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## Management styles during an emergency – the Pandemic Case

**Abstract:** The inspiration for writing this article is on the one hand, the critical event caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that is being shared by all people around the world and that affects us all universally. On the other hand, it is my academic experience, shared by my colleagues – academic teachers. Therefore, the research I conducted meets all the conditions of critical engaged research: it stems from my own biographical experiences, it is an important opinion on the issue, it is rooted in the current, critical social event and it is aimed at unmasking, revealing real social practices and behaviors. Described below are the styles of managing institutions of higher education (of different kinds – vocational, academic, etc.) in a critical event related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Which management styles are being updated in a critical situation, which are selected and preferred by management, and what are the consequences? These are the questions I will try to answer. In accordance with aforementioned declarations, I will do it based on interviews with the authorities of several Polish institutions of higher education, as well as on the basis of autoethnography.

**Key words:** management styles, critical event, anxiety, trust, control, participation, covid-19, coronavirus, autoethnography, higher education institution.

### Introduction

The inspiration for writing this article came from, on the one hand, the critical situation that we all – people living on different continents and in

different countries around the world – have been facing since March 2020, and on the other hand, it is my academic experience, shared by my colleagues – academic teachers working with me. My research thus meets all the conditions of critical engaged research: it stems from my own biographical experiences, it is an important opinion on the issue, it is rooted in the current critical social situation, and it aims to unmask, to expose real and often hidden social practices and behaviors. These are the above described styles of management of higher education institutions (university, academy, academic and vocational institutions of higher education) in a critical situation related to the SarsCov2019 pandemic. Which management styles are being updated in a critical situation, which are chosen, preferred by management staff, and what are the consequences? These are the questions I will try to answer. As declared earlier, I will do so both on the basis of interviews with the authorities of several Polish institutions of higher education and on the basis of autoethnography.

Thus, the purpose of the paper presented here is an attempt to answer the question of different styles of management of people/higher education institutions in a critical situation such as a pandemic. I am interested in both the variety of approaches used in this area and the consequences they have both at the level of the organization itself and people working there. In an attempt to achieve this goal, I will present: the discourse of possible management styles present in the theories of management sciences, my own proposal of research in this area and its presentation, description and interpretation in relation to opposing criteria of analysis, which I have chosen, which are: fear and trust as sources of the style of management of people applied in a critical situation, control and cooperation as ways of acting in a situation of managing people in a critical situation, and suspicion and anxiety as emotions accompanying managers in a critical situation. I would like to emphasize that the criteria of analysis I have proposed are intentionally located on a continuum, situated at their two different ends. Situating them in this way will not only make the issues presented more problematic, but will also highlight them to create engagement in the reader that can turn into action.

I will present, describe and interpret the management styles used in the pandemic in relation to opposing criteria of analysis, which I have chosen, which are: fear and trust as sources of the style of management of people applied in a critical situation, control and cooperation as ways of acting in a situation of managing people in a critical situation, and suspicion and care as emotions accompanying managers in a critical situation.

The research included four Polish universities, two vocational and two academic institutions of higher education. I interviewed management staff ranging from rectors through vice rectors, deans, deputy deans to institute directors. Autoethnography, on the other hand, relates to my experience of working during the pandemic – I worked as an institute director at one university and I directed

a doctoral seminar at one academic institution of higher education. I worked simultaneously at these two universities, where I not only experienced a certain management style but also tried to somehow create it (as an institute director).

When addressing the issue presented in this paper, I think it is necessary to start with the question of how the concept of management style is understood? An analysis of many of the concepts present in management science shows that leadership/management style is primarily related to the efficiency of managerial activities. It is considered a sustained and repetitive way in which a supervisor interacts with subordinates in order to stimulate and coordinate their performance as a team and thereby achieve the goals facing the organization. The management style “represents a complex of relationships between the manager’s behaviors, personality traits (attributes), the characteristics of the managed team, and the context in which the manager and team operate (...) The management style is replicated from top to bottom within the official hierarchy” (Penc, 2000, p. 148).

The literature lists four basic management styles: autocratic, participative, democratic and laissez-faire (Bucurean, 2016, p. 498). An authoritative leader is a leader who tells subordinates what to do and expects orders to be obeyed without question. Research suggests that autocratic management is most effective when the task is simple and fairly repetitive, at the same time where the leader has only short-term relationships with subordinates (Brahim, Ridić, Jukić, 2015, p. 9). A participative leader is one who makes decisions collaboratively, involves employees in their making (Bell, Mjoli, 2013, p. 451). Research results (Lumbasi, K’Aol, Ouma, 2016, p. 10–11; Mehrabi, Safaei, Kazemi, 2013, p. 151) confirmed that such a leader gets more respect and trust, and involving subordinates in decision-making leads to better decisions, which also translates into employee performance. A democratic leader is a person who seeks to act in a manner consistent with and/or conducive to democratic principles (Gastil, 1994, p. 951). The democratic management style is a very open and collegial style of leading a team. In other words, a democratic leader is one who shares decision making with other team members (Ray, Ray, 2012, p. 3). According to Amanchukwu, Stanley, and Ololube (2015, p. 10) democratic leaders make the final decisions but they include team members in the decision-making process. They encourage creativity and team members are often very involved in projects and decisions. Laissez-faire, the French term for “let it happen” when applied to leadership, describes leaders who allow individuals to work independently. Laissez-faire is the style of leaders who avoid making decisions (Chaudhry, Javed, 2012, p. 259), of those who can give teams complete freedom to do their work and set their own deadlines. Laissez-faire leaders typically allow their subordinates to make independent decisions concerning their work (Żuchowski, 2018, p. 23–25).

## Anxiety as a management tool in a critical situation.

In narrative or biographical research, as in an epic story, time and place of action are important. They give a deeper meaning to the events that happen, our reactions and experiences. The time and place in which our social lives go on is one of the mechanisms that construct the meanings we assign, the ways we value, make choices, and make decisions.

The term critical event refers to an event or situation that has become a significant turning point in a person's life (Tripp 1996, p. 44). It emphasizes precisely this turn, which can be directed toward despair, destruction, or disintegration. It can become an opportunity to become emotionally mature, to gain a new kind of competence, it can open up new opportunities for personal development, create the prospect of achieving happiness.

"The term 'critical event' makes chronological sense in that it points to those events or situations that became a turning point or brought about change in someone's life. D. Tripp states that the term 'critical event' has historically meant some event or situation that became a significant turning point in the fate of a person, institution, political party, or some social process, such as industrialization, war, and negotiations. These are events on a grand scale; they occur very rarely in real life. In most cases, critical events are neither so dramatic nor obvious. Rather, they are a direct report of quite ordinary incidents occurring in everyday work, and the fact that they are critical comes from the fact that they point to underlying motives and structures. In this sense, at first sight they are "typical" rather than "critical" and only through analysis do they reveal their critical meaning. When they occur, we do not always realize their critical importance. Or we do not want to acknowledge how important they are. Critical events are created by our way of looking at a situation: a critical event is an interpretation of the momentousness and significance of what has happened. We recognize something as a critical event as a result of a value judgment based on the validity we assign to the meaning of the event. In the life of every person there are periods of breakthrough, turning points associated with a change in the current order of things and the need to make a choice about the further path of life. When discussing critical events, the emphasis is on the turning point, which not always needs to be directed toward despair, destruction, or disintegration. A critical event can become an opportunity to mature emotionally, gain a new kind of competence, open new opportunities for personal growth, and create prospects for success" (Bocan 2015).

Such a critical event is certainly the COVID19 pandemic, which, as of March 2020, moved education out of schools and higher education institutions into the space of the family home, and made the term 'remote education' one of the more frequently mentioned in public debate and private conversations.

Critical events previously known to us from our own biographies affected individuals, disrupted their functioning, changed their individual perspective, thus influencing the lives of the loved ones and the social environment of those to whom they happened. Today we are faced with a very different situation. Here is the critical event that is the global outbreak of SARS-CoV2 epidemic. It affects us all, it is global, and spares no one. Therefore we are dealing with an unprecedented event. Never before have we all, regardless of place of residence (country, continent), age, status, social position, occupation, found ourselves in an identical situation of threat to health and life as today. This is why concepts and theories that have so far described in a detailed, almost clinical way situations of oppression and suffering experienced by individuals are now, in my opinion, applicable to the description of what concerns entire communities, diverse social groups, societies, and all people. It can be said today that we have all found ourselves on a trajectory of suffering. All of the characteristics, described by Strauss, Riemann and Schütz, of the situation which they call the trajectory of suffering apply to each of us, and all of them organize our lives and daily functioning today. Riemann and Schütze “use the term ‘trajectory of suffering’ to describe a situation which is unexpected, which we do not anticipate, and which destroys the order (normative order) in which we have lived so far. A characteristic feature of these experiences is:

- The need to question one’s own expectations that have hitherto organized the individual’s biography;
- Loss of control over one’s own actions, over what happens to a person;
- The inability to understand what is happening to us by referring to any rational arguments;
- A sense of separation from the surrounding, a sense of isolation, a loss of trust in people;
- Disruption of the everyday, routine course of events – the experience of suffering becomes a disturbance that makes it impossible to sustain the routine conventions of everyday life based on which we have hitherto built our ontological security;
- Passivity and immobility, inability to take any action, immersion in suffering, submission to a new logic of suffering or a situation we perceive as illogical and absurd: “this could not happen to me, it is impossible, I cannot believe it” are statements made by people experiencing suffering.

In such a situation there is a need to rebuild one’s own biography on the basis of a new type of order, some other convention of everyday life. There is also a need for an entirely new definition of an individual’s life situation. This definition is an attempt to describe the nature and mechanics of suffering, as well as an attempt to explain the reasons for suffering. This theoretical working through suffering can take the form of authentic, in-depth reflection on oneself, one’s life, and relationships with others. It can also take the form of the unreflective

acceptance of others' explanations, assessments, and opinions by a person affected by the trajectory of suffering.

Coping with suffering is possible thanks to:

- The ability to understand one's own situation;
- The ability to self-reflect;
- The ability to redefine one's identity;
- The ability to build new, mature relationships with oneself and with others" (Nowak-Dziemianowicz 2016, p. 280).

It is said that in the concept of the trajectory of suffering, two strategies are possible to describe one's own suffering-related experience. One is to accept the interpretations of the event offered by other people: family members, friends, colleagues. This unreflective description of one's own situation, based on other people's opinions, prevents further work on the trajectory of suffering. It condemns us to someone else's judgments, justifications, assessments of our own situation – its causes, course and effects. A second way to describe one's own traumatic situation is an attempt of authentic, in-depth reflection on oneself, one's life, and one's relationships with others. And this way of description, based on the ability to make the effort not only to say what happened, but also to answer the question of why it happened, who is to blame, who is responsible, opens the way to work on the trajectory of suffering.

The critical situation in which we are all involved today is therefore related to global suffering. It is accompanied by fear for oneself, for one's loved ones, for the conditions of the present and future existence. This fear is the most important, primary distinguishing feature of our situation. That is why I have made it one of the criteria of the analysis carried out in this paper.

Fritz Riemann in his excellent book entitled "Anxiety" (original title "Grundformen der Angst") (2005) notes that anxiety accompanies each of us from the cradle to the grave. It may or may not be conscious, it may be the result of some particular experience, or it may be a distinct characteristic, a trait of our personality. And while we can talk about anxiety as if it were an abstract concept, it always has an individual, singular face. The fact that anxiety is an inseparable companion of human existence means that, despite the incredible progress, despite the subjugation of the material world, thanks to new technologies, anxiety has not disappeared or diminished in the slightest. Its sources and its causes have simply changed. Today, we fear differently and we fear something different. We have replaced old fears with new ones, no less threatening and persistent. In his book, Fritz Riemann describes four types of anxiety that represent a kind of archetype of this experience.

Each of these types or kinds of anxiety is associated with a specific tension (antinomy, ambivalence) to which every person is condemned, an antinomy that affects each of us.

The first is the antinomy between the desire to be a unique individual, someone distinguished from others, and the need for coherence, sameness with others. Each of us, as F. Riemann writes, wants to be unique and exceptional and at the same time wants to be part of a larger community, thus gaining a sense of security, a familiar settling in a larger community (Riemann 2005, p. 16). On the one hand, we are afraid of merging with the crowd, of losing our uniqueness, on the other hand, we fear the loneliness of “the painted bird”, originality condemning us to a sense of alienation, social rejection. “The more different we are from others, the more vulnerable we are to uncertainty, misunderstanding, rejection and loneliness” (Riemann 2005, p. 16).

The second antinomy, according to the author cited above, is the tension between our desire to sacrifice ourselves for others, our need to be open to the other person, and the need for independence, autonomy that each of us values so much today. This antinomy condemns us to the fear of losing our autonomy, independence, to the fear of not belonging anywhere, related to the situation of total isolation of a man who realizes in an extreme way his/her need for freedom and independence. This antinomy makes us feel:

the fear of losing one's self, of losing independence, of being dependent on someone, of not being able to live one's life as one would like to and of having to make sacrifices for others and give up a lot of things, which is enforced by the expected need to fit in. It is primarily about the issues of our dependencies and the fact that we, despite these dependencies and threats to our «self», should turn towards life, open ourselves to it. If we do not take this risk, we will remain lonely individuals, without relations with other people or belonging to something beyond ourselves, and in the end human beings without a sense of security, so that, as a consequence, we will not manage to know ourselves or the world” (Riemann 2005, p. 17).

A third kind of tension, generalizing the anxiety of modern man, is the ambivalence between our desire for constancy, based on the ability to last, to plan, to anticipate the future, to see ourselves in the bigger picture, in a “known”, secure future, and the risk, the sense that nothing can be predicted, that life is uncertain and surprising. However, “if we gave up the idea of the permanence of life, we could not create or realize anything; every human work must be done as something that will last, otherwise we would not even begin to put our intentions into action” (Riemann 2005, p. 18).

The fourth tension, which is the source of modern man's fear, is located between our desire for change, readiness for transgression, pushing boundaries, the need for constant development, moving forward and the strength of traditions, norms, habits and our commitments, which often act as a kind of brake against development and change.

The tensions and antinomies described are the source of four basic types of fear for modern man:

- The fear of giving up on oneself, of dependency, of losing one's "self".
- The fear of self-fulfillment, of self-development, associated with the threat of insecurity and isolation.
- The fear of change, associated with a sense of permanent uncertainty and fragility of human existence.
- The fear of all necessity, of determinism, of those conditions of our existence on which we have no influence, which we cannot control.

These four archetypal forms of fear can occur in different configurations, in varying degrees of intensity, at different stages of our lives. We may experience only one of them, several, or all of them at the same time. The intensity of this experience can also vary. The type of fear we experience and its intensity depend both on our hereditary characteristics and on the conditions of the environment in which our socialization took place and in which we lived. This is why we are so different in our fears. What we fear and what we are not afraid of at all, how we react in an anxious situation, what means we reach for depends to a great extent on what experiences make up our biography. Children and adults react differently in anxiety situations. An adult has a huge repertoire of behaviors to help cope with anxiety. They may respond to their anxiety in different ways, they may try to deal with their anxiety in different ways. They can defend themselves by recognizing the reason for their anxiety, they can try to understand where the anxiety comes from, they can tell other people about it and thus receive understanding and help, or they can rationally assess possible and potential danger. All these possibilities are not available to a child who, in any situation that generates anxiety, does not understand the reasons for the situation in which they find themselves, does not know how the situation will turn out, how long it will last and what the consequences may be. This means that a child's experience of anxiety leaves long-lasting traces that can determine a variety of their behaviors, including in adult life. "A child's weak «self» forced to confront their own anxiety cannot cope with its excessive power, so they are dependent on outside help; if left to their own devices they will suffer great psychological damage" (Riemann 2005, p. 20).

The types of anxiety and associated behaviors described will become one of the criteria for my analysis.

## **Between control and anxiety – management styles of managing a university in an emergency situation**

In order to answer questions asked in this paper, I will present, describe and interpret the management styles used in the pandemic in relation to opposing criteria of analysis, which I have chosen, which are: fear and trust as sources of the style of management of people applied in a critical situation, control and cooperation as ways of acting in a situation of managing people in a critical situation, and suspicion and care as emotions accompanying managers in a critical situation.



The pandemic has placed us all on a trajectory of suffering. Our previous plans, intentions, goals were suddenly and unexpectedly invalidated. The lockdown announced by the authorities has not only deprived us of a stable foundation, not only condemned our existence to an unpredictable succession of events, but also made us disbelieving and fearful. The unpredictability of the pandemic situation and the lack of knowledge about it only increased our level of fear and contributed to the loss of basic, existential balance, which is the condition of normal functioning. Our conventions of daily life built up over the years, involving both rituals and deliberate, conscious actions, suddenly lost their meaning – our lives were no longer in our hands. The whole rational orientation to life, developed so far by the universally valid Enlightenment cognitive psychology, contained in the slogan: you can do it, you will do it, you are worth it, has lost its validity and its power. We were not prepared for it, we were in it alone. We needed safety, we needed trust, we needed support. Remote education, which we were committed to overnight, was another change, another challenge for us in this difficult, critical situation. It was part of a new and unknown, thus opaque and unfriendly world. How did our authorities behave in this situation? What leadership style have the people responsible for the work of Polish higher education institutions chosen?

In light of the comparisons performed, it can be concluded that the autocratic style has become one of the styles of management of higher education institution in the pandemic situation. There were different variations of it. According to the aforementioned typologies, we can indicate the exploitative-authoritative style based on Likert's typology or the clumsy autocratic – the worst of all autocratic styles; it is characterized by despotism, imperiousness, incompetence; treatment of employees depends on the boss's mood, possible inadequately high punishment for an offense or high reward for insignificant merit (according to J A C Brown's typology). Some of higher education institutions that became the place of conducting research presented in this paper were managed in this way. However, the purpose of this paper is not to label specific institutions, so I am not going to name them here. The intent of the research presented here was to find and describe the mechanisms of managing an institution and leading people during an emergency rather than to evaluate individual higher education institutions during a pandemic.

In the light of this research, it can be seen that the tools used in autocratically managed higher education institutions emphasized the absolute and undisputed power of the management and were completely subordinated to this power. The preferred means of managing the academic community in a pandemic situation at these higher education institutions focused primarily on control and fear. It was the employees who were supposed to prove that they reliably perform their duties, report their daily performance on an ongoing basis, confirm all their actions with documentation. The compulsion to report our own teaching activities, which is an academic daily routine for many of us, came as more than a surprise.

It also became evidence of a lack of trust in academic teachers, often with many years of experience. This strategy was accompanied by the chaos and messiness of constantly changing orders, sending inconsistent messages, and threatening with consequences that had never happened before in pre-pandemic “normality”. Management with the use of anxiety has become the norm in the cases described. Its source was to be the scattered information about inevitable dismissals and salary reductions awaiting teachers, or even threats of non-payment if teachers were unable to document their daily work. A contradiction so dangerous and dysfunctional has emerged in the situation of the trajectory of suffering. Its example is the complete incompatibility of the orders of the higher education institution authorities with the orders of the ministry or the central authorities. And then a stay-at-home order was announced in Poland for March and April. Higher education institutions were closed, institutes were closed. However, in several of the higher education institutions I have described, administrative staff and institute authorities were required to come to work. Negotiations and letters concerning this issue did not help. The case of one of the administrative employees at a higher education institution, who due to her age and health condition (chronic lung disease) wanted to work remotely, is characteristic of this way of management. Her idea was supported by the institute director. The authorities of the higher education institution, however, have consistently rejected her requests for remote work. These refusals were made in writing, so there is documentation of this style of management. Also, the institute director was required to be present at the higher education institution. Questions about what purpose such a presence would serve, as the management of this higher education institution was also coming to work, were to no avail. So when the whole country heard “stay at home” every day, some employees in some higher education institutions (locked and deserted) had to come or travel to work. There were no arguments being an answer to the question of what this presence is needed for, what tasks in the absence of students cannot be done remotely. That was a clear command based on tremendous fear for the job and a sense of threat. For administrative staff of the higher education institution, this autocratic strategy, based on control and management with the use of anxiety, had another dimension. Not only did it compound the fear, which on the one hand concerned health and life, and on the other was related to maintaining employment. Those affected by this management strategy had a permanent feeling that they might lose their job. Another dimension of this autocratic strategy, based on absolute power, is the disadvantage and humiliation of that group of higher education institution employees which is the group of administrative employees. A frequent question that came up in my conversations at the time was whether it was possible to differentiate between caring for the health and life safety of different groups of employees – administration, students, as well as research and teaching staff. Was the inequality outlined here (in the cases described) a manifestation of

some rationality, some real need for which the administrative workers in a time of almost complete lockdown had to come to work, or is it just a mere tool of power in the hands of superiors confused and not ready to manage the crisis? In the first part of the presented text, I describe (following Riemann) the different types of anxiety. It seems to me that this autocratic, ruthless towards people, non-empathic management style in higher education institution was chosen by managers with very high levels of fear. The fear of change, the fear of failure. Fear can be a source of aggression, it does not allow to understand the situation of another person, it closes or limits the possibilities of perception. I think that the style of management during the pandemic I have described and encountered in several Polish higher education institutions points to the mechanisms mentioned above. Excessive control, using fear as a tool to force obedience, refusing to trust and replacing it with caring for bureaucratic, often meaningless procedures and meticulously checking their compliance in a situation where the order on which we build our ontological security has been questioned, is the management style of people unable to cope with their own anxiety, people oriented towards ruthless execution of standard tasks even in non-standard situations. I think that such a rigid attitude, such an orientation towards standard tasks does not work in a critical situation. It generates tension, causes anxiety, reduces motivation to work, turns what previously could have been a passion or a source of satisfaction into an unpleasant duty performed under the pressure of threat of losing one's job.

However, most Polish higher education institutions have adopted a different management style. It was a democratic, transactional style. It was based on mutual trust, respect, and was about providing support in such a difficult situation for everyone. Building relationships through new ways of communicating with employees has become a tool of this style. Frequent meetings through various communicators, during which the higher education institution authorities explained the situation, calmed down, toned down emotions, are a manifestation of this style. Elements of participation were also included. Employees were able to make suggestions, propose their solutions. Important to this style was the creation of a kind of partnership – authorities of higher education institutions did not absolutize their position, did not act as someone infallible. They offered support, built relationships based on trust, listened to employee feedback, and took that feedback into account. An excellent example of this style is the statement of one of the Rectors, who said that if, in a pandemic situation, she had to choose between the quality of education and the sense of safety of employees, she would always (she emphasized always) choose safety. And she added – “I know that quality of education is extremely important. But people are more important”.

On the trajectory of suffering, people need other people. In order to regain the balance they lost, in order to normalize an abnormal situation, they need a new security. Such security can only be guaranteed to them by other people. The creators of the trajectory of suffering theory call them biographical helpers or

caregivers on the trajectory. And in the democratic, transactional, and participatory style of management that dominated in Polish higher education institutions during the pandemic, as I described, their authorities were able to play such a role. This management style allowed them to become involved in the process of restoring ontological security. Ontological security is the conviction that somewhere among other people I am at home, in my place, that I can settle there, that I can trust my surroundings (both in the material dimension as a place and in the social dimension as other people). Ontological security is a generalized trust in other people, places, and events. It is a sense that we can pursue our own plans, our own needs and expectations without dangerous risks. It is also the repeated, stored in our memory rituals and conventions of everyday life (A. Giddens), which need tangible and intangible symbols in addition to memory.

The considerations of ontological security are set in the context of theories formulated on the grounds of sociological, psychological and pedagogical conditions of constructing (working on) one's own identity. Ontological security is just such a condition. It is based, among other things, on: an intimate relationship with another person, so-called "basic trust", repetitive rituals and conventions of everyday life. Therefore, the way of managing a higher education institution in a critical situation seems to me to be a key issue. In a situation where our ontological security is at stake, using fear as a tool to guide people is not only dysfunctional and ineffective. It is completely unethical.

## Conclusion

The pandemic has placed us all on a trajectory of suffering. It deprived us of the repetitive, familiar and known rituals of everyday life on which our lives were based. Private, intimate, related to family and professional lives. A person on the trajectory of suffering has a huge job to do. They must understand the unpredictable, sudden situation that destroys their peace, they must understand and interpret their position in it, and to cope with the trajectory of suffering they must redefine their own identity. That is, they must make an effort to work on themselves both in psychological terms (what am I like, what are my strengths and weaknesses, what resources can I use in this situation) and in relation to their social and professional roles. For us, academic teachers and researchers, this role was precisely defined. And the pandemic has not changed the **meaning** of that role. The pandemic has only changed the context of the role. The pandemic, by turning our situation, based on balance, on normative order that allows us to act every day, into chaos, into an unpredictable, ephemeral and random set of events over which we have no control, has made this familiar and internalized academic role problematic and has made it more difficult for us to fulfill it. However, we still understand the essence of the role, its provisions, rules and norms that

govern it, and the sanctions for breaking them. After all, in the process of social construction of meaning, we have participated in the creation of provisions for that role. And that is why we do not need to be taught it all over again just because the social context (pandemic) has changed so dramatically, and therefore the way we perform that role has changed.

Anxiety, the types of which I have cited in this paper, is associated with certain behaviors, with a certain personality type. One of these is the schizoid personality disorder, which is built on anxiety.

This is the personality of an insular person who feels safe only when feeling isolated from others. Built on the fear of losing one's "self", the personality is characterized by material contacts with other people, basing them on common interests and the accomplishment of common tasks rather than on a community of experiences or emotions, distance rather than closeness. Such people react to closeness, which they themselves perceive as crossing boundaries, with hostility. They view this closeness as a threat to their own living space, as a threat to their independence and integrity. Such individuals cultivate a fear of closeness with other people. However, closeness is unavoidable in life – that is why people with this form of dominant fear have the ability to engage in various behaviors that separate them from others; they build walls, barriers, and boundaries. How is the schizoid personality formed? What biographical experiences make up this type of fear?

This is how F. Riemann writes about it:

What causes (...) this fear of giving oneself away, of sacrificing oneself – and therefore – this excessive focus on oneself, on caring about one's own individuality? This is constitutionally fostered by an extremely vulnerable personality background, a fragile psyche, instability and susceptibility to being hurt. The distance between oneself and the surrounding world that one creates is a form of self-defense (...). These persons need distance to cope with the world and with life; distance provides them with a sense of security and reassurance that they will not be disturbed or ridiculed by others. Their innate tendencies make them somehow deprived of a «protective layer», they are deprived of a «thick skin», so they look for a secluded living space, they close themselves off so that the excess of stimuli that reach them does not prevent them from functioning in reality" (Riemann 2005, p. 43).

What is the genesis of this type of anxiety, this type of personality? It turns out that the first experience that has to do with it, which is responsible for the formation of such an anxious personality type, is a deficiency of trust in early childhood. Trust deficiency, which has various sources, is most often associated with a particular type of motherhood in early childhood, a particular relationship of a child with their mother. Any separation from the mother – whether caused by her illness, absence, multiple work responsibilities, as well as coldness in mutual relations – becomes the basis for a loss of trust. Children of unloving,

emotionally cold, self-centered mothers have a great chance of becoming adults in whom this very type of anxiety may predominate. If something happens during childhood that causes a child to perceive the world as scary, untrustworthy, or as deterrent, as something beyond them, “they will be scared off, they will shut down, they will adopt a wait-and-see attitude. Instead of turning to the world with confidence, they will acquire a deep distrust. (...) Such a child will get hurt already at the threshold of their relations with the world, finding refuge and rescue only within themselves” (Riemann 2005, p. 45). And in the light of the research presented in the text, I may assume that the trust deficit is the basis for choosing a management style based on anxiety as the most effective tool for directing other people in a critical situation. This choice leads to a sense of alienation, to chaos and a permanent sense of insecurity. The pandemic has changed everything. But today, there is an accumulation of changes in higher education institutions. A few months before the outbreak of the epidemic that trapped us in our homes and made our work remote, the new Act on Higher Education called the Gowin Law or the Constitution for Science came into effect. It has turned the previous academic order “upside down”, separating, for example, scientific activity from teaching, eliminating collegiality (faculty councils and their competencies), and orienting us all toward earning points for our scientific publications. The focus on gaining points or grants, replacing the autonomy of scientific work with external control through rewards and punishments i.e. basing our creative, scientific work on behavioral foundations are just a few examples of this rapid change in which we, as an academic community, participated. We have not had time to prepare for these changes, we have not had time to get used to them and the pandemic with its related changes came. What would be and what is appropriate for this situation of accumulated changes is certainly a management style based on participation, communication, trust and support. And in many Polish institutions of higher education this style has appeared. I have experienced it myself at one of the Universities where I work. However, my critical, committed approach to my own professional role and to the social sciences I represent made me take up this topic because of the presence of such a dangerous and unethical in a critical situation autocratic, fear-based and over-controlling style of leadership and management in many smaller Polish institutions of higher education. I treat the presented paper as my moral duty – it is my opinion (or maybe even a cry) about the need for ethics in the world of higher education, it is a reminder of the ethos of these institutions, their essence and their social role. Autonomy (including moral autonomy) is the face of a higher education institution, it is its ontology. Not autocracy, not despotism, not humiliation, intimidation and forced obedience. In a critical situation, on a trajectory of suffering, we need understanding, help and support. Like these retired employees of one of the universities who were taken care of by the university authorities already since the beginning of the pandemic, as they live alone and need help. Help in everyday life. And such

help was provided to these people (no longer working, who had to be found, who had to be taken care of). This is the essence of a university. An autonomous community of supportive people. Supporting each other through research and teaching, always inseparable but only possible in a democratic, participatory, opportunity-generating way. It is in defense of this way of managing the higher education institution, and in opposition of autocracy, the use of power and the abuse of such tools of power as humiliating (unprecedented) control that I wrote this text.

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