CRITICAL THINKING IN COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ORGANIZATIONS

Saralah Devi Mariamdaran Chethiyar[a], Shaminy Marutha[b], Jessica Marie Arokiasamy[c], MAM Sameem[d]*✉

[a] *School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia*

[b] *College of Law, Government, and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia*

[c] *Operation Manager, Holaart Industry*

[d]* *Department of English Language Teaching, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka*

Abstract

This research aims to identify some of the key challenges of critical thinking in communication and decision making of manager's during covid-19 pandemic in organizations. In a climate of the globalization of the present-day economy, and, as a consequence, the covid-19 pandemic worldwide has forced employees to work from home remotely. In a current emergency state of the pandemic which has been predicted to be a endemic, critical thinking in decision making of the present organizations focusing on communication, and the consequence due to sudden implementation of remote working rapid technological changes (e.g., the using personal telecommunication to connect companies server, Zoom and etc.), The paper analyses some managers' key obstacles to continuing to the organizations businesses, focusing on communication with employees and decision making. The authors further explore critical thinking, communication, decision making and emotional intelligence of managers. Employing a sample of 20 managers from essential services organization, the aim of this paper is to identify the importance of critical thinking in communication and decision making including understanding the level of emotional intelligence of managers. This paper suggests that managers should take time to evaluate the decision making and the first step in developing their critical thinking skills is to set aside the time to communicate and make decisions of daily choices. This research further suggests that the managers should be an active listener as well, especially during group discussion. Good critical thinkers employ emotional intelligence to draw reasonable conclusions from a range of information sources, knowledge and experience in determining what is useful. This research provides the opportunity to prepare and to improve critical thinking skills in communication and decision making.

Keywords: *Covid-19 pandemic, Critical Thinking, Communication, Decision Making, Emotional Intelligence*

Introduction

SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19 pandemic) a global health crisis widely known as contagious human-to-human transmission of virus that causes life threatening illness leading to death of many people. The tragedy is also an international economic threat that impacted organizations across the globe (O Connor, et al., 2021) which resulted in the implementation

✉ risameem@seu.ac.lk

of individuals with the requirements of wearing mask, sanitizing constantly and frequently washing their hands including executions of lockdowns around the world in order to stop the further widespread of the disease. The Covid-19 pandemic has generated a wide array of unique challenges for employees and employers to further take many precautionary actions including enactment of social distancing, isolation and self-quarantine measures. These precautionary measures include the temporary closure of many organizations of workplaces, educational institutes, entertainment, and recreational locations. The people are required to stay in their homes during the lockdown period as mandated by the government officials of the country that results in many employees required to work remotely meaning work from home (WFH). This restriction not only affects individuals on social connectivity but also impacts most economic sectors to take emergency measures to sustain their business. Hence, it is vital that organizations adapt to changing times and new necessities accordingly to mitigate the issues faced and economically sustain in the market during this hard time of many uncertainties caused by Covid-19 pandemic. The new norms and presupposition that the COVID-19 pandemic have forced upon the organizations forces the management to instantly change their management strategies rapidly and take relevant actions to ensure businesses continue accordingly (Geada, 2021). The management of organizations had put forward their contingency plans not only to keep up the businesses yet to ensure sustainability of their economy, including to manage their workforces in new forms of contact. These organizations need to make sure that their workforces are receiving the right information and their work uniformly. Moreover, these organizations also have to carry on additional responsibilities to make sure their employees are not impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and by the mandated lockdowns including ensuring their mental health. Many of the organizations had come in with the initiatives to reach out to their employees and provide more support during this pandemic. Therefore, this led the organizations to quickly make some vital and important decisions in restructuring

communication pathways and adapt to new communication methods. Nevertheless, in order the information and contingency plans are properly disseminated to the employees, the managers of each department in an organization play an important role. Managers should be conscious of the possible struggles their employees confront during Covid-19 pandemic and respond with empathy (Dirani, et al., 2020) because management may not fully know who has been affected by the pandemic and to what extent it has impacted them. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of many people in many different ways. Henceforth, establishing an empathetic attitude will foster honest conversations between employees and management that will help mitigate the negative impacts of employees during WFH through continuous effective communication.

Everyday people face new challenges at work, individuals especially managers may be bombarded with information and choices. Therefore, critical thinking skills may help managers sift out fact from opinion, make better decisions, and achieve more fulfillment at work and personal life. Critical thinking is the art of elevating what is subconsciously rationalized to the level of conscious recognition. It is "*purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or conceptual considerations upon which that judgment is based*" (Facione, 1990); (Dwyer, et.all., 2014). Critical thinking is an important thinking process that has the potential to add value to people's lives. In order to improve the quality of executing decisions, including when examining a problem and the manager finds out that existing solutions are inadequate, there is a need to find new methods. In this case, the manager may look into the previous experience and knowledge that can produce various ideas through the filters of reason and logic, one must decide whether these ideas are useful and applicable in communication and decision making. In this time of Covid-19 pandemic crisis, we cannot just agree and blindly follow the dictates of others without critically thinking of the issue. This is because, in the current

digital world the social media exerts influences a lot on individual's thinking. Hence while we listen to them, the individual needs to have critical thinking views. The managers especially need to practice critical thinking by utilizing their intelligence, experience, training knowledge and in their capabilities to deal with different occurrences of situations and issues from time to time. The managers need to get involved in challenging and meaningful tasks and endeavors. In this paper critical thinking focuses mainly on communication and decision making during Covid-19 pandemic. During the crisis, managers need to take additional initiatives to make decisions or to communicate with the team before making any decision. At this point of time manager's need to maintain an open mind. This is because open mindedness allows the individual's to be open to ideas, brainstorming and opinions of others especially from the team members. However, it doesn't mean that managers will accept outright new ideas during discussions. These ideas and thoughts can be relevant and help managers to interpret, make judgments, clarify further on the ideas or opinions before making decisions and it gives confidence for the members to collaborate in discussions and have more communications together. Besides that, manager's when communicating and making decisions should also have the ability to be emotionally stable. This means to have emotional intelligence capability in order to identify and control both oneself and others emotions, and to apply that ability to certain tasks. Decision making is one of the most essential abilities of today's workplace demands. Decision making is one of the most indispensable capabilities in today's workplaces that requires making decisions depending on the situation. Hence, in critical thinking to make the right decisions one of the important criteria of manager's is emotional intelligence. There are several purposes managers have to deal with before committing to make any decision. For example, there are many times managers provide suggestions to accelerate the productivity of an organization while other situations can be on deciding to cut off a little percentage from salary as a measure of cost-cutting and so on. At these stages taking decisions can become not only stressful but also disruptive if not accompanied by proper

evaluation and analysis of the situations and its outcomes. Managers have to choose the most applicable and result driving actions so as to make the best decision to avoid any negative and regretting results. When critical thinking is applied to communication and decision-making, it raises the decision-making model to a level of conscious and deliberate choice and increases the susceptibility of decisions to reason and logic (Paul & Elder, 2014, p. 183).

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking has been well known for decades however it has been a catchword nowadays. First to define critical thinking, the word *"critical"* is defined from Greek term *"kritikos"*) which gives the meaning of evaluating, judging, questioning, analyzing and distinguishing (Kirmizi, et all,. 2015). In the perspectives and information from various fields such as psychology and philosophy critical thinking is an important thinking activity that additionally merits people's lives. The concept of critical thinking is part of effective thinking and decision making (Moore, 2013). However, people do not use critical thinking daily in their lives because most people genuinely think "uncritically,". It is perceived, even reasonable people cannot think critically at times due to personal instinct, emotional pressures, propensity and obstruction (Rudinow & Barry, 2008, p. 15). In order to improve the quality of a leader's decisions, it would be suitable to find and eliminate the real reasons for these barriers. When a critical thinker examines issues and finds that existing solutions are inadequate, there is a need to find new strategies. Hence, through training, past experience and knowledge critical thinking processes are used to produce various ideas by filtering logics and reasons one can decide whether these ideas are useful or need further discussion before making a decision (Turan., et., al; 2019). Critical thinking is known as "reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on identifying, analyzing and making decisions. Critical thinking skills allow a person to comprehend and address a circumstance based on all available facts and data. The critical thinking skills are used to sort and organize facts, data

and other information in order to define an issue and foster effective solutions. The act of analyzing facts to understand an issue or topic thoroughly in any circumstances is the art of critical thinking developed in a person with knowledge and experiences. Critical thinking often occurs when identifying an issue for developing a solution and making decisions. Part of being a good critical thinker is being unbiased in effective thinking and decision making. That means analyzing the issue without allowing personal feelings or having any perceptions to influence how a person considers it. Instead, a good critical thinker should only analyze the issue based on the facts collected. Critical thinking skills are essential in every organization especially to the management team such as managers and directors of the company. Good critical thinkers will work both independently and with groups to solve issues. Critical thinking skills are important because the skills allow businesses to run smoothly by solving issues that occurred, developing solutions, and creating new ideas by taking into consideration the facts and having distinguishable perspectives to reach a sound, rational conclusion.

Communication

Referring to social science terminology, communication is derived as the logical investigation of the creation, handling and impacts of sign and image frameworks utilized by people to send and get messages (Hargie, et al., 2004). Meanwhile, according to (Alipour, 2011) the communication is the recovery, progression and dynamism factor of the organizations. The management measures are brought out through it. The conduct is amended, information becomes productive and goals are achieved. Going deeper into business prospects, an organization is a social framework inside which a group of individuals with various psychology, financial background, social and cultural foundations cooperate to accomplish common goals (Alipour, 2011). An effective communication within this social framework is a very important to reach out the goal and for a successful organization. This is because communication is exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, opinions, expressions,

emotions, instructions between one to one or between one-to-many interaction. Worldwide people revolve around communication and it is almost impossible to lead a life without it. At work places, face-to-face or remote communication is referred to as an important tool to deliver important messages. The requirement for effective communication skills is excessive and crescent as today organizations are emerging and being competitive and the need to deliver correct messages in an appropriate way is of prime importance. However, in today's workplace the challenges are that employees tend to be less communicative and more impulsive. They do not think before they act or communicate and often welcome disastrous consequences like conflicts, isolation, insensitivity, resentment and many more that are harmful both for relationships and business. Such outcomes have a direct impact to productivity and the future of the organization. Therefore, employees are required to be efficient in their actions in order to maximize positive results in the workplace both in terms of relationships and the future perspectives of the organization. Being efficient in terms of actions is again a broad term. As already a known fact everything is communication dependent, hence employees are required to understand the fine line of difference between communication and communication through creative thinking. Communication management had become very crucial in organization moreover during the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic virus contagion as the face-to-face communication are more likely to be avoided and communication becomes remote through digital communications. Social distancing, no physical interaction such as shaking hands and wearing a mask are some of the control measures to be considered to cut off the human-to-human contagion. The recommendation from World Health Organization and the implementation of lockdown in most of the countries has left with not much option for the organizations to allow employees work from home due to mandatory lockdown mandated by the government. Remote working became a new experience to most employers and employees had to change the way they communicate as telecommunication became vital as a mode of communication. Many

communications mediums are readily available and become prominent among the organization including zoom, WhatsApp, skype and internal communication like emails and chats to support communication among their stakeholders. As employees have to work remotely, their online conduct will inevitably change as they look for better approaches to perform group cooperation tasks in a brief time that needs some experimentation with a lot of restriction (Waizenegger, & McKenna., 2020). The different approach of communication brings challenges to both the employers and employees as they need to sustain the corporate performance with a new norm in a short period of time with uncertainty of when it would end. Although the way managers communicate with the team now differs as now more time is spent on digital platforms. Therefore, moving from a manager's perspective, an ineffective organization's communication will directly impact the performance of a managers and their team including the organization as an overall. The pandemic makes the duty of the managers more complicated in daily decision making including communicating with their peoples, new hiring and business dealing as they unable to see directly or understand if their peoples are happy or unsatisfied, incompetence, being sensitive, lack of coordination and also lack of motivation which will lead to ineffective outcomes and delayed in any decision makings if there is a need for the managers to make decision on some issues and matters. Therefore, a correct measure of action needs to be taken for the right message to communicate to their workforce and management. Adding on to this, the management team needs to find the communication barriers, the reason and also preventive steps to avoid those issues to reoccur.

Decision Making

Decision making is recognizing issues and opportunities and then providing solutions accordingly (Daft., 2008). One of the necessary parts of any business exercise is decision making. Information is the basic material, ongoing process, and concoction of decision making. A wrong decision making can have a very great influence on the outcomes (Holsapple, 2001). Therefore, decision making is a special managerial task as it is only a part

of the work of managers and usually does not take much time. Managers are anticipated to make important and positive impacts throughout its operations and production (Drucker, 2005, p. 307). Drucker expressed that the decision is the choice of being able to select the two alternatives which is the closest to the truth, rather than the choice between right and wrong (Drucker, 2005). How will the manager decide between these two alternatives? In an opinion, the ability of the manager to make this differentiation will rely on their ability of critical thinking. According to Karl Wiig, decision making is one of the most important activities that people can engage in. The stages in the decision process are significant for making effective decisions and achieving the desired results.

Decision making can be defined as a pledge to a game-plan that is planned to yield results that are fulfilling for indicated people to action (Yates & Tschirhart., 2006). Good decisions depend on having the correct information which can be only from the surface of the information, some with more analysis and proof base, personal experiences, obtained knowledges and others innovative understanding in the perfect spot at the perfect time and able to act effectively (Snowden and Boone, 2007; Bennet & Bennet., 2008). Every decision made by the managers during this current situation is crucial and has a direct effect on their stakeholders. Employees are uncertain of current changes and futures and need guidance from their organization leaders. The role of managers to determine organizational outcomes that have a broad impact on employees at all levels is especially clear in the crucible of a crisis and certainly vital in fundamental ways. (Kniffin et al., 2021). Therefore, each decision making of a manager needs to be evaluated properly considering many aspects based on the current situation and without bias. Crisis or emergency where the stakes are high, the situation demands rapid responses to constantly changing conditions, (Klein, 2014). Additionally, managers through communications also can influence decision making which is through brainstorming. The brainstorming technique is based on generating as many ideas as possible. In this technique,

there is no criticism of any ideas presented, and all ideas are recorded, analyzed properly before concluding to make a decision (Akdere, 2011). The unpredicted situation of the pandemic had made the decision making for the manager become harder. Decision making relies upon anticipated changes in the future. Communication between the stakeholder which rely virtually also had brought another issue to the management. Managers need to have good understanding and trust toward the communications tools used for these purposes for their goals to be reached. Managers and analysts, they depend on, had valid justification to have less confidence in their capacity to effectively foresee expected technological, financial and social changes and conceivable change in the intensity of firms during the pandemic.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is explained as "*a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions*" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and is contend as a new way of thinking for personal development (Boyatzis, et al., 2000). Emotional intelligence of a person can be measured through an assessment instrument. For use in the workplace a representative measurement "*Genos emotional intelligence*"

assessment was designed (Palmer, et al., 2009) to measure how often an individual believes that they demonstrate emotionally intelligent behaviours at work. Many affiliated studies on emotional intelligence contend that emotional intelligence is significant in an individual's intellectual functioning (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Some of which highlights that emotional intelligence facilitates cognitive processes and helps to overcome difficult situations by properly maneuvering emotions of self and others (Salovey & Mayer., 1990); (Schutte et al., 2001). Some research further showed emotional Intelligence (EI) is a variable that can never be excluded from an individual's significant success in life because of its notable effects on an individual's organizational behaviour such as dedication to perform tasks, ability to display leadership and commitment to a job. Emotions can help an individual work smarter, or erode an individual's endeavours, an estimated 90% of top performers in virtually every industry possess high emotional intelligence (Rausch, et al. 2011), suggesting that high emotional intelligence would improve an individual's performance at work. Hence, EI is predominantly needed by managers to lead the team. The interpretation of the inventory is based on the guidelines on corresponding percentile range and categories as provided by the Genos Emotional Intelligence Technical manual (Gignac, 2010). Table 1 shows the interpretive guidelines for Genos EI Inventory percentile scores.

Table 1: Interpretive guidelines for Genos EI Inventory percentile scores

Percentile Range	Categorization	Interpretative Guideline
80-99	Very High	Very high level of frequency in exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors
61-79	High	High level of frequency in exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors
41-60	Average	Average level of frequency in exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors
21-40	Low	Low level of frequency in exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors
1-20	Very Low	Very low level of frequency in exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors

From the table 1 it is shown that the interpretive guidelines for exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors is categorized from "very low" with

percentile range 1-20%, "low" with percentile range 21-40%, "average" with percentile range

41-60%, "high" with percentile range 61-70% and "very high" with percentile range 80-99%.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted to establish a common knowledge about the topic of research and it is known as initial data. Through a literature review, a study can be more clearly established in order to create survey questionnaires. Initial data and general information obtained from published journals, information from the internet, the research work that has been published before, the standard procedure in the project and books. This study adopted mix method study which combines elements of qualitative and quantitative study approaches. The use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques. This method is selected for the purposes to strengthen the study and its conclusions. There were 20 respondents from selected organizations. The selected organizations were those companies that were allowed to operate during lockdown and counted as essential services. The selected respondents were from the management team who are highly responsible for frequent communication interacting to the employees and also plays are important role in making decision operational, other strategic in the organization and additionally during pandemic have to manage some employees that work from office while (WFO) some work from home (WFH) following the mandate by government. The qualitative questionnaires were self-developed based on relevant literature reviews and the quantitative questionnaires were adopted from Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory-Short. The questionnaire was used as guidance for the researcher to ensure participants provide the responses as required.

Results and Discussion

There are a total of 18 respondents out of 20 questionnaires distributed to the participants, 90% response rate. The respondents that have been selected for this study consist of respondents from essential services organizations. The range of age respondents is from 25 to 54 years old. The range of respondents' working experience is between 5 and more than 10 years and the majority of the respondents have more than 10 years of working experience. Table 2 summarizes the demographic information and emotional intelligence of the respondent.

Table 2: Demographic of respondents and % in exhibiting emotional intelligence behaviors

Person	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Role in Organization	Years in current role	Total working experience	EI
P1	Female	25-34 Year Old	Single	Assistant Manager / Team leader/ Supervisor	< 1 Year	10 Years +	87.14%
P2	Male	35-44 Year Old	Single	Assistant Manager / Team leader/ Supervisor	1-5 Years	10 Years +	85.71%
P3	Male	35-44 Year Old	Married	Manager	1-5 Years	10 Years +	91.43%
P4	Female	45-54 Year Old	Single	Manager	10 Years +	10 Years +	61.43%
P5	Male	25-34 Year Old	Married	Assistant Manager / Team leader/ Supervisor	10 Years +	10 Years +	90.00%
P6	Male	35-44 Year Old	Married	Manager	10 Years +	10 Years +	87.14%
P7	Female	35-44 Year Old	Married	Assistant Manager / Team leader/ Supervisor	10 Years +	10 Years +	67.14%
P8	Female	25-34 Year Old	Married	Assistant Manager / Team	5-10 Years	5-10 Years	67.14%

				leader/ Supervisor			
P9	Male	45-54 Year Old	Married	Senior Manager	10 Years +	10 Years +	85.71%
P10	Male	45-54 Year Old	Married	Senior Manager	10 Years +	10 Years +	85.71%
P11	Female	25-34 Year Old	Single	Manager	1-5 Years	10 Years +	80.00%
P12	Female	35-44 Year Old	Married	Manager	10 Years +	10 Years +	92.86%
P13	Male	35-44 Year Old	Married	Senior Manager	1-5 Years	10 Years +	85.71%
P14	Male	25-34 Year Old	Single	Assistant Manager / Team leader/ Supervisor	5-10 Years	5-10 Years	70.00%
P15	Female	25-34 Year Old	Single	Assistant Manager / Team leader/ Supervisor	5-10 Years	5-10 Years	72.86%
P17	Female	25-34 Year Old	Married	Manager	1-5 Years	10 Years +	81.43%
P18	Female	25-34 Year Old	Divorce	Manager	1-5 Years	10 Years +	68.57%

Results and Discussion for Communication

The novel coronavirus pandemic has affected the way we communicate and its critical impact on our daily communication. During the mandatory quarantine, many individuals are working from home with little to no face-to-face interactions. The most obvious change now, individuals spend more time communicating through many mediums, such as telephone calls, email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, social media, etc. Below are the responses received from the open ended questionnaires which will help do better in all forms critical thinking in communication and making decisions. There were six questionnaires in communication. First question **"Does your organization and managers have a clearly defined and communicated contingency plan on pandemic?"** All the 18 respondents have answered *"Yes, the organizations have clearly defined and communicated the contingency plan on pandemic"*. Highlighting one of the respondents who had answered as*, "Yes, the higher management together with the EHS team had clearly defined and communicated the sustainability of business and how every employee can work together to adhere to the SOP's while fulfilling each job role"* **P11.** This question has been asked to the participant to investigate if the organization is aware of the impotency of the contingency plan and how effective it is among the employees. The result shows that all the participants representing the organization answered they had a clear contingency plan communicated to them. It is notable that organizations and the organization managers had a contingency plan prepared ahead and communicated among the employees. In certain organizations the employees are equipped with pre-training to make them prepared for any emergencies. All the preparations have helped the contingency plan successfully implemented during this pandemic. This is very crucial mainly on organizations which need to continue the operation in any emergency issue such as banking and logistics. The impotency of the communication far ahead to mentally prepared can be seen in this question.

Second question "**How do you overcome the communication barrier during covid-19 Pandemic?** Many respondents had replied, *"By using Internet of Things (IoT) and Communication technologies. Meanwhile the others respond by following SOP and having a well-planned contingency"*. Example of responses states are *"Increase the communication frequency and use multiple tools"* **P3;** *"We are using Zoom as the main communication tool now for our day to day processing, we ensure a daily team huddle*

*(30mins) and usually full attendance." **P4**; "Through frequent online communications, chat if there is a need to contact the person." **P11.** In this question we can see that the pandemic has clearly changed the way organizations communicate. Most of the communications have changed from face to face communication to usage of the digital platforms to meet each other virtually and for discussion on online mediated platforms. These technologies have been available way longer before the pandemic however this has been widely implemented during the pandemic which has opened up new opportunities and ideas among organizations on communicating, sharing knowledge and spreading the business remotely. The skepticism of the effectiveness of virtual meetings compared to face to face has been changed simultaneously as they do not have other choices. Even though the employees had some issue with using the new technologies on their daily routine due to the sudden changes, eventually they will come up with better ways to complete their task with the understanding of the organization to provide the injury time to the employees.

Third question,"**Do you think frequent communications with colleagues through communication tools is important ? Especially during Pandemic when some of your colleagues are working from home.** This question has been asked to the respondent to check on the communication effectiveness especially during Pandemic when most of the managers and their employees are working from home. For this question most of the respondents answered, *"Yes, very important".* Particularly the answers that have caught our attention are *"Yes, it's very important. We don't only talk about work, but we also share personal experiences among us"* **P5;** *Yes, it is important because it is an important tool of communication when the office requires us to work from home.* **P11.** The importance of these communication tools is to ensure the correct messages reach the right employee effectively as the organization needs all of them to be in one tract to ensure the progression of the organization. Using the communication tools the message is delivered to employees and all the other stakeholders frequently. Example the message is delivered via email, meetings via

zoom calls, and also during team huddles. This is to ensure that the employees are aware and understand the information. Besides that, most organizations also are monitoring the progress of their employees via surveys to ensure the mental stability and understanding of the stakeholders**.** The communication tools also have been utilized by the organizations and the employees to motivate each other such as the check in that ensures everything is in order. This helps the organization to collect more data on the welfare of their employees during work from home, as the employees are exposed not only to work stress but to other impacts such as dealing with home chores together with working, pandemic health issues, family member welfare, financial issues, etc. The employers need to ensure that the welfare of their employees are not impacted not only physically but mentally. Programs such as how the employees manage the work from home shared among the team members and virtual event celebration are examples that have helped the employees to get together virtually and boost their positivity.

Forth question: What are the communication tools used to help with communication within the organization? (Please tick all relevant answers). This question is for our knowledge on the communication tools that are widely used among the organization as the results are as below:
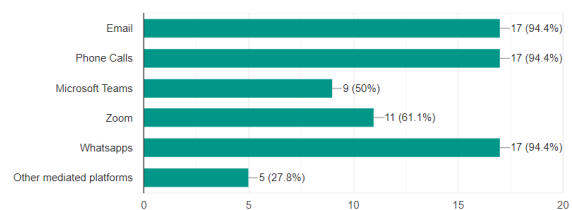

Figure 1: Communication Tools

The figure shows that emails, phone calls and WhatsApp are some of the main communication tools used widely to communicate.

Fifth question: How has the pandemic changed the value of communication within organizations? This question to explore more if the value of the communication has been changed. The result shows that 14 responded as

47

the pandemic had changed the value of communication within organizations. Meanwhile, four respondents replied that there were no changes. Although the majority had informed that there are changes in the value, not all the responses are comfortable with the changes as stated is *"When organizations realized this is the new reality and it looks like we're going to be here for a while, that's when the communication skills gap became more apparent."* **P1.** From the response it can be concluded that this pandemic has reduced the dependency of staff from one another & encourages them to be more independent in completing their daily job scope. The values changes and the mixture of the response on the technologies communication as managers and employees need more time to adapt to the new norm. This will totally change once the communication via technologies are familiarized and become a normal among them.

Sixth question: With current covid-19 pandemic issues worldwide, How much effort does your direct superior make the attempt to keep you informed on organizational status for you to disseminate to your team? This question has been raised to the managers to check on if these managers are receiving a clear message which later will be delivered to their people working under their umbrella. 12 respondents mentioned that they are receiving high, frequent and on time effort given by their direct superior and meanwhile 6 respond on a normal basis. Highlighting the response is *"The management team constantly updates the entire team worldwide with the latest updates and how every employee should strictly follow SOP and keep themselves and all others around them safe. Additionally, our company provides the necessary PPE for protection oneself, it is distributed monthly to all employees through each departmental manager."* **P11.** The current pandemic issue has given a lot of impact to everyone and constant updates from organizations are needed for all the stakeholders to be well equipped with the information. These include the information on the pandemic impact and the current stage on the organization economy, the futures on the organization and the employees and etc. A transparent details of the situation will help the stakeholder to have a proper plan ahead.

Besides, as discussed previously, clear information from the management will keep the employees on the right track and the managers to guide their peoples on the correct path. Therefore, the higher management needs to play the important part to communicate with correct knowledge to their managers.

Results and discussion for Decision Making

The speed with which the Covid-19 crisis is unfolding is putting the world's leaders mercilessly to the test including managers at work. Various decision-making techniques contribute positively to the quality of critical thinking of individuals, it is very important for individuals who want to make more successful decisions. **First question: Describe your typical process for making a decision and forming a plan of action.** We had received a combination respond, 12 responses that *"collaboration and team discussion"* prior to the decision making take place meanwhile the others have responded that they Identify, choose alternative decision, analyzes, and implement, capacity management, minute of meetings (MoM), evaluate the pros & cons of the situation before making the final decision. Although managers have their own ways to make the decision however mainly the information is gathered via discussion and brainstorming after they identify the problems. Following that the alternatives decisions are chosen and analyzed and lastly implemented.

Second Question: Have you ever delayed choosing a course of action? How did that hesitation affect you, your team and the overall business? Working from home which involved third party telecommunication and virtual connection to systems could sometimes delay due to systems error. Therefore, sometimes management needs some understanding, providing more time, team cooperation and jumping in when there are issues and etc. The questionnaire responses are, 12 respondents stated *"No, with no delay"* meanwhile 6 respondents had responded *"Yes, due to lockdown"*.

Third Question: Do you find you make better decisions alone or with a group? Most decisions that have been made by brainstorming will have better information and

more alternatives which gives the managers the best decision. However, there are certain decisions that need to be taken individually which can be based on personal experiences. This questionnaire is to identify how much the managers make decisions on a daily basis. The responses for the questions are that most managers choose the *"group discussion"* to make a decision.

Fourth Question: When working with colleagues on a joint project, how would you divide responsibilities? Also, how do you arrive at this choice? The question was asked to check on capacity management as the organization might be impacted with sudden shortage of workforce due to the pandemic. The outcomes are mostly based on seniority, position and talent. Meanwhile the other responses are more on the task divided equally as the team consists of experts. This decision making is very crucial for the manager to make sure the operations are operated without any obstacles.

Fifth Question: When supervising employees, what is the best time and way to discuss possible shortcomings in their work? Time is another issue to be discussed among employees as work from home makes the employees juggle among their working and home life. Besides, the managers need to consider the situation before sharing any shortcomings. As per the questionnaire the outcomes are managers prefer to discuss possible shortcomings in their work during the team huddles and meeting or immediately to avoid any further issues. A response to highlight is: *It doesn't have to wait for any particular time. Errors or shortcomings have to be addressed immediately rather than waiting for performance management/appraisal time. P 7*

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results demonstrated the importance of critical thinking in communication and decision making. Thus, the findings of this study may offer managers an opportunity to prepare and to improve critical thinking skills in communication and decision making before communicating and making decisions especially during the covid-19

pandemic uncertainties and the government mandatory lockdown from time to time in Malaysia. This further suggests that managers should take time to evaluate the decision making and the first step in developing their critical thinking skills is to set aside the time to communicate and make decisions of daily choices. It is important in communication that the managers to be an active listener as well, especially during group discussion. This is because when an employee is speaking, managers should carefully listen to everything before responding. It is concluded, in hope for the research to stimulate more research attention on how critical thinking enhances communication and decision making. Critical thinking allows an individual to analyze information, gather research, develop curiosity, approach arguments, communicate by brainstorming to a more diverse group of people in the team and finally examine the decisions before making decisions. In critical thinking for a manager to communicate and make decisions they need to be emotionally stable and accordingly it is identified that in this paper the managers either exhibit high emotional intelligence or very high emotional intelligence. The emotional intelligence managers appropriately build relationships with their teams and support brainstorming and problem solving. Therefore, subsequent decisions can be made confidently ethically with facts. Good critical thinking always refers to the ability of reasoning information objectively and also considers unconscious bias decisions through logical thinking. Critical thinking is problem solving capabilities that are sought-after skills in almost every organization. Very often critical thinking is considered discrete from emotions, nonetheless good critical thinkers employ emotional intelligence to draw reasonable conclusions from a range of information sources, knowledge and experience in determining what is useful and otherwise. In critical thinking, using emotional intelligence as a part of critical thinking means that the impact of this thinking is considered with empathy. An effective critical thinker requires comprehension on how emotions can assist or hinder thinking processes. Manager with high emotional intelligence makes a powerful critical thinker in a straightforward, pragmatic manner to

understand what they mean and how they are applied in the workplace when facing a difficult decision.

Recommendation

Critical thinking alternatively can also be mastered by self-direction provided the person would want to improve oneself. The person should have the willingness to improve in their life and profession that will automatically motivate for self-improvement. There is a theory developed for self-directed learning as shown in Figure 2.
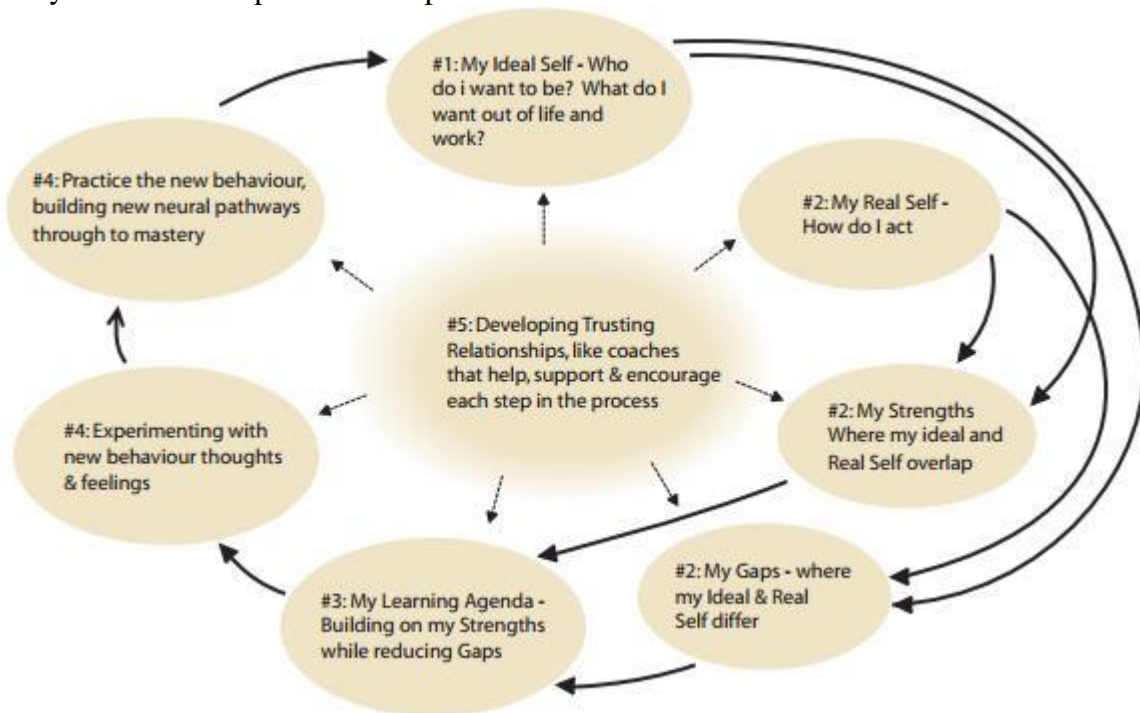

Figure 2: Self Learning Boyatzis' Theory (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Figure 2 guideline is the process of self-directed learning is the discovery of whom individuals want to be in a job or own personality. The self-directed learning is a process that can be guidance on how to increase the effectiveness of change and self-learning efforts. The guideline will help to develop the skills of people to work towards the new discoveries of themselves.

References

Akdere, M., 2011. An analysis of decision-making process in organizations: Implications for quality management and systematic practice. Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 22(12), pp.1317-1330.

Alipour, F. H. (2011). The relationship between organizational climate and communication skills of managers of the Iranian physical education organization. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 30, 421-428.

Bardzil, P., & Slaski, M. (2003). Emotional intelligence: Fundamental competencies for enhanced service provision. Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 13(2), 97-104.

Baudrillard, J. (1983). The ecstasy of communication. New York.

Bennet, D., & Bennet, A. (2008). Engaging tacit knowledge in support of organizational learning. Vine.

Boyatzis, R. E., Goleman, D., & Rhee, K. (2000). Clustering competence in

emotional intelligence: Insights from the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI). Handbook of emotional intelligence, 99(6), 343-362.

Daft, R. L., & Lewin, A. Y. (2008). Perspective—Rigor and relevance in organization studies: Idea migration and academic journal evolution. Organization science, 19(1), 177-183.

Dirani, K. M., Abadi, M., Alizadeh, A., Barhate, B., Garza, R. C., Gunasekara, N., ... & Majzun, Z. (2020). Leadership competencies and the essential role of human resource development in times of crisis: a response to Covid-19 pandemic. Human Resource Development International, 23(4), 380-394.

Drucker, P. F. (2005). Managing oneself. Harvard business review, 83(1), 100-109.

Dwyer, C. P., Hogan, M. J., & Stewart, I. (2014). An integrated critical thinking framework for the 21st century. Thinking skills and Creativity, 12, 43-52.

Facione, N. C., & Facione, P. A. (1996). Externalizing the critical thinking in knowledge development and clinical judgment. Nursing Outlook, 44(3), 129-136.

Geada, N. (2021). Management of Change: Pandemic Impacts in IT. International Journal of Enterprise Information Systems (IJEIS), 17(2), 92-104.

Gignac, G. E. (2010). Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory. Technical Manual (2nd Ed.), Sydney, Waterloo, NSW, 10-36.

Giorgi, G., Mancuso, S., & Perez, F. J. F. (2014). Organizational emotional intelligence and top selling. Europe's Journal of Psychology, 10(4), 712-725.

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., & McKee, A. (2013). Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence. Harvard Business Press.

Hargie, O., Dickson, D., Tourish, D., & Hargie, O. (2004). Communication skills for effective management. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holsapple, K. A. (2001). Equilibrium configurations of solid cohesionless bodies. Icarus, 154(2), 432-448.

Kidwell, B., Hardesty, D. M., Murtha, B. R., & Sheng, S. (2012). A closer look at emotional intelligence in marketing exchange. GfK Marketing Intelligence Review, 4(1), 24-31.

Klein, G. (2014). An overview of naturalistic decision making applications. Naturalistic decision making, 69-80.

Kniffin, K. M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S. P., Bakker, A. B., ... & Vugt, M. V. (2021). COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action. American Psychologist, 76(1), 63.

Moore, T. (2013). Critical thinking: Seven definitions in search of a concept. Studies in Higher Education, 38(4), 506-522.

O Connor, M., Conboy, K., & Dennehy, D. (2021). COVID-19 affected remote workers: a temporal analysis of information system development during the pandemic. Journal of Decision Systems, 1-27.

Palmer, B. R., Stough, C., Harmer, R., & Gignac, G. (2009). The Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory: A measure designed specifically for workplace applications Assessing Emotional Intelligence (pp. 103-117): Springer.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2014). Critical thinking: Intellectual standards essential to reasoning well within every domain of human thought, Part 4. Journal of Developmental Education, 37(3), 34.

Rausch, E., Hess, J. D., & Bacigalupo, A. C. (2011). Enhancing decisions and

decision-making processes through the application of emotional intelligence skills. Management Decision.

Rudinow, J., Barry, V. E., & Letteri, M. (2008). Invitation to critical thinking, 1st Canadian edition. Toronto: Thomson.

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. Imagination, cognition and personality, 9(3), 185-211.

Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Bobik, C., Coston, T. D., Greeson, C., Jedlicka, C., ... & Wendorf, G. (2001). Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations. The Journal of social psychology, 141(4), 523-536.

Snowden, D. J., & Boone, M. E. (2007). A leader's framework for decision making. Harvard business review, 85(11), 68.

Turan, U., Fidan, Y., & Yıldıran, C. (2019). Critical Thinking as a Qualified Decision Making Tool. Journal of History Culture and Art Research, 8(4), 1-18.

Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W., & Bendz, T. (2020). An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19. European Journal of Information Systems, 29(4), 429-442.

Yates, J. F., & Tschirhart, M. D. (2006). Decision-making expertise. The Cambridge handbook of expertise and expert performance, 421-438.