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# Sustainable Leadership, The Role of Leadership in Post-Pandemic Sustainability

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## ABSTRACT

The pandemic has reconfigured several aspects of everyday life: interpersonal relationships, communication, studies, work, economy, etc. In this long list of changes we also find leadership. Sustainable leadership proposes to align organizations towards a vision of empathy and resilience in the face of current problems and future crises due to a better understanding of the environment and the ability to anticipate challenging situations.

Keywords: Leadership, Sustainability, Post pandemic crisis.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of the crisis generated during the COVID19 pandemic created a snowball effect with an environment of different overlapping and interrelated crises that are complex in their management and represent a challenge for the leadership of organizations. The social volatility, uncertainty and urgency of the emerging challenges intensified, the time to solve them became shorter and traditional planning and management tools became obsolete. (Calvo, 2021) Faced with this impact, those who lead organizations were pressured to make decisions with little certainty and much uncertainty, and with the responsibility of sustaining trust not only in their teams but also in society. More and more is expected from the leadership role to be able to create environments that are committed, resilient, sustainable and capable of creating positive impact value.

The pandemic highlighted that the environment and climate are closely related to health. Climate change increases the likelihood of a health crisis like COVID19. (Sonia Marcela - Rosas, 2020) These perceptions more focused on the consequences of polluting economic models pose new challenges for organizations as it broadens the dimensions of sustainability. As a consequence of the health crisis, sustainability went from being a business option to a growth opportunity for organizations. The limitations and changes in the functioning of society created challenges for the sustainability of organizations. The new need based on a relationship of quality consumption with generating a positive impact on social or environmental issues, give a new organizational approach having as a principle the empathy and the creation of well-being.

Every crisis brings change, and leadership was no exception. Crises transform the leadership of organizations and the way they evaluate how they can adapt to disruptive changes, something that is becoming more and more frequent. Urgent action during a crisis requires immediate behaviors, while in a post-crisis environment it involves a balance between analysis, reflection and action. (Sergio Julio, 2009) Expectations of organizational involvement have increased in a post-crisis environment. Becoming agents of change is the greatest challenge in the face of social and environmental problems that pose new needs to be solved. Leadership with a vision of generating impact in the medium and long term, but with the capacity to provide well-being in the short term, requires a commitment to sustainability through purposes that integrate environmental, social, governance and educational criteria.

Currently the Educational System, apart from its historical role of teaching content by areas, has been interested in finding techniques that facilitate both the student and the teacher in improving the understanding of each of these as are the didactic resources as strategies that enable the capture of ideas. (Muñoz - Hernandez y otros, 2020).

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## 2. LEADERSHIP IN A CRISIS

In 2019 the globalized world came to an abrupt halt due to the COVID19 pandemic. The world experienced a health crisis that triggered others intertwined and empowered each other in a chain reaction. Society maintained an accelerated expansion and suddenly faced a situation that not only slowed it down almost completely, but also forced it to rethink the path it had been following.

Connectivity conditions changed and the need to improve the use and scope of ICTs for the continuity of operations transformed the vision of how to transmit information. The educational sector had more complex conditions than the business sector, to provide access in a situation of immediacy, unclear protocols and lack of inclusion. (Cruz - Carbonel y otros, 2020) .During the first months, society faced an uncertainty about its functioning that ended

up overwhelming the action capacities of those who were in charge in all the different public and private organizations. The lack of knowledge of the impact and repercussions that a pandemic could cause generated a series of organizational crises that had serious consequences.

Responding to the challenges of the pandemic with innovation and resilience is part of the role of leadership. Operating in an environment with different overlapping crises requires adaptation to technology as a business tool and key attributes such as empathy, sensitivity to the environment or interpersonal connection, for assertive communication. It involves a transformational analysis of the leader's attributes, the follower's characteristics, the context, the leadership process and the results. Leadership in sustainable transformation must have a systemic and collaborative approach to initiate unprecedented processes, creating sustainable innovation systems. **(González - Castro y otros, 2021)**

In an environment of limited mobility and isolation, leadership has also had to adapt to the remote work modality. Virtuality poses an opportunity for organizations to create a new scenario of working at home as a business policy, which presents a challenge to leadership as it leads to modify and adapt the leadership style through the use of technology and remote communication. **(Torner, 2020)** There is no absolute leadership, but if there is one thing that those who have studied leadership in crisis agree on, it is that in an adverse context it requires leaders who communicate assertively and possess emotional intelligence. **(Jaime A. Riquelme - Castañeda, 2020)**

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### 3. POST-PANDEMIC SUSTAINABILITY

The global financial downturn gave way to a new way of adding value to organizations. The use of technology for the basic operation of organizations went from being optional to being crucial for their growth. Having the possibility of transferring the normal face-to-face operation to remote work encouraged the development of technology for connectivity as a basic work tool. **(Gasparini, 2020)** Different options were given after the staging of virtuality and the use of technology for the development of business and daily activities. Rethinking, adapting and innovating are key to sustainability in post-pandemic times.

The post pandemic resulted in greater visualization of the form of consumption and the impact of consumption. Market trends changed and rapid adaptation is a requirement for sustainability. This adaptation is supported by an articulation of experiences during the stages of training in each technological advance, allowing to be more self-aware in the transformation of knowledge and its influence in the future. **(Cruz- Vega, 2019)** The emergence of virtuality opened the possibility of fostering innovation in production alternatives of social or environmental impact and the purposes to provide solutions to this type of problems as a parallel objective to consumer satisfaction. This added value that results in the creation of concepts such as B Corporations, gives way to a new vision of the company. **(Pacheco - Sánchez & Rodríguez – Téllez, 2019)** companies, give way to a new vision of post-pandemic sustainability, whose return to normality is to accept that we will not return to the same thing, and on the contrary means leaving behind invasive consumption models, polluting or with negative social or environmental consequences.

In this area of the new normality with green approaches highlight the change-generating ventures, where alternative forms of consumption are made known, with immediate impact on a social problem, as are the "B Companies", new business models that analyze the changes in consumer sensitivity focuses on the proposal of organizational sustainability, and the fact that a company presents these characteristics implies a higher degree of credibility and therefore economic growth **(Pacheco - Sánchez & Rodríguez – Téllez, 2019)**. This allows a boost in sustainable leadership, since it is about how to continue growing economically, based on empathy to generate social welfare and preserve the environment.

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### 4. SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Leadership can be understood as the ability to motivate or influence an environment and carry out actions to achieve an objective. Sustainability is understood as the balance between environmental care, social welfare and economic growth with short and medium-term impact, but with long-term commitment. Sustainability is a topic on the business and academic agenda, due to its impact on production models and consumption trends, whose dynamics depend on business initiatives to generate competitiveness and innovation in organizations. **(Rodríguez - Moreno, 2016)** In this sense, aspects of socioeconomic and environmental wellbeing must be integrated into their production practices. **(Manzano - Duran y otros, 2021)**

The opportunity to integrate in a balanced way the economic, social and environmental spheres allows a form of sustainable leadership that includes society and the environment in its business objectives. Sustainable leadership provides better conflict management based on assertive communication, as well as the alignment of values, mission and vision of the organization with social and environmental welfare, prioritizing people as assets of great value, and creates opportunities for innovation thinking about the future of the market with socio-environmental and economic commitment. **(Angarita - Vega y otros, 2021)**

Sustainable leadership enhances the attraction of talent, as well as the commitment of people and, as a result, stakeholders. The development of technology allows sustainable leadership to have better platforms and networks for innovation, which provides more possibilities for gaining competitive advantages.

The world has transformed rapidly in the last decade bringing with it imminent changes in the way people participate in society, how they connect, interact or lead. While lifestyles have changed, the challenges facing leadership are the result of everything that has been happening before the pandemic; being sustainable, innovative, applying new technologies and understanding the consumer or customer from new perspectives based on a positive residual impact.

Consequently, the study of the main forms of the productive activity of the mind depends on the cultural life in which the individual is immersed. (Lemus - Quintero, 2021).

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## 5. RESULTS

The present difficulties in the economy were largely caused by the COVID-19, since it has affected all countries in the world, therefore, some good alternatives, which are visionary for a more efficient business management, are leadership and resilience, the accompaniment of professionals, planning, long-term orientation and determination in the face of uncertainty. (Deloitte., 2020)

Colombia is one of the best performing emerging markets in Latin America in terms of economy, as it recovered quickly from the pandemic, showing a 10.7% growth in GDP in 2021 and in the first three months of the current year, its increase was 8.5%; Given that Colombia is one of the most mega-diverse countries and is home to almost 10% of the world's recognized species, Colombians know that they must stabilize the growth of the economy and bet on the preservation of the environment, since the country is currently more fragile, which causes more floods, landslides, lack of water and these events negatively affect agriculture, the health of society, commercial activities and critical infrastructure. (Banco Mundial Birf - Aif, 2022)

Additionally, Confecámaras, indicates that 2,126 Colombian companies have embraced the exercise of Commercial Interest and Collective Interest Companies or BIC and the departments that show leadership in this movement are Cundinamarca - Bogotá with 426 companies, followed by Risaralda with 323, Valle del Cauca with 172, Antioquia with 150, Boyacá with 131 and Santander with 123 occupies the sixth position in industries that most point to this type of sustainable business. (Fayad, 2022)

In terms of sustainability in the business environment, Colombia oscillates in a high percentage, as 77% of its companies practice this strategy and leaves as a reference an increase of 32 points over last year, as indicated by the study on "Sustainability in the Latin American Leadership Agenda" of SAP, a multinational company that provides cloud-based software"; For this evaluation, organizations from various sectors were grouped, where it was revealed that approximately 34% of companies have introduced the SDGs of the United Nations in the current year, which emphasize mitigating the gender gap, promoting water saving and minimizing the negative effect on biodiversity. (Portafolio, 2022)

Due to the above, in Latin America, Colombia is in second place after Argentina, which has 38% in sustainable organizational progress; on the other hand, the president of the multinational SAP, Cristina Palmaka, states that productivity and sustainability can work hand in hand simultaneously and that is the reason why companies are increasingly inclined to this strategy, which is characterized by its responsibility to the environment and society. (Portafolio, 2022)

"Currently, among the attributes that national managers highlight most among their peers in terms of leadership skills are in first place the ability to adapt to change (44%), followed by being innovative (43%), having the ability to collaborate across the company (29%), being resilient (27%) and being brave when it comes to taking risks (25%), according to data from the auditing firm Grant Thornton 2021. According to a 2020 report "Shortage of Job Opportunities for Young People" by the firm Manpower Group, 44% of respondents claimed to have taken courses related to strengthening soft skills." (Acis, S,f)

Sustainable leadership creates resilience in companies to face future unforeseen events, since it provides effective understanding of both external and internal business situations in order to anticipate the difficulties that arise; in other words, the term sustainability and cooperative is more attractive to talents and also makes employees more motivated, demonstrating greater organizational commitment; in addition, this leadership model is successful, competitive in the long term and maintains an approach that produces positive effects. (Ruiz, 2021)

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## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable leadership in a post-pandemic era with organizational approaches based on empathy towards the environment and social welfare becomes a tool to focus efforts in balance with market needs and new consumer expectations.

The crisis represented by the limitations of the pandemic quarantine gave society a space to evaluate the path and consequences of the development that sustains society, and to analyze what options there are to change the way of life focusing on a model of empathy with the environment and the social problems that open gaps that condition the development of society.

Sustainable leadership is based on the vision and will to generate long-term positive impact. Digital tools, new technologies and the virtual environment are presented as new conditioning factors in leadership. Leadership under the remote work modality presents particularities that have as key the knowledge of this technological environment.

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