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## **EVALUATION OF PERSONAL LEADERSHIP FACTORS OF EMPLOYEES IN E-COMMERCE**

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**ABSTRACT.** *The purpose of this article was to investigate the factors promoting the expression of personal leadership of employees, by conducting a case study of a Lithuanian start-up e-commerce platform. Quantitative and qualitative research were used to conduct the research. For quantitative research, data was collected using a survey method.*

*In this way, data can be collected and summarized to explain a certain phenomenon. In this case, an e-commerce company that provides internet and advertising services was selected. The questionnaire was sent to the employees of the e-commerce platform working in the Lithuanian branch. A qualitative study was conducted using the semi-structured interview method in order to assess the dynamics of social relations. The study revealed that psychological factors and feedback have the greatest impact on employees' personal leadership. An important place in the expression of personal leadership in the organization is occupied by both the organization and the individual himself.*

**KEYWORDS:** employee leadership, employee empowerment, employee commitment, personal leadership, e-leadership, e-commerce.

**JEL classification:** M51, M54, L81.

## Introduction

Modern organizations operate in an extremely dynamic business environment, where it is important to be able to operate not only in the physical, but also in the virtual space, to quickly and systematically adapt to ongoing changes. These changes are driven by technological innovations, primarily digitization and computerization, which are based on the principles of efficiency and productivity in all business and life activities (Gbadegeshin, 2019). The use of computer technologies in business helps to efficiently carry out various e-business operations, smoothly manage and administer the activities of organizations, and implement innovations. The constantly changing business environment forces organizations to review their operational strategies and pay more and more attention to the creation of integrated systems, one of the components of which is the formation of organizational culture and the promotion of employee leadership (Digriènė, 2018). Competent leaders are a necessary condition for the development of every organization that seeks to cope with all the challenges of today's uncertain and constantly changing world. Scientific debates unanimously recognize that leadership is a critical factor in organizational growth and effective change (Amor *et al.*, 2020; Mencl *et al.*, 2016; Alves Pereira Cardoso *et al.*, 2014).

In today's operational conditions, one of the most relevant factors increasing the effectiveness of the organization is the ability of the manager - leader to make decisions beneficial to the well-being of the organization, especially when they are related to business digitization processes (Sainger, 2018). This means that not only the mutual trust and support of the leader and the employees is required, when participating and making important decisions, but also the expression of the characteristics of the leader operating in the digital space, his competences and the ability to use modern management methods to improve the organization's activities, and most importantly - to involve employees and encourage their obligations to the

organization. Competent leaders, in pursuit of the organization's goals, are able to significantly improve the results of daily activities, gathering employee teams, increasing the motivation and involvement of each employee. It is noted that successful organizations will be those that are able to find, shape and develop leaders within organizations (Cottrell, 2000). D. Weiss, V. Molinaro claim that organizational investments in leadership development are beneficial, as they will pay off with the acquisition of a sustainable competitive advantage that will lead organizations forward (Weiss, Molinaro, 2005). It becomes extremely important for organizations to maintain stability within the organization by organizing the work process and routine in the context of constant changes and technological innovations.

The issue of research in the field of leadership receives a lot of attention from researchers who have studied various aspects of leadership. M. Vercueil, A. Nicolaidis (2021) note that leadership topics are relevant for representatives of sociology, politics, psychology, pedagogy, ethics and business. 21st century in research, there are important generalizations and attempts to form unique models of leadership competencies. By summarizing various studies of characteristics and abilities characteristic of leaders, researchers have identified cognitive, social, emotional, etc., which are significant for leaders. competencies (Byrne *et al.*, 2018; Crossan *et al.*, 2013; Boyatzis, 2008; Pagon *et al.*, 2008). A lot of attention in leadership discussions has been devoted to defining and analyzing leadership styles (Aydin, 2018; Grill, Kauffeld, 2015; Sart, 2014; Yukl, 2013). Leadership is defined as a collective process of spreading influence, in which such aspects as the leader's abilities and competences, trust in others, degree of control, distribution of power, peculiarities of decision-making and work organization, nature of interaction with others and communication in the team, quality of feedback, methods of employee promotion are important. , tolerance of change, etc. It should be noted that leadership is a dynamic, ever-changing phenomenon. The role of the leader and the expression of his activity are needed every time differently due to the specifics of the era, business realities, constantly changing circumstances, the degree of uncertainty and other aspects. Digital technologies are changing the economic, political, social, cultural and even biological life of modern society, thus fundamentally changing the ways people interact with each other, work, learn, receive information and create knowledge (Radman, 2020). It is noted that the structure of organizations is changing (Sainger, 2018), e-technologies are applied to organize operational processes and various hardware and software components are combined (Lee, 2013), face-to-face communication is gradually being discontinued, and interaction is becoming increasingly technological (Rubavathi, Balamurugan, 2022). With the emergence of e-business, e-commerce, e-books, e-seminars, e-leadership also appears, taking place in an e-environment where information technology, especially the Internet, is used to organize work (Hani, 2001). In the course of such profound changes, researchers emphasize the necessity of new approaches to leadership processes (Rubavathi, Balamurugan, 2022; Van Wart, Roman, Wang, Liu, 2019; Sainger, 2018). The topic of leadership in the context of e-business becomes one of the biggest challenges, therefore it is important to study the meaning of leadership in the period of digitalization, to understand how digitalization frames leadership processes and the resulting challenges in organizations (Van Wart *et al.*, 2019; Sow, Aborbie, 2018). Amor *et al.* (2020) note that leadership is a critical component that affects the work environment and employees' job perceptions. According to V. Vaitkevičius (2016), leadership can be understood as an interactive and mutual interaction between the leader and his followers. This interaction can be explained as a process of influence, where the leader influences his followers, but at the same time is in the zone of influence of the followers. It should be noted that employees should be seen as active participants in change initiatives and not passive recipients, so employees'

beliefs, attitudes and behaviors have a significant impact on the organizational change process and results. By empowering employees, leaders encourage the creation and dissemination of knowledge among all members of the organization, which in turn encourages innovation. Emphasizing the importance of e-business and digitization in today's market, this article focuses on the expression of employee leadership and its promotion in e-commerce.

This article presents the conducted research, the purpose of which is to identify the factors that promote the expression of personal leadership of employees in an e-commerce platform.

The significance of the conducted research is based on the fact that factors promoting employee involvement and empowerment were defined, which are an important condition for the expression of employee leadership and an element of the effectiveness of the entire organization. It was established that modern organizations must be ready to develop and promote the personal leadership of their employees, because the development of the potential of employees creates the leadership of the organization in its field of activity.

## **1. Theoretical Background**

Modern definitions of leadership expand the traditional concept of managerial authority, emphasizing not only the managerial abilities of a person. Analyzing the concept of a leader, different authors highlight significant character traits, abilities and competencies that modern leaders must have. Emphasis is placed on the ability to communicate, collaborate and develop a network (Mencl *et al.*, 2016), emotionality and passion (Lazanyi, 2009), social activity (Chen *et al.*, 2016), creativity and openness to new approaches (Khalili, 2016), innovative thinking (Baumgartner, 2014), critical thinking (Semerci, 2010), intelligence and reason (Judge *et al.*, 2004), integrity, strong moral attitudes and commitment to the organization (Byrne *et al.*, 2018), managing complex situations (Mencl *et al.*, 2016), empathy and high emotional intelligence (Rosete, Ciarrochi, 2005), flexibility (Yukl, 2008), entrepreneurship (Leitch, Volery, 2017), ability to promote change and innovation (Algahtani, 2014). It is recognized that alongside the available characteristics, the leader's professional knowledge and competences, emotional intelligence, abilities to create connections and develop relationships, motivate the organization's employees and increase their involvement in ongoing processes, manage risks, make creative decisions, etc., are significant.

However, it is emphasized that leadership is a collective concept that encompasses a number of important social, organizational and personal processes, which in turn include influencing a group and inspiring that group to achieve common goals (Blagoev, Yordanova, 2015; Sart, 2014; Owens, 1995). Leadership becomes extremely significant in the context of a group and an organization and is associated with empowering other members and increasing their potential and mobilizing them for joint activities, so strong leadership makes the organization even stronger, and in the same way - weak leadership reduces its potential and destroys it (Alves Pereira Cardoso *et al.*, 2014). In addition, leadership takes place at various levels: societal, organizational, team and personal (Crossan *et al.*, 2008).

In order to effectively lead in the age of technology and digitization, leaders must be able to operate in the modern era, master information and communication technologies, and organize activities in both physical and digital environments. The term "digitization" is defined in two ways: on the one hand, digitization is understood technically as the conversion of analog data into digital information; on the other hand, it can be comprehensively seen as the development of the whole society, which is determined by the development of electronic data

processing technologies (Petry, 2016). Digitization leads to both new challenges and opportunities, as it causes wide-scale changes at all levels of the economy and society, fundamentally changing the ways people communicate and interact with each other, as well as the activities of organizations in the market. Digital transformation encompasses all events and processes that individuals, business organizations, societies and nations around the world organize through the adoption of technology (Collin *et al.*, 2015). Researchers emphasize that modern leaders are expected to know when and how to adapt technology (Van Wart *et al.*, 2019; Sow, Aborbie, 2018).

In a mature and successful organization, employees are confident about their leader's perception of business digitization (Kane *et al.*, 2015), and organizational changes and transformation are helped by the vision of its leaders and the decisions made that link digitization to new organizational needs (Sainger, 2018). It should be noted that this perception requires not only technological mastery, but also the realization of the real benefits of digital technologies for the future of the organization. Digital transformation is not possible without a leader who creates a platform for it and motivates stakeholders to take action, in other words, a leader who thoughtfully applies technology to drive sustainable business success (Sainger, 2018; Kavadias *et al.*, 2016). It is clear that the foresight of the leader helps the company in the digital transformation, and technology can be used to facilitate the organization of all processes. Together with technology, leaders shape the various dimensions of the organization, i.e. i.e. business models, structure, processes, technology adoption, products, offerings and employee engagement model. Digitization is a process of continuous change that is open and requires continuous transformation at all levels of the organization, so leadership faces not only new opportunities, but also challenges during digital transformation. It is noted that the leader's leadership is no longer only related to the distribution and monitoring of tasks and their completion, as it also includes creating space for the development of employees' creative potential through collaboration and continuous learning (Kane *et al.*, 2015; Eagly, Chin, 2010; Bass, Riggio, 2006). This is the only way to create a team of employees with valuable skills necessary for the company to survive in the market. In the digitization era, the organization's aspiration is to involve all employees, so digital leadership is a two-way interaction that is not only tied to top management positions (Hensellek, 2020; Eagle *et al.*, 2010). Various authors, analyzing leadership processes in the context of digital transformation of organizations, emphasize the variety of new opportunities, challenges and risks, which is why it is important to create an organizational culture favorable to digital innovation (Hensellek, 2020; Leitch *et al.*, 2013). Thus, it can be said that a leader is an organizational figure who ensures the digital maturity of an organization with a digital vision and strategy, and then helps to prepare for future changes (digital transformation), i.e. i.e. prepares employees for change, provides processes, technology offerings, engagement model, structure and business model to realize this vision.

In the context of the discussed changes, the term e-leadership links electronics, the Internet and other things of the digital world to leadership, which means the ability of a person to act or influence the people he leads in order to achieve organizational goals (Mustajab *et al.*, 2020). In other words, e-leadership is leadership that combines today's widely used concepts: leadership and technology development. The definition of leadership is significant in the digital space, but has certain specifics. The role of e-leadership in the current era of technology is particularly important because, regardless of the size of the organization, leaders have the responsibility to ensure the existence and performance of organizations so that they can survive and compete in the market and avoid certain threats that can stop the organization from

functioning, so organizations need leaders, with the ambition and capacity to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies and to ensure fair, sustainable and green development at the global level, preventing and combating social and economic disasters that may occur now or in the future (Capogna *et al.*, 2018). It should be noted that an e-leader is considered a leader who influences the success of the implementation of the organization's vision, mission and goals, involves all members of the organization and is able to manage information technologies in order to achieve the organization's goals (Yudha, Susanto, 2019; Van Wart *et al.*, 2019). In e-leadership, as in traditional leadership, it is important to motivate employees, but it is also important to be able to use information technology effectively, to be able to establish various connections through different digital channels, which can be used to communicate successfully and create mutual trust (Savolainen, Lopez-Fresno, 2014). E-organization management enables the implementation of strategies, providing more attractive, digitized services that society wants. M. Van Wart *et al.* (2019) summarized and distinguished the following significant areas of competence of an e-leader: e-communication: clarity of communication, resolution of misunderstandings and management of communication flow; e-social skills: leader and group cohesion; e-team formation: team responsibility, recognition of team members and their abilities, team motivation; e-change management skills; e-trust: ability to trust, reliability, consistency, honesty, work-life balance, diversity management; e-technological competence: correct use of information technology, combination of traditional and virtual methods, technological knowledge, technological security.

E-leadership, as a new paradigm, poses many challenges when almost all activities are carried out virtually and through computer mediation, when leaders do not always face the employees of the organization and this strongly determines the organization's performance (Al-Ghaili, Al-Harethi, 2019). Given the changed expressions of leadership, which are significantly characterized by the application and use of digital technologies (Kamalaldin *et al.*, 2020), new and more complex leadership requirements arise, including both the basic understanding of the role of the leader and the application and use of innovative innovations (Kempner, 2022). The era of digitalization provides new opportunities for e-leaders, but also generates a number of different challenges, therefore, in the changing environment, the importance of technological competencies is emphasized alongside cognitive, emotional, and social competencies. Internet space, as a highly democratic medium, highlights not only the need for leadership by managers, but also the need for personal expression of leadership by all participants.

The changing environment of modern organizations and modern work culture increase the need to move away from strict hierarchical structures, which are associated with a high degree of employee control, numerous restrictions, norms and requirements. The mobility of modern workers, the ability to choose employers on a global scale reduces their desire to commit and bind themselves by moral ties with organizations and colleagues, if they do not see meaning in their professional activities, opportunities for professional growth, etc. are becoming increasingly challenging for modern organizations. In addition, the need to search for new ideas, new ways of solving problems, new forms of activity organization, communication and cooperation in modern society is emerging. New organizational cultures require team responsibility, cooperation, external focus, mutual trust and supportive actions, calculated risk-taking (Gill *et al.*, 1998).

In order to encourage the expression of personal leadership of employees, several important aspects are mentioned - inclusive leadership that promotes these processes and the resulting involvement of employees in operational processes and commitment to the organization. In leadership theory, inclusive leadership is applied to emphasize the need for

greater diversity and better relationships between the leader and the working staff (Wuffli, 2015). F. Amagoh (2009) indicates that inclusive leadership is the ability to influence others in order to motivate and encourage everyone to more effectively achieve organizational goals. It is a win-win situation with a common goal and vision of a mutual relationship between the leader and the employees (Obaid, Al-Abachee, 2020). An inclusive leader can be defined as someone who can communicate effectively with all individuals working at all levels of the organization and is accountable for results (Bhandari *et al.*, 2004). A. Carmeli *et al.* (2010) emphasize that inclusive leadership refers to a clearly visible leadership model that can more effectively integrate teams into creative business contexts. Such practices have an impact on employee well-being and the growth of creativity due to the motivational impact of an inclusive leadership style, greater employee satisfaction, commitment and participation in tasks and assistance in building strong relationships between leaders and employees. Such relationships promote greater employee participation in activities to which they tend to contribute their unique abilities (Liden *et al.*, 2008). It should be noted that inclusive leaders are able to ensure that employees are involved in organizational decision-making (Khan *et al.*, 2021), they aim to increase employee motivation and develop their abilities to create new ideas (Sharifirad, Ataei, 2012), ensure that employees have access to the vital tangible and intangible resources of the organization, thereby promoting employee motivation and the implementation of new ideas (Afsar *et al.*, 2014). It is emphasized that a significant relationship with the leader allows employees to gain leadership experience related to resources and their beneficial use (for example, legitimacy of time, materials, space, innovation-related information, political support), which strengthens their ability to promote, develop and apply new ideas (Ng, Salamzadeh, 2020). Finally, such leaders can improve employees' emotions and positive feelings, thereby inspiring them to undertake innovative tasks (Javed *et al.*, 2019). Research shows that inclusive leadership is a significant driver of employee leadership (Javed *et al.*, 2017; Javed *et al.*, 2019). Innovative employees usually collect and apply various information to generate new and creative ideas that can improve the current situation in the organization (Nimfa *et al.*, 2021). In addition, inclusive leadership encourages employees to be innovative: they want to acquire knowledge, discover and create new ideas to solve important issues, thus improving work performance (Amabile *et al.*, 2005). The desire of employees to learn is necessary to perform the job, because learning motivates employees to acquire new skills that are useful to them in the performance of their functions. The leader's behavior motivates employees and encourages the creation of a pleasant work environment that would help them become more effectively involved in achieving the organization's goals (Bataineh *et al.*, 2022).

Authors studying leadership processes emphasize the connection of phenomena such as employee involvement, commitment, and empowerment with the expression of personal leadership (Khan *et al.*, 2021; Obaid, Al-Abachee, 2020; Javed *et al.*, 2019). In terms of work engagement, it can be argued that in the context of the modern world, work is the most time-consuming activity that provides opportunities for growth for the majority of society. It is argued that work and involvement in it is one of the main factors that determine a person's well-being at work (Bakker, 2011). Work engagement involves a high level of personal contribution of the employee to the organization (Kopperud *et al.*, 2014; Luthans *et al.*, 2008). Engaged employees are enthusiastic and positive, not only in their work functions, but also in their individual leisure time and communicating their commitments to others (Blomme *et al.*, 2015). When examining work engagement, it is important to mention that it can be defined as a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (Rodriguez, 2018, p.38), an emotional energy that improves employee performance

(Rich *et al.*, 2010), can be described as an employee's "investment" and willingness to use personal characteristics (Shuck, Herd, 2012). It is important to note that engaged employees feel connected to their company, work harder, stay longer and motivate others to do the same. Each member of the organization influences the engagement of other employees - what kind of connections he establishes, what kind of attitude prevails towards teamwork, and the general attitude towards the workplace. W. Kahn (1990) states that in both individual and group work, individuals become emotionally, physically and consciously attached to work, bound to tasks.

Another significant category - empowerment - is based on the idea that providing employees with resources, authority, delegating responsibility for their work and actions will make employees more effective. It is said that there is a need for employee empowerment in the era of globalization because empowered employees can make quick decisions and respond quickly to any changes in the environment (Murari, Gupta, 2012). Empowering employees to take on leadership roles can have a positive long-term impact on both the company and the individuals themselves. Empowering leadership means sharing power and motivating employees to desire better results (Vu, 2020). It should be noted that the term empowerment has become extremely significant in various public sphere or professional contexts in the last decade. Empowerment is an opportunity that empowers an employee to make independent decisions in the workplace (Vogt, 1997), and it is also a transfer of control that makes the employee's actions and decisions possible (Chandler, 1986). It should be noted that empowerment in the organization has a number of advantages, since employees feel empowered at work, this is associated with better work performance, satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Vu, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2018). Empowerment can be understood as the increased motivation of an employee to perform tasks, which arises from the power given to him to make decisions and the resulting positive orientation of the individual towards his role at work.

The involvement of employees in operational processes, their empowerment determines the resulting commitment of employees to the organization, loyalty and attachment to the organization. The moral and psychological aspect is especially significant in the construct of organizational commitment. It is emphasized that the commitment to the organization is perceived as a certain attitude of the employee towards the organization, it is revealed that the individual identifies with a specific organization, believes in its values and goals, gets involved in it as a social system and wants to stay working in it (Porteret *et al.*, 1974). An individual's investment in an organization makes him feel loyal. J.P. Meyer *et al.* (2002) emphasize that commitment is a multifaceted construct that includes affective commitment, i.e. emotional attachment to the organization, identification with it. The employee believes in the goals of the organization and tends to identify his goals with the organization (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). In addition, there is continuity commitment, when an employee commits to the organization because of his needs, such as finances or friendly relations with colleagues. Normative commitment is also important, when an employee commits to the organization because it is the only correct way of behaviour and depends on the individual's sense of duty (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). A person becomes committed to the organization when he accepts the company's values, when he can follow them. This attitude towards the employee is described as the obligation to stay in the organization, because it is necessary to do so. Emotional commitment is usually associated with the employee's efficiency in performing their functions, absence of absenteeism, identification with the organization, compared to normative commitment. And work efficiency, absenteeism and identification with the organization are even negatively related to continuous commitment. (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). In summary, it can be said that the commitment of employees to the organization reflects their closer connection with the organization, the desire to identify



with the organization, concern for its future, belief in its values, which encourages employees to express themselves more actively and strive to demonstrate personal leadership.

## **2. Empirical Research Methodology**

In the theoretical basis of the topic, the definitions of leadership, factors promoting expression in a modern organization, factors promoting the expression of personal leadership of employees are analyzed, but the question of which factors influence the expression of leadership remains relevant. The research aimed to empirically determine and evaluate the factors promoting employee leadership in an e-commerce organization, therefore it was decided to conduct a quantitative and qualitative study.

An e-commerce company that provides Internet and advertising services was chosen for the study. This company of Lithuanian capital chooses because of its successfully created business in the electronic space for more than 10 years. Over the years of its existence, the company has created 500 jobs, operates in sixteen different countries and has grown a market of 65 million users.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that promote the expression of personal leadership of employees, by conducting a case study of a Lithuanian start-up e-commerce platform.

Research objectives: to identify the role of a leader in an e-commerce organization from the point of view of employees and managers; to determine the forms and need for expression of personal leadership of employees from the point of view of employees and managers; to analyze the factors promoting the expression of personal leadership of employees.

Research organization. The electronic questionnaire of the quantitative survey was sent to the employees of the e-commerce platform working in the Lithuanian branch (175 employees). Quantitative research data was collected using the survey method, because it is easier to fill out a questionnaire prepared with special computer programs, the influence of the interviewer is avoided, more privacy is provided when answering sensitive questions, and it is easier to reach the respondents themselves (Gaižauskaitė, Mikėnė, 2014). With the help of quantitative research, numerical data can be collected, and they can be summarized in various groups of people or explain a specific phenomenon (Babbie, 2010). This method was used to determine what factors promote leadership in organizations across different sections, and to determine the extent to which those factors affect the organization and its performance. With the help of the questionnaire survey data collection method, the required number of respondents was reached quite quickly and conveniently.

To investigate the role and meaning of leadership in the organization, a questionnaire (created based on the theoretical analysis of the topic) was used, which consisted of 19 questions revealing the characteristics of leadership and involvement. In order to identify how employees evaluate the role of leadership in the organization, questions or their statements were formulated, which were divided into 5 categories: demographic questions, expression of leader and personal leadership, and promotion of personal leadership of employees. The first 6 questions are presented with possible answer options t. i.e. demographic and connection/loyalty issues. Further question blocks reveal:

- the role of the leader in the organization - in this block, 4 questions were presented in the form of statements in order to find out the importance of the leader in the organization, the opinion of the employees about the necessary qualities/competencies of the leader, and the attitude of the employees towards the role of the leader in increasing employee involvement;

- expression of personal leadership of employees - in this block, questions were asked in order to find out the importance of personal leadership of employees in the organization, and how the employees of the organization see themselves - whether they consider themselves involved and inclined to personal leadership;
- promotion of personal leadership of employees - the questions in this block aim to find out how personal leadership of employees is promoted in the organization under study, whether it can be encouraged in general, in what forms it can be done, and what factors lead to greater engagement in work.

Qualitative research is carried out using a semi-structured interview method, since this research is related to aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing mainly on understanding and explaining the dynamics of social relations (Queirós *et al.*, 2017). Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of the research phenomena themselves. In the qualitative study, an interview was used to determine managers' attitudes towards employee leadership, the questionnaire of which, based on the theoretical analysis of the topic, consisted of 13 main questions, which were filled in during the interview if necessary. The interview was conducted according to pre-prepared questions. The questions are formulated to understand the importance of leadership in an organization. The method of interview data collection is focused on the opinion of management employees about employee leadership and empowerment. This study helped to understand the qualitative aspects of the factors that promote employee leadership. Interviews were conducted with two heads of different departments and the director of the same organization. Managers with three different levels and management experience were selected and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The questions are formulated to understand the managers' approach to employee leadership, engagement, and empowerment. The informants voluntarily agreed to participate in it — verbal consent was obtained. The informants were informed before the interview about the purpose of the research and that the interview would be recorded; records were used for research-related analysis, confidentiality guaranteed. The study was conducted from October 20 to November 30, 2022.

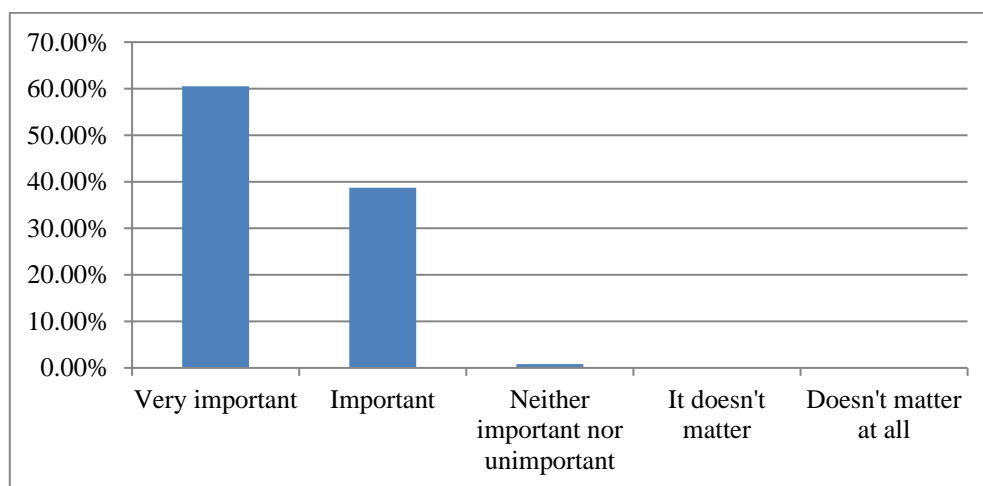
### **3. Results and Discussion**

Most of the interviewees have worked in the organization for 1-2 years (42,7%), and also a significant part of the interviewees who have worked in this organization for less than a year - 4-6 months 24.2%, 7-12 months 19,4 percent. With these data, it can be said that the majority of respondents who filled out the questionnaires have more than one year of experience. The e-commerce platform itself is a fast-growing start-up, which may explain why there are so many new team members.

Evaluating the respondents' attitude towards the organization, it can be said that the majority (92.7%) of those who took part in the survey are proud to work in the research company. There was not a single respondent who chose a negative answer to this question. Only 7.3% found it difficult to answer this question. Therefore, it can be assumed that these positive results can influence the answers to other questions as well, i.e. questions related to the internal activities of the organization will be evaluated positively.

From the answers presented in the diagram, it can be seen (*Figure 1*) that most of the respondents have a strong connection with the organization in which they work, since almost all respondents answered that it is important (38.7%) or even very important (60.5%) to them. the future of the organization he works for. One respondent (0.8%) remained neutral. Linking

this with pride in working for this company (*Figure 1*), it can be assumed that this company prioritizes the well-being of its employees.

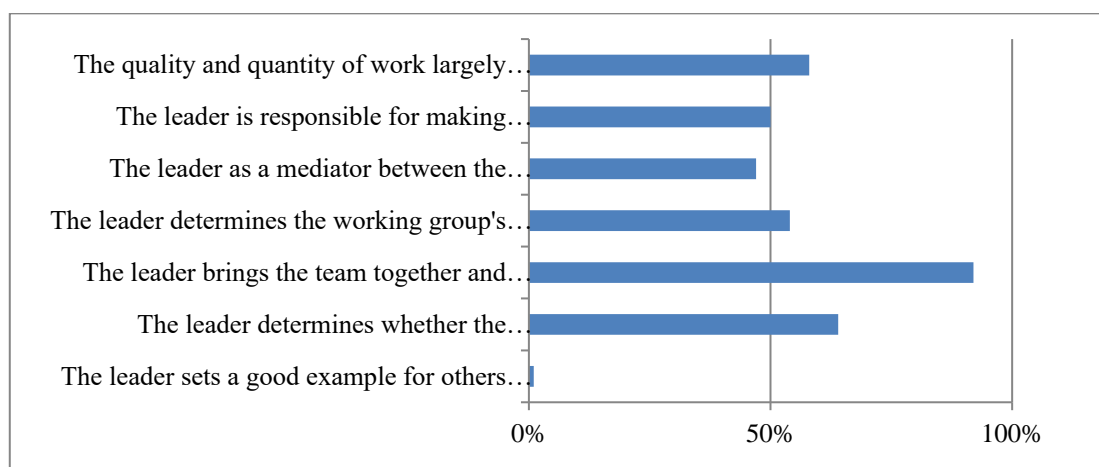


Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 1. The Distribution of Respondents' Opinions about the Future of the Organization in which They Work**

When investigating respondents' loyalty to the organization they work for, a Likert scale was used, where 1 is very unimportant and 5 is very important. According to this scale, it is possible to find out the attitudes, attitudes and opinions of employees. Slightly more than half of the respondents (58.9%) rated their loyalty to the organization where they work as the maximum score. Respondents who scored 4 (37.1%) also made up a considerable part. There were no respondents who rated their loyalty with one or two points. Here it can be assumed that most of the people working in the company are loyal and faithful employees, which is one of the most important competitive advantages of the company in the world market (Sturd and Nordstrom, 2019).

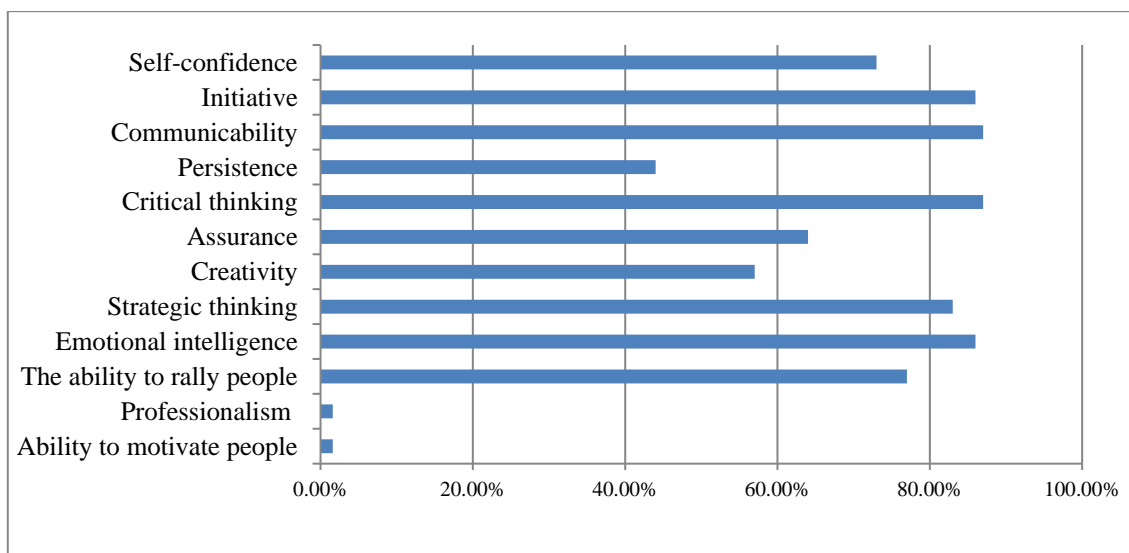
Analyzing the question about the importance of the leader for the organization, the data show (*Figure 2*) that the leader has a great importance for the psychological atmosphere at work, as many as 92% indicated this. respondents. 64 percent respondents indicated the leader as the person who is responsible for understanding and implementing the company's goals. Fewer respondents believe that the leader determines the work group's relationship with the environment (54%), that the quality and quantity of work depends on the leader (58%). From the diagram, we can also see that the leader is seen as the main mediator between the work group by a little less than half of the respondents (47%), and as a person who is responsible for making essential decisions (50%).



Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents' Answers about the Importance of the Presence of a Leader in the Organization**

The main qualities that a leader must have (*Figure 3*), the respondents singled out five necessary qualities: critical thinking (87%), emotional intelligence (86%), initiative (86%), communication (86%), and strategic thinking (83%). Such qualities as the ability to gather people (77%), self-confidence (73%) were also noted by the vast majority of respondents, but were not among the previously mentioned. According to the number of respondents' answers, persistence (44%), assurance (64%), and creativity (57%) are not necessary qualities for a leader. Several respondents also added the ability to motivate people and knowledge of their field.

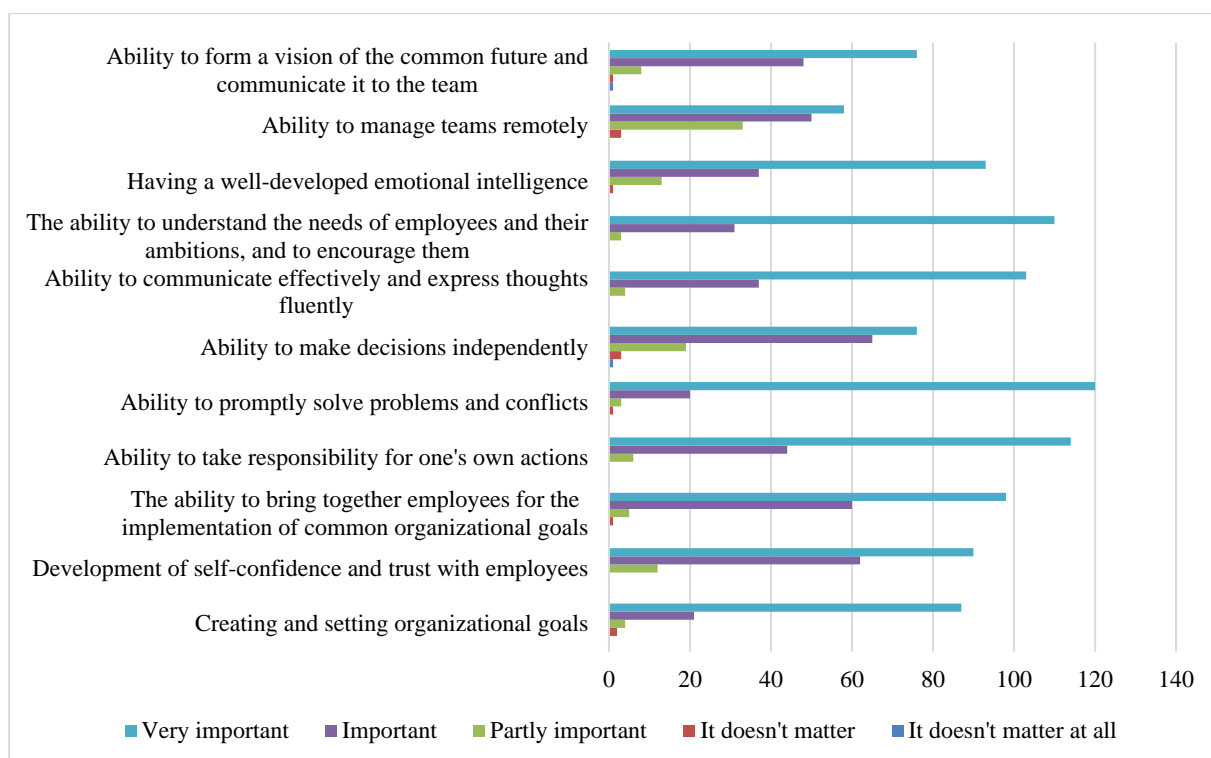


Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 3. Distribution of Respondents' Answers on the Main Qualities of a Leader**

Examining the most important competencies of a leader (*Figure 4*), it can be seen that the majority of respondents singled out the ability to promptly solve emerging problems and conflicts (120 out of 175 respondents), the ability to take responsibility for their actions (114

out of 175 respondents), and the ability to understand the needs of employees and their ambitions and to promote them (110 out of 175 respondents). It can be concluded that the role of leader is important for the members of this organization in situations of problem solving, responsibility and motivation. Only a few employees who took part in the survey classified the ability to form a vision and convey it to the team (1 out of 175 respondents) and the ability to make decisions independently (1 out of 175 respondents) as completely unimportant competencies. This shows that for the majority of employees these characteristics are nevertheless sufficiently or partially important. From the obtained data, we can say that the leader has a clear role in this organization, and must have the appropriate abilities for leadership to be successful.

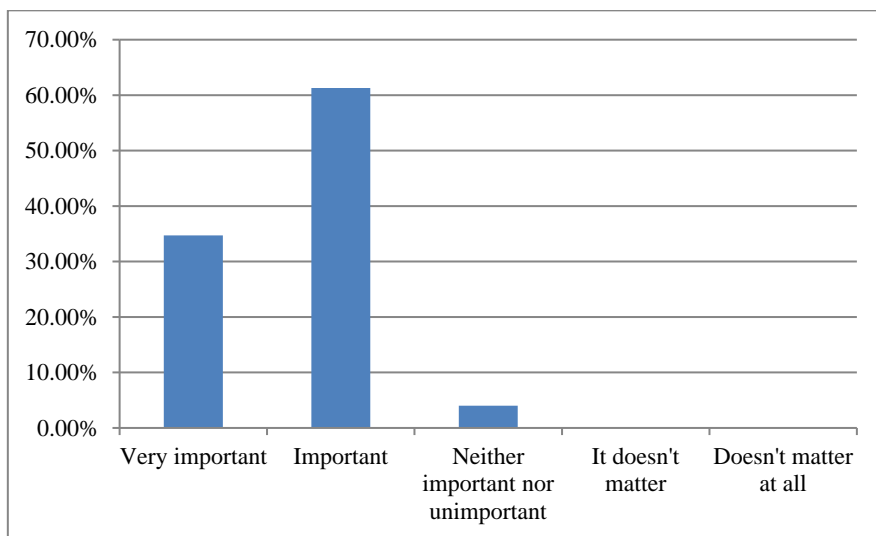


Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 4. Distribution of Answers According to the Leader's Competencies, which are the Most Important According to the Respondents**

For more than half of the respondents, the role of the leader in the team is very important (54%). There was not a single respondent for whom the leader in the organization was unimportant. It demonstrates a strong organizational understanding of why a leader in an organization is necessary to achieve the highest organizational goals.

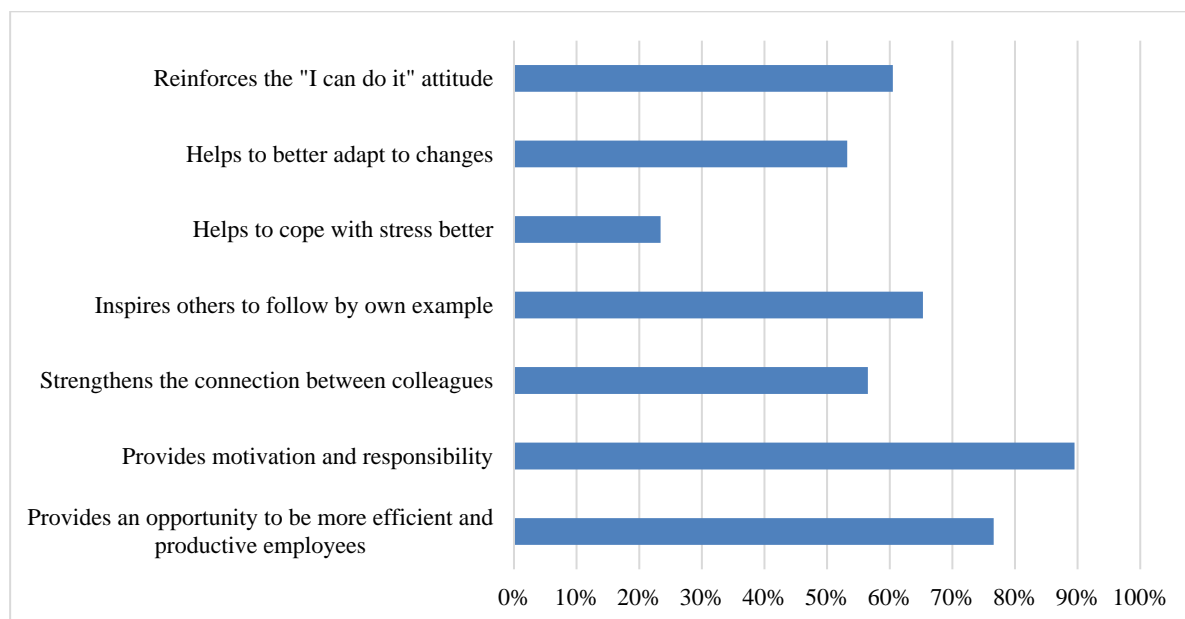
The diagram from the presented data shows (*Figure 5*) that personal leadership is also important (61.3%) or even very important (34.7%) in the opinion of the respondents in the organization. 4 percent all respondents remained neutral on this issue. This distribution of data shows that an important part in the company is self-reflection and the understanding that an important part of the company's responsibility is borne by the employees themselves.



Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 5. Distribution Of Respondents' Answers according to the Importance of Personal Leadership**

Analyzing the question about the importance of personal leadership (*Figure 6*), it can be seen that the statement that personal leadership is important because it provides motivation and responsibility (89%) received the most positive ratings from the respondents, which shows that employees do not leave the aspect of motivation solely to the responsibility of the leader. This assumption is strengthened by the opportunity to be more efficient and productive employees provided by personal leadership (77%). The chart also shows from the given data that personal leadership does not help to cope better with stress (23%). From this data, it can be said that with greater leadership comes not only a "can do it" attitude (61%), responsibility, but also stress.



Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 6. Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question: "Why do you think Personal Leadership of Employees in the Organization Is Important?"**

The conducted research showed that the majority of employees partially classify themselves as individuals with leadership traits (56.5%), a third (33.1%) of the respondents strongly classify themselves as individuals with leadership qualities, and 10.5% does not assign itself. This shows that more than half of the people working in the organization have, or partially believe that they have leadership qualities.

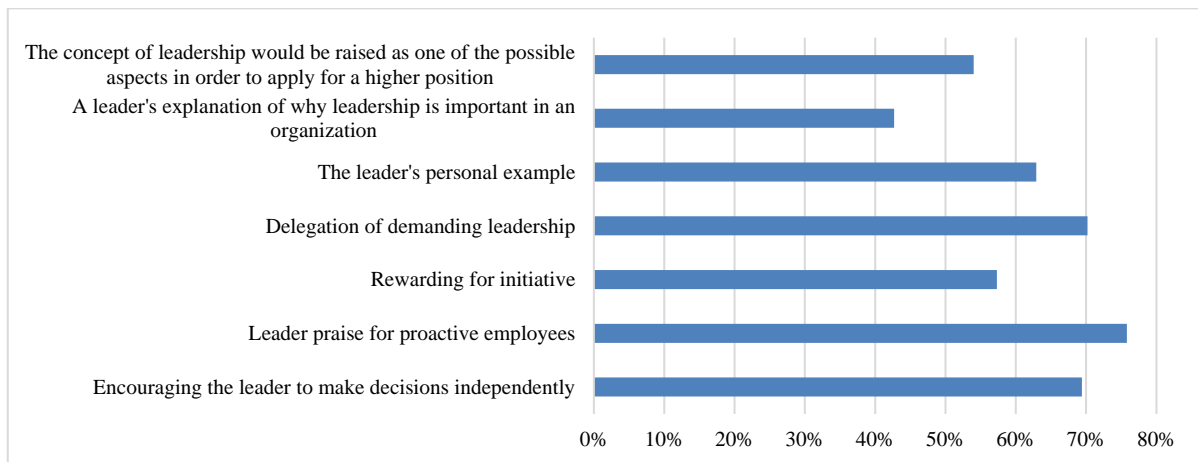
Analyzing the involvement of employees in the organization, it is observed that slightly more than half (50.8%) of the respondents answered positively to the question: "Do you consider yourself involved in organizational activities?". Comparing involvement with the attribution of leadership traits, it is observed that similar data prevails, i.e. 7.3 % do not consider themselves involved in organizational activities. Also, the obtained data show that it is easier for employees to measure their involvement in organizational activities than to measure themselves in terms of leadership.

Analyzing the employees' attitude towards how personal leadership can be manifested, the data emphasize initiative at work (91%), offering new ideas (86%), and providing feedback (85%). It turned out that in the understanding of employees, positivity (47%), empathy for colleagues (56%), and delegation of work (59%) are the qualities that are less associated with personal leadership.

To the question of whether it would be possible to encourage personal leadership of employees, the vast majority of respondents agreed that personal leadership of employees can be encouraged (65.3%), or at least partially (33.9%). This indicates the openness of employees to the promotion of personal leadership.

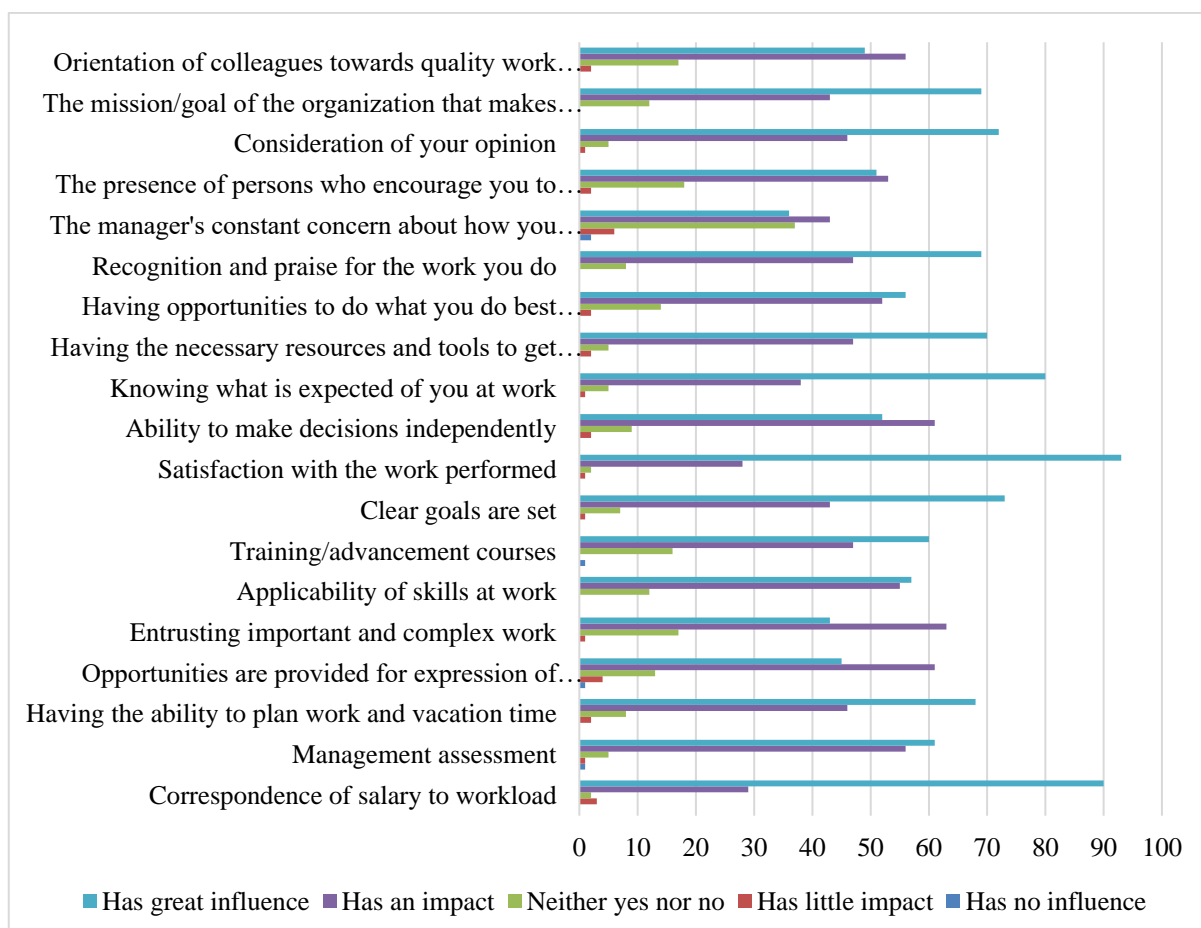
When researching the organization where they work, the vast majority of respondents answered that employee leadership is encouraged there (69.4%), but a quarter of respondents (25.8%) could not answer this question. 8 respondents (4.8%) answered this question negatively. This shows that it is difficult for some employees to assess the organization's position on this issue.

Analyzing the question of the ways in which the personal leadership of employees could be encouraged, it can be seen that it is important to notice the initiatives of employees and praise them (76%), and it is also important not to forget to delegate tasks related to leadership (70%). The least encouraging forms are the explanation of why leadership in the organization is important (43 %) and that the leadership requirement is raised as one of the possible aspects to apply for a higher position (54 %). This shows that recognition and verbal encouragement from the manager is very important. Material incentive was noted as one of the encouraging forms of leadership by slightly more than half of the respondents (57%). Here it can be seen that most organizations already have most of the tools to encourage employees' personal leadership, i.e. verbal encouragement, confidence, personal example.



Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 7. Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question: "In what Forms could the Personal Leadership of Employees be Encouraged?"**



Source: created by the authors.

**Figure 8. Score Distribution of Work Engagement Factors**

When assessing the factors that have the greatest influence on engagement in work (Figure 8), the respondents rated the satisfaction with the work performed (93%) and the



salary that would be appropriate for the workload (90%) the most. The constant concern of managers has the least influence on employee engagement (36%). Other factors such as management appreciation, opportunities to plan work and vacation time, opportunities to express creativity, being entrusted with important and challenging work, applicability of skills at work, training/qualifications, clear goals, ability to make independent decisions, knowing what is expected, necessary resources and tools having, the opportunity to do what you do best every day, praise and recognition, encouraging people, taking into account the opinions of the respondents were rated by the respondents with a similar distribution as having an influence or having a very strong influence. This shows that there is no single correct option for involving an employee in organizational activities.

Summarizing the results, it can be concluded that this organization is focused on its employees. Most employees are loyal and care about the future of the organization, and leaders in this organization create a positive work environment and are able to promote employee motivation and job satisfaction. Employees describe a leader as a self-confident, proactive, communicative, critical and strategic thinking individual, as well as emotional intelligence. A significant number of employees can classify themselves as having these qualities in part, and it is believed that personal leadership is important in the existence of the organization. It is personal leadership that is named as providing motivation and responsibility, as well as providing an opportunity to work more efficiently and productively, and as a result, to be more involved in organizational activities. According to the collected data, personal leadership manifests itself in initiative at work, proposing new ideas, providing feedback, it can be encouraged by encouraging and praising employees, as well as by delegating tasks to them, allowing the leadership potential to unfold.

### ***3.1 Analysis of the Results of the Survey of Managers' Interviews***

During the qualitative study, the following aspects were discussed: the importance of leadership in modern organizations; effectiveness of personal leadership in the organization; the impact of employee engagement and empowerment on organizational performance.

First of all, the aim of the interview was to identify the views of the informants on the importance of leadership and its role. Analyzing the received answers, it became clear that it is important to distinguish management from leadership (Informant 1). When asked why the topic of leadership is significant in the activities of modern organizations, each of the subjects had observations on this issue. Informant 1 indicated that leadership is a new way of working with people: "it would probably be difficult to follow some "old traditions" of how to lead and how to work with people." Informant 2 indicated that the leader has an important position in motivating employees to work and that his role is to show the "bigger picture": "the leader is the person who can see your potential to grow." Informant 3 summarized that almost everything depends on leadership: "the success of the company, I think, is inseparable from the right, motivated people, and I think that this is the main leadership style that either empowers people or actually suppresses them in some way." When the informants were asked whether leadership is important only for people in leadership positions, they all answered unequivocally that it is not. In the opinion of informant 1, "now it is impossible to do without a certain form of leadership in any field". Informant 2 states that "if you feel the urge to lead and maybe sometimes mentor others, you don't necessarily have to stick to a position." Informant 3 noticed that perhaps this is even the reverse option, "the purpose of leadership is not to lead, but to inspire to do something, to give freedom and trust. Being able to speak up, being able to express

one's opinion and being able to implement and enthrall others - this is what leadership is all about." It can be concluded that the expression of leadership in an organization is important at all levels, regardless of the position of power. When asked what, in the managers' opinion, are the personal qualities that help effective leadership, Informant 1 singled out openness and sincerity and partial perfectionism, Informant 2 mentioned being close to the team, and Informant 3 emphasized simplicity and the understanding that you are not perfect or special "understanding what you are and where you are, trusting people, wanting people to be inspired, wanting people to improve, wanting them to take something away", and emphasized that the most important thing for her as a manager is freedom, trust and encouragement to grow. Summarizing, one can see the repetition and emphasis on soft skills of leaders.

Delving deeper into the phenomenon of leadership, the informants had to describe what, in their opinion, is the personal leadership of an employee. According to Informant 1, personal leadership is "when you are able to guide yourself in certain moments, i.e. i.e. to know what your values are, what motivates you, etc.", while Informant 2 had a hard time answering this question. Informant 3 summarized that it is "the desire to go to work, to achieve results, to feel meaning and to feel that you have learned something." From the answers, it can be said that motivation plays a big role in personal leadership. When asked whether this personal leadership is important and necessary for employees who do not hold managerial positions, all informants answered positively. According to Informant 3, "a person is happy with what he did or his result. When he can create his own result, when he has an idea, and ideas come when you want to do something, when you want to lead."

When delving more into the expression of personal leadership, the informants had to say where personal leadership comes from - whether from the employee or from the environment. Opinions differed somewhat here. From Informant 1's point of view, personal leadership is more driven by the environment, while Informant 2 and Informant 3 said that both sides are at work here. Informant 3 summarizes personal leadership as "one thing you can try very hard to prove leadership, but if it is not valued, then naturally you will not feel satisfaction and you will be suppressed further." Then you have a medium that encourages you to do - directs, helps, it's naturally easier." Personal leadership is mentioned as having a close relationship with the involvement of employees in the organizational processes. Informant 2 observes that this connection is direct and sees from his examples that those people who have leadership qualities are usually involved in activities and are able to go a little further than others.

When analyzing what influences employee engagement, the managers singled out faith in the organization where you work, understanding whether you are in the right role/position, and that the organization itself accepts, encourages and responds, i.e. i.e. internal and external factors that determine employee engagement. When managers of e-commerce organizations were asked why it is important to empower employees, similar answers were given. Informant 1 states that empowerment leads to human development "it means that tasks can become more difficult, work quality improves, team results improve and in general you move forward and again by empowering you build confidence." Informant 2 mentions that empowerment is a very big part of motivation "it seems to me that it is very important to give that medium to the person so that he can search for those solutions himself and then a great motivation comes", and Informant 3 notices that empowering the employee opens the way to success "when you empower a person, it happens when a person sees: what I can do differently? What can I change? Where can I see some innovations? empowerment really drives creativity and improvement and improvement." After asking about the ways in which employees are empowered in the organization, everyone emphasized trust and permission to take

responsibility as much as the employee wants. Taking into account the results of the study, after analyzing the statements of the research participants, it can be said that the expression of leadership in the e-commerce company chosen for the study is an important part of the organizational culture, which is applied to all employees, regardless of the positions held. It is soft skills that are emphasized as influencing effective leadership. Both the environment and the person himself have the power to demonstrate personal leadership, which has a strong connection with the employee's involvement in the organization's operational processes, as well as empowerment.

#### **4. Discussion and summary**

Summing up the research, it can be said that the function of a leader is important in order to increase the efficiency of employees' activities and to achieve organizational goals. The very role of a leader in this e-commerce platform creates a positive work environment, increases employee motivation, job satisfaction, and also inspires others to follow his example. Employees describe a leader as a self-confident, proactive, communicative, critical and strategic thinking individual, as well as emotional intelligence. Based on the results of the study, it can be said that in this e-platform, the leader's ability to promptly solve problems, take responsibility for his actions, understand the needs of employees and listen to their ambitions is very important, which is why he is able to communicate effectively and convey ideas smoothly. Leadership is defined as a new way of working with people and a large part of the success of the organization depends on it.

The data also shows that a large proportion of employees can identify themselves as having these and other listed characteristics, which are classified as leadership traits, which indicates that the company is interested in promoting leadership regardless of the position in the hierarchy in the organization. A significant number of employees believe that personal leadership is important in the life of the organization, which includes motivation, achieving one's own goals, seeing meaning, and involvement, which is mentioned as one of the main aspects when talking about personal leadership. Namely, personal leadership is defined as providing motivation and responsibility, and providing an opportunity to work more efficiently and productively, as a result of which employees tend to be more involved in organizational activities.

According to the collected data, personal leadership manifests itself in initiative, offering new ideas, and providing feedback. E-commerce managers mention the benefits of empowering employees, when an environment is created for the employee to independently search for and set goals, solutions, etc., which can complicate tasks, improve work quality, results, and increase self-confidence. Most e-commerce company employees agree that personal leadership can be encouraged. It is mentioned that personal leadership can be encouraged by the leader praising the employee, encouraging him to make decisions independently, and delegating certain tasks. Managers say that personal leadership is also greatly influenced by the environment, which can not only direct or help, but also inhibit. It can be concluded that this e-commerce company is interested in promoting personal leadership of employees according to their needs i.e. i.e. enables decision-making, is open to ideas, provides feedback. Factors such as a healthy work environment where pay matches the workload and clear goals have a significant impact on employee engagement. Although the theoretical part highlighted the observations of the authors (Van Wart, Roman, Wang & Liu, 2019; Sow, Aborbie, 2018) about technology competencies that are extremely important for e-leaders, the

participants of the conducted study emphasized such leadership competencies as the ability to work in a team, to encourage others, not to be afraid of risks, to take responsibility for decisions and to encourage others to do so.

## Conclusions

When analyzing the specifics of leadership in e-business, the emphasis is on faster adaptation to changes and the ability to give employees more freedom when making decisions. This shows that the e-leader must have specific knowledge that is necessary to face e-business challenges i.e. e-communication, e-social skills, e-team building, e-change management, e-trust and e-technology competencies.

Employee leadership is greatly influenced by engaging managers who lead other team members by example. By involving others, leaders empower employees to make decisions by giving them the tools or psychological empowerment i.e. supporting, sharing roles, etc. The theoretical analysis also revealed the relationship between personal leadership and commitment to the organization, which is related to both individual and organizational factors.

Empirical research reveals that employees' personal leadership is stimulated by psychological factors i.e. leader support, encouragement when making decisions, as well as feedback, i.e. praise. It was established that the personal leadership of e-commerce company employees is influenced by both the organization and the individual himself, i.e. a medium must be created that would encourage it - direct it or help it.

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## **DARBUOTOJŲ ASMENINĖS LYDERYSTĖS VEIKSNIŲ ELEKTRONINĖJE PREKYBOJE VERTINIMAS**

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### **SANTRAUKA**

Santrauka.

Šiuo darbu siekta ištirti darbuotojų asmeninės lyderystės raišką skatinančius veiksnius atliekant lietuvių startuolio elektroninės komercijos platformos atvejo analizę. Pasitelktas kiekybinis ir kokybinis tyrimas. Kiekybiniam tyrimui duomenys buvo renkami taikant apklausos metodą. Taip galima surinkti duomenis ir juos apibendrinti paaiškinant tam tikrą reiškinį. Šiuo atveju pasirinkta e. komercijos įmonė, teikianti interneto ir reklamos paslaugas. Anketa buvo išsiųsta e. komercijos platformos darbuotojams, dirbantiems Lietuvos padalinyje. Kokybinis tyrimas atliktas taikant pusiau struktūruoto interviu metodą siekiant įvertinti socialinių santykių dinamiką. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad didžiausią poveikį darbuotojų asmeninei lyderystei daro psichologiniai veiksniai ir gaunamas grįžtamasis ryšys. Taip pat svarbu asmeninės lyderystės raiškai organizacijoje tiek organizacija, tiek ir pats individas.

**REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** darbuotojų lyderystė; darbuotojų įgalinimas; darbuotojų į(si)pareigojimas; asmeninė lyderystė; e. lyderystė; e. prekyba.