Resilience in Leadership Styles amidst COVID Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: In times of crisis such as wars, hurricanes, earthquakes, or pandemics like the one we are experiencing now, leaders play a critical role, since their decisions and actions may have life or death consequences. The corona virus pandemic presents a critical challenge to leadership at all levels and in all organizations. How are leaders responding to this public health crisis and the impact on the style of their leadership keeping the effected work force employees with correct decision making and actions is what out paper stresses upon. We also see the impact of this crisis in survivability of leadership, a term well defined as resilience in leadership style. Amidst the pandemic, various Psychiatrists and mental health specialists, based on accumulated knowledge from past research, are offering suggestions on how to adapt to new work and family arrangements brought on by work displacement and social distancing. An important aspect related to business research continuation in this domain emerges in form of Leadership Resilience. Therefore, primarily our study suggests that employee' perceptions of newly created apprehensions and some aspects to add to the "Theory Building" in the domain Resilient Leadership in crisis.
Keywords: Covid-19, Leadership Resilience, employees' perceptions; corporate social responsibility; distributive justice; procedural justice; organizational citizenship behavior; work engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

As 2020 began, COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel corona virus, was thought of as mostly a specific country issue. If an organization didn't have any that country-based factories or customers, then from a business perspective, leaders didn't have much to worry about. But by late February, people around the world were learning the meaning of pandemic and coming to grips with the potential health impacts of a virus that by early spring spread to more than 170 different countries, sickened more than a two million people, and caused more than 160,000 deaths. The health statistics were arriving quickly and human beings in unaffected parts of the world chose to be rather naïve to the idea of this crisis hitting them hard, and coupled with statistics on quantifying the economic damage took longer to arrive. Clearly, the virus has cost organizations billions of dollars in lost revenue (potentially up to $1.1 trillion by the end of this year, by one estimate). The question has gone from whether the corona virus will cause a recession to how deep one could be. But COVID-19 is causing far more than just financial damage. Leaders are scrambling to secure supplies, keep fearful employees motivated to work, and, in some cases, keep bold strategic plans that have been years in the making from falling apart.

Indeed, this is an unnerving test of leadership styles. Combine that with the short tenures of many current senior leaders, and it's quite possible that many of today's top executives are even more unprepared for such a challenge. Korn Ferry canvassed its experts across the world on how leaders can help their organizations navigate all this. Here's what they had to say. It's only natural: senior leaders, always under intense pressure from investors, may default to looking at the financial damage the corona virus is causing or could cause. There's good reason to be concerned, especially since the bottom-line toll has already been so large.

But employees being fearful survivors don't want to know how much the virus is costing the company; experts say workers want to feel they're in the same boat as the boss. "People need to know that even though the leader is employed to manage and run a business, he or she is also a human being—someone that cares for them and understands what they are going through," says Michael Distefano, president of the Asia Pacific region for Korn Ferry and a member of the firm's Global Operating Committee. "The leader must lead from the front, exhibiting the values and behaviours they expect from the team." However,

Leading from the front doesn't mean being isolated. To be sure, for many leaders, one of the hardest things to do is to rely on the opinions and decisions of other people. But that's exactly what they need to do in times of crisis, especially when the cause of the crisis is outside of their area of expertise.

In general, the management literature is rather thin about (responsible) leadership during a crisis. The sparse literature on "responsible leadership" that appeared in the last two decades is mostly conceptual or normative with few empirical tests. It focuses on the business leader's role in corporate social responsibility (e.g., Waldman & Balven, 2014) or on addressing stakeholder needs beyond shareholder returns (e.g., Maak & Pless, 2006). There is an interesting study of 39 United States Presidents (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991), which found several personal traits, e.g., needs for power, behavioral charisma, and the existence of a crisis during the presidency to be associated with presidential performance. Though this is not a direct study of responsible presidential leadership, research on political leaders may offer valuable insight on responsible leadership with serious consequences for the nation. There is a critical need for study on the nature, the antecedents, the consequences, and the contextual boundaries of responsible leadership in all types of organizations, public and private, in times of peace and crisis. As we witness different forms of leadership actions unfolding in dealing with this pandemic, there is a correspondent responsibility for business researchers to contribute evidence based knowledge on responsible leadership in times of crisis, relative to that in times of normalcy. Some imperative questions therefore arise as mentioned below:-

- How and why are responsible leadership practices, similar or different in various organizational contexts, levels, industries, sectors, regions, or times of crisis?
- How do responsible leaders embrace action and compassion, focusing on alleviating the sufferings of those directly affected, without losing sight of the needs and longer-term consequences for the larger community?
- How do they respond to conflicting information and priorities?
- Who should they consult or involve in making timely decisions since time is the essence in crisis situation?
- In general, what types of responsible leadership practices contribute to the well-being of citizens and resilience of societies to weather all forms of challenges and adversities?
- Is responsible leadership different in form and substance, relative to responsible leadership in normal or peaceful times?

Therefore, research can help us to identify, select, or develop leaders who will lead responsibly in both ordinary times and times of crisis.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEATRICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The two relevant theories to the study used were contingency theory that highlights possible means of differentiating among alternative forms of organization structures and systems of management. The contingency approach implies that organization theory should not seek to suggest one best way to structure or manage organizations but should provide insights into the situational and contextual factors which influence management decisions. Organizational structure is a valuable tool in achieving coordination, as it specifies reporting relationships of who reports to whom, delineates formal communication channels, and describes how separate actions of individuals are linked together (Pace, 2004). Another theory is model-an acronym for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement. The ADKAR model-an acronym for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement was first published by Prosci in 1998 after research with more than 300 companies undergoing major change projects. In 2006, Prosci released the first complete text on the ADKAR model (Jeff ,2006). This model is probably one of the most well known, widely used and efficient models in the change management field (Harvey, 2009). This model is intended to be a coaching tool to help employees through the change process initiated by a pandemic.

The first step in managing any type of organizational change is to understand how leaders should manage change with a single individual. If this model is applied well and adopted, it can be of great importance in the New Normal caused due to disruption created in the pandemic times.

Leadership is also defined as the act of providing directions, energizing others and obtaining their voluntary commitment to the leader's vision (Bloisi et al.,2007). For (Senge 2005), leadership is associated with stimulants and incentives that motivate people to reach common objectives. The essence of leadership is to achieve the intended objectives with and through people (Hersey et al., 2001).According to Koech &

Namusonge (2012), one of the most prominent formats for classifying and studying leadership includes; three styles–transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. In this approach, leadership is conceptualized by the behavioral areas from laissez-faire style or non-leadership, through transactional leadership which hinges on reward system and punishments to transformational leadership which is based on inspiration and behavioral charisma (Bass & Avolio, 2003). The approach is chosen because of its currency in management research and the efficiency demonstrated through research findings.

III. RESEARCH THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

The rapid, global spread of COVID-19 has quickly eclipsed other recent epidemics in both size and scope, becoming a pandemic. In addition to the deadly human toll and the disruption to millions of lives, the economic damage is already significant and far-reaching. In the face of certain challenges and a still-uncertain set of risks, business leaders are rightly concerned about how their companies will be affected and what to do next. Some basics about the foundational definitions of these theories are presented in the paper with analytics of the correct style. A survey was done in affected areas in the technician level of aviation to provide practical insights for chief executives and their leadership teams in taking decisive action. On basis of this following hypothesis was made:-

Hypothesis 1: Employees' are positively engaged in their work outcome during and post COVID scenario.
Relationship between Employees' Perceptions of CSR and Work Engagement
These resources form the backbone of employee engagement in normal circumstances whereas in case of crises that the world is facing right now, the leadership styles exuded need to be unique and a mix of empathy without compromising the output.
Hypothesis 2: Employees' perceptions of effect of COVID pandemic are positively associated with work engagement.

Relationship between Work Engagement and OCB

Based on the argument that psychological experience at work drives work behavior [47], we can say that OCB is closely related to commitment. Some authors [35] even consider that OCB is a type of behavioral commitment. In this sense, research has shown that work engagement positively influences in-role and extra-role behaviors, such as OCB [22–24].

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedures: In this study, we used a cross-sectional design and collected data from observation of the working professionals. A descriptive research method was used in the targeted population of 81 employees of a military aviation environment based in headquarters. This method was appropriate for this study as it provides a quantitative description of attitudes, experience and opinions of the sample population. The study comprised the population size of 48 employees from five department's namely human recourse, Finance, Procurement, Air Navigation Services and Communication. Stratified simple random sampling was used to select individuals from the population to represent the characteristics found in the entire group. Data was collected using questionnaires and discussions in form of personal peer reviewed interviews with both open and closed questions. The independent variable was identified and measured using a five-point scale ranging from 1(strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The respondent's demographic information such as: age, gender, education level, departments and work experience were also captured. The internal consistency technique of validity was used where the internal consistency of data was determined from scores obtained from a single test administered to a sample of subjects. The scores obtained in one item were correlated with scores obtained from other items in the instrument. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, was then computed to determine how items correlated among themselves. A multivariate regression model was applied to determine the relative importance of leadership in respect to its contribution to the effect of leadership styles exuded in the crises of pandemic. A confidence level of 95% was used.

Correlation Analysis. Correlation is a measure that indicates the extent to which two or more variables fluctuate together. The correlation technique is used to analyse the degree of relationship between two variables (Mugenda & Muge nda, 2003). A positive correlation indicates the extent to which those variables increase or decrease in parallel; a negative correlation indicates the extent to which one variable increases as the other decreases. While correlation analysis is the use of statistical correlation to evaluate the strength of the relations between variables. In investigating relationships, we are examining the strength of a connection between two characteristics belonging

to the same individual or equipment. Correlation can be positively related that is an increase in one variable coincides with an increase in another variable. It can be also negative, that is as one increases the other reduces or zero/random correlation when one real relationship occurs. Coefficient of determination (R2) provides the amount of common variation between two variables or the amount of variation in dependent variable explained by variation in dependent variables when converted to percentage. Correlation analysis was done to calculate Karl Pearson and Spearman's Correlation Coefficients between implementation of organization structure. Significance values of less than 0.01 were considered sufficient for a relation to exist. A correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the degree to which changes to the value of one variable predict change to the value of another. In positively correlated variables, the value increases or decreases in tandem. In negatively correlated variables, the value of one increases as the value of the other decreases. In our present analysis, The coefficient of correlation of 0.825 (Karl Pearson) and 0.829 (Spearman) shows a strong positive relationship between leadership commitment and the implementation of the organizational structure. The two detailed significance values of the correlation analysis for both Karl Pearson and Spearmans' rank were below the set significance level of 0.05 corresponding to 95% confidence level. Leadership commitment recorded the highest significance with the significance value of 0.000 A related trend was realised with Spearman correlation analysis where leadership commitment was more significant of 0.001.

Regression Analysis. Similarly, The regression analysis for leadership in relation to hypothesis number one showed a weak positive relationship between the two variables. The results were computed at 95% confidence level. R Square value was found to be .064 implying that 6.4 % variability in achieving satisfaction with old leadership styles is explained by leadership resilience. The bulk of variation (93.6%) is explained by variation of other factors. The regression analysis for leadership in relation to motivation showed a moderate positive relationship between the leadership commitments in relation to staff motivation . The coefficient of determination (R. Square) was found to be 0.412. This means that 41.2% variability in staff motivation can be attributed to leadership commitment amongst the respondents of a particular organisation. The other variation of 59.8% is explained by variation of other factors. The R value of 0.642 shows that there

was a moderate positive relationship between leadership commitments and staff motivation.

In this paper we would study the effect of the outcome without going into further mathematical calculations as exhibits. Following paragraphs give a better understanding of outcomes of the type of leadership styles expected out of leaders in a bottom up approach.

V. INTERPRETATION AND OUTCOMES

Leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing and showing concern for and interacting with the members are all forms of empowering leadership and empowerment oriented leaders are the need for the hour. An individual and members of the teams should be empowered. By doing so, the organization will be able to achieve its objectives and this will make the organization in question to be competing with others in terms of human resource utilization and achieving the intended organizational goals.

The leader who does not have the ability to lead other people, manager who does not acquire the role of a leader, will never manage to bring subordinates and organizational needs together in order to promote efficient operations (Mintzberg, 2009) and this is true in case of the pandemic. As per the analysis from the study, there is a need for the right combination of personality traits, appropriate skills, and style of leadership in these times as the leader must realize that this is the time when a resilient approach is adapted. Interestingly, these combinations vary dependently on the position and level of management. Goals and visions are very important to any organization and senior managements together with all employees' ability to work on achieving them (Leavitt, 2005). From the findings, quality of leadership is a vital tool to achieve success from the team of subordinates since it is the manpower which will manage all other available machinery towards achieving organizational structure. The rapid, global spread of COVID-19 has quickly eclipsed other recent epidemics in both size and scope, becoming a pandemic. In addition to the deadly human toll and the disruption to millions of lives, the economic damage is already significant and far-reaching. In the face of certain challenges and a still-uncertain set of risks, business leaders are rightly concerned about how their companies will be affected and what to do next.

It was the need of hour to be recognized by researchers in the field of leadership that various companies and individual are in different phases of

dealing with the outbreak, and therefore the impact of it is different for each subject. Regardless of the extent of the virus's effect on an organization, certain qualities of resilient leadership will distinguish effective leaders:

- **Empathy leaders.** During a crisis, resilient leaders express empathy and compassion for the human side of the upheaval. Their first priority is safeguarding workers, and ensuring their immediate health and safety, followed by their economic well-being followed by the company's cause for which the leaders are hired at the first place. Resilient leaders also consider how the nature and tone of their communications with customers and the sensitivity of the customer experience need to shift in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. Customers respect discipline in each step. Resilient leaders stay vigilant, focused on protecting financial performance through the crisis, and making hard, fact-based decisions. A leader must not lose sight of the vision and purpose of the company. Companies that are guided by leaders who keep their purpose when they face hard decisions and have a keen sense for how they should evolve are successful in safeguarding the cause of being resilient as leaders.

- **Put the mission first.** Organizations in the middle of a crisis are going through uncertain turbulence. Resilient leaders establish priority areas that can quickly cascade and arrest them. At such times they must engage with sorting the command and control, talent focus, sorting supply chains, establishing a business ecosystem that supports this new normal.

- **Real time business solutions.** No company has the ability to deliver perfect information and many can't deliver the information they have in real time on operations that could be affected during a pandemic. There will be many "known unknowns" in the days and weeks ahead. Leverage proxy data as much as possible to inform decisions. When the crisis is over, conduct a thorough review to see how to improve information quality in future crises— but during this one, you will likely have to set aside that kind of analysis.

- As leaders confront the unanticipated, this is also a time to encourage initiative and empower at all levels of the organization. This approach may have value beyond the current crisis as organizations learn to conduct business in more uncertain times.

- Resilient leaders seize the narrative at the outset, being transparent about current realities.

- **Trust Factor.** In a time of crisis, trust is paramount, and is a function of three elements. First, transparencies in communicating the facts as you know them. Second, relationship with the audience: some level of "knowing" each other among leaders, employees, customers, and the broader ecosystem. It's also important to recognize and address the emotions of all stakeholders. This is not just about charts and numbers. Narratives can be powerful ways to acknowledge the fears that naturally surface in times of crisis, while at the same time framing the opportunity that can be achieved if stakeholders come together and commit to overcoming the challenges presented.

- **Communication as leaders.** In this new normal communication, emails, texts, and tweets lack the voice intonation, eye contact, and body language essential to trust-building communications. Encourage the use of video instead of emails and other forms of communication. Just as you may feel overwhelmed by your inbox, so do your employees.

- **Embrace the long view.** Any period of volatility can create opportunities that businesses can leverage if they are prepared. In the case of the COVID-19 outbreak, organizations that take a more assertive and longer-term approach can spark innovations that will define the "next normal." Embracing the long view requires organizations to anticipate structural changes and their lasting effects. The long view also demands that organizations consider how to become market shapers by aligning themselves with the future-shapers of their industry, or becoming the nexus of the next ecosystem while their competitors focus on the crisis.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

A Test of Resilient Leadership: Leaders have always had to balance the immediate short-term needs of the business with the long-term strategies and vision. This paradox of leadership is especially true as companies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders need to formulate return-to-work plans and adjust work processes for the short-term recovery of operations but also discern what longer term impacts this pandemic will have overall. COVID-19 is a crucible within which resilient leadership is refined. Acting without perfect information, often with only a few hours or days to spare, some leaders will have to guide their

organizations through myriad decisions and challenges, with significant implications for their company's whole system—employees, customers, clients, financial partners, suppliers, investors, and other stakeholders—and society more broadly. In this clarity of thinking, communications, and decision-making will be at a premium. Those leaders who can best exhibit this clarity—and lead from the heart and the head will inspire their organizations to prevail through this crisis, positioning their brands to emerge stronger, prepared for whatever may come. Crises like these, with deep challenges to be navigated, will also lead to opportunities for learning and deepening trust with all stakeholders, creating more value not just for shareholders, but for society as a whole. 5 critical lessons that we and our leaders need to learn from this crisis:

- **Science Matters.** It is simply unfathomable that in an era where science has lengthened our lives, improved the quality of those lives, and provided space-age technology that our parents couldn't even dream of, that we – and our leaders – would not rely on science in making critical decisions. Whether it was the Chinese government trying to hide what doctors knew about the impending pandemic, or Western leaders ignoring the pleas of scientists to take drastic actions, we should realize the dangers of not relying on scientific discoveries in policy-making. Looking beyond the current pandemic, what about climate change and what science is telling us about that impending catastrophe?

- **Top-Down, Authoritarian Leadership Doesn't Work.** We can use China and the US as good case studies for the failure of authoritarian leadership. The Chinese government's failed decision to hide the novel corona virus outbreak, and President Trump's proclamations that fly in the face of what his own experts are claiming, suggest that when decisions are centralized in a powerful "head," without adequate input from knowledgeable others in the decision-making process, it is a recipe for disaster. One hundred years of research on leadership tells us that authoritarian leadership doesn't work well.

- **Greed and Self-Interest Are Our Worst Enemies.** Whether it is the profiteers who are hiking up the prices of crucial medical protective gear, or hoarders emptying the shelves of grocery stores, we are seeing the ugly truth that greed represents the "dark side" of our human nature that causes some of us to gain at others' expense. If medical personnel are not adequately protected from infection, or if some of our fellow citizens risk exposure by trying to find food and necessities, we will all lose. Beyond the pandemic, the increasing economic gap between the elite ultra rich and the lowest socioeconomic rungs of society, is a greed-related problem that needs immediate attention.

- **Engaged Followership Is Necessary.** In a country where less than half of us regularly vote and where people routinely try to "not get involved," we need to realize the power and the benefits of becoming engaged citizens. In leadership research, we have begun to focus on the important role that exemplary followers play in effecting change and getting things done. We are seeing this in the news on a daily basis. Doctors and medical technicians who are rigging ventilators to manage more than one patient, volunteers who are shopping for elderly and disabled persons, local officials who are breaking with higher-level government leaders to take more drastic actions to save lives. If greed is the dark nature of humans, altruism – helping others – is the bright side. After all, it is engaged citizens/followers in organizations and societies who really get things done, not the leaders.

- **We Cannot Miss This Opportunity to Learn and Evolve.** As historians say, "those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." If leaders do not seize the opportunity to learn from the challenge of the global pandemic, they are likely to find themselves unprepared when new problems arise. The best way to lead in a crisis is to prepare beforehand. We are seeing the problems caused by lack of preparation – the dismissal of the US pandemic response team, ignoring warnings, lack of adequate stockpiles of medical equipment and supplies. Too much power and control in a single leader, particularly when the leader does not consult broadly with experts and advisors (from both/all political parties and perspectives), is bad.

- Not only leaders, but each of us must learn from this experience. We need to prepare for possible crises/setbacks – stay informed, have contingency plans. We need to become more engaged in society, in the selection of our leaders, and speak up when necessary (the "Silent Majority" was not a good thing). Perhaps we can become less self-focused and reach out to others to assist (or be assisted).

We need to learn, to evolve, not because another crisis might be coming, but because it is a certainty.

VII.   CONCLUSION

As the pandemic spreads all over the world, I am reminded of the fragility of human life and how unprepared some societies are. I am even more resolved that business research can contribute to alleviating some of these sufferings and can help organizations become stronger and kinder. I hope this pandemic is a wake-up call for leadership researchers, as much as it is for leaders in government, business, communities and universities. As a community of scholars, we have the power to reclaim our freedom and respond to the call to be responsible social scientists so that we can realize our dreams and achieve our aspirations to contribute to healthy, just, and thriving societies. History taught us that after every major global disaster, the world is better. I deeply hope this pandemic is reminding us that life is too precious to waste on writing research papers that do not matter. Let us exercise responsible leadership ourselves by studying and advancing responsible leadership, as well as all other valuable topics, to contribute to the making of a better world post-COVID-19.

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