"The role of leadership qualities of the management in preserving and ensuring the functionality of relocated Ukrainian higher education institutions during the war"

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BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

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THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF THE MANAGEMENT IN PRESERVING AND ENSURING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF RELOCATED UKRAINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DURING THE WAR

Abstract

The war in Ukraine has led to significant changes in the functioning of higher education institutions. Many universities from the eastern and southern regions of the country were forced to relocate to safer areas. The study examines the role of leadership qualities of the management of Ukrainian HEIs relocated due to the war on their success in functioning in the new conditions from the perspective of the academic staff. The research methods included an anonymous online questionnaire of 162 academic staff members from Berdiansk State Pedagogical University and Melitopol State Pedagogical University named after Bohdan Khmelnytsky. The study identified leadership qualities that HEI staff identified as key to stabilizing the institution's operations in crisis conditions. Responsibility was named by 53.09% of respondents, and strategic thinking by 44.44%. Also, it was found that respondents, in general, positively assessed the results of leadership actions of management in difficult conditions: 29.6% rated them as "very effective" and 54.3% as "effective." Despite the overall successful adaptation of the studied HEIs, weaknesses in management decisions were revealed, including insufficient emotional support for academic staff and the absence of developed crisis action plans. The study's conclusions emphasize the importance of further developing professional and moral-volitional qualities of management representatives for effective HEI governance in crisis conditions. The findings may be useful in creating specialized professional development programs for HEI managers in conditions of political, economic, and other instability.

Keywords	leadership qualities, relocation, higher education management, crisis management, emotional support, strategic thinking
JEL Classification	I23, I25, I29, O15

INTRODUCTION

As of March 2023, 3,180 educational institutions in Ukraine have been damaged by shelling and bombing, of which 350 institutions have been completely destroyed. These include 116 higher education institutions and research institutions (CIVICA, 2023). The outflow of teachers, staff, and students abroad has significantly depleted the human capital of universities, and displaced HEIs are forced to adapt to new conditions without sufficient material resources (Tsybuliak et al., 2023; Kozmenko et al., 2023). In addition, the constant threat of missile strikes, unstable funding, and deep psychological exhaustion among the staff complicate both operational activities and long-term planning (Stadnik et al., 2022). All this poses extremely difficult tasks

for HEI leaders to ensure the stability of work, adapt to crisis conditions, and support the staff in preserving the academic community.

Leadership qualities in HEI management play a crucial role in this process, either facilitating or hindering effective governance under crisis conditions. They, and not just professionalism, are the driving force behind educational changes, motivating teachers to achieve their goals and ensuring rapid adaptation and implementation of innovations (Carola et al., 2022; Vientseva et al., 2024). Currently, there is insufficient research on which specific leadership qualities contribute to the successful adaptation and stable functioning of HEIs displaced by the war.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Management of a higher education institution (HEI) is a complex and dynamic process that combines interrelated functions: planning, organization, motivation, coordination, communication, and control. They also cover scientific research, administrative operations, financial management, resource allocation, infrastructure maintenance, and public involvement. Effective governance integrates academic, research, and operational activities, contributing to an environment conducive to innovation, excellence, and sustainable development. A decisive role in this is played by the head of the higher education institution, who, in addition to professional competencies, must have the ability to work effectively with people (Black, 2015; Udin et al., 2019; Barrientos-Báez et al., 2022).

In the scientific literature, leadership is defined as a process in which a person sets a goal or direction of activity for a team and, thanks to his competence, authority, and beliefs, involves him in achieving the desired result (Agwoje & Okeleke, 2023; Kurniady et al., 2020; Taylor & Machado, 2006). Leadership is based on human relations and motivates and unites people around a common idea, while management directs to results, performance of tasks, and achievement of goals (Yielder et al., 2004; Moreno-Carmona et al., 2022). Leadership involves determining the trajectory of collective development, maintaining momentum, and maintaining team spirit (Bryman, 2007). A leader is an initiator of change, a strategic thinker and a motivator who creates an environment conducive to the success of the entire team (Genza, 2021).

Since leadership is a dynamic and complex process that depends on many variables, such as time, conditions, and people, it cannot be static (Guo et al., 2021). Therefore, management of the leadership qualities of the heads of HEIs is important for solving complex issues related to higher education quality assurance (Nair et al., 2010). The concept of "leadership qualities" is considered through the prism of specific competencies and behavioral characteristics that contribute to the successful management of HEIs (Black, 2015).

The lack of active interaction of the management of HEIs with academic staff in order to achieve a common goal significantly reduces their motivation for effective work (Kasalak et al., 2022). Therefore, leadership qualities should be considered not only as the ability to organize and manage all processes in a HEI but also to maintain effective communication with colleagues (Drew, 2010). Thus, the continuous development of personal and professional qualities of the management of HEIs will ensure its successful operation (Ameijde et al., 2009).

Among the professional leadership qualities of the management of HEIs, researchers prefer the ability to quickly adapt to new technological and social realities, in particular, the "4C system" – communication, cooperation, critical thinking, creativity (Kurnyady et al., 2020); change and take on new transformative forms (Agwoje & Okeleke, 2023).

Effective leadership is characterized by systematic support of employees, provision of open consultations (Lumby, 2012), professional mentoring (Garrison & Vaughan, 2020), and culture of interaction (Burhanuddin, 2017). The personal leadership qualities of the heads of HEIs on the basis of a value-oriented approach (McCaffery, 2018) help to create an atmosphere of trust in the team, which contributes to the implementation of innovations and increased corporate commitment (Maalouf, 2023).

HEIs face various consequences of natural disasters, political conflicts and pandemics (Nikjoo et al., 2022; Farnell & van't Land, 2023); crisis of autonomy, reduction of state funding and increased integration into international ratings (Christopherson et al., 2014); social crises due to tensions in relations between students, teachers and communities (Yue & She, 2015; Vientseva et al., 2024). Other challenges, such as environmental ecology and public health issues, diversity and inequality, the impact of technology and social media, and the crisis of democracy, also significantly affect the social reality and higher education system today (Mazurkiewicz, 2021).

In conditions of uncertainty, especially during crises, such as pandemics or other global problems, improvisational decisions made by the management of HEIs play a crucial role (Tabesh & Vera, 2020; Scaglione et al., 2019). It is not about scattered experiments of leaders but about the combination of traditional decision-making processes (comprehensive analysis) and intuition, which is influenced by the leadership qualities of the individual. Proponents of this theory believe that relying only on professional competence cannot overcome the pressure, urgency, and unpredictability caused by crisis situations.

Inefficient management of a university in crisis conditions can lead to deterioration of its reputation and dissatisfaction among faculty and students (Nikjoo et al., 2022), loss of financial stability, decrease in the quality of educational services, reduction of staff (El-Khawas, 2011), etc.

In such an unpredictable environment, HEI managers must be ready to adapt their professional strategies to ensure motivation and create a positive climate in the team (Taylor et al., 2006). In crisis conditions, the following leadership qualities are decisive: readiness for quick actions, adaptability, and the ability to coordinate efforts at different levels of management (Nikjoo et al., 2022). Objectivity and accountability are also critical, as effective leaders in higher education know when to stop allocating resources to something that has not achieved its goals and is no longer useful in a particular situation (Druguş & Landøy, 2014). Therefore, in order to continue to ensure the effectiveness of HEI work and strengthen the trust of

the academic community in difficult conditions, HEI managers must demonstrate adaptability and resilience (Deliva, 2024). In addition, it is important to have as many allies/partners as possible who can help overcome the crisis, emphasizing the importance of cooperation, solidarity, and respect in relationships. Without this, HEI managers will be left alone in their efforts to address the consequences of crises and achieve the ultimate goal – high-quality higher education (Mazurkiewicz, 2021).

Ideally, special programs should be developed in advance to minimize the consequences of crises for the academic community and the reputation of the university, as was done, for example, at the University of Sydney (University Emergency Response Plan, 2016), which faced political crises, fires, accidents and releases of hazardous substances. A similar document, Stanford University's Emergency Management Plan (SUEMP, 2019), identifies leadership qualities that facilitate rapid decision-making, risk assessment, and coordination between different departments and external emergency services. At the Medical University of Vienna, management has also developed a business continuity plan during emergencies such as pandemics or economic crises (Vienna Medical University, 2023). This required significant strategic thinking, coordination between all departments, resource management skills, and responsible decision making.

However, it is impossible to foresee large-scale military actions. Such a situation, more than ever, requires the mobilization of leadership qualities in the management of HEIs at the right time. This especially applies to such critical situations as moving a university (Nenko et al., 2023; Nikolaev et al., 2023; Popovych et al., 2023; Tsibulyak et al., 2023), or even the functioning of a HEI "without walls" (Lopatina et al., 2023; Sychikova et al., 2023). The main attention in the described studies is focused on the general presentation of the experience of adaptation of military personnel to work under martial law. The leadership of the Donetsk National Technical University has identified the preservation of personnel potential as a priority task. After all, some teachers remained in the occupied territories, and others moved or changed their field of activity, which led to a decrease in the quality

of education (Zakharova et al., 2023). For example, Volodymyr Dahl Eastern Ukrainian National University, using the experience of displacement in 2014, developed an effective development strategy adapted to modern challenges and threats. This made it possible not only to ensure the continuity of the educational process in the conditions of a full-scale invasion but also to strengthen the competitive position of the university in the market of educational services (Porkuyan et al., 2023). For the teachers of the Sumy National University, the biggest problem was the lack of pre-developed plans for the functioning of the university under martial law (Petrushenko et al., 2023). Mariupol State University suffered significant material and technical losses as a result of hostilities, but with the support of the public, it quickly adapted to the new requirements and resumed the educational process in distance mode (Orzhel et al., 2023).

A critical analysis of experiences similar to the Ukrainian context can provide the management of HEIs with valuable information to activate specific leadership qualities. For example, Tel Aviv University (TAU) faced the problem of mobilizing students for the army and introduced a change in the format of exams, additional sessions, and provision of psychological support. Such flexibility in managing the educational process and care, in particular through the creation of a hotline and the involvement of charitable funds to support students, allows the university to remain stable and contribute to social stability even in the extreme conditions of war (Rosenbaum, 2024). The situation in Syrian HEIs is even more complicated. Management is trying to adjust to limited resources, mass emigration of faculty, and damaged infrastructure by relaxing admission requirements, protecting universities from attacks, and integrating student conscripts. However, government control over HEIs, increasing corruption, and discrimination worsen the atmosphere, reducing the quality of higher education and limiting academic freedom (Milton, 2019).

However, the main attention in the described studies is focused on the general presentation of the experience of adaptation of HEIs to work in wartime conditions. The goal of the study, however, is a bit deeper and more specific – to determine the role of leadership qualities of the management of Ukrainian HEIs relocated during the war for their preservation and successful functioning in new conditions from the point of view of the academic staff.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Institutional context

This study was conducted in October 2024 at Berdiansk State Pedagogical University and Melitopol State Pedagogical University named after Bohdan Khmelnytsky, which were relocated to Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, due to the temporary occupation of part of Ukraine's territory by Russia. As of today, the educational processes in these HEIs are carried out using distance learning technologies.

2.2. Participants

The study involved 162 academic staff representatives who were asked to analyze and evaluate the significance of the leadership qualities of the management of HEI. This selection of respondents was driven by the fact that the leadership of these universities faced complex challenges, representing a unique experience in global practice as it combines management under the conditions of armed conflict and relocation. The teachers were selected as the main category respondents for the study (among other categories of university staff) due to their direct connection to the educational process and strategic managerial decisions. Their evaluations are the most relevant for analyzing the leadership qualities management of HEI, as the relocation crisis has had a significant impact specifically on academic activities. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. Since the questionnaire was single, electronic, and anonymous, the data are presented in a summarized format. In addition, this approach allows us to focus on common trends and patterns in the responses of respondents, regardless of their place of work, focusing on common problems and challenges faced by relocated HEIs. Since both universities operate in similar crisis conditions, their teachers face similar adaptation problems, which makes it advisable to present the sample as a holistic group for analysis. This helps

to increase the representativeness of the study results and avoids possible biases due to differences in the size or structure of individual institutions.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Criterion	Subcategory	% (n)
Gender	Women	81.5 (n = 132)
	Men	16 (n = 26)
	Prefer not to answer	2.5 (n = 4)
Age	20-35	24.7 (n = 40)
	36-45	35.8 (n = 58)
	46-60	33.3 (n = 54)
	60+	6.2 (n = 10)

2.3. Instrument and procedure

A questionnaire was developed for the study, with its questions based on an analysis of current regulatory documents and academic research related to the leadership qualities of the management of HEI in crisis conditions. The existing literature on the influence of individual personality traits of leadership on higher education management practices was analyzed, key themes and constructs related to leadership qualities were identified, and certain questions were adapted to reflect the specific challenges faced by higher education institution leadership in the context of armed conflict. Additionally, the developed questionnaire underwent internal review by two experts specializing in the study of educational leadership. This procedure improved the overall logic of the questions and helped eliminate ambiguities in their formulation.

The questionnaire included detailed information about the purpose of the study, the main procedure, and consisted of 18 questions (Appendix A), of which 14 were closed-ended and 4 were open-ended. The use of the Likert scale and ranking methods facilitated a more precise identification of the priority of various leadership qualities and provided a substantive analysis of the impact of leadership on the success of Ukrainian universities relocated due to the war. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods enabled the collection of objective data for comparison, while qualitative methods revealed unique perspectives of the respondents on the situation and uncovered additional important aspects (Bryman, 2004; Hallinger & Hosseingholizadeh, 2019; Northouse, 2018; Smith & Wolverton, 2010). This is valuable for understanding the leadership characteristics

of the management in relocated HEIs and for the further development of effective management strategies in crisis situations.

To analyze the responses to the open-ended questions, the content analysis method was applied (Insch et al., 1997; Lakshman, 2012). This approach allowed for the systematization of textual data, the identification of key themes, and a more in-depth and structured understanding of the respondents' arguments. The responses were anonymized, analyzed, and organized into a table using a coding system based on categories.

Google Forms with a questionnaire were sent to research participants via corporate email addresses. This method of data collection allowed for quick and systematized responses from a significant number of participants while also enabling them to share more detailed and honest perspectives on the topic. Furthermore, this approach ensured comfort and safety for respondents, considering their geographical locations and the security challenges within the country.

2.4. Ethical considerations

All methods and procedures of the study were strictly aligned with relevant ethical principles, including the Helsinki Declaration. The research adhered to ethical standards and was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee of Berdiansk State Pedagogical University (Protocol No. 9.1/2024 dated September 16, 2024). All participants provided informed voluntary consent to participate. They were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study, its duration, and assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their data. Respondents were notified that their responses would be used exclusively for scientific purposes and presented in an aggregated form for publication. Participants retained the right to withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any time without any consequences.

3. RESULTS

The surveyed academic staff positively assessed the success of their management's adaptation to the challenges caused by the war and relocation.
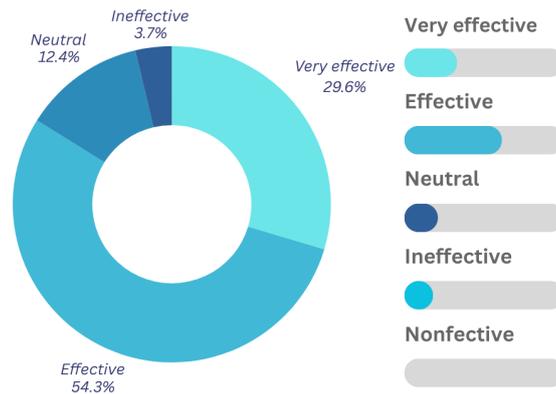
Figure 1. Respondent answers to the question: "How do you assess the adaptation of the management of your HEIs to the challenges caused by war and relocation?"

Nearly one-third (29.6%) rated the leadership's actions in organizing the work of the university in the new conditions as "very effective" and 54.3% as "effective". These figures indicate a high level of satisfaction among the faculty with the management's work during the crisis and a significant level of trust in the decisions they made (Figure 1). However, 12.4% of respondents took a neutral position, which may signal certain shortcomings in the management's work during the adaptation to new conditions or reflect the respondents' personal high expectations (since 3.7% chose the rating "ineffective").

These quantitative results are well complemented and specified by the respondents' answers to the open-ended question: "Which decision of the management of your HEI do you consider the most successful during the relocation?". The responses can be grouped into a few key themes (Table 2).

Under the theme of Relocation and Organization of University Operations, respondents emphasized management's ability to effectively organize the relocation process, ensuring a timely transition to new locations and the swift resumption of the ed-

Table 2. Key themes and respondents' feedback on the most successful decisions of the management during the HEIs relocation

Key theme	Examples of respondents' answers
Relocation and organization of university operations	"Timely relocation, resumption of the educational process... it was important for me to survive the first six months of the war". "The relocation was carried out effectively – the best decision. I don't know what I would have done if the university hadn't continued its full operation..." "Leaving the occupied area, quickly setting up operations in a new place". "Ensuring access to the online platform to continue the educational process without delays".
Preservation of the university structure	"The decision to preserve the university, its team, and modernize it according to the challenges of war and relocation. It was more than just fulfilling the professional duties of management". "Maintaining the university as an independent entity. The management prevented our university from merging with other institutions. I am grateful to our leadership for this because I feel comfortable working with my familiar team". "Autonomous work based on the unique "university without walls" model is very convenient and effective".
Support for staff and the educational process	"The prompt organization of remote learning, support for teachers and students, flexible communication system, and preservation of jobs". "Financial support for employees, active participation in international projects for affected universities". "Offline meetings for the team in different cities, support for clubs for students and faculty".
Partnership search and infrastructure adaptation	"Finding partners for temporary accommodation. I know that other universities weren't very eager to help us with this, but our leadership achieved good results". "Active promotion on social media, partnerships with cities and other universities, and leadership involvement in image-building activities gave us many new students despite the relocation and temporary inconveniences. This means that the university remains competitive".
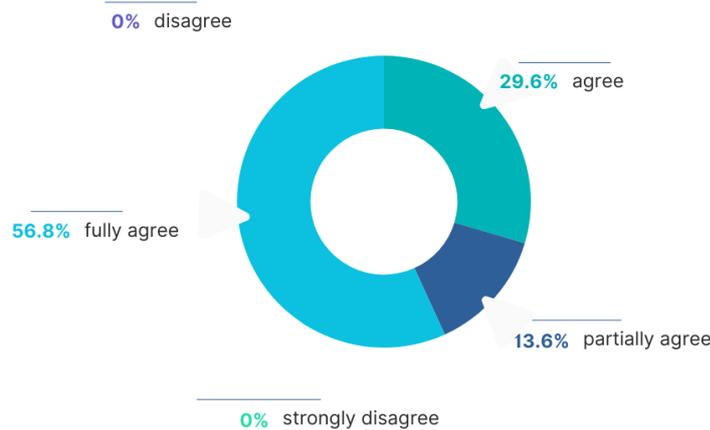
Figure 2. Respondent answers to the question: "To what extent do you agree with the statement: "The leadership qualities of the management significantly affect the success of HEI in relocation conditions?"

ucational process. Ensuring uninterrupted access to online learning platforms was also highlighted as a critical factor in maintaining continuity.

In the area of Preservation of the University Structure, respondents appreciated efforts to maintain the university's independence, prevent its merger with other institutions, and modernize its operations to meet the challenges of war and relocation. The implementation of innovative operational models, such as the "university without walls", was noted as particularly effective and convenient.

Regarding Support for Staff and the Educational Process, the management's efforts to establish remote learning, maintain jobs, and provide financial and emotional support were recognized. Flexible communication systems and additional initiatives, such as international collaborations and informal gatherings for staff and students, were also valued as means of fostering a supportive environment.

Finally, in the Partnership Search and Infrastructure Adaptation category, respondents acknowledged the management's success in forming partnerships for temporary accommodation and securing resources. Active promotion through social media, collaboration with cities and other universities, and initiatives to maintain the university's competitiveness were identified as significant achievements.

These responses illustrate that the management's actions during the relocation extended beyond immediate logistical and organizational measures. Strategic decisions that addressed broader institutional and staff needs were particularly well-received, highlighting the leadership's comprehensive approach to crisis management.

This thesis is supported by the high level of conviction among respondents that the leadership qualities of management representatives significantly affect the success of HEI in relocation conditions (Figure 2). The majority of those surveyed (56.8%) fully agree with this statement, while a significant portion (29.6%) agrees but without strong conviction. Only 13.6% selected the option "partially agree." These results, along with the fact that none of the respondents chose "disagree" or "strongly disagree", indicate the critical importance of leadership qualities in the successful operation of universities during relocation.

In addition, most survey participants highly rated the impact of management's leadership qualities on the academic performance of HEI (Figure 3). 19,8% of respondents noted that certain decisions "had a very positive impact," while 67.9% indicated a "positive impact." A small portion of respondents (11.1%) did not notice significant changes. Only 1.2% of respondents reported a "negative impact", which could be related to individual difficulties or specific circumstances.

To clarify, lecturers were asked to critically assess how management members demonstrated specific leadership qualities that contributed to the
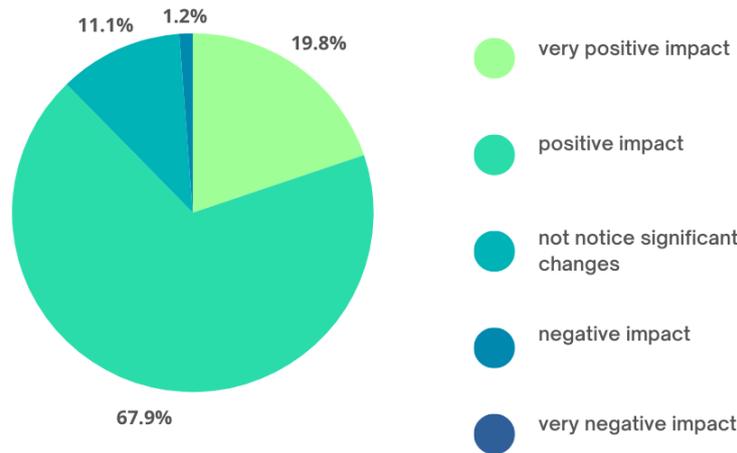
Figure 3. Respondent answers to the question: "To what extent did the leadership qualities of your management have impacted the academic performance of HEI under relocation conditions?"

successful adaptation and effective functioning of their HEIs in the context of relocation. The summarized results are presented in Table 3.

53.09% of respondents confirmed that representatives of the management of HEIs most often demonstrate responsibility, and 7.41% chose the option "does not demonstrate."

49.38% of respondents chose the ability to make innovative decisions as a personal quality of leadership. The options "very often" and "almost always" together accounted for another 30.86%. This indicates a general recognition by academic staff of the innovativeness of their leadership, although a small percentage (4.94%) believe that this leadership quality needs to be strengthened.

Teamwork ability can also be an important leadership quality, as in times of crisis, it is necessary not only to innovate and lead the academic staff but also to cooperate effectively and promote harmonious work among all its members. Assessing this aspect, 48.15% of respondents confirmed that their managers demonstrate teamwork ability at the highest level, while 33.34% rated it quite high but not perfectly, indicating a positive perception with room for improvement. Only 13.47% of respondents rated the management's ability to work in a team low.

81.48% of respondents confirmed the ability to delegate authority and strategic thinking of management to the management of HEIs: 44.44 choose the answer constantly, 18.52% – almost constantly, and 18.52% – very frequently.

Table 3. Assessment of the demonstration of leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs

Leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs	Values, n (%)						
	does not demonstrate	almost does not demonstrate	rarely demonstrates	moderately demonstrates	very frequently demonstrates	almost constantly demonstrates	constantly demonstrates
Teamwork ability	10 (6,17%)	6 (3,7%)	6 (3,6%)	8 (4,94%)	26 (16,05%)	28 (17,29%)	78 (48, 15%)
Strategic thinking	6 (3,7%)	8 (4,94%)	6 (3,7%)	8 (4,94%)	22 (13,58%)	40 (24,69%)	72 (44,44%)
Ability to make innovation	8 (4,94%)	10 (6,17%)	6 (3,7%)	8 (4,94%)	20 (12,34%)	30 (18,52%)	80 (49,38%)
Emotional support	16 (9,88%)	10 (6,17%)	6 (3,7%)	18 (11,11%)	24 (14,81%)	38 (23,46%)	50 (30,86%)
Flexibility	6 (3,7%)	8 (4,94%)	12 (7,41%)	12 (7,41%)	36 (22,22%)	24 (14,81%)	64 (39,51%)
Ability to delegate authority	4 (2,47%)	10 (6,17%)	6 (3,7%)	10 (6,17%)	30 (18,52%)	30 (18,52%)	72 (44,44%)
Responsibility	12 (7,41%)	8 (4,94%)	4 (2,47%)	10 (6,17%)	8 (4,94%)	34 (20,99%)	86 (53,09%)

44.44% of respondents recognized the management of their university as promising and future-oriented, choosing the option "constantly demonstrates" strategic thinking. However, 13.34% indicated the opposite: "does not demonstrate," "almost does not demonstrate," or "rarely demonstrates."

The leadership quality of emotional support from the management of HEIs was the least highly rated: only 30.86% of respondents chose the option "constantly demonstrates," while 9.88% – "does not demonstrate at all." This is the heaviest negative assessment among all the proposed leadership qualities, which emphasizes a weak point in the management of the surveyed HEIs.

In general, the respondents highly evaluate the level of manifestation of key leadership qualities in the management of relocated HEIs: responsibility, the ability to delegate authority and make innovation, teamwork ability, etc. Emotional support and flexibility, which teachers feel a significant need for, are rated much lower.

Taking into account the multifaceted leadership qualities of HEI management (professional, moral and volitional, individual and personal), an attempt was made to determine their importance to the respondents.

The questionnaire results on the priority of these groups of leadership qualities among the management of relocated HEIs (Figure 4) indicate that 64.2% of academic staff consider profession-al leadership qualities the most important. This shows that academic staff feel more confident in crisis conditions when their management demonstrates high professionalism and the ability to organize the university's work. At the same time, 25.9% of respondents identified professional leadership qualities as important but not the most critical (second priority), while only 9.9% considered them the least significant (third priority).

Moral and volitional leadership qualities were identified as the most important by 55.6% of respondents. In their opinion, the honesty, humanity, tolerance, and determination of the heads of HEIs will contribute to the successful adaptation of the university to new working conditions. 27.2% consider moral and volitional leadership qualities to be important but not of primary importance. In addition, 17.2% of respondents agreed that these qualities are the least important for crisis leadership. This indicates that the institution's activities during relocation may not always comply with ethical management methods or be effective.

Individual and personal leadership qualities were recognized as the most important by 50.6% of respondents. Thus, half of the participants are dominated by such traits as charisma, emotional stability, reflexivity, and the management's communicative abilities during the stress of moving. At the same time, 23.5% of the questionnaire academic staff consider these leadership qualities to be the least important compared to professional or moral and volitional qualities.
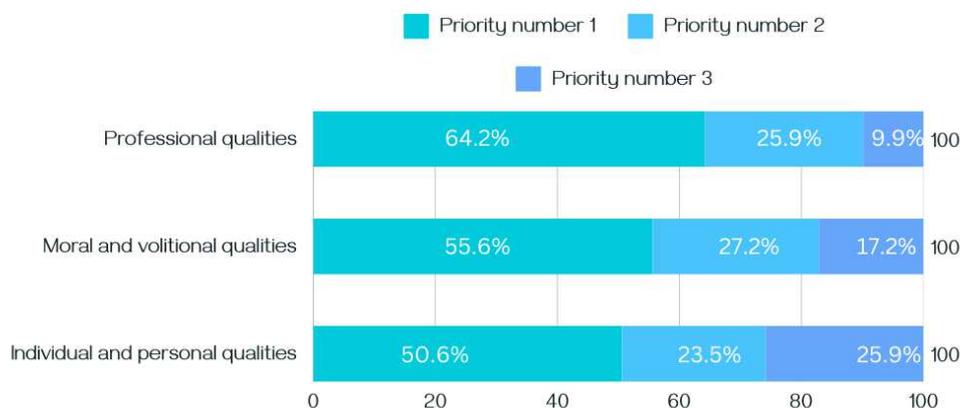
Figure 4. Distribution of priorities of professional, moral and volitional, individual and personal leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs

Table 4. Distribution of the significance of specific professional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs

Professional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs	Assessment of the importance of professional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs, n (%)				
	most important	very important	moderately important	slightly important	least important
The ability for self-development and continuous professional growth	74 (45.68%)	28 (17.28%)	32 (19.75%)	20 (12.35%)	8 (4.94%)
The ability to innovate	76 (46.91%)	28 (17.28%)	28 (17.28%)	18 (11.11%)	12 (7.41%)
Strategic thinking	110 (67.90%)	20 (12.35%)	4 (2.47%)	8 (4.94%)	20 (12.35%)
Teamwork skills	88 (54.32%)	32 (19.75%)	18 (11.11%)	8 (4.94%)	16 (9.88%)
Responsibility	104 (64.2%)	24 (14.81%)	8 (4.94%)	8 (4.94%)	18 (11.11%)
The ability to delegate responsibilities	67 (41.36%)	45 (27.78%)	20 (12.35%)	10 (6.17%)	20 (12.35%)

The results indicate that the success of the management of relocated HEIs depends on the professionalism and moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management, and individual and personal leadership qualities are not the key factor.

At the next stage of the research, it was determined which specific professional, moral and volitional, individual and personal leadership qualities of the management in relocated HEIs are most significant for academic staff. To this end, one of the questions asked respondents to rank the importance of professional leadership qualities from a provided list. The results are presented in Table 4.

67.90% of respondents consider strategic thinking a priority professional leadership quality for the management of relocated HEIs. 12.35% of participants attributed it to the category of secondary quality, and 19.76% rated it as "moderately important," "slightly important," or "least important."

The second most significant professional leadership quality identified was responsibility, which 64.2% of respondents chose as "most important." It was recognized as secondary by 14.81% of the participants and insignificant ("moderately important," "slightly important," or "least important" options) by 20.99%.

54.32% of respondents chose teamwork skills as the "most important," while 19.75% ranked them as secondary, and 25.93% rated them as "moderately important," "slightly important," or "least important." This shows that faculty members pay a lot of attention to effective teamwork during a crisis.

Less than half of the respondents consider professional leadership qualities such as the ability to innovate (46.91%) and self-development and continuous professional growth (45.68%) to be the most important. The ability to delegate responsibilities is considered the least significant quality by 41.36% of respondents.

Faculty members were also invited to evaluate the importance of specific moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI using a similar approach (Table 5).

The highest place among the moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI was given to decency, which was recognized as a priority by 65.43% of respondents. The minimal selection of other ratings indicates that staff feel more protected in crisis situations when management consistently fulfills its professional promises, avoids personal insults, and refrains from abusing its authority.

55.56% of respondents consider honesty the most important quality, and 17.28% consider it "very important." When management provides truthful information about the real state of affairs in the HEI, academic staff better understand the situation and make decisions.

Table 5. Distribution of significance for specific moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI

Moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI	Evaluation of the importance of moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI, n (%)				
	most important	very important	moderately important	slightly important	least important
Humanity	88 (54.32%)	22 (13.58%)	26 (16.05%)	14 (8.64%)	12 (7.41%)
Decency	106 (65.43%)	16 (9.88%)	12 (7.41%)	6 (3.70%)	22 (13.58%)
Self-criticism	70 (43.21%)	34 (20.99%)	24 (14.81%)	10 (6.17%)	24 (14.81%)
Honesty	90 (55.56%)	28 (17.28%)	18 (11.11%)	16 (9.88%)	10 (6.17%)
Tolerance	86 (53.09%)	36 (22.22%)	16 (9.88%)	14 (8.64%)	10 (6.17%)

Next in importance, university teachers identified humanity (54.32% voted for the most important) and tolerance (53.09% of the highest scores), which indicates the need to observe ethical norms and emotional support.

According to the academic staff, self-criticism is the least important moral and volitional leadership quality for the management of relocated HEIs. 43.21% of respondents identified it as the most important quality, and 14.81% as the least important. This is the highest percentage of negative evaluations in this category of leadership qualities.

So, it becomes clear that decency, honesty, humanity, and tolerance are the most important moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs in crisis conditions. These qualities help them act on the basis of high morals; otherwise, there is a risk of losing the team.

The respondents also had to identify the most important individual and personal leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs necessary for the effective management of educational institutions (Table 6).

Communicability was recognized as the most important. 60.49% of respondents believe that management should be able to effectively communicate with academic staff about the state of affairs in HEIs in crisis conditions.

58.64% of respondents identified emotional stability as crucial for keeping calm in the team and effective management in stressful situations. And only 4.94% recognized it as "least important".

Table 6. Distribution of the importance of specific individual and personal leadership qualities of the management of HEI

Individual and personal leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI	Assessment of the importance of individual and personal leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEI, n (%)				
	most important	very important	moderately important	slightly important	Least important
Charisma	62 (38.27%)	32 (19.75%)	38 (23.46%)	22 (13.58%)	8 (4.94%)
The ability to self-reflection	74 (45.68%)	43 (26.54%)	19 (11.73%)	16 (9.88%)	10 (6.17%)
Developed intuition	69 (42.59%)	39 (24.07%)	22 (13.58%)	18 (11.11%)	14 (8.64%)
Emotional stability	95 (58.64%)	37 (22.84%)	12 (7.41%)	10 (6.17%)	8 (4.94%)
Readiness to take risks	57 (35.19%)	30 (18.52%)	43 (26.54%)	18 (11.11%)	14 (8.64%)
Communicability	98 (60.49%)	34 (20.99%)	12 (7.41%)	6 (3.70%)	12 (7.41%)

Table 7. Key categories of other leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs

Category	Examples of leadership qualities
Communication skills and accessibility	Openness and accessibility to communication. Constantly in touch, 24/7 support. Ability to hear the team. Creating an atmosphere of trust in the team.
Emotional stability and support	Optimism, confidence, moral and volitional stability. Empathy. Support from academic staff. Humanity, friendliness.
Professional competence	Manifestation of professionalism in matters of any nature. Professionalism, decency, integrity. Strategic thinking, professional organization of the educational process. Effective time management.
Initiative and adaptability	Initiative, adaptability, creativity. Flexibility, determination, ability to make quick decisions. Proactivity, foresight, pragmatism.
Motivational and managerial qualities	Involvement of the team in decision-making. Focus on results.

The academic staff indicated the ability to self-reflection as the next most important. 45.68% of respondents rated this as the most important quality.

Less priorities for research participants are developed intuition (42.59% gave the highest score), charisma (38.27%), and readiness to take risks (35.19%). This may mean that academic staff want to see careful, professional, and well-informed management decisions.

The analysis of respondents' answers to the questionnaire question "List leadership qualities demonstrated by the management of HEI that you consider important but were not mentioned in this questionnaire" confirms the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding the structure of leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs (Table 7).

Thus, teachers pay special attention to professional qualities that ensure the stable functioning of HEIs under challenging conditions. In particular, among the most frequently mentioned were the ability to make decisions quickly, professionalism in solving issues of various levels of complexity, as well as time management and focus on achieving results, creativity in solving tasks, organizing a safe environment for the team and the management's ability to effectively shape the image of the institution.

Moral and volitional qualities also played a significant role in the respondents' evaluations. Among

them stand out confidence, prudence, moral and emotional stability, ethics, decency, and social responsibility.

Special attention is paid to individual and personal qualities that affect interaction with the team. Communication openness and accessibility, as well as the ability to listen to the team and create an atmosphere of trust, are also considered very important. In addition, the emphasis is on friendliness, empathy, proactivity, and optimism, which help maintain motivation and teamwork in a crisis.

Thus, the study's results indicate that for the HEI to function effectively in crisis conditions, balanced management actions provide a combination of professional, moral, and volitional individual leadership qualities, which ensures stability, team support, and prompt response to challenges.

In critical relocation conditions, emotional support from the management of the relocated HEI becomes one of the key factors in the successful adaptation of the academic staff. Employees' psychological stability and comfort are important for maintaining the effectiveness of the educational process and maintaining the team.

The questionnaire results show that the management of the studied universities generally provides adequate emotional support to academic staff during relocation (Figure 5), as evidenced by the high percentage of positive responses.
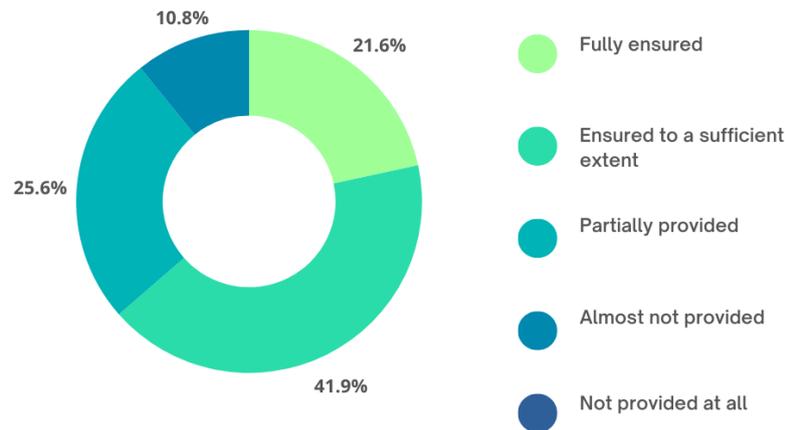
Figure 5. Providing emotional support to academic staff of relocated HEIs

21.6% of respondents confirmed that emotional support from management is fully ensured, and another 41.9% indicated that it is provided to a sufficient extent. These are various management initiatives to support academic staff: provision of psychological counseling services, regular online meetings as part of informal communication projects, and structured opportunities for interaction between management teams and teachers. In addition, systems of recognition and rewards for staff contributions have been noted as valuable measures that boost academic staff morale and contribute to a positive work environment.

However, 25.67% of respondents noted that emotional support is only partially provided, and 10.81% – it is almost not provided. This indicates that about a third of the academic staff have higher expectations for emotional support. Respondents highlighted the lack of a coherent psychological support system, such as regular counseling or support groups. They also noted the lack of informal initiatives to foster team spirit or provide safe spaces to discuss emotional issues. In addition, some staff felt that the available interventions were too formalized and not sufficiently tailored to their individual needs.

It is important to note that no respondents selected the option "not provided at all," highlighting the general recognition of an adequate level of support from management. Thus, if the majority of academic staff are satisfied with the current level of emotional support from the management of HEI during relocation, some still feel the need for a more individual approach and additional measures. Therefore, the obtained results emphasize the need to develop strategies for emotional support of academic staff and improve management approaches to maintain trust and effective cooperation in crisis conditions.

4. DISCUSSION

In order to effectively manage Ukrainian HEIs relocated during the war, their leaders, in addition to leadership skills, must be provided with resources, have an organizational culture, etc., that is consistent with a systemic approach to anti-crisis management (Guo et al., 2021).

The study's results confirm that the successful adaptation and effective functioning of relocated HEIs depend on the quality integration of three groups of management leadership qualities: professional, moral and volitional, individual, and personal.

Responsibility and strategic thinking are among the most important professional qualities. Responsibility creates a sense of stability among staff and strengthens trust in management decisions (Ibach, 2014), while strategic thinking enables effective responses to the challenges of war (Black, 2015; Schram, 2014). Delegation, self-development, and innovation were found to be less significant. This can be explained by the fact that staff prefer a clear hierarchy and defined actions during a crisis, which is contrary to the generally accepted principles of effective leadership (Northouse, 2018).

Moral and volitional qualities, such as decency, honesty, and humanity are recognized as key to retaining human resources. A lack of moral support can lead to staff turnover, whereas trust in leadership fosters team cohesion, especially under stress (Milton, 2019).

Flexibility and adaptability in decision-making were considered more important than long-term planning (Zechlin, 2010; Starratt, 2005). This highlights the need to respond quickly to changes typical of wartime conditions, such as air raids, power outages, or personnel losses due to migration.

Individual and personal leadership qualities, including communicability, emotional stability, and the ability to self-reflect, play a critical role in maintaining open communication and team morale. These qualities are especially important in crisis situations to ensure team stability (Black, 2015).

The results of the study also emphasize the need to develop leadership qualities such as crisis planning and transparency in decision-making. Crisis planning facilitates efficient resource allocation and ensures continuity of the educational process, while transparency strengthens trust in leadership and reduces uncertainty (Scaglione et al., 2019).

Despite the generally positive assessment of the management actions of relocated HEIs by academic staff, there are significant gaps in management activities and insufficient development of certain leadership qualities that affect successful adaptation in times of crisis, improve management effectiveness, and support staff. In particular, attention should be given to strengthening emotional support for staff. This is confirmed by the fact that only one-third of respondents acknowledged that the leadership "constantly" demonstrates emotional support, while a small portion of respondents rated this quality as insufficient, stating that it is not demonstrated at all. This indicates the heterogeneity of approaches to staff support in different universities/structural units or that leadership tends to focus more on organizational issues.

CONCLUSION

The study is devoted to determining the role of leadership qualities of the management of Ukrainian higher education institutions (HEIs) relocated during the war in order to preserve and ensure their functionality in the new conditions from the perspective of academic staff. The article highlights three main categories of leadership qualities of the management of Ukrainian HEIs: professional, moral and volitional, individual and personal qualities. Responsibility and strategic thinking stand out as vital professional traits, fostering stability and trust in leadership decisions. Honesty, decency, and humanity, as moral and volitional qualities, are crucial for emotional well-being and reducing staff turnover, while individual and personal qualities – communicability, emotional stability, and self-reflection ensure open interaction and team morale. Together, these qualities enable leaders to inspire and unite academic communities, overcoming challenges and achieving shared goals. Surveyed academic staff positively evaluated their management's ability to adapt to war and relocation challenges, highlighting the leadership's role in maintaining trust and effective operations in crisis conditions.

The study revealed certain gaps in management practices, particularly the need for more substantial emotional support for university staff in crisis conditions and the necessity for proactive crisis planning. These findings could initiate the development of training programs for HEI management focused on acquiring skills in crisis management and post-crisis recovery.

The identified leadership qualities of the HEI management will help them better adapt to changes caused by relocation and the crisis in the country, foster the innovative development of HEIs, and accelerate their integration into the new environment, while also preserving human resources. This will not only help overcome current challenges but also lay the foundation for sustainable development and the future competitiveness of the institution.

LIMITATION

In this study, it is essential to consider several vital limitations that could impact the interpretation of its results.

One of the study's key limitations is the restricted sample, which only includes academic staff. Other categories of employees (such as administrative personnel or higher education seekers) were not involved in assessing the management's leadership qualities, even though their perspectives could have been valuable in creating a more comprehensive picture.

Another limitation is that the study involved only two Ukrainian HEIs relocated during the war. For a more in-depth analysis, it is necessary to examine the situation in other universities in similar conditions so that the results would be more representative of the entire higher education system.

It is also worth noting the lack of direct observation of the management's activities in real conditions. The evaluations were collected based on the respondents' subjective opinions, which may influence the objectivity of the results.

In addition, the context of the war creates additional challenges for data collection, which may limit the representativeness of the sample and the objectivity of the evaluations. Specifically, the emotional state of the respondents could have influenced their assessments both positively (a sense of support and protection) and negatively (a sense of danger and stress).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire "Evaluation of leadership qualities and effectiveness of the management of Higher Education Institutions in the context of relocation"

The questionnaire is intended for academic staff of relocated HEIs

Dear colleagues!

We are conducting an anonymous questionnaire to assess the leadership and management effectiveness of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the context of relocation caused by the full-scale invasion. Your responses will help us better understand the impact of leadership on institutional operations and academic performance during these challenging times. The questionnaire is completely confidential and no information will be used to identify respondents. Your input will help to create more effective management strategies and improve working conditions in HEIs.

Your opinion, perspective, and support are very important to us. Thank you very much for your participation!

1. **Select your gender:**

☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Prefer not to answer

2. **Indicate your age:**

☐ 20-35
☐ 36-45
☐ 46-60
☐ 60+

3. **How have your relations with the management of your HEI changed due to increased emotional pressure after the full-scale invasion?**

☐ Significantly improved
☐ Slightly improved
☐ Remained the same
☐ Deterioration
☐ Significantly deterioration

4. **Please specify in what way:** _____

5. **To what extent do you agree with the statement: "The leadership qualities of the management significantly affect the success of HEI in relocation conditions"?**

☐ Fully agree
☐ Agree
☐ Partially agree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

6. Rate on a scale of 1 to 7 how the management of your HEI demonstrates the following leadership qualities:

☐ Strategic thinking
☐ Teamwork ability
☐ Ability to make innovate
☐ Emotional support
☐ Flexibility
☐ Ability to delegate authority
☐ Responsibility

7. Rank the significance of leadership quality groups management of relocated HEI (1 - most important, 3 - least important):

☐ Professional
☐ Moral and volitional
☐ Individual and personal

8. Rank the significance of professional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs (1 – most important, 6 – least important):

☐ the ability for self-development, continuous professional growth
☐ the ability to innovate
☐ strategic thinking
☐ teamwork skills
☐ responsibility
☐ the ability to delegate responsibilities

9. Rank the significance of moral and volitional leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs (1 – most important, 5 – least important):

☐ humanity
☐ decency
☐ self-criticism
☐ honesty
☐ tolerance

10. Rank the significance of individual and personal leadership qualities of the management of relocated HEIs (1 – most important, 6 – least important):

☐ charisma
☐ the ability to self-reflection
☐ developed intuition
☐ emotional stability
☐ readiness to take risks
☐ communicability

11. How do you assess the adaptation of the management of your HEI to the challenges caused by war and relocation?

☐ Very effective
☐ Effective

☐ Neutral
☐ Ineffective
☐ Very ineffective

12. What management decisions of your HEI do you consider most successful during relocation?
_____

13. To what extent do you think the management of HEI provides emotional support to academic staff during relocation?

☐ Fully ensured
☐ Ensured to a sufficient extent
☐ Partially provided
☐ Almost not provided
☐ Not provided at all

14. Provide reasons for your previous answer: _____

15. Rate how often you observed the following actions by your management of HEI (1 – never, 7 – always):

☐ Implementation of new strategies
☐ Creation of crisis plans
☐ Communication with staff and its motivation
☐ Search and attraction of external resources to support the HEI
☐ Establishment of new types of cooperation
☐ Openness and transparency in decision-making

16. List leadership qualities demonstrated by the management of HEI that you consider important but were not mentioned in this questionnaire: _____

17. How confident are you in the long-term strategic plans of your management HEI regarding operations under relocation conditions (1 – absolutely not confident, 5 – absolutely confident)?

☐ Absolutely not confident
☐ Not confident
☐ Somewhat confident
☐ Fairly confident
☐ Absolutely confident

18. Evaluate what extent did the leadership qualities of your management has impacted academic performance of HEI under relocation conditions?

☐ Very positive impact
☐ Positive impact
☐ Not notice significant changes
☐ Negative impact
☐ Very negative impact