future research directions, the resumption of data collection and analysis processes, on a larger scale, on the Romanian Government and the leader, in depth symbolizing a thorough study. To these, it is considered necessary to integrate a data collection related to organizational culture and document analysis. It will lead to what is meant by the set of norms, values, behaviors it promotes and the practices it implements. The final goal is to empirically observe the way in which the transactional leadership style has an impact on internal decisions, projects, the leader-employee relationship, the positioning of the company and the shaping of the social contract between them.

7. CONCLUSION

If we were to summarize the thread of the research, one of the preliminary conclusions we reached concerns the fact that the opinions of Romanian citizens regarding the post-pandemic government leadership are some of the most diverse. While some

respondents state that the management and communication mechanisms were effective, their degree of security was high, they felt close to the institution/leader and the leader in turn empathized with the citizens, others claimed the opposite. The research paper tested a hypothesis that supports the fact that the pandemic period brought with it a series of lessons translated into policies that will subsequently produce improvements. The hypothesis from which we started, the fact that the post-pandemic period brings with it a series of transformations at the policy level, with leaders having innovative visions and citizens feeling closer to the institutions, has not been fully validated. The resilience process, which by definition represents an ongoing mechanism after the onset of the pandemic, was an archetype encountered in the pillars of the research. The leadership style found within the institution of the Government of Romania is a transactional one. This highlights a wide range of its characteristics, such as the military system in which leader was formed and from which it originates, the establishment of explicit objectives, predictable trajectory and the lack of an innovative vision. The leader-citizen relationship, the charisma of the leader, being few of the totality of the elements explained during the research study that reinforce the stated ones. Moving on to the body of the work, we draw preliminary conclusions regarding the methodology used, the way we thought and designed the entire process of data collection and analysis. This represents the most difficult point, because the penciling of the trajectory of the work will lead to its transposition, empirically, of the way in which the research was carried out.

Thus, having these matters well grounded, we created the research methodology in a rather rigorous manner, and the results were adequate. Using the chosen data collection method, namely the questionnaire. This represented in itself a complex way of working, because the subjectivity of the respondents complicates the analytical process. But, using the inductive thematic analysis, the paper penetrates beyond the stipulation of some easily obtainable themes. Referring to the empirical framework of the work, namely the analysis in concreto, it can be affirmed that this represented the transposition from theorizing to reality. The answers of the respondents were among the most different, complex in analysis, sometimes contradictory, but precisely these gaps amplify the outline of a more authentic framework. Finally, it can be stated that the leadership style overwhelmingly influences the evolution of an institution, the leader-follower relationship, but also the impact of their decisions on society, thus creating a well-rooted social contract.

Appendix 1

Interview guide

1. 1. The first phase is that of "Initiation" :
 - during which we will present to the interviewees the purpose and duration of the interview (2-3 minutes/question);
 - there is a presentation of the objectives pursued during the interview, its duration (20 minutes) and the manner of conducting the interview;
 - permission is requested to record and quote what was said by the respondents.
2. The second phase is "Realization":
 - addressing general questions, 11 in number ;
 - among these are the follow-up questions, which highlight more detailed answers, numbering 5.
3. The third phase is about "Completion" :
 - this taking place at the moment when you feel that you have found out everything you set out to do;
 - it ends politely, with the related thanks, giving the interviewee the opportunity to make some desired additions.

Appendix 2

Interview grid

1. How do you define/what do you understand by the concept of "freedom"?
2. What was your life like before the pandemic from the point of view of the right to freedom and security?
3. What are your expectations from the leader?
4. How was communication from the leader in the post-pandemic period?
5. Follow-up: What were the sources of information?
6. How attached do you feel to the leader?
7. Follow-up: How attached do you feel to the institution?
8. Is there a crisis of government leadership?
9. How does the leader make you feel?
10. What is the leader's vision?
11. Follow-up: From what perspectives does he see the problems and how does he relate to them?
12. In what direction should the leader's mandate be directed at the level of the topics addressed?
13. Is the leader a person to follow?
14. Follow-up: What do you like most about it and why?
15. What do you dislike about it and why?
16. Follow-up: What recommendations do you have for improving professional conduct?

Appendix 3

3.1. The table containing the list of interviewed persons

Number	Age	Sex	Profession	Area of residence	The environment of origin
R1.	25	Female	Sales agent	Cluj-Napoca	Bucharest - urban area
R2.	23	Male	Student	Cluj-Napoca	Râmnicu-Vâlcea – rural area
R3.	27	Male	Student	Cluj-Napoca	Bacau - the urban area
R4.	22	Female	Social worker	Piatra Neamt	Neamt - urban area
R5.	30	Female	Professor	Bacau	Iasi-urban area
R6.	35	Male	Journalist	Bistrita-Nasaud	Bistrita - urban area
R7.	45	Female	Teacher	Suceava	Ash - rural area
R8.	38	Female	Policeman	Bucharest	Neamt - rural area
R9.	30	Male	University assistant	Cluj-Napoca	Campulun-Moldovenesc - rural area
R10.	55	Female	HR inspector	Turda	Turzii plain – rural area
R11.	41	Maculinea	bobby	Cluj-Napoca	Neamt - urban area
R12.	39	Male	Professor	Oradea city	Oradea - urban area
R13.	65	Maculinea	Retired	Cluj-Napoca	Dej – rural area
R14.	23	Female	Psychologist	Bistrita-Nasaud	Bistrita - rural area
R15.	19	Female	Student	Piatra Neamt	Neamt - urban area
R16.	43	Male	Nurse	Suceava	Gura-Humorului – urban area
R17.	22	Female	Student	Cluj-Napoca	Gherla – urban area
R18.	26	Female	chemist	IASI	Ash - rural area
R19.	40	Male	Politician	Cluj-Napoca	Turda – urban area
R20.	49	Maculinea	Border policeman	Timisoara	Suceava – urban area
R21.	19	Female	Student	IASI	Iasi - rural area
R22.	23	Male	Engineer	Cluj	Cluj – urban area
R23.	66	Female	Retired	Suceava	Suceava – rural area
R24.	60	Male	Retired	Timisoara	Suceava – rural area
R25.	24	Male	Student	Cluj	Târgu-Jiu - rural area

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