

“Nothing is created, nothing is destroyed, everything is transformed”: a study on the Covid Manager identity-seeking process.

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Abstract

This study investigates the Covid Manager’s rising role, assuming that can be covered by the Protection and Prevention Manager, who should also acquire four typical Project Manager skills, namely conceptual, human, political, and technical skill in order to perform effectively. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five qualified professionals, through blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions. Final results broadly confirmed the main research’s assumption, but they have also led to some additional findings, such as the relevance of transactional leadership and of trust towards the leader. The originality of this work is that of giving sense to a new-born career figure, which presents a “mediating entity” between, on one hand, professional and public stakeholders, and, on the other hand, organizational-specific interests and goals.

Keywords: Covid Manager, Project Manager, CHPT skills

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1. Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the way of approaching work and has put forward a new perspective over the importance of safety climate and those leadership behaviours that could enhance organizational safety performance (Zou & Sunindijio, 2009; Yukl et al., 2005; Neal & Griffin 2004; Clarke & Ward 2006). A response to such a new scenario is the introduction of the Covid Manager (CM), an organizational broker responsible for the balance between organizational control and pandemic chaos and accountable for the internal coordination of safety prevention and control measures and the external coordination with the structures of the Regional Health System (Manuale per la riapertura delle attività produttive, 2020; DGR n. 601 of 12 May 2020).

The CM is defined as a coordinator of anti-Coronavirus measures, who is nominated by the employer among the organizational Health & Safety (H&S) network and who usually is the employer itself or the Protection and Prevention Manager (PPM). However, independently from his/her formal role, the basic requirement which characterizes the CM is the possibility to effectively exercise both organizational and directional powers (Regione Veneto, Comunicato n°645, 30th April 2020, Manuale per la riapertura delle attività produttive and Regione Lombardia, ordinanza n. 538, 30th April 2020). Nevertheless, the hypothesis of Covid Manager as PPM is concerned, it is to say that this specific issue is particularly controversial: the key issue is that the PPM, for definition (article 2 of the decree 81/2008), it is not equipped with such powers, but only with advisory functions. This is why this study advances the understanding of the CM role by testing the CM dynamic role assumption and the central role of the interchange between typical Project Manager (PM) skills, safety climate and safety performance by broadening the PM role towards new meaning attributions. More specifically our assumption is that the CM role could be covered by the already existing PPM) who, adding CM-specific tasks to his/her traditional role and expanding the meaningfulness of its self and externally-perceived position, acquires some of the most typical PM hard and soft skills and is responsible for leading a Covid Task Force (CTF) mainly through transformational leadership behaviours (Flin & Yule, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kipnis et al., 1980).

By addressing the CM organizational identity and dynamic role assumption, we contribute to Health and Safety literature Project management literature, by aiming at covering a literature and experimental gap regarding the CM role, its main responsibilities, hard and soft skills, its main leadership style and how he/she relates within the organizational borders. Our findings contribute to the literature by providing useful insights on how to introduce the CM role, on how enhancing its effectivity and on how to get practical and managerial advantages by introducing such a new figure within every organizational network, both in term of perceived safety climate and perceived leadership style. Our research is supported by the adoption of a qualitative approach, characterized by the submission of semi-structured interviews made of both open and closed Likert questions; in spite of a quantitative approach, such a methodological choice gave us the chance to master a still unexplored phenomena, its shades and its perceived meaning.

2. The Covid Manager's skills, behaviours and characteristics

Theoretical and empirical studies suggest that PMs, when involved in Health and Safety (H&S) issues, are fundamental to manage safety measures risks, since they are responsible for performing safety management tasks and for developing a positive safety climate (Thamain & Wilemon, 1975; Neal et al. 2000). Therefore, PMs should acquire four specific sets of skills: conceptual, human, political, and technical skill, also known as the CHPT construct (Zou & Sunindijio, 2013 & 2009; Goleman & Cherniss, 2003; Ahearn et al., 2004; Pritchard, 2001; Westney, 2001). By developing the CHPT skills PMs could more naturally and effectively perform transformational leadership behaviours and positively impact over OCBs (Organ's, 1988; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Williams & Anderson, 1991; Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999; Bass, 1985), also thanks to the safety climate and trust-towards-the leader mediating role (Asgari et al., 2008; Braun et al., 2013).

Scholars, across decades, attempted to give a clearer definition of the CHPT skills construct, in particular many have argued that the conceptual skill is the ability to envision the project as a whole: such a skill indicates that many project's activities are strictly connected one to another, this means that PMs should apply conceptual skills to understand the project and the goal at 360 degrees and to foresee how the project's implementation itself could plausibly impact over the whole organizational environment (Robbins, et al., 2009).

More specifically, the conceptual skill is believed being formed by three different competencies: integration, scoping and visioning. The integration is the ability of assuring that all the project's fundamental components and passages are well coordinated; the scoping competence consists in the ability of focusing energies in those works and actions which are strictly necessary to accomplish the project itself; last but not least, the visioning competence refers to knowing how to observe the project's process and to literally visualize how the project's implementation will impact on the organizational and extra-organizational environment.

“In relation to safety, the research argues that conceptual skill is essential for PMs to realize the impacts and necessities of good safety practices on the workers and their family, the company, the community, and the achievement of project objectives. It helps PMs to understand that safety is really an important and integral part of their project. Furthermore, conceptual skill allows PMs to address safety issues from a life-cycle perspective rather than limiting it only during specific and central stages” (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009, p. 4).

The human skill, instead, is the ability to work and interact with and by the means of other people; as a matter of fact, projects usually involve numerous stakeholders and a Covid management project it is not exempt from this nature: a successful project manager must be able to reach a specific goal always taking in consideration that many relationships, expectations, and interests must be managed. Human skills are more specifically defined by three peculiar competencies: leadership, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skill. The leadership competence mainly consists in the ability to exercise a certain influence on people, who become followers, to achieve a specific target; the emotional intelligence competence, is defined as the capacity for

recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.

More specifically, emotional intelligence too is constructed by four different dimensions (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001), which are self-awareness (the ability to recognize our feelings and use them properly in the decision making process), self-management (the capability to control and regulate anxiety, anger or nervous attitude), social-awareness (the ability to recognize and sympathize with other people's feelings) and relationships' management (the ability influence or harmonize emotions in relationships)

Finally, the competence of interpersonal skill is that ability to manage different types of relationships, with peers, superiors or subordinates: it is very important that a project manager with sufficient human skills know how to deal with conflicts, motivation, communication and teamwork problems; this is particularly true in the most delicate phases of the team formation process, the storming and norming ones (Tuckman, 1965). To sum up, “human skill is required to influence project safety performance because people are the ones who perform the works, thus PMs need human skill to communicate the importance of safety, lead the implementation of safety management system, and motivate and inspire people to work safely. Furthermore, PMs need human skill to manage stakeholders' expectations related with safety” (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009, p. 5).

With reference to the political skill, some researchers agree on defining it as the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives (Ahearn, et al., 2004, p. 311).

The political skill can be considered also as the ability to understand complex environments and situations, from a social, economic, cultural point of view and to use such knowledge to exercise an instrumental influence upon other people. Political skill is fundamental for PMs because projects themselves can be considered as political arenas where many conflicts, interests and powers interact one with the others (Ferris, et al., 2005).

In addition to this it is important to notice that “the main difference between political skill and human skill is that political skill is specific to interactions aimed to achieve success in organizations (or projects). The interactions can take place anywhere (Fisk, 1997), but the main goal is the organizational influence and success (Ferris, et al., 2005). Ferris et al. (2005) proposed four key competencies or dimensions of the political skill.

Social astuteness is the first competency: it is argued that people with high political skill are astute observers of others and they are keenly attuned to diverse social situations. They are sensitive to others; thus, they are considered as ingenious and clever in dealing with others.

The second competency is interpersonal influence: another characteristic of people high in political skill is their convincing personal style that exerts a strong influence to people around them. They are flexible and they can appropriately adapt their behaviour to each situation in order to extract certain responses from others.

Another important competency of political skill is the networking ability: people included in the networks are considered to hold assets deemed as valuable and necessary for attaining successful personal and organizational functioning. People with high networking ability are often expert negotiators, deal makers, and at ease with conflict management.

The fourth and the last political skill competency is apparent sincerity: this competency is the key to influence others because it focuses on the perceived intentions of certain behaviour exhibitions. In this case, the influence attempts will be successful when there are no ulterior motives behind the behaviour exhibited. People high in apparent sincerity inspire trust and confidence because they do not appear to be manipulative or coercive. In some cases, safety is relegated below other project objectives like time and cost. “By exercising political skill, PMs are able to demonstrate genuine interest towards safety, which will influence others to realize about the importance of safety in the project, thus convince them to put safety as a priority. Furthermore, political skill is a clever way to achieve behaviour coordination and eliminate many barriers that might disrupt safety performance. It inspires trust, confidence, and support. It also orchestrates and facilitates the interaction among team members that can boost safety performance” (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009, p. 6).

Last but not least, the technical skill consists in all those techniques and specific knowledges which are necessary in order to successfully perform a certain task or cover a certain role within the organization. According to some studies (Fisk, 1997; Pritchard, 2001; Westney, 2001), the technical skill itself is composed by six specific technical competences: scheduling (mainly defining the activities progression and timeline and recognizing the tasks interdependence), budgeting and cost management (properly allocating resources in order to effectively reach the project’s goals and allocating the budget for individual activities always considering the probability of the need of changes in the project development), quality management (identifying standards and evaluate how much actions meet such set standards thanks to periodical assessment), document and contract administration (knowing how to implement performance in accordance to juridical and administrative schemes and notions), risk management (knowing how to manage risk in order to do not lose competitiveness but, at the same time, not exposing the team to an excessively threatening activity) and, at last, procurement management (knowing how to collect resources and services from exogenous environments such as vendors or suppliers).

Table n° 1- CHPT Skills'synthesizing scheme

SKILLS	MEANING
CONCEPTUAL SKILL	
INTEGRATION	The ability of assuring that all the project’s fundamental components and passages are well coordinated (Sunindijo & Zou, 2011).
VISIONING	The ability of focusing energies in those works and actions which are strictly necessary to accomplish the project (Sunindijo & Zou, 2011).
SCOPING	Knowing how to observe the project’s process and to literally visualize how the project’s implementation will impact on the

	organizational and extra-organizational environment (Sunindijo & Zou, 2011).
HUMAN SKILL	
LEADERSHIP	The ability to exercise a certain influence on people, who become followers, in order to achieve a specific target: leaders are the ones who, in every organizational environment, make things happen and stimulate actions by influencing different stakeholders and coordinating them towards a common and shared goal (Robbins, et al., 2009).
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	“The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (Goleman, 1999, p. 375).
INTERPERSONAL SKILL	The ability to manage different types of relationships, with peers, superiors or subordinates: it is very important that a project manager with sufficient human skills know how to deal with conflicts, motivation, communication and teamwork problems (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
POLITICAL SKILL	
SOCIAL ASTUTENESS	Being astute observers of others and keenly attuned to diverse social situations. This means being sensitive to others and be considered as ingenious and clever in dealing with others (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE	Having a convincing personal style that exerts a strong influence to people around. This means being flexible and appropriately adapt personal behaviour to each situation in order to extract certain responses from others (Ferris, et al., 2005).
NETWORKING	People included in the networks are considered to hold assets deemed as valuable and necessary for attaining successful personal and organizational functioning. People with high networking ability are often expert negotiators, deal makers, and at ease with conflict management (Fisk, 1997).
APPARENT SINCERITY	This competency is the key to influence others because it focuses on the perceived intentions of certain behaviour exhibitions. In this case, the influence attempts will be successful when there are no ulterior motives behind the behaviour exhibited. People high in apparent sincerity inspire trust and confidence because they do not appear to be manipulative or coercive (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
TECHNICAL SKILL	
SCHEDULING	Defining the activities progression and timeline and recognizing the tasks interdependence (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).

COST MANAGEMENT	Properly allocating resources in order to effectively reach the project's goals and allocating the budget for individual activities always considering the probability of the need of changes in the project development (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
QUALITY MANAGEMENT	Identifying standards and evaluate how much actions meet such set standards thanks to periodical assessment (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
DOCUMENT ADMINISTRATION	Knowing how to implement performance in accordance to juridical and administrative schemes and notions (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
RISK MANAGEMENT	Knowing how to manage risk in order to do not lose competitiveness but, at the same time, not exposing the team to an excessively threatening activity (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).
PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT	Knowing how to collect resources and services from exogenous environments such as vendors or suppliers (Sunindijo & Zou, 2009).

Source: Authors' elaboration

More specifically, in the context of the relationships between PMs and project team members with reference to the safety issue, it has been proved that visioning, self-awareness and apparent sincerity are initiators of the entire relationships among project manager skills, safety tasks and safety climate.

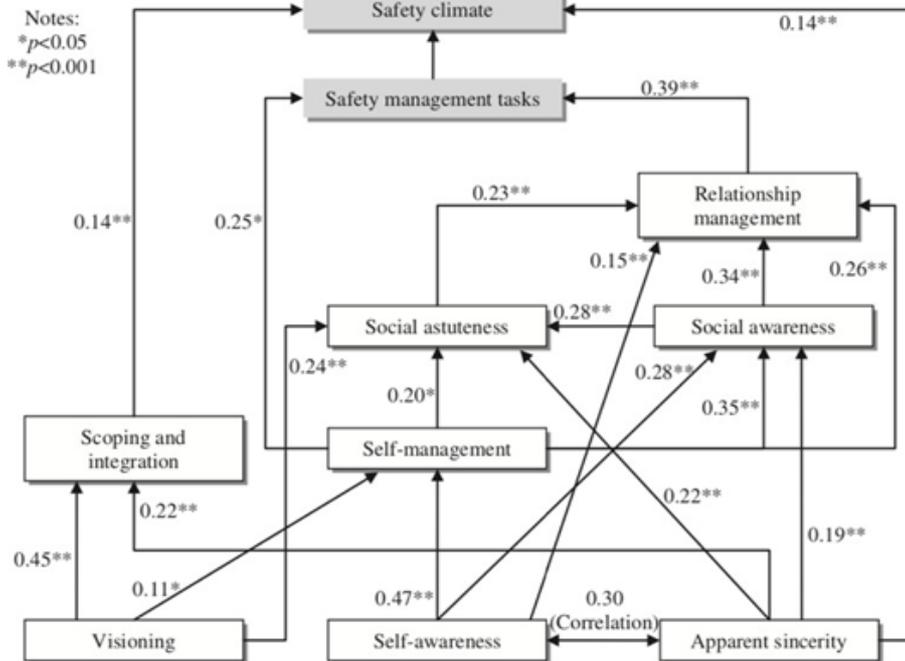
The model further reveals that visioning is a predictor of scoping and integration, self-management and social astuteness (Zou & Sunindijo, 2013, p. 97).

Self-awareness is the second initiator and it is considered as a predictor of three main emotional intelligence's competences, social awareness, self-management (influenced by both self-awareness and visioning initiators) and social awareness: to sum up, the research support the hypothesis according to which self-awareness, as part of the emotional intelligence competence, is fundamental in order to exercise an effective leadership towards team members and to cooperate effectively with others (Zou & Sunindijo, 2013).

The third initiator is represented by apparent sincerity which, as a fundamental political skill's component, it is useful in order to perform effective socialization process and to positively influence first impressions and perceptions. Thus, it is necessary that successful project managers show themselves as trustworthy and genuinely interested in health and safety issue in order to have an effective positive impact over team members' perceptions with regards to safety measures' relevance.

Studies suggest that project personnel should prioritize their skills development so they can effectively implement safety tasks and lead the development of safety climate. Figure 1 simplifies and suggests how project management personnel should develop their skills in order to manage effectively safety risks (Zou & Sunindijo, 2013).

Figure n° 1 – Skills components



Source: Zou & Sunindijo, 2013

3. The Covid Manager under a leadership perspective

In order to successfully face Covid-19 spreading and respond to public safety demands, organizational customs must be unfrozen and transformations of behavioural safety habits should be pursued and cemented (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 2014; Putri et al., 2020). More specifically, the effectiveness of the CM as change agent, with respect to safety climate-related perceptions and organizational practices, calls for the adoption of transformational, rather than transactional, leadership behaviours, towards the CTF, with regards to which the CM, being provided of managerial authority, represents the most strategic reference point and has the responsibility for enhancing safety performance and OCBs.

With reference to the existing relationship between leadership behaviours, trust and OCBs, some studies suggest that there are positive and direct relationships between transformational leadership behaviours, and organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) and OCB, considering elements as leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived organizational support (POS), and trust as the mediators (Asgari et al, 2008; Bass, 1986, Clark & Ward, 2006). As far as the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviours is concerned, it could be claimed that, since the transformational leader is one who has the effective ability to motivate and encourage followers, even at the cost

of personal interests, by shaping a clear and collective vision of a shared goal, individuals who perceive such a vision are generally keener in contributing to such a common aim, even with extra role performance.

With regards to the relationship between LMX (leader- members exchange) and OCB, a positive influence is expected since high-quality relationships between leaders and followers fulfil one of the most important people’s needs, the one of feeling intrinsically motivated and self-gratified by achieving an organizational shared goal, not only a personal one (Graen & Uhl Bien, 1995). In few words “LMX is expected to correlate positively with OCB. Support for this relationship was provided by Hackett, Farh, Song, and Lapierre (2003), who reported a meta-analytic mean correlation of 0.32 between LMX and overall OCB, leading them to conclude that OCB plays a key role in the reciprocal social exchange process of LMX [...]. Taken together, LMX has significant influence on the level of OCB among employees as a high quality of LMX may motivate employees to exhibit extra-role behaviours without any formal rewards from the organization” (Asgari, et al., 2008, p. 229). Perceived organizational support (POS) and Trust in leaders, instead, are considered as mediators of the relationship between all types of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviours: to make it simple, procedural justice, as the fairness of organizational procedures and decisions concerning employees, and distributive justice, as the fairness of the compared relation between employees’ contributions and rewards, both play a positive influence over OCBs thanks to the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS); this happens because fair policies and procedures strengthen employee beliefs that, because of their efforts, they will be fairly rewarded (procedural justice), on contrary, receiving benefits from the organization would signal to an employee that she/he is valued (distributive justice) in a fair and just way.

Trust as a mediator between transformational leadership behaviours and team performance, as an example, has been a central focus for many studies, among which the one of Braun et al. (2013) that, by introducing the mediating role of trust, looks at transformational leadership as a “multilevel phenomenon” (Braun, et al., 2013). Transformational leadership can spread its effect at an individual, team or cross-relationship level.

Individually speaking, the effect of transformational leadership behaviours is the one of inspiring and motivating people and single organizational members towards a specific goal. At a team-level, transformational leaders aim to transform individual goals into a joint one and to intellectually stimulate the team to develop innovative approaches to problems.

Last but not least, at a cross- relationships level transformational leaders not only address their behaviours and influence towards single individuals, but also to the team as a whole and that means that, even though these behaviours are not explicitly directed towards every single follower, but towards a collective entity (e.g. the team), they will influence each individual team member anyway and they will have an impact over the leader-member exchange too (Braun, et al., 2013).

The previously assumed relationship between an effective transformational leadership style and performance at an individual, team or crossed level, is strongly influenced by the trust that followers perceive towards their leader: the concept of

trust, it is one of the main reasons and precondition of the leader existence, since leaders strongly need to be trusted by their followers because trust is what binds the follower to the leader itself (Nanus, 1989) and it makes the relationship last and be significant.

Taking in consideration such theoretical developments, this study assumes that if the CM covers a PM role towards a CTF, the adoption of a transformational leadership style, not only will directly influence safety OCBs, but also indirectly, both from an individual and collective point of view thanks to the mediating role of trust in leaders and POS. Thus, if the CTF considers both the leader and the team goal as trustworthy, it will potentially improve the organizational safety performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

4. Methodology

The lack of studies regarding the CM role leads to the choice of adopting a research method that makes an in-depth understanding of a still unexplored phenomena possible. Therefore, we adopted a qualitative approach based on the operationalization of theoretical “sensitizing” concepts (Blumer, 1969) in research variables (Table 2) and based on semi-structured interviews made of both open and closed five-points Likert scale questions.

Table n°2 - Operationalization of research assumption’s concepts into variables

CONCEPTS	VARIABLES
Organizations equip themselves with a specific anti-Coronavirus Task Force	Covid-19 Task Force existence
The PPM is responsible for coordinating the anti-Coronavirus Task Force performance	Task Force coordinating role
The PPM behaves as a leader with both consulting and executive power	Adoption of leadership behaviours
The adoption of a transformational leadership style leads to a performance beyond expectation	Type of adopted leadership style
Trust towards leaders represents a mediating element between leadership behaviours and OCBs	Role of trust
The PPM develops typical PM’s skills: the CHPT skills	Existence and significance of CHPT skills

Source: Authors’ elaboration

Additionally, scores derived from closed Likert questions investigating the CHPT skills’ significance have been submitted to averaging and a ranking of each skill have been set. Interviews have been submitted to qualified witnesses according to a “convenient sampling” method (Saunders et al., 2012) which made an

expedited and suddenly available data collection possible (Henry, 1990; Given, 2008), but which does not obviously lack of risks, such as the potential bias due to the under-representation of sub-groups in the sample itself (Bornstein et al. 2017).

Respondents have been selected in reason of their experience as components of their respective Health and Safety network: they have been selected among professionals that, in the Northern area of Italy, cover a strategic role in organizational Health and Safety networks according to the Italian TUSL (d.lgs. 81/2008) having at least 5 years of work experience; more specifically three of them covered the PPM role, among which two of them had also the formal title of CMs, one ASPP (Agent of the protection and prevention service) and one Preposto. We chose respondents also taking in consideration the industry they belong to; more specifically, we conducted our research with reference to the mechanical-manufactory, construction and tertiary services (health services) industries, since from the official and normative statement of the Italian Coronavirus emergency status, only few industries, among which the ones selected for our study, could keep production going or at least readjust it to the country's health needs (DPCM 22 Marzo 2020). Unlike other industries, enterprises engaged in basic necessities operated throughout the pandemic emergency and this necessitated immediate and evolving reorganization in order to face Coronavirus related risks, including the introduction of CM.

Respondents have been interviewed by telephone and accepted to be recorded while submitting the interview. Such a methodological choice it's not only supported by the effective impossibility to conduct face-to-face surveys during Covid-19 pandemic, but also the advantages of this methodological choice, such as the speed of data collection and the tendential shortage of resistance in allowing the interview by the addressees.

Based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we interviewed every respondent once employing the same questions, independently from the covered role, asking informants about their job profile and role in the organization, how these are perceived and considered within the organizational borders and how much effective they consider those behaviours which are symptoms of the CHPT skills and transformational or transactional leadership style.

More specifically, we asked sixteen open questions regarding which are the main changes in Health and Safety figure's tasks due to the persistence of the Coronavirus situation, the exitance of a peculiar CM's responsibility among the respondents' tasks, the degree of self-consideration as a fundamental coordinating figure in re-organizing the work processes, the kind and intensity of relationship which bound CMs to CTFs, what kind of technical skills respondents effectively perform in order to face Coronavirus, if those who are supposed to be responsible for the anti-coronavirus measure effectively exercise executive powers and if they cover a leading role within the H&S network.

Additionally, with both open and four closed Likert questions, we tried to investigate the salience of each CHPT skills, with particular reference to the adoption of a transactional or transformational leadership style (human skill), the relevance of visioning competence-related behaviours in defining the CM role (conceptual skill),

the importance of the network ability (political skill) and, finally, how much time management and budget management issues had an impact on the CM performance (technical skill).

Finally, we asked about the perceived importance of trust between the H&S professionals and employees to guarantee safety compliance and safety participation behaviours.

A qualitative methodology was used in order to analyse recorded interviews; more specifically we adopted a sort of hermeneutical approach which aimed at rising new conceptual categories and constructs in relation with the theoretical background.

Firstly, we set the data pool by identifying the main key-concept of the research hypothesis, by attributing abstract values to the interview track on the basis of the predetermined theoretical background, a sort of indexing activity, then we proceeded with the construction of a thematic charts by sorting the interviews’ records on the index basis. Secondly, by defining and giving a broader and more extended description of the emerged conceptual categories, we passed from a descriptive analysis phase to an explicative analysis one (Spenser, Richie, O’Connor, 2003) by establishing conceptual relations and setting a theoretical system.

In line with the effort of building a thematic chart, Table 3 shows respondents’ perceptions towards those key concepts that have been analysed in this explorative study.

Table n° 3 - Operationalization of research assumption’s concepts into variables

RESPONDENTS’ CITATIONS	CONCEPTS
<p><i>“My company has decided to create a specific Task Force: there is a peer committee where all decisions are taken”.</i></p> <p><i>“I collaborate within a Covid-Committee, obviously the committee is characterized by a formal hierarchy, the same which usually operates in the Health and Safety field, but from a practical point of view there is a full sense of cooperation: such a hierarchy exists only as formally intended”</i></p>	<p>Covid-19 Task Force existence</p>
<p><i>“I keep on covering a coordinating role: there is a task force, who sets all the Health and Safety rules so it is natural that indirectly or during an emergency, I can intervene with my executive powers: anyway, decisions are generally taken by such” round table”. Let’s say that, from a theoretical point of view I can exercise executive powers, but at the same time I do not want to destroy the traditional approach to Health and Safety at work. I do not want to be seen as a “vigilant”, an authority”</i></p>	<p>Task Force coordinating role</p>
<p><i>“The motivational levers that should be used to persuade people, as far as Health and Safety is concerned, are not the reward-related ones, otherwise people will never be responsible for the importance of respecting safety rules. At the end, the main goal is to make people understand that respecting rules should not be done only to please their employer, but for themselves: when in the evening you come back home, you want to be safe and sound for your family. Rules is anyway important, but not self-sufficient.”</i></p> <p><i>“Penalties or sanctions are necessary, but they are not the motivational levers that stimulate workers’ behaviours. Safety cannot be a command, but something that is part of our DNA”</i></p>	<p>Type of adopted leadership style</p>

<p><i>“Vigilants must be there, but they are not very useful: controllers will never be as many as the controlled ones: a virtuous system of self-control and awareness is surely more efficient.”</i></p>	
<p><i>“Trust is fundamental, but not sufficient to make rules being respected. It also depends on how much people are aware of health and safety issues.”</i> <i>“Trust is very important, it is a fundamental element, above all when talking about health and safety issues: towards trust, messages are better perceived and understood by the addressees.”</i></p>	<p>Role of trust</p>
<p><i>“Coronavirus is a Health problem which involves everyone’s life: the emotional and psychological aspect is fundamental!”</i> <i>We felt more a time-related pressure, rather than economic one: anti-coronavirus measures had to be put into practice as soon as possible! Obviously budget limitations do exist, but we have a quite extended expense autonomy.”</i> <i>“The capability to look at the health and safety measures’ realization as a whole is absolutely relevant in order to effectively cover my role”</i> <i>“In order to reach the final goal, intermediate steps must be considered: to understand how much the main goal is important, it is necessary that people have a clear perception of the risks and the actions that must be put into practice. If the goal is to avoid Covid contagion or to avoid injuries, it is necessary to clearly understand all the steps and the action that should be adopted”</i></p>	<p>Existence and significance of CHPT skills</p>

Source: Authors’ elaboration

5. Findings

Through a realistic textual and contextual analysis of the recorded interviews the main research hypothesis has been confirmed and some additional findings have been put into light. First, the PPM results being the professional which is mostly keen on covering a CM role and contributing to its meaning-seeking process. All the respondents stated that a CTF has been created, composed of interfunctional members and led by PPM, that plays a negotiating role among different organizational interests and functional-specific communities.

This confirms the hypothesis according to which, in spite of the mere advisory powers which characterize the PPM (d.lgs 81/2008), it can also exercise directional ones by adding specific anti-Coronavirus responsibilities to its traditional duties. Secondly, collected data confirm the importance of adopting a transformational leadership style by the CM, which might positively influence the perception and awareness of safety measures and which might motivate employees to adopt safety OCBs (House & Sing, 1987): “In general, for the PPM is quite difficult to obtain people fellowship only by setting some mandatory rule; the most important thing is deeply talking to people in order to make them develop a true awareness safety measures’ relevance” (Interview number 4). Nevertheless, respondents underlined that also transactional leadership behaviours contribute to assure, even if at an unconscious level, the minimum expected safety performance: “Formal rules and sanctions are necessary in order to reach the minimum safety standard, nevertheless they are not those incentives that make co-workers change their behaviours into more safe ones; safety cannot be an imposition, but something that people feel in their DNA”

(Interview 5). Transformational and transactional leadership behaviours are not considered mutually exclusive, but complementary to grant both standard and beyond expectations' safety performance. Additionally, PPM, while performing as CM, acquires some PMs' CHPT skills, as transformational leadership style, visioning competence, emotional intelligence, time and budget management.

Results confirmed the importance of CHPT skills, to effectively exercise the CM role, with this level of importance: the network ability of the political skill, the visioning competence of the conceptual skill, the capability of adopting transformational behaviours of the human skill and, as last, the capability of managing budget and deadlines of the technical skill.

Finally, respondents ascertained that trust in CM is fundamental in order to positively influence the employees' awareness and engagement level towards the respect of safety measure. They also underlined that, to be effective, trust towards should not only rely on CM's personal skills and competences, but also on organizational citizens' genuine awareness and commitment, which could be enhanced by the implementation of organizational justice practices, such as procedural and interactional ones.

6. Discussion

The study advances the understanding of the CM role: we tested the CM dynamic role assumption and the central role of the interchange between typical PM skills, safety climate and safety performance. One of the main strengths of the qualitative approach that has been addressed, is that of enhancing and broadening the PM role towards new meaning attributions: he/she does not only behave as an interstitial stakeholder of business goals among organizational functional and project-oriented lines, but also, in the guise of the CM, assumes an interplaying role between generalized and social safety demands and organizational communities' interests and perceptions. More specifically, we contributed to the macro literature which focuses on the much-studied connection between typical PM skills, leadership behaviours in safety-concerning projects and OCBs by disentangling the CM role and broadening PM traits to pre-existing organizational H&S roles. On the PPM side, the study confirms its parallelism with standard PM traits while performing CM tasks, since PPM not only acts as the main CTF leader, but also acquires CHPT skills that, by positively impacting over the safety climate, could lead to better safety performances and pro-social behaviours.

In line with previous findings, our study validates the need of adopting contingent leadership behaviours: while transformational leadership is fundamental to enhance safety OCBs and organizational safety commitment, transactional leadership is equally necessary to “get things done” and gain standard safety targets. Additionally, the study puts into light the significance of perceived awareness-based trust towards PPM, which could be pursued and enhanced by a growing procedural and interactional organizational justice within organizational citizens. We also contributed to the Project Management and Safety Management literature by

advancing a qualitative evaluation of the CHPT skills in terms of perceived relevance: while the CM political capabilities of creating and supporting relational networks at a broad organizational level, being a “mediating entity” within the organization, results as the most appreciated skill in performing PM safety tasks, quite surprisingly, the technical competence of managing budget ranked least in terms of significance, since, when approaching to mere safety-concerning projects, financial and economic issue are not take into account and the employees’ safety guarantee is considered absolutely primary.

Differently, time management skills have obtained a higher recognition since, above all while facing unexpected threats as Coronavirus, are fundamental to comply with updating normative requirements and to promptly act against safety dangers. Following these considerations, this study aims at enhancing the identity-seeking process of the CM, a role which was born concurrently with Covid-19 pandemic and safety demands and which is trying to find his/her place in organizational contexts while negotiating and attempting to establish an ever-changing balance between practices control and social chaos, between the pursuit of sense-making organizational behaviours and effective safety targets.

7. Managerial implications

The managerial implications of this study are varied, nevertheless mainly two of them cannot be neglected. The first deals with an organization-individual fit (O/I) issue (House et al. 1987), since this study draws attention to the potential current and future developments of PPM and suggests that his/her project-related core should be enhanced by organizations, to grant an alignment between external and internal stakeholders, when talking about safety issues: new organizational and human-kind’s purposes must be considered and turned into practice (Di Carlo E., 2020).

More specifically PPMs should become aware of the negotiating and mediating role they cover within both intra and inter-organizational borders (; on the other hand, organizations should promote the development of project management-like approaches to H&S duties and goals, ideally by supporting the establishment of formally and/or informally recognized task forces and the development of CHPT skills, even by the means of ad hoc HR Management practices, among those who are supposed to cover safety-related leading role. Secondly, precise CM’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be set to provide H&S managers and employees with recommendations for detecting and controlling those factors that mostly influence the safety performance.

More specifically, KPIs should not only be clear and measurable, but also enhance the CM’s double-faced nature by evaluating, on one hand, those specific hard skills which are necessary to fulfil the role-related responsibilities, and, on the other hand, typical PMs’ soft skills which lead to the enhancement not only of the CM mediating function, but also of a transformational leadership style and organizational pro-social behaviours.

8. Limitations and future research directions

This research does not lack of limitations. A first concern regards the qualitative approach with regards to the trustworthiness of findings: to address this issue, a textual and contextual analysis of the recorded interviews and a match between theoretical variables and witnesses' interpretations have been addressed.

Additionally, we acknowledge that this research rests on a quantitatively limited comparisons of case-studies, therefore it has limited generalizability. Consequently, the applied model would benefit from more in-depth case studies in industry or territorial-specific organizational contexts. Even though only an early-stage job analysis of the CM has been depicted, additional developments and insights of this new organizational role could be pursued in the future. More specifically, since our theoretical and empirical analysis is mostly based on the belief that the need of an organizational CM role, intended as a projective one, is a Coronavirus pandemic-related and temporary necessity, the main limitation of such a preconception is that, currently, a specific “projective deadline” cannot be scheduled, even though the existence of a hypothetical end can be foreseen. Therefore, future directions of this study might contribute to understand if it could be reasonable thinking at the Covid Manager as a Process Manager too (Hammer & Stanton, 1999; Sonteya & Seymour, 2012), who is called to handle with continuous and long-lasting safety challenges and who must seek for renewed transformation and adaptation forms within the organizational formal and informal structure (Palmberg, 2010).

Also, while this work mainly focuses on a CM static analysis, from a temporal perspective, without taking into account potential CM identity evolutions, future studies may also consider testing its evolvment and conversion process, concurrently with the broader Coronavirus pandemic progression, by addressing an “as is – to be” comparison (longitudinal survey) and contributing this way to the debate about the narrow connection between individual meaning-seeking processes and social transformations.

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