INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

Knowing What It Means To Be The Leader in Crisis

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ABSTRACT:

No one gives a given leadership trait much thought until the you-know-what hits the fan. Crisis management is the quality I'm referring to. True catastrophes, however, are exceedingly uncommon. They are the leadership's black swans. A deep confidence in the value of leadership is matched by rapid and frequently superficial appraisals of leadership effectiveness. Such evaluations are seldom more timely than in the aftermath of crises and tragedies. These evaluations must be superficial since we, the general public, can only rate leaders based on what we see. While symbolic performance is crucial, even if simply to arouse the public, it is not the only performance dimension by which crisis leadership should be judged. Leadership is crucial, and a leader's performance under difficult circumstances is crucial. Leaders must look beyond the box to solve a problem, not only in a crisis, but in general.

Purpose: - The purpose of this research article is to highlight that efficient leaders are important and what leaders do to handle crisis, so my paper try to explore how during crisis like COVID for an example response plan of leaders are not predefined rather behaviour and mindset comes to fore.

Design/Methodology /Approach: The research follows a generic qualitative inquiry approach fashioned after Stebbins (2001) work on exploratory research. This methodology captures leader's perspective through semi structured interviews (Mishler, 1986). This paper presents valuable insights on Crisis Management by studying what different leaders from varied fields and domain who are success in handling crisis as leaders in their own ventures or organization do to effectively manage crisis. A case study approach is used in my paper where certain leaders performance strategy for handling crisis will be generalized to serve the larger group.

Originality/value :- In this regard, this study will be useful for understanding the importance of leaders in crisis as they owe their people a clear sense of direction and this paper may help other leaders to add new knowledge, insights from other efficient leaders and their perspective to refer.

Keywords: crisis management, black swans, crisis leadership, leadership effectiveness.

I. Introduction and Literature Review:

- Leadership is defined as the ability to think beyond preconceived limitations and devise answers or paths that few others can envision. After that, the leader must present this vision for everybody to perceive and pursue. The importance of education and knowledge management cannot be overstated. Even ordinary people are investing extensively in

education and knowledge management these days, and the effects are visible. Crisis management I can state that it is often ignored, underestimated, and not even one of the top necessities — until a catastrophe occurs. It's one of those occasions. Only a few could have imagined institutions would close, firms would instruct employees to work from home, and practically everything in the world would be suspended a year ago when Covid -19 hit the planet. The COVID-19 pandemic presented an ultimate test for organizational leaders across the world (Dirani et al., 2020).The heterogeneity in the success of firms during the COVID-19 has reemphasized the importance of having a strong leadership during a crisis, which enabled organizations to seize the opportunities presented by the crisis and stay ahead of the competition (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

- Leadership in Crisis Management :-

We define crisis management as the collection of activities targeted at reducing the negative consequences of a crisis. Damage to people, essential infrastructure, and government institutions is used to assess the impact. Effective crisis management saves lives, safeguards infrastructure, and restores public faith. Ineffective crisis management is frequently linked to negative outcomes. Recent "mega crises," such as the Covid Pandemic, the 2020 Beirut bomb, Ukraine War, Srilanka Economic Crisis, Global Warming, Wars, and the financial crisis, have all been met with harsh criticisms of crisis management (ranging from "failures of creativity" to "failures of initiative"). We shouldn't anticipate too much from crisis management for a variety of reasons. The coronavirus pandemic is a catastrophe unlike any other in recent memory for many people, from the top to the bottom. Leadership is a skill that can be learned.

- Consider how many variables influence the outcome of a crisis or disaster: the size, speed of onset, and "knowability" or predictability of a threat agent all influence the amount of leeway available for crisis management. The action of other parties, such as NGOs, the media, rivals, victims, and bystanders, also has an impact on the response's outcomes. Finally, the outcome is influenced by the resources available to aid a recovering society. At the same time, there is ample evidence that crisis management is important. We believe that crisis management can have a small but significant impact on the outcome of a crisis.

- Keegan et al. (2004) recognised the primary behaviours that are noticed in leadership attributes such as objective clarification, team boundaries setting, member guiding, leading followers, engaging members to the team, meeting organisation, and information flow control in their study. In turn, aggregate leadership dimensions include leading, involving, defining roles, and organising teamwork.

- According to Distefano (2002), a manager's capacity to lead their subordinates is crucial to success in the global market. The study's main finding was that extraordinary leadership performances in different countries were universal.

- In Line with the research objectives, literature review was initiated to obtain knowledge about the effective leadership attributes during the COVID-19 pandemic or Ukraine War or Srilanka Crisis order to learn from such experiences and propose attributes that leaders need to take on board if they were to survive and thrive in future crises. The current studies on crisis leadership during pandemic are not only limited but also fragmented and scattered across the literature. A lack of comprehensive research in crisis leadership during pandemic or war or economic crisis appear missing. As a result, organizational leaders had limited understanding of how to deal with COVID-19 pandemic situation or current economic and war crisis and have naturally been caught unawares.

II.   Effectiveness in Crisis Management:

The effectiveness of crisis management can be assessed along the following dimensions:

- Making things happen: crisis management is about organizing, directing, and implementing actions that minimize the impact of a threat;

- Getting the job done: forging cooperation between previously unrelated agents; and enabling "work arounds" when routines and resources do not work;

- Fulfilling a symbolic need for direction and guidance.
  the formulation of these dimensions is, of course, a normative exercise. But it helps us think through how crisis activities contribute to these aims. It helps us connect process and outcome, while taking the difficulty of a particular crisis into account.

III.   Research Design:

The research furthers understanding in how crisis leadership, are important based on the complexity of a crisis with the need to capture the leaders' perspective of crisis leadership and management within the crisis, an argument is raised for a qualitative exploratory. A exploratory study draws on personal experiences by allowing free discourse of the interviewee's narrative which yields the richest data through a discovery process. Using narrative analysis researcher utilized this to provide an in depth understanding of each participants' unique perspective. The interviews focused on each participant's experience in successfully guiding their organization or department crisis. One question was used to start and guide the Interview process, but the focus was on allowing the interviewee to elaborate on their experience as leader

IV.   Research Methodology & Research Question:

The paper adopts an exploratory perspective and employs a qualitative approach to study the magnitude of leadership on crisis management different leaders were interviewed to gain deeper

insights into a contemporary aspect of leadership within its real-life context.

The overall objective of this research is to clarify and understand that:-

1. Why is the role of leadership important during times of crisis as per your opinion and experience over the period of your time in your capacity as Leader?

V.   Participants Response:-

In the following section , the given below leaders were interviewed through instant messaging app and Electronic -Mail due to covid-19 guidelines to maintain social distancing to get an insight on their thoughts on the effect of leadership on effective crisis management.

1. **Mr Aslam Khan, CEO Octaware Technologies Limited:-**

During times of crisis, people are worried, concerned, lonely, and disengaged. The employees of the organization face personal and professional challenges during a crisis. Engaging, motivating, and retaining employees is critical in these difficult times. In these times, empathy, compassion, connection, and solidarity are important to positively impact the lives of people. Therefore, the role of a leader as an inspirational, adaptive, and compassionate individual during crisis times is important.In March 2020, the world economy underwent an extreme, simultaneous, and universal collapse unlike anything seen since dotcom days due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a leader of the organization, outlining critical strategies that the management team must consider to navigate through the COVID-19 crisis was vital for the organization. As a business leader, I adopted basic principles to fight the crisis situation with the first step to establishing the "Crisis Management Team" and developing a "Crisis Response" process. I used the spotlight to convey the strategic messages of the organization's vision and developed a communication plan to manage employee morale.

2. **Dr Saima Shaikh Director, Maha-Care and Head Dept I T:-**

The people a leader manages pay a lot of attention to what the leader say—and what he/she does, and in times of crisis when the team loses its direction and are incapable of finding any solution, the Leader is a person who owe their people a clear sense of direction, even when visibility is poor. Hence clear and Trustworthy Communication is a key. One more important trait that a leader should have is Empathy which is ability to relate and to connect with people and empowering them especially when their feeling low. The leader in times of crisis should lead from the front, show confidence and steadiness and take complete charge of the situation.A good Leader must try their level best to prevent crisis in the first place if not be ready for any unpredictable situation. Interact more often with the team.Ask the employees not to panic at the time of crisis. Encourage them to face the tough times with courage, determination and smile. Make them work as a single unit. In my capacity as Head of Department and Director, I feel being a good leader one should have all these qualities in order to come out of any crisis. Also

It's not only important to pass by the difficult situation, but the after action review is one of the most important thing which involves analyzing an incident, the response and lessons learned. Hence I believe "When it comes to leadership development, leaders tend to learn more from their mistakes than from their successes". Also I end up by mentioning a quote which I came across while reading an article which says that "Anyone can lead when the plan is working. The best lead when the plan falls apart."

3. <u>**Mr Abdul Gazi, Assistant Manager Wipro:-**</u>

Most of the company always have back up plan to handle crises. The leaders are trained on basic Crises management. Actual Crises has scenarios not captures in the books. The leaders have to analyse the situation and use their experience and Leadership quality to take real-time decisions. Make necessary changes in the routine plan to handle the situation. A good leader will also take care of people along with business management. Leader will motivate the people to work to the best of their abilities during Crises. With the guidance of a good Leader company will be able to survive the Crises and show the best picyure to the client. Leaders play a vital role in Crises handling. Leaders can see the Opportunities in Crises and go beyond customer expectations.

4. <u>**PravinYadav, Team Leader Wipro**</u>:-

Most important thing is to keep the team motivated during the crisis situation. Being a leader, one needs to lead the being in the front being supportive to the team and also to achieve the goals.

VI.   Leaders in Action:

While leadership is often seen as what leaders do, research in this area acknowledges that leadership is a process of interaction between different leaders and followers and the environment (Schyns&Riggio, 2016). Employees (followers) are key stakeholders for leaders, and during a crisis, employees expect the leader to successfully manage it. They want to be supported by him, they demand support from him, they want to feel his interest and empathy, and subsequently, they want to help him through the crisis (Joniaková et al., 2021). The significant uncertainty of a global crisis exacerbates the challenges associated with leadership compared to more 'business-as-usual times (Ahern &Loh, 2020). However, each leadership style has its own issues in managing crises. Let me highlight some points on why leaders are important an what leaders can do to put crisis management in action.

- **Communication the Key:-**

    Crisis communications from leaders often hit the wrong notes. Time and again, we see leaders taking an overconfident, upbeat tone in the early stages of a crisis—and raising stakeholders' suspicions about what leaders know and how well they are handling the crisis.

Authority figures are also prone to suspend announcements for long stretches while they wait for more facts to emerge and decisions to be made. Be clear what you know, what you don't know, and what you are doing to learn more."Thoughtful, frequent communication shows that leaders are following the situation and adjusting their responses as they learn more. This helps them reassure stakeholders that they are confronting the crisis. Leaders should take special care to see that each audience's concerns, questions, and interests are addressed. Having members of the crisis-response team speak firsthand about what they are doing can be particularly effective. shouldn't stop at any phase.Offering an optimistic, realistic outlook can have a powerful effect on employees and other stakeholders, inspiring them to support the company's recovery.

- **Inclination towards leader in Uncertain Times**:-

While it's natural in uncertain times for people to turn to the leader for definitive answers, sometimes the authentic answer is "I don't know right now" — quickly followed by, "And here's what we are going to do." In a crisis such as today, leaders need a Plan B — and a Plan C and Plan D as well.The natural inclination in a crisis may be to go into command-and-control mode. That's not leadership. Leadership is creating a "bottom-up" culture of world-class observers to accurately perceive today in order to predict tomorrow also it is important amid uncertainty, leaders need to be hyper-focused on past experiences and synthesize and apply them to real-time, fluid conditions. Clarity comes from finding a close comparison. Is it like the Great Recession? The 1987 stock market crash? The outbreaks of SARS or MERS?

- **Known to Unknown:**

Leaders acquire perspective, discover trends, connect the dots, and establish suitable and timely responses by comparing the "unknown" of the current crisis to the "known" of previous ones. The eventual recovery may be a V, a U, or another alphabet letter, but a new normal will emerge, due to scientists, innovators, and visionaries. Nothing accelerates learning like a crisis or a difficult problem. This is when you apply what you've learned in the past to fresh and unfamiliar situations. When you don't know what to do, it's all about knowing what to do..

- **Ambiguity and leadership:**

Leaders have to deal with ambiguity all of the time. It's classic and comes with the territory. During a crisis, the amount of ambiguity increases exponentially. Leaders must manage their personal reactions to ambiguity as dread spreads throughout the organisation. Leaders face a variety of pressing and critical concerns on a daily basis. Many leaders, I've discovered, have trouble discriminating between the two

Urgent VS Critical

When a crisis hits, though, everything blurs as events and their implications constantly change. What's important often becomes urgent, and what's urgent becomes critical. Leaders must delegate the urgent by empowering others to lead around a common purpose. In a crisis, leaders must connect with, motivate, and inspire others, and show genuine compassion. In the military, for example, leaders put the safety and well-being of others before themselves. I've met a number of military leaders who led during periods of conflict and voluntarily told me, "I've

never lost a soldier." This reveals a deep mindset of humility and accountability.

VII.   How to go ahead is to : Learn from the Crisis:-

As a leader, you must ensure that your team keeps a detailed record of everything that occurs during a crisis. Why? Because, in order to ensure that this crisis does not recur, you and your team must analyse that log and prepare to dissipate it before it may pounce.

With respect to Leader objectives of crisis management can be stated as the following; (Cener, 2007).

o   To identify the types of crisis that might affect the decision givers and to inform them about the process of crisis,

o   To enable the managers to identify and assess a crisis,

o   To provide managers with several techniques in creating crisis escape plans,

o   To provide the managers with necessary qualifications for the best possible management of crisis.

Qualifications of leader managers regarding crisis management can be stated as below; (Cener, 2007)

- The ability to catch the signals of crisis.

- Preparation and protection against crisis.

- Efficient decision taking throughout the crisis management process.

- The ability to use power throughout the crisis management process.

- The ability to plan the crisis management process.

- The ability to organize the crisis management process.

- The ability to ensure communication throughout the crisis management process.

VIII.   Summarizing:

According to Peker and Ayturk (2000), crisis call plan and crisis immediate action plan shall be prepared firstly for crisis management. Crisis management centre and crisis teams shall be established. Crisis communication system shall be set up and the trust and support of people shall be ensured. An authoritative type of management shall not be used during this process. On the other hand; disciplinary measures shall be taken and applied, successful staff shall be awarded

and society shall be motivated. Finally; crisis process and crisis management shall be assessed well.

Stoller (2020) mentioned the need to provide space for colleagues to experiment, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes during the crisis. Eichenauer et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of providing employees the flexibility and autonomy in completing their tasks. Therefore in summary, in order to overcome the unexpected states of crisis successfully, leader managers shall be knowledgeable and skilled. Because if organizations are not managed well during crisis, new problems will show up inevitably.

IX.   Assumptions:

There are a few assumptions in the research that must be taken into account. First, the researcher assumes that the respondent has the necessary background to complete the study and is telling the truth about their experience. Because the research methodology employs a narrative style, it is considered that unless the subject is an exceptional storyteller, lying about the event would be more difficult. Because it is claimed that the average person could not manufacture the kind of detail found in a recounted experience without having lived it, the rich detail retrieved from the narrative process is seen to contribute in generating validity.

The researcher adopts an ontological approach based on the individuals' individual lived experiences. Participants' perceptions of the crisis phenomenon are their own, and may differ from those of others who have gone through the same ordeal. However, the purpose of this study is to look into underlying characteristics that may be common throughout the participants' individual experiences. Based on their experience with the crisis and their leadership, the researcher assumes that all of the participants will share certain similar Factors. This assumption is supported by a thorough analysis of the literature as well as data from previous leadership and crisis studies.

The researcher assumes that all aspects of this study were conducted in accordance with the theoretical frameworks offered in the literature review. The researcher anticipates that the data gathered from the participants will reflect organisational crisis management theory, crisis leadership theory, and strategic crisis management theory in some way.

X.   Limitations:

The experience of a few noteworthy leaders is restricted in this study. It is also limited to people who have lived through a crisis. Because the research is based on individual experiences, it is confined to their perspective on how the crisis occurred and how they responded to it. Because of the small sample size drawn from a chosen set of participants, this study is limited in its generalizability, preventing any generalisation to the general population.

XI.   Conclusion:

During a crisis, leaders must focus on one of the most crucial aspects of their job: making a positive influence in people's lives. To do so, leaders must recognise the personal and professional hurdles that employees and their families face during a crisis. Leaders need behaviours and mindsets that will keep them from responding to yesterday's events and help them look ahead during a crisis, not a predetermined response plan. The study also responds to increased calls in the literature for quantitative investigations to validate themes and/or test conceptual models of effective crisis leadership(Caringal-Go et al., 2021).

This study advances the issue of crisis leadership through the perspective of situational leadership theory and implicit leadership theory from a theoretical standpoint. The findings back up the literature's claim that situational leadership is a successful leadership style in times of crisis (Hersey & Chevalier, 2000); Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019) and that an effective leader requires a rational understanding of the task situation and make an appropriate response that has the highest probability of success (Hershey et al., 1977; McCleskey, 2014). To put it another way, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the situation. Instead, to satisfy the changing demands of a business and its people, leaders must be able to shift from one leadership style to another or show many leadership styles at the same time.

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