Research Article

Soft Skills and Interpersonal Ability of CEOs for Company Existence in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic Era

Nur Hasyim[1]*, and Darul Nurjanah[2]

[1]Business Administration Departement, Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, Depok, Jawa Barat, Indonesia
[2]Civil Engineering Departement, Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, Depok, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

ORCID
Nur Hasyim https://orcid.org/0000-00029637-9769

Abstract.
The post-Covid-19 pandemic period is uncertain because the pandemic hampers the running of business processes in almost all sectors due to the decline in market demand, production, and profits that occur in the company, so the CEO must optimize soft skills, interpersonal skills, and hard skills to survive in the company. This study aims to find out the soft skills and interpersonal skills that CEOs guide to exist in the post-Covid-19 pandemic period. This qualitative research investigates the CEO's soft skills and interpersonal abilities for company existence in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era. Data were collected by interviewing the CEOs of PT Andal Software and PT Ikapunija Silver Expert, conducting documentation studies, and searching on trusted internet websites. Next, the data were analyzed qualitatively: data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The results of the study were soft skills guided by CEOs to exist in the post-pandemic period, such as leadership, strategic management system, effective communication, technical skills, good culture, and faith. Meanwhile, interpersonal skills developed include utilizing words such as please, sorry, ladies and gentlemen, as well as optimizing questions and discussions with employees and consumers.

Keywords: soft skill, interpersonal skill, company, post-Covid-19 pandemic

Corresponding Author: Nur Hasyim; email: nur.hasyim@bisnis.pnj.ac.id

1. Introduction

Knowledge and skills about soft skills are non-negotiable. That capacity we really need. Soft skills are often referred to as emotional intelligence or character. Soft skills are needed to handle difficult and uncertain times that require us to be resilient, optimistic, and awake. Soft skills are the ability to manage oneself and others [1–3]. Soft skills refer to non-academic skills, such as communication skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, cooperation, co-learning, entrepreneurship, ethics, and leadership soft skills incorporate aspects of generic skills which include non-academic skills such as communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, teamwork, life-long learning and

information, entrepreneurship, ethic and professional moral, and leadership [4,5]. Soft skills incorporate aspects of generic skills which include non-academic skills such as communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, teamwork, life-long learning and information, entrepreneurship, ethics, and leadership [6,7].

Of course, the CEO as a person who is responsible for making various decisions for the sustainability of the Company must have adequate soft skills. The CEO is also responsible for the company's operational activities. Soft skills are the ability to manage oneself and others [3,8,9].

In this post-pandemic era, based on the observations of researchers, several CEOs have remained successful, among others, it is known that their business ventures continue to run smoothly, including (i) Indra Sosrodjojo CEO of Andal Software [10], and (iii) Unggul Baroto Ikapunija Silver Expert [11]. Andal Software is a company engaged in system planning and software houses. KarirLab is engaged in career platform services. Ikapunija Silver Expert is engaged in Leadership development, Project management, and Executive Coaching.

The soft skills possessed and guided by CEOs in leading companies during the pandemic so that their companies still exist are not known because research related to this is not yet available. Therefore, the study addresses this. Formulation of this research problem., the research questions are (i) What soft skills are owned and guided by CEOs to continue to exist in the post-Covid-19 pandemic, and (ii) what is the sequence of the utilization of soft skills aspects that are guided so that the company continues to exist in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period?

There have been several studies that have addressed soft skills, however, research specifically investigating soft skills in CEOs seems not yet available. Research on existing soft skills is as follows. Research on soft skills needed in teaching with researchers Hashim et al. [12], This study found that there are six soft skills needed, namely communication skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, ethics, and leadership. Research on soft skills needed by students conducted by Muhmin et al. [13], This study found that soft skills are very important; Soft skills needed by students include initiative, ethics/integrity, critical thinking, willingness to learn, and motivation. Research on the effect of soft skills on principal leadership with researchers Munir et al. [6]. The findings were that soft skills and social skills had a partial and simultaneous effect on Principal Leadership, and the soft skills research required by software managers, with researchers

Buchynskab et al. [14]. The finding was that software delivery managers desperately need communication capacity to maintain relationships with clients.

2. Research Methods

The research was conducted with a descriptive-qualitative research approach, namely research that describes in detail, both conditions and processes, as well as the relationship regarding the main research results; research with qualitative data which then the results of the research are described descriptively [15].

Data is the object of research, the reality that is the focus of research, including places, participants, and events that surround the focus of research. This research data is related to soft skills guided by CEOs in the post-pandemic period so that the companies they lead continue to exist. The CEOs who will be the source of the data are (i) Indra Sosrodjojo CEO of Andal Software, and (iii) Unggul Baroto Ikapunija Silver Expert [11].

Data was collected by conducting (i) interviews with all two CEOs, and (ii) giving questionnaires to CEOs, especially where interviews were not possible. Data is collected by recording techniques and recording techniques. Data collection with interviews with the CEO of Ikapunija Silver Expert was carried out online, utilizing interview guides. Similarly, the interview with the CEO of PT Andal Software also took place in an orderly manner so that interview questions in accordance with the interview guidelines could be answered properly. Interviews with two informants were conducted separately. Meanwhile, data collection using questionnaires is given by researchers on things that informants have not been able to convey during data collection, with interviews. The informants then provided power points (CEO Ikapunija Silver Expert) and notes (CEO Andal Software).

The data are further analyzed qualitatively as exemplified by Miles and Huberman (1992): data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data reduction is the simplification of data to make data easier to understand. Data presentation is data presented in a neater form so that it is easy to understand. Concluding is concluding data that has been presented neatly.

3. Results and Discussion: Soft Skills and Interpersonal Ability Owned and Guided by CEOs to Continue to Exist in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic Period

The results of the study inform that the soft skills possessed and guided by CEOs so that the Company continues to exist in the post-Covid-19 pandemic period are (i) leadership, (ii) strategic management system, (iii) effective communication, (iv) personal skills, (v) good culture, and (vi) faith (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Soft skill and aspect of soft skill of CEO for existing in the Post-Covid-19 pandemic period.

3.1. Leadership

The CEO of PT Andal Software said that leadership is the capacity to create something that does not yet exist. Something that wants to be created needs to be outlined in the vision, mission, and program that needs to be conveyed to all employees clearly and using good language. Everyone is also allowed to convey their ideas and proposals sufficiently.

The CEO of Ikapunija Silver Expert said that to exist during a pandemic, the CEO also needs to have a solid team (superteam). It takes about 4 people who have excellent integrity and capacity so that when the company is in any condition, the company still exists.

The main characteristics of leadership also include several things [16]. First, Vision: A leader has a vision or foresight of the goals to be achieved and how to achieve them. Second, Decision-Making Ability: Leaders must be able to make the right and wise decisions in various situations. Third, Communication Skills: Leaders must be able to communicate effectively with team members or followers to explain vision, goals, and direction. Fourth, Motivation ability: Leaders must be able to motivate others to work hard and contribute maximally. Fifth. Leadership Ability: Leaders must be able to set a good example, lead with integrity, and inspire others. Sixth, Conflict Management Ability: Leaders must be able to overcome conflicts and find good solutions to problems that arise. Empathy: A good leader can understand the feelings and needs of his team members. Openness to Learning: Leaders must be willing to continue learning and improving, as well as accepting feedback to improve.

3.2. Strategic management system

CEO of Ikapunija Experts that a strategic management system is a system used in managing an organization. The CEO needs to divide tasks among the team. It is highly recommended that CEOs choose managers with loyalty and high capacity so that they can carry out their duties well.

A strategic management system is a way of managing a company properly and efficiently [5,17]. A Strategic Management System is an approach or framework used by organizations to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate their strategies to achieve long-term goals and corporate vision [18]. This system assists the organization in identifying strategic direction, allocating resources, and ensuring that day-to-day actions are consistent with the vision and strategic plan that has been set.

Some of the key elements in a Strategic Management System are as follows. First, understanding the Vision and Mission, namely that the organization must have a clear understanding of its vision (desired long-term achievement) and mission (reason for the organization's existence). Second, Environmental Analysis; involves an in-depth understanding of the external and internal factors that can affect the organization. It includes a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Third, strategy formulation, namely organization formulates strategies that will help them achieve their goals. It involves the selection of alternative actions to be taken. Fourth, Resource Allocation, namely the organization allocates resources such as time, money, and personnel according to their

strategic priorities. Fifth, is strategy execution; this step involves the implementation of the strategy through daily activities within the organization. This requires effective communication, monitoring, and management of change. Organizations should regularly monitor their progress against strategic objectives and conduct evaluations to determine whether the strategy is effective or requires change. Seventh, Capability development; This aspect includes the development and improvement of the organization's ability to face existing and future strategic challenges.

3.3. Effective communication

Communication refers to a person's ability to convey ideas. CEOs certainly must have this ability to manage the company during a pandemic that is full of challenges, including declining sales. CEOs must be able to clearly explain the duties and responsibilities of the staff they lead.

Effective communication needs to be implemented every day. CEOs need to get managers and staff used to convey ideas and problems faced. They also need to be asked to provide solutions to the problems faced. In the event of a conflict, everyone involved in the conflict needs to be allowed to present a solution. They were then asked to choose the best solution. Then, explain the reason that a particular solution is best. Next, the solution is agreed upon and implemented together. So, regular communication every day to monitor the achievement of activities is needed, in particular, to establish closeness with the team, find out obstacles, and determine corrective steps and follow-up actions [3,12,14].

Communication is very important, and CEOs need to be able to guide their staff when they face problems. Staff should be allowed to solve problems and provide solutions during joint meetings. The best solution needs to be agreed upon to use. All staff need to follow the existing solution once established. The CEO's communication skills must be sufficient so that information can be clearly understood by all stakeholders [14].

In order to improve effective communication, efforts need to be made to always strive to think positively. It is necessary to realize that everyone has potential and interest in a particular field. These potentials and interests need to be followed up by finding tasks or jobs that match their potential and interests until people with these potentials and interests become good and optimal performers.

3.4. Technical skill

Technical skills are technical skills that focus on the abilities and knowledge needed by a person to perform a task. During a pandemic, CEOs and staff must not only think but must be able to act to complete technical work. The CEO needs to understand the use of platforms and applications used by the Company to follow and use the information systems in the Company. Technical skills also often refer to specific abilities or expertise related to a particular field of technology, computer science, or scientific discipline. These skills are usually acquired through education, training, or work experience [2,4]. Technical skills can vary depending on the specific field. Some examples of common technical skills are data analysis, graphic design, cloud technology, and foreign language skills. When someone has technical skills, he can designate his competence and performance so that he can carry out tasks according to his position.

3.5. Good culture

PT Andal develops a culture called RICH: Responsible, Innovation, Collaboration, and Humble. The CEO applies attitude and responsibility to the tasks he is assigned. Innovation needs to be done so that the Company's products can answer the needs of the community. Collaboration is non-negotiable if work can be completed quickly. Humble is that humility (not arrogance) needs to be owned by every person in the organization (Figure 2).

3.6. Faith

Faith is an important factor that CEOs also guide to face and exist in the post-pandemic-19 era. Management is a belief in God so the CEO needs to surrender, by always believing in God so that the Company continues to exist. With faith, CEOs are more confident and more resilient in facing various challenges.

The faith that needs to be believed for people and organizations to exist and succeed was conveyed by Goleman [19] that self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, and self-confidence are needed to exist in organizations.

Belief in God is indispensable so that people do not despair. Rest assured that God is all-loving and all-loving. Therefore, every time and every time there is a problem, people need to continue to pray and take refuge in God. Man should not be disappointed and
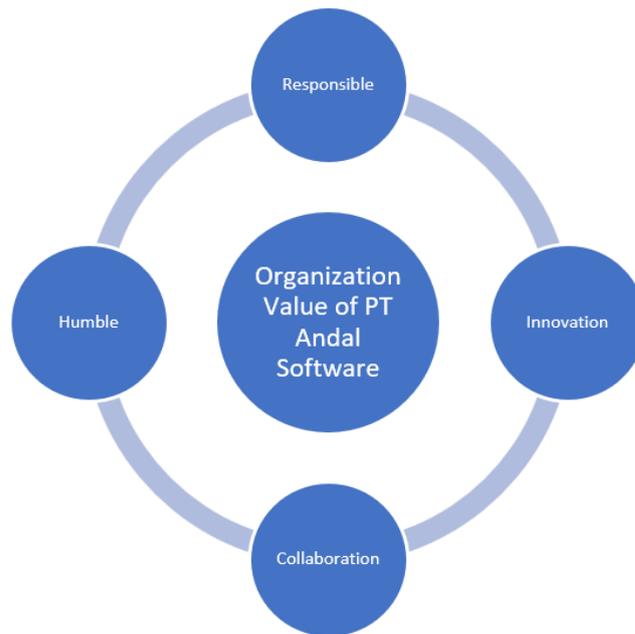
Figure 2: Value of PT Andal Software.

complain a lot. Life is not all in accordance with our expectations: teachers, environment, achievement of goals. Importantly, we must keep moving forward, optimistic, moving even though we may only be able to improve performance by 1%. One percent is progress.

3.7. Personal ability owned and guided by CEOs to continue to exist in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic period

In the post-pandemic period, the skill of relating to others, also known as social or interpersonal skills refers to a person's ability to interact, communicate, and collaborate with others effectively [20,21]. These skills are essential in everyday life, both in personal and professional environments. Here are some examples of skills in relating to others. First, communication skills; These skills include the ability to speak clearly and effectively, listen well, and understand messages conveyed by others. Communication skills also involve the use of appropriate body language and appropriate facial expressions. Second, is empathy, which is the ability to understand and feel the feelings and views of others. Empathy allows people to relate better to others because it can respond with empathy to their needs and feelings. Third is conflict resolution ability, which is the ability to manage conflicts and find solutions that satisfy all parties. This includes the ability to identify problems, talk openly about differences, and seek solutions together.

Fourth is the ability to collaborate, namely the ability to work together in groups or teams, contribute constructively, and support common goals. This includes the ability to listen to other people's ideas and share ideas with others effectively. Fifth is self-control, which is the ability to control emotions and respond to situations calmly and rationally. It helps in avoiding unnecessary conflicts and making better decisions in social situations. Sixth is network-building skills, which can build and maintain relationships with various people in various environments. Networking can help in finding new opportunities in career or personal life. Seventh is the ability to assess social situations, which can read social situations well, such as reading the tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language of others. It helps you to respond appropriately in a variety of social contexts. Eighth is time management skills and priorities, namely managing time well, and maintaining a balance between work, personal life, and social interaction. This can help you avoid conflict and stress caused by overload [20,21].

Personal ability is the ability to relate to others. In the post-pandemic period, personality ability is very necessary. CEOs communicate their thoughts to the rest of the staff with a good approach and language [22]. Personal ability needs to be optimized with the ability to empathize with others to have good social skills. In personality language can be supported by the use of words, words such as good morning, good afternoon, father, mother, sorry, excuse me, please, and permission [23].

4. Conclusion

Leadership skills, task-sharing capacity, good communication skills, and faith are essential things needed by CEOs to exist in the post-pandemic period which is still full of uncertainty. This capacity certainly also needs to be possessed by organizational staff so that they continue to exist in the face of the pandemic era. Presumably, some people are aware and find out about these non-physical needs even though some people are more focused on physical efforts, regarding body health, food, or nutrition which are also important to exist in facing the post-pandemic period. In a healthy soul there is a healthy body, also vice versa, in a healthy body there is a strong soul and mentality. We need to optimize the sufficiency of body and soul.

Acknowledgments

References

[1] Ray A. Professionalism as a soft skill: The social construction of worker identity in India's new services economy. Third World Q. 2023;0(0):1–20.

[2] Casali N, Meneghetti C. Soft skills and study-related factors: Direct and indirect associations with academic achievement and general distress in university students. Educ Sci. 2023;13(6).

[3] Lyu W, Liu J. Soft skills, hard skills: What matters most? Evidence from job postings. Appl Energy. 2021;300(March):117307.

[4] Otermans PCJ, Aditya D, Pereira M. A study exploring soft skills in higher education. J Teach Learn Grad Employab. 2023;14(1):136–53.

[5] Joie-La Marle C, Parmentier F, Weiss PL, Storme M, Lubart T, Borteyrou X. Effects of a new soft skills metacognition training program on self-efficacy and adaptive performance. Behav Sci (Basel). 2023;13(3).

[6] Lestari A, Mahmud H, Munir NP. Pengaruh Soft Skills Dan Keterampilan Interpersonal Terhadap Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah. Kelola J …. 2022;7(1):107–20.

[7] Ode L, Adam B. JUMBO (Jurnal Manajemen, Bisnis dan Organisasi). 2019;3(2):13–27.

[8] Ramos-Pulido S, Hernández-Gress N, Torres-Delgado G. Analysis of soft skills and job level with data science: A case for graduates of a private university. Informatics. 2023;10(1):1–13.

[9] Ibourk A, El Aynaoui K. Career trajectories of higher education graduates: Impact of soft skills. Economies. 2023;11(7):1–22.

[10] Andal M. Andal.

[11] Mandiri MPIP. PT Ikapunija Pakar Mandiri. 2003;

[12] Ngang TK, Yunus HM, Hashim NH. Soft skills integration in teaching professional training: Novice teachers' perspectives. Procedia - Soc Behav Sci. 2015;186:835–40.

[13] Muhmin AH. Pentingnya Pengembangan Soft Skills Mahasiswa di Perguruan Tinggi. Forum Ilm Indonusa. 2018;15(2):330–8.

[14] Schlichter BR, Buchynska T. Soft skills of delivery managers in a co-sourced software project. Procedia Comput Sci. 2021;181(2019):905–12.

[15] Sutopo. HB. Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. Surakarta: Universitas Sebelas Maret; 2006.

[16] Chiu YW, Amin MW, Li ST, Ali M. Spiritual leadership influence on employee creative service performance: A moderated mediation analysis. BMC Psychol. 2023;11(1):1–13.

[17] Kolesnik K, Oliinyk N, Komarivska N, Kazmirchuk N, Imber V. Future-teacher soft skills development in the context of Ukraine's integration into the European Higher Education Area. Int J Learn Teach Educ Res. 2023;22(2):413–31.

[18] Ji H, Zhao X, Dang J. Relationship between leadership-member exchange (LMX) and flow at work among medical workers during the COVID-19: the mediating role of job crafting. BMC Psychol. 2023;11(1):1–8.

[19] Goleman D. Working with Emotional Intelligence. New York: Bantam Books; 1999.

[20] Rudberg I, Olsson A, Thunborg C, Salzmann-Erikson M. Interprofessional communication in a psychiatric outpatient unit – an ethnographic study. BMC Nurs. 2023;22(1):1–14.

[21] Guptill M, Reibling E, Phan T, Khoo B, Lin S, Donham C, et al. Working in fours: Generational communication in the emergency department. Int J Emerg Med. 2023;16(1):1–9.

[22] Hasyim, Nur; Nurjanah D. Gramatika Bahasa Indonesia. Surakarta: Tahta Media Grup; 2023. 1–60 p.

[23] JR M, Rose D. Working with discourse. London: Continum; 2007.