

A STUDY ON APPROACHES OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

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Abstract

Leadership is not a process or course. It is a gesture by which the followers achieve the objectives of the organization without fail and within the timeframe specified. The importance of leadership is understood everywhere and its real importance and dimensions will be realized when the organization is in a systematic or unsystematic crisis. One can see an effective leadership of an organization from the growth aspects and prospects but the real facet of a true leader will be portrayed during the down times. All over the world, many organizations have faced the similar situation during Covid-19 as the productivity has come down and the sustainability is under question. Those organizations, which have sufficient reserves and provisions back-up to restore the situation for some more time could stay in the competition but others almost have lost their place in the market. On the other hand, the life of employees, especially the middle and lower level, experienced lot of pain due to non receipt of salary/wages, more working hours, reduced salary terms, terminations etc.

Keywords: *Transformational leadership, Covid-19 Pandemic, Employee Safety and retention, Long term sustainability and Organizational Motivation.*

Introduction

Every organization's success or failure is dependent on many factors. But the key factor among all is the strong leadership. When a strong leader exists, even the weak organization survives. When the leadership is weak and dull, even a strong organization fails. Usually, we find two types of leadership in every organization (i) Transactional Leadership and (ii) Transformational Leadership.

Transactional leadership is defined by control, organization, and short-term planning. Leaders who adopt this style rely on a system of rewards and punishment to motivate their followers. It is the most commonly used leadership in organizations. Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance. The present paper gives a picture about the approaches of transformational leadership and its framework and also throws light on various case studies of economies that highlight the importance of transformational leadership during Covid pandemic times.

Objectives of the Study

The present research paper has the following objectives:

- ❖ Understanding the Transformational Leadership and its approaches
- ❖ Framing an Integrated framework for transformational leadership
- ❖ Case studies of economies that prove the importance of transformational leadership during Covid times

Research Methodology

Data Collection: This kind of study totally requires secondary data and accordingly data from various articles, journals and websites were collected.

This research is extensively carried out with a view to understand the approaches of global transformational leadership during Covid-19 pandemic period. In this three different economies were taken as case studies to understand how well a transformational leadership will render the desired result during pandemic times and analyzed to draw an integrated framework.

Understanding of Transformational Leadership approaches

It is a kind of leadership that inspires the followers and strengthening their motives, perceptions, moral values beliefs to help achieve the organizational goals. It is mainly concerned with trust and authenticity. It does not happen in common. It happens when the followers are demotivated or deactivated to work and the organization badly needs people to sustain.

In that case, a leader needs to transform himself to motivate the employees and make them to realize the importance of situation under question. It is not so easy to elevate the moral values and encourage the employee. It is possible by –

- Forming a creative and encouraging relationship with staff.
- Supporting and motivating them to perform beyond the expectations.

The importance of transformational leader is mainly highlighted during crisis or tough times of organization or economy. When organization is going on smooth wheels, a leader needs to perform his job to the given extent. But the changing environment and current pandemic has taught the world a lesson of “Act Before It Comes” which emphasis the organizations and people to be more conservative and constructive. Many leaders could not cope up with the changing times and challenging tasks raised by Covid and they gave up. The employees and organization fell down. This has resulted into Organizational crisis besides the health crisis. Only those organizations that respond and react as per the market requirements by transforming the strategies from normal approach to individual approach could sustain and survive.

There are four strategies that transformational leaders usually follow



Fig 1: Strategies for Transformational Leadership

The Integrated Leadership Approach for defending the Covid-19 pandemic

There are various leadership approaches like traits based approach; styles approach and contingency approach are not mutually exclusive. The actions of a leader will depend on the internal qualities, the context and environment and by the interactions with the public and private agencies. Most of the political bodies are vested with self-interests during pandemic which has resulted into more number of deaths in the respective economies. A transformational leadership will emerge in those situations which need a great cooperation and coordination among the key players of the society in coping with Covid- 19 and also a strong, broad minded leadership approach is required. In framing a critical integrated leadership approach in coping with Covid-19, there is an aspect of coordination and cooperation among the following three groups is essential.

- 1. The Leaders**
- 2. The Functionaries**
- 3. The Admirers**

The Leaders: These are the crucial, decisive and strong people to take any corrective decisions in crisis situations. The situation of Covid-19 is just like forest fire, which can be put out in some places and not in others but it will keep burning as long as there is wood. In this crisis, the main task for the leaders should be to provide for an advanced planning and designing a central strategy action plan. Unless the middle level leaders (state/central) receive clear guidelines and objectives, the manpower mobilization, optimal and timely health and medical resources cannot be pooled up. Hence it is very important to define a clear objective from which an action plan and a course strategy can be drafted.

The Functionaries: Covid-19 is a kind of health crisis which affects overall economy and so the public and private functionaries have to team up together from industries, health departments, economy in achieving the common objectives. The finance department must budget the costs and benefits of the health measures for the economic and social welfare. The Pharma industry should develop vaccines to protect the mankind from the deadly virus by venturing into huge risky research projects though the profitability is very little or nil.

The Admirers: The admirers of the process would be the common people who live in society trusting on the Government (ie. Leaders and Functionaries). They should be proactive in all times in implementing the decisions and rules laid by the Government authorities so as to stop the spread of this contagious disease by social communication and self-preparedness. Many a times, it is seen that most of the measures or strategies adopted by the two key players will be successful or failure because of the followers, ie. the admirers. Individual and group behaviour and responses to the actions determined play an important role for reducing the risk of pandemic.

In this context, the interaction between the above 3 key players is crucial and accordingly three situations can be framed.

- Complete Sync among the players
- Partial Sync between two players
- Complete un-sync among the players.

The above situations will result into the following actions or outcomes.

- Success in coping with Covid-19
- Partial Success & Partial Failure
- Complete Failure in coping Covid-19

For understanding each of the above outcomes, the following case studies are taken that consist of the coordination and cooperation levels of 3 players.

Case Studies that comply with importance of Transformational Leadership in Covid-19:

1. Complete Failure in handling the Covid-19

United Kingdom

The UK's experience where all the three players, viz. Leaders, functionaries and admirers showed incompetence that failed to render the public trust in handling the first wave of Covid-19.

Leadership

UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson is proved to be a part time prime minister with more of U- turns. He downplayed the virus and spread misinformation. He did not consult the public health experts and behavioural scientists. Rather, he believed a narrow group of selected epidemiologists and modellers. He did not even consult the local governments and took frequent U-turns. His leadership was overall very unhappy for the public as his approval rating has come down from 40% in May 2020 to -6% in July 2020.

Functionaries

UK depended more on centralized National Health Services (NHS) and a group of scientific experts. Though the country has huge testing capacity, the samples were sent to Italy and Germany for processing as there were turf wars and bureaucratic infighting. It neglected the care homes where more elder people were staying and who were more vulnerable for infection. It failed to mobilize the resources from local governments. NHS utterly failed in providing the PPE kits and clear guidance rules to public.

Admirers

When the Government is not standing on a key decision and was taking frequent U-turns, the public were more dependent on the news media and self knowledge. There were no child care facilities that supported employees to return for work and the unusual shut downs and call for social distancing was not cared. Even the essential commodities were closed which caused high inflation and revolution among the public. Many people were unable to practice the self isolation due to financial reasons.

2. Partial success in handling Covid-19

Japan

In Japan, the leadership was failed but the functionaries and admirers did well enough to have a partial win over Covid-19.

Leadership

Japan's former Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe was not a disruptive and divisive leader like US & UK and he did not politicize the pandemic. In early months of pandemic, he wanted to conduct the Olympic games in spite of knowing the effect of virus all over the world so as to get national pride and economic recovery. Later, he dropped the decision because majority of the nations were against the conduct. A central scientific disaster task force was established without any clear-cut responsibility. In the beginning of year 2020, he welcomed the Chinese visitors despite knowing the deadly Covid. Later, he declared an emergency in the nation in the first week of February 2020. He supplied two masks to every household but it was backfired as the masks were dirty, defective and too small.

Functionaries

In spite of having a failed leadership, Japan could resist the pandemic due to its robust and well functioning health care system. Even today, Japan ranks the highest in providing medical and health services in the world. Targeted restrictions were strictly allowed by the nation's public health department which was foolproof adopted by the authorities. Social distancing was made compulsory and wearing of masks was made stringent. On the whole, the total public health system did well to the public in stopping the contagious disease.

Admirers

The public, after knowing the ineffectiveness of the leadership, has strictly followed the rules and regulations meticulously without deviation. The public had self quarantined themselves so as to stop the spreading of virus. They have followed the orders of the public health departments and maintained social campaigns for public awareness.

3. Complete Success in handling Covid-19

Vietnam

It is amongst the most successful countries in handling the pandemic in spite of being relatively poor and weak healthcare system in the world. During the first wave, it recorded zero deaths for several months.

Leadership

The country shares the border with China and on emergency, the former Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc acted quickly in anticipation of the spread of pandemic in his country and closed the borders. He requested the people of his country to fight against the virus as if they fight against the enemy. His government committed to sacrifice the short term economic benefits for a long term public health and safety. He mobilized a successful people driven and community driven campaign to eradicate Covid-19 even before WHO declared same as pandemic. His community based approach raised social solidarity and fostered people's trust and confidence on their leader and Government. A task force was set up that coordinates the government responses at all levels of governance.

Functionaries: After the Government which took preventive and precautionary actions in coping with Covid-19, the emergency epidemic presentation centre was activated on 23rd January 2020 that prevented around 35,000 infected cases and 350 deaths during pandemic. Land border controls and airport screening was widely done to check the import cases. Social distancing, self quarantine, wearing of masks, voluntary disclosures of infection cases had resulted in tremendous and effective identification and tracing of virus infections.

Admirers

The public very much supported the leadership and strictly followed the rules and regulations laid by the authorities without fail. The public had self quarantined themselves so as to stop the spreading of virus. They have followed the orders of the public health departments and maintained social campaigns for public awareness. The people were self disciplined and were so sincere to follow the Government measures. A

mobile app NCOVI was launched update the personal and health information of the public. The key secret behind the success of Vietnam is social solidarity and responsibility of the people of Vietnam in responding to the rules and regulations laid down by the Government.

Findings of the Study & Integrated Framework

The above 3 cases can be analysed and the following integrated framework can be drawn:

Categories	Complete success	Partial success	Complete failure
Execution of Planning and Preparedness	Very Good	Average	Poor
Formulation of strategies	Good	Moderate	Poor
Information Distribution & Communication	Excellent	Reasonable	Nil
Implementation of Strategies	Very Good	Good	Poor / Bad
Mobilization of Resources	Very Good	Good	Nil
Confidence on Leadership	Very Good	Medium	Nil
Social Solidarity	Very High	Medium	Very Low
Discipline	High	Moderate	Very Low
Self Motivation	High	Moderate	Nil
Outcomes of Deaths during Pandemic	Very low	Medium/ Moderate	Very high

Conclusion

Finally, Covid-19 is a testing time for all economies and political leaders. It is a challenging task for the executors how well they implement a right kind of timely plans without losing the public trust and for the functionaries how well they adopt the policies. Transformational leaders need to put forth a culture of safety and trust among the functionaries and admirers. The various cases discussed here are highlighting the importance of coordination among the different players in order to have a sound national strategy and plan of action to fight Covid-19. Above all, the leaders who always think about the safety and security of nation and public rather than thinking about self interests or short term political benefits will surely win the hearts of people and will stand as a role model for other nations.

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