ROLES OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT UNDER THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

Thornsri P., Pila-Ngarm P.*

Abstract: This research aimed to study the correlation between the role, behaviour, characteristics, style, and efficiency of leaders in managing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during the global economic crisis in Thailand. Mixed methods were employed to collect qualitative and quantitative data from SME entrepreneurs with business experiences and successful business management in Bangkok for at least 10 years in the service sector that was growing in medium-term growth by using the interview form and questionnaire survey. Many factors can contribute to a successful or existing business, and an appropriate approach will be used in operation. The approach and leadership roles discovered in this study should emphasise building personnel confidence, having a clear vision, being a good planner, being decisive, being a problem solver to reduce business effects, creating various channels to access targets, and updating information systems to improve business strategies.

Keywords: leader, management, effectiveness, SME, crisis

Introduction

The most serious global crisis in more than 20 years, which had a significant impact on every country around the world, both domestic and international business, occurred in March 2019. The COVID-19 health crisis caused by the coronavirus epidemic has led to the world's largest economic crisis, which was more severe than any other economic crisis because it has affected the economy, society, politics, transportation, and human life in every aspect. This global economy has been severely affected including shutting down various businesses, laying off many workers, and increasing of unemployed people. Some businesses had to adjust their management to continue running the business in the capital of Thailand and important economic areas. Whenever any crisis affected the business, SMEs in Bangkok became the outposts that were extremely important because a reflection of the Thai SMEs about any direct impacts could be explored from SMEs in Bangkok.

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Leadership role during the crisis was one of many essential factors and the main key to driving the enterprise and country through the crisis. A leader with a clear vision could motivate workers and bring success and sustainability to the company, while a leader with a lack of vision and leadership could bring failure to the company. Therefore, a good leader could appropriately manage an enterprise with suitable management skills, omniscience, capabilities, foresight, consideration, flexibility, and accurate analysis of the crisis and situation in the present. As previously stated, this study focuses on the relationship between a leader's role, behaviour, characteristics, style, and efficiency. Thus, the study had two objectives: 1) to investigate the relationship between the role of the leader, leadership behaviour, leadership characteristics, leadership style, and the leader's SME management efficiency in Thailand during the global economic crisis; and 2) to develop a leadership role model for SMEs management in Thailand during the global economic crisis. These could further investigate the model of leadership role for managing SMEs in Thailand during the global economic crisis.

Literature Review

Many scholars have written literary works relating to the roles of leaders (Aiyimaphan, 2020; Marquis and Halton, 2006), role development approaches (Coates et al., 2021), risks (Dankiewicz et al., 2020), characteristics of future leaders (Hawamdeh and Attari, 2016; Subrahmanyam, 2020; Firsova et al., 2019), leadership development (Amriani et al., 2020; Feld, 2012; George et al, 2012; Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Samani and Thomas, 2016; Quinn and Quinn, 2016), and leader development (Fernández-Aráoz et al., 2017). Also, Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory was referred to in the paper of Moss et al. (2021), Mahmood et al. (2021), and Hussain et al. (2021). Moreover, the relationship between factors such as style, and traits were mentioned in the writing of Alsarrani et al. (2021), Djafri et al. (2022), and scholars' works published in Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science, Emerald and Google Scholar.

To investigate an approach to developing the role of SME leader and model of SME management in Thailand during the economic crisis, three major factors related to leadership style and management efficiency were the roles of the leader, leadership behaviours during the global economic crisis, and future leader characteristics. The first indicator was leadership roles, with 5 indicators including position (rights) as a follower due to necessity, recognition (relationship), work creation (works), human development (person building), and the highest point (regards). Second, during the global economic crisis, leadership behaviour was measured using five indicators: fastest critical signal detection, fastest data collection, fastest analysis for crisis forecasting, fastest planning for crisis prevention, and fastest pre-crisis action. Last were the characteristics of the future leader, which included six indicators such as suitable people management and job selection, good financial and cost management, various business management, stakeholder engagement, and change management

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and agility. These hypotheses could be determined based on the objectives and factors.

Hypothesis

• There is a positive relationship between the role of a leader and leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis.

• There is a positive relationship between the characteristics of future leaders and leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis.

• There is a positive relationship between the role of a leader and leadership style.

• There is a positive relationship between leadership behaviour and leadership style.

• There is a positive relationship between the characteristics of future leaders and leadership style.

• There is a positive relationship between the characteristics of future leaders and management efficiency.

• There is a positive relationship between the role of a leader and management efficiency.

• Leadership style mediates the relationship between leadership behaviour and management efficiency.

• Leadership style mediates the relationship between the characteristics of future leaders and management efficiency.

Research Methodology

This research was mixed methods research with the step of the exploratory procedure. The researcher divided the research into phases. Firstly, qualitative data was collected and analyzed. Then quantitative data was collected and analyzed in the second phase. The key informants for both phases of the research were the same population group. Anyhow, qualitative data was given more importance than quantitative data because the quantitative data would be used to supplement or support the qualitative data. Integration would appear in the step of interpretation and discussion. The details of the research were as follows:

Populations and Samples: The population in this study were SME entrepreneurs with business experience and successful business management in Bangkok for at least ten years in the service sector, which was growing in the medium term. Sampling methods were divided into two processes: 1) the sampling method for qualitative research that grounded theory studies and rule of thumb were applied to determine the sample size, 10 case studies were compiled by in-depth interview; and 2) the sampling method for quantitative research that Krejcie and Morgan's formula (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970) was used to determine sample size with a confidence level of 95% and considering a 5% degree of error, the minimum sample size of this study was 384 companies.

Variables: The independent variables were the role of the leader, leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis, and future leader characteristics. The dependent variable was management efficiency.

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Research Tools for Data Collection: An in-depth interview and a questionnaire survey were used as research tools in this study. To begin, a semi-structured interview was designed to gather information about the general state of the leadership role in managing SMEs in Thailand during the global economic crisis. Second, the open-ended questionnaire survey would be completed with accurate, clear, and complete answers that corresponded to reality rather than limited answers. The open-ended questions were also commonly used in situations where the answers from the samples could not be predicted by the researcher and cannot predict the answer in advance from the samples. The questionnaire survey was divided into 5 parts as follows: 1) Part 1: There were 8 checklist questions to collect general information including gender, salary, education, business registration, nature of ownership, position, the lifespan of a business, and several officers in an organization; Part 2: Information about the leadership role for managing SMEs under the global economic crisis was collected in this part. The questions were divided into 5 aspects including position (rights), acceptance (relationship), work creation (works), human development (person building), and the highest point (regards); Part 3: Information about the leadership behaviours in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis was collected in this part. The questions were divided into 5 aspects including fastest catching critical signal, fastest data collection, fastest analysis for crisis forecast, fastest planning for crisis prevention, and fastest pre-crisis action; Part 4: Information about characteristics of future leaders in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis was collected in this part. The questions were divided into 5 aspects including people management and putting the right people in the right position, good financial and cost management, various business management, building a stakeholder engagement, managing change and agility, and special skill management for work promotion; Part 5: There were 18 questions to collect data about the leadership style as well as management efficiency for SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand.

Statistics for Data Analysis: 1) Descriptive statistics including percentage and frequency distribution were used to analyze and describe the personal information from the respondents; 2) Factor analysis was a statistical technique to gather or combine related variables into the same group. Both positive and negative possibilities of the relationship could appear. Variables within the same component were highly correlated. The variables with different components had little or no correlation. The analyzed result could be used either to develop a new theory or to test or confirm an existing theory. Data compiled by questionnaires were converted into numeric code and recorded in the computer, then additional data was examined by a statistical program for analyzing, managing data and research (IBM SPSS Statistics Base Authorized User Initial Fixed Term License); 3) Structural equation analysis (SEM) with AMOS program was a statistical method used to examine the correlation between variables. The relationship might be measured in various forms such as the relationship between observed variables and unobserved variables (latent variables), and correlation between two or more latent variables. A chart or

pictogram could also be used to show the correlation between the variables of the nine hypotheses. This study also looked at the results of reliability and validity, factor analysis, variable selection, multicollinearity, and regression analysis.

Research Results

With the data collected by in-depth interview and questionnaire survey, the finding revealed that respondents (244 people or 33.33%) were males. 139 people (36.20%) belonged to Generation X (age range between 46-58 years old). 119 people (30.99%) earned a salary of more than 40,000 baht, and 188 people (48.96%) had a higher education level (master's and doctorate degrees) and owned a legal business with a commercial registration certificate (individual). 202 people (52.60%) also held majority ownership rights. While 197 people (51.30%) worked as business owners, 266 people (69.27%) had been in business for more than ten years.

This was the result of an analysis of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) based on the role model of an effective leader who managed SMEs in Thailand during the global crisis (a case study of Bangkok). There were 5 latent variables in this section with the SEM analysis for effective leadership role models in managing SMEs under the global crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok), including leadership roles, leadership behaviours under the global economic crisis, future leader characteristics, leadership style, and management efficiency. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to examine the correlation of all aspects. Moreover, the model was adjusted to make the statistical values acceptable by the Modification Indices method, and consideration of variable weights and R2 values were shown in Figure 1 as follows.
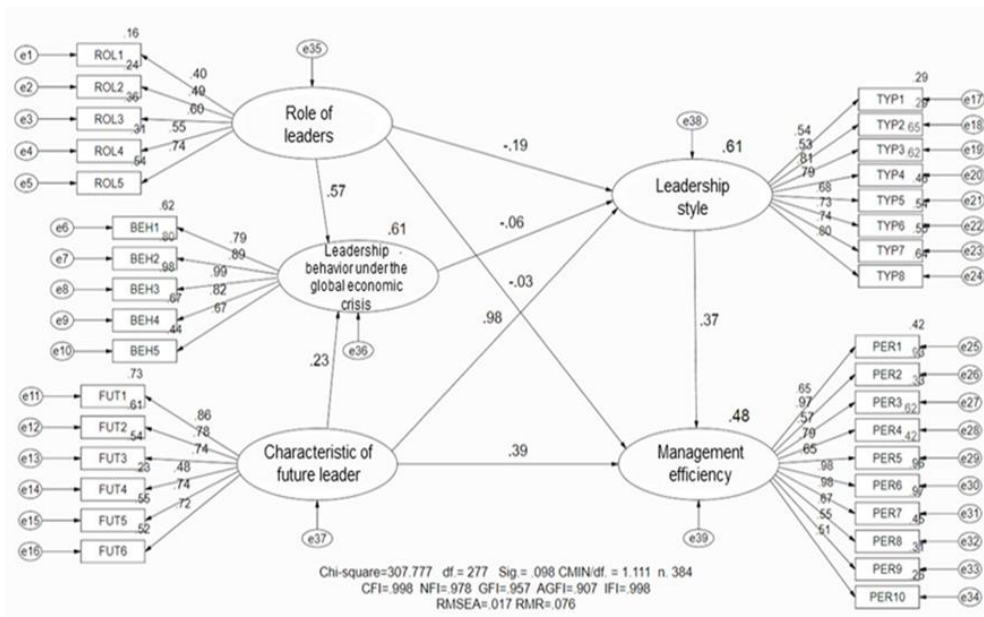
Figure 1: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
According to the hypothesis of the research subject "Roles of leader effective in SME management under the global economic crisis in Thailand (evidence of Bangkok)"
Source: Own elaboration

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Table 2. The results of the calculated statistics compared with benchmarks (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1999) to evaluate and verify the conformity and the empirical data of the Structural Equation Model according to the hypotheses "Roles of leader effective in SMEs Management under the global economic crisis in Thailand (evidence of Bangkok)"

Index	Criteria	Outcome	Consideration	Reference Concept
Chi–Square = 307.777 df. = 277.0				
Sig.	> 0.05	0.098	Meet the criteria	Hair et al. (2006), Bollen (1989) and Sorbon (1996)
CMIN/df.	< 2.0	1.111	Meet the criteria	Bollen (1989), Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000)
GFI	> 0.90	0.957	Meet the criteria	Hair et al. (2006), Browne and Cudeck (1993(
AGFI	> 0.80	0.987	Meet the criteria	Durande-Moreau and Usunier (1999), Harrison-Walker (2001)
NFI	> 0.90	0.978	Meet the criteria	Hair et al. (2006), Mueller (1996)
IFI	> 0.90	0.998	Meet the criteria	Hair et al. (2006), Mueller (1996)
CFI	> 0.90	0.998	Meet the criteria	Hair et al. (2006), Mueller (1996)
RMR	< 0.08	0.076	Meet the criteria	Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000)
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.017	Meet the criteria	Hair et al. (2006), Browne and Cudeck (1993(

Source: Own elaboration

The finding for the analysis of structural equation Modeling "Efficient leadership role model in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok)" revealed form the researcher explored the Structural Equation Modeling according to hypotheses related to the concepts and theories, the model consisted of 34 observed variables and five unobserved variables including leadership role, leadership behaviors under the global economic crisis, characteristics of future leader, leadership style, and management efficiency. After the experimental uncertainty of both types of variables was adjusted by model modification indices, the structural equation modelling of the efficient leadership role model in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) correlated with the empirical data in criteria. The value of Chi-Square was 307.777, df = 277.0, Sig. = 0.098 > 0.05. CMIN/df. was 1.111 < 2.0 according to the theory of Hair et al. (2006), Bollen (1989), and Sorbon (1996). The results of the analysis after model adjustment revealed that the indices were

consistent and these statistical values passed the specified criteria for all 7 indices, which could be summarized as follows.

1. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was a comparison of hypothetical models that had higher consistency than empirical data, so values with 0.90 or over should be a good fit and indicate the consistency and harmony of the model according to the concept of Hair et al. (2006). As the result of this research, empirical correlation according to the index criteria was met because the analyzed value was $0.998 > 0.90$.

2. Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) represented the proportion of variances and covariances that could be described by the model. According to the concept of Hair et al. (2006) and Mueller (1996), that good fit values above 0.90 could indicate the consistency and harmony of the model. As the result of this research, empirical correlation according to the index criteria was met because the analyzed value was $0.957 > 0.90$.

3. Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) represented the proportion of variances and covariances that could be described by the model-adjusted degrees of freedom. According to the concept of Durande-Moreau and Usunier (1999), the acceptable value should be greater than 0.80, and the analyzed value should be $0.957 > 0.90$. As the result of this research, the index that was in accordance with the criteria could indicate the comparative fit of the model.

4. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was a good indicator of the inconsistency of the generated model to the population covariance matrix, and fit values should be less than 0.05 or between 0.05 and 0.08 according to the criteria of Hair et al. (2006), Browne and Cudeck (1993). So, the comparative fit of the model was explored when the index was in accordance with the criteria, and the analytical value was $0.017 < 0.08$.

5. Normed Fit Index (NFI) was a measure of fit level based on criteria. According to the concept of Hair et al. (2006), the acceptable value should be greater than 0.90. The analytical values were $0.978 > 0.90$ so that the index was in accordance with the criteria that could indicate the comparative fit of the model.

6. Incremental Fit Index (IFI) was a comparative fit index. The test model was compared to a baseline model where all variables were uncorrelated. Also, the theoretical model could be used to properly explain the relationship, that an acceptable value should be greater than 0.90 according to the concept of Hair et al. (2006). The comparative fit of the model was discovered because the analytical values were $0.998 > 0.90$.

7. The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) showed the average residual size by comparing the goodness of fit of a hypothetical model with the empirical data. The fitting model obtained a value of 0.05 or closest to 0 according to the Diamantopoulos criterion (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000). The analysis result of the value was $0.076 < 0.08$, which was a reasonable value showing the comparative fit of the model according to the criteria.

According to the above-mentioned analysis, the fact that all seven indices were consistent with the empirical data indicated that the structural equation modelling of

the efficient leadership role model in managing SMEs in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) was conditionally consistent with the empirical data at the statistical acceptance level. According to modelling criteria that indicated statistically significant validity or OK fit confirmation, the variables including leadership role, leadership behaviours during the global economic crisis, characteristics of future leaders, leadership style, and management efficiency were empirically consistent with a statistically significant test result (P 0.05). Table 3 summarises the test results.

Table 3. The result of the structural equation analysis for efficient leadership role model in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (A case study of Bangkok)

Variables (Paths)			λ	SE.	t-value	Sig.	R2
Leadership behaviors	←	Leadership roles	0.57	0.33	4.010	0.000*	61.0%
Leadership behaviors	←	Characteristics of a future leader	0.23	0.14	2.021	0.043*	61.0%
Leader styles	←	Leadership roles	-0.19	0.25	-1.314	0.189	61.0%
Leader styles	←	Leadership behaviors	-0.06	0.05	-0.974	0.330	61.0%
Leader styles	←	Characteristics of a future leader	0.98	0.12	7.150	0.000*	61.0%
Efficiency	←	Characteristics of a future leader	0.39	0.15	3.147	0.002*	48.0%
Efficiency	←	Leadership roles	-0.03	0.23	-0.342	0.732	48.0%
Efficiency	←	Leader styles	0.37	0.10	5.049	0.000*	48.0%

Note: $p < 0.05$
Source: Own study

The variables including leadership role, leadership behaviours under the global economic crisis, characteristics of future leaders, leadership style, and management efficiency were considered from the regression coefficient of the independent variable and standard score chart which was the coefficient of a decision indicating the influence of the variables. The result of the structural equation analysis for efficient leadership role model in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) could be summarized as follows:

1. Leadership roles: There were 5 observed variables (ROL1- ROL5) with weighted regression coefficients between 0.40 - 0.74, and multiple correlation coefficients (R2) of 16.0% - 54.0%. The leadership roles affected the structural equation analysis for efficient leadership role models in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) with a path of direct influence. The summary was as follows.

- The leadership role had a positive direct influence on leadership behaviour under the global economic crisis with λ =0.57, SE.=0.33, t.-value=4.010, Sig.=0.000<0.05. Also, R2 or influence on change was 61.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05.

2. Characteristics of future leaders: There were 6 observed variables (FUT1- FUT6) with weighted regression coefficients between 0.48 - 0.86, and multiple correlation coefficients (R2) of 23.0% - 73.0%. The characteristics of a future leader influenced the structural equation analysis for an efficient leadership role model in managing SMEs in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) during the global economic crisis, with three direct influences and one indirect influence. The following were the summaries:

- The characteristics of future leaders had a positive direct influence on leadership behaviour under the global economic crisis with λ=0.23, SE.=0.14, t.-value=2.021, Sig.=0.043<0.05. Also, R2 or influence on change was 61.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05.

- The characteristics of future leaders had a positive direct influence on the leadership roles with λ=0.98, SE.=0.12, t.-value=7.150, Sig.=0.000<0.05. Also, R2 or influence on change was 61.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05.

- The characteristics of future leaders had a positive direct influence on the management efficiency with λ=0.39, SE.=0.15, t.-value=3.147, Sig.=0.002<0.05. Also, R2 or influence on change was 48.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05.

- The characteristics of future leaders had a positive indirect influence on management efficiency, and the leadership style mediated the relationship between both variables with a total regression coefficient or λ=0.36 (0.98x0.37).

3. Leadership behaviors under the global economic crisis: there were 5 observed variables (BEH1- BEH5) with weighted regression coefficients between 00.67 - 0.99, and multiple correlation coefficients (R2) of 44.0% - 98.0%. The test revealed that the leadership behaviours under the global economic crisis unaffected the leadership style with λ= -0.06, SE.=0.05, t.-value=0.974, Sig.= 0.330>0.05.

4. Leadership style: There were 8 observed variables (ROL1 - ROL5) with weighted regression coefficients between 0.53 - 0.81 and multiple correlation coefficients (R2) of 29.0% - 65.0%. The leadership style affected the structural equation analysis for efficient leadership role models in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) with a path of direct influence. The summary was as follows:

- The leadership style had a positive direct influence on the management efficiency with λ=0.37, SE.=0.10, t.-value=5.049, Sig.=0.000<0.05. Also, R2 or influence on change was 48.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05.

5. Management efficiency: There were 10 observed variables (PER1 – PER10) with weighted regression coefficients between 0.51–0.98 and multiple correlation coefficients (R2) of 26.0% - 97.0%. The variable of the structural equation modelling for efficient leadership role models in managing SMEs under the global economic crisis in Thailand (a case study of Bangkok) was management efficiency.

With a statistical significance of 0.05, this study, "Roles of Leader Effective in SMEs Management under the Global Economic Crisis in Thailand (Evidence of Bangkok)," revealed latent variables, namely leadership role, leadership behaviours

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under the Global Economic Crisis, characteristics of future leader, leadership style, and management efficiency. The following are the results of 9 issues based on the research hypotheses:
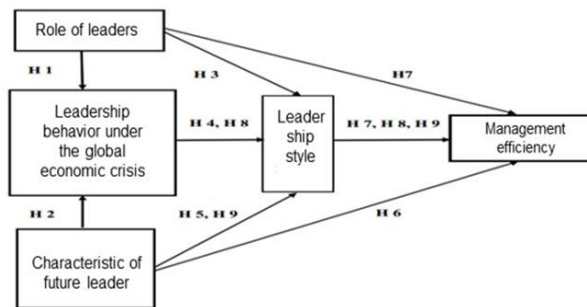

Figure 2: The diagram of the hypothesis structure
Source: Own elaboration

Hypothesis 1 (H1): During the global economic crisis, the leadership role was positively correlated with leadership behaviour. H1 was accepted or testing revealed a positive correlation between leadership role and leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis. The path coefficient was at 0.57, and R2 or influence on change was 61.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05The fact that the testing was consistent with the research hypothesis demonstrated that leaders played a critical role in successfully managing an organisation in a crisis. Several necessary leadership roles included the use of position (rights) to build organisational relationships with personnel or to gain widespread recognition, obvious work creation, human development to increase effectiveness and capability, followers' potential to become good future leaders, and the ability to manage problems or risks in a crisis. Moreover, learning, experiencing, and information monitoring were also important leadership roles that could bring trust, belief, and respect, and affected leadership behaviours such as performance for the fastest catching critical signal, fastest data collection, fastest analysis for crisis forecast, fastest planning for crisis prevention, and fastest pre-crisis action. This result indicated that the structural equation model, which was based on the research hypotheses and developed from relevant concepts and theories by the researcher, was consistent with the empirical data.

The leadership role in the organization was an important factor in running a business. Leaders played an important role in driving business efficiency and became the main key to creating a good working atmosphere in the organization. Therefore, having good visionary leaders is the key factor in running a business (Aiyimaphan, 2020). Many scholars have explained the role of leaders in different contexts, such as Marquis and Halton (2006), who explained that leaders who had a role in management were thinkers, analysts, decision-makers, communicators, assessors, and facilitators. Also, there were many important roles for leaders. First was the role

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of managing risk occurring in the organization because leaders had to have a role in applying knowledge for being a mentor, a motivator, and an instructor. Second was the role of coordination as a mediator. Third was the role in change management including exploring the premeditation as well as being a forecaster, an influencer, and a creative problem solver. Finally, the leaders had to be role models for people in the organization.

As in the study by Coates et al. (2021) about the role development approaches for SME business leaders in rural areas, Pakistan revealed that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were the main strength in the economic development of countries around the world and were important in shaping the economic direction. Decision-makers of enterprises in most cases were aware of specific risks in their environments; however, in the case of external risks, only a third of the companies could manage two types of risks. The larger the SME, the more comprehensive the management of both exogenous (market and financial) and endogenous risks (Dankiewicz et al., 2020). Finally, in risk situations, the leadership role and behaviour were critical for decision-making and organisational management.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Future leader characteristics were positively related to leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis. H2 was accepted and testing revealed a positive correlation between future leader characteristics and leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis. The path coefficient was 0.23, and the R^2 (influence on change) was 61.0% with a 0.05 statistical significance. That the testing was consistent with the research hypothesis could describe how a future leader's characteristic was developed from leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis. There were many characteristics of leaders in the future such as suitable people management and the right person selection for the job, good financial and cost management, various business management, building a customer or stakeholder engagement, change management and agility outside and inside the organization, and special skill management for work promotion. Therefore, all mentioned characteristics were directly by the leadership behaviours under the global economic crisis. The important leadership behaviours were performance for the fastest catching critical signal, fastest data collection, fastest analysis for crisis forecast, fastest planning for crisis prevention, and fastest pre-crisis action. The finding indicated that the structural equation model based on the research hypotheses, developed from relevant concepts and theories by the researcher, was consistent with the empirical data.

According to the findings mentioned above, many scholars have written about leadership development (see for example Amriani et al., 2020; Feld, 2012; George et al., 2012; Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Samani and Thomas, 2016; Quinn and Quinn, 2016). Matters that were necessary for developing leadership to increase more experience, knowledge, quality, rights, suitability, inspiration, and participation were the coaching and mentoring system and the potential assessment process. Moreover, Fernández-Aráoz et al. (2017) indicated a guideline to develop leaders with a potential assessment process including identifying desired strong

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leadership characteristics, measuring the potential of desirable leaders, creating a growth path by identifying the hierarchy of people empowerment, and giving leaders opportunities for represent their potentiality.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The leadership role was positively correlated with the leadership style. H3 was rejected or the testing revealed that the leadership role was not correlated with leadership style.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Leadership style was positively correlated with leadership behaviour during the global economic crisis. H4 was rejected, or the testing revealed that during the global economic crisis, leadership behaviour was not correlated with leadership style.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The characteristics of future leaders were positively related to leadership style. H5 was accepted, or the testing revealed a positive correlation between the characteristics of a future leader and leadership styles. The path coefficient was 0.98, and the R2 or influence on change was 61.0% with a 0.05 statistical significance. The fact that the testing was consistent with the research hypothesis may indicate that the characteristics of future leaders were evolving to form leadership styles. There were many future leader characteristics such as suitable people management and job selection, good financial and cost management, various business management, building customer or stakeholder engagement, change management and agility outside and inside the organisation, and special skill management for job promotion. Leaders must use their skills and processes in communicating and conveying information and ideas to create good mutual understanding, nice coordination, and a good organizational climate for working together; moreover, leaders could lead teams to work effectively and increase competitiveness, which was a guideline for sustainable organizational success. Finally, that leadership styles were directly affected by the mentioned characteristics of future leaders could refer that the structural equation model based on the research hypotheses, developed from relevant concepts and theories by the researcher, was consistent with the empirical data.

Some scholars applied Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory in their projects. They mentioned that situational leadership style had a strong influence on staff performance (Moss et al., 2021) because it could help organizations transform plans and decisions into personnel operations, and leaders could adapt their leadership style to the realities of the social context and the current situation. (Mahmood et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2021)

Hypothesis 6 (H6): The characteristics of a future leader were found to be positively related to management efficiency. H6 was accepted and testing revealed a positive correlation between the characteristics of a future leader and management efficiency. The path coefficient was at 0.39, and R2 or influence on change was 48.0% with a statistical significance of 0.05. The fact that the testing was consistent with the research hypothesis could explain why future leader characteristics have a direct impact on management efficiency. There were many future leader characteristics such as suitable people management and job selection, good financial and cost

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management, various business management, building customer or stakeholder engagement, change management and agility outside and inside the organisation, and special skill management for job promotion. Increasing good organisational commitment among leaders and personnel could result in cooperation, a good organisational climate for working, promoting more efficient work processes, achieved output and outcomes from work, and maximising the benefits of public resources by using them honestly and prudently. Furthermore, leaders could effectively lead teams and increase competitiveness, which was a guideline for long-term organisational success. It was considered to decrease working procedures and office hours to facilitate and reduce expenditure to achieve the organization's intended objectives and goals. In any case, by working methodically in the organisation, team members with diverse skills and experiences were creative and newly innovative. Finally, the fact that the aforementioned characteristics of future leaders had a direct impact on management efficiency revealed that the structural equation model based on the researcher's research hypotheses, developed from relevant concepts and theories, was consistent with the empirical data.

The relationship between leadership style and future leadership traits is also mentioned in the other literary writings of Alsarrani et al. (2021) and scholars' works published in Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science, Emerald and Google Scholar. Future qualified leaders with intelligence, suitable physical health, emotional readiness, flexibility, and sociability were required for the employees in the organization. Moreover, leadership management, leader's strategy, and innovation system were suitable indicators for developing soft skills in future leadership management (Djafri et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 7 (H7): The positive correlation showed a relationship between leadership roles and management efficiency. H7 was rejected or the testing revealed that the leadership role was not correlated with the management efficiency.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): The leadership style mediated the positive relationship between leadership behaviour and management efficiency. H8 was rejected or the testing revealed that with the leadership style as the mediating variable, there was no correlation between leadership behaviour and management efficiency.

Hypothesis 9 (H9): The leadership style mediated the relationship between future leader characteristics and management efficiency. H9 was accepted and testing revealed a correlation between future leader characteristics and management efficiency, with leadership style acting as a moderating variable. The path coefficient was 0.36, and the R^2 (influence on change) was 48.0% with a 0.05 statistical significance. That the testing was consistent with the research hypothesis could explain how future leader characteristics that directly affected leadership style could improve management efficiency. There were multiple characteristics of a leader in the future, namely suitable people management and right person selection for the job, good financial and cost management, various business management, building a customer or stakeholder engagement, change management and agility outside and inside the organization, and special skill management for work promotion. When

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leaders and employees increased their organisational commitment, cooperation and a positive organisational climate for working emerged. Furthermore, future leaders' characteristics will be further developed to achieve leadership styles that are most appropriate for the organisation in various contexts. The workforce could then produce outputs and outcomes to achieve the organization's intended objectives and goals. The working procedure had been systematised, made accessible, and validated. Besides, various resources of the highest quality for operations, including natural resources, workforces, capital, and action methods were implemented with full potential development, and the enhanced efficiency of working processes was also promoted. Finally, the mentioned future leader characteristics directly affected management efficiency with leadership style as a mediating variable, revealing that the structural equation model based on the researcher's research hypotheses, developed from relevant concepts and theories, was consistent with the empirical data.

Individual characteristics of future leaders should be effective. A sense of happiness, satisfaction, and willingness to work could result in full capacity, appropriate working techniques for more outcomes, high-quality work, little waste of capital, low cost, energy reduction, and time reduction; additionally, innovating and modifying working methods appeared to achieve better results (Hawamdeh and Attari, 2016). Also, Subrahmanyam (2020), and Firsova et al. (2019) wrote that with managerial performance competencies for future leadership traits, the value of skills including expertise, skills, abilities, personality, and motivation could empower and accelerate people or employees' mental reaction, mood, and behaviour to take action, make a decision, achieve goals, and maximize the management efficiency.

Implications for Research and Practice

This research was conducted during a crisis. Therefore, studying leadership roles in business management in normal or different situations will help to enhance knowledge development in business management effectively. In addition, the roles of effective leaders in managing SMEs were investigated in this study; it would be more beneficial if some studies on leadership roles and other factors influencing business success were investigated, as knowledge in SME management would be developed productively.

Conclusion

From the results of this research, developing leadership roles for enterprises is essential to business growth because the leader plays an important role in driving SMEs. As in the case of SMEs in the service sector that could generate high income for the country, the sample group studied by the researcher was in a large city and constantly undergoing business changes. Therefore, the development of knowledge and management skills for leaders, executives, and entrepreneurs to acquire modern

knowledge is an important basis for further development of the country's large businesses.

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ROLE SKUTECZNYCH LIDERÓW W ZARZĄDZANIU MAŁYMI I ŚREDNIMI PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWAMI W WARUNKACH GLOBALNEGO KRYZYSU GOSPODARCZEGO

Streszczenie: Celem tego badania było zbadanie korelacji między rolą, zachowaniem, cechami, stylem i skutecznością liderów w zarządzaniu małymi i średnimi przedsiębiorstwami (MŚP) podczas globalnego kryzysu gospodarczego w Tajlandii. W celu zebrania danych jakościowych i ilościowych zwrócono się do przedsiębiorców zlokalizowanych w Bangkoku z sektora MŚP z 10 letnim doświadczeniem w sektorze usług, posiadającym doświadczenie biznesowe i skuteczne zarządzanie biznesem, dla posyskania danych zastosowano metody mieszane (formularz wywiadu i ankiety). Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badan stwierdzono, że wiele czynników może przyczynić się do sukcesu planowanego lub istniejącego biznesu, po tym gdy odpowiednie podejście zostanie zastosowane w działaniu. Podejście i role przywódcze zidentyfikowane w niniejszym badaniu powinny kłaść nacisk na budowanie zaufania personelu, posiadanie jasnej wizji, bycie dobrym planistą, bycie zdecydowanym, rozwiązywanie problemów w celu zmniejszenia efektów biznesowych, tworzenie różnych kanałów dostępu do celów oraz aktualizowanie systemów informacyjnych w celu poprawy strategii biznesowych.

Słowa kluczowe: lider, zarządzanie, efektywność, MŚP, kryzys