

**THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
DURING COVID-19**

The seal of Mahidol University is a circular emblem. It features a central blue circle containing a golden Thai royal crest (Chakrasamukha). Surrounding this is a white ring with Thai script. The outermost ring is a light blue circle with the university's name in Thai script at the top and English at the bottom.

UKRIT SUWAN


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.....
Mr. Ukrit Suwan
Candidate




.....
Assoc. Prof. Astrid Kainzbauer,
Ph.D.
Advisor



.....
Assoc. Prof. Prattana Punnakitikashem,
Ph.D.
Chairperson



.....
Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University



.....
Asst. Prof. Manjiri Kunte,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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Ukrit Suwan

THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP DURING COVID-19

UKRIT SUWAN 6449106

M.M. (GENERAL MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. ASTRID KAINZBAUER, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. PRATTANA PUNNAKITIKASHEM, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. MANJIRI KUNTE, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the role of transformational leadership in empowering individuals and organizations to adapt to the new reality and thrive during the crisis. The paper examines the theoretical framework of transformational leadership and its essential components such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. The research methodology for this paper is a qualitative method. The data is gathered through interviews with leaders and employees from various organizations. The findings suggest that transformational leadership has a vital role in empowering and motivating individuals to embrace change, develop resilience, and innovate in the face of uncertainty.

This paper provides insights into the importance of transformational leadership during the pandemic and highlights the potential benefits of transformational leadership for individuals and organizations. It concludes with recommendations for leaders to cultivate transformational leadership practices.

KEY WORDS: Transformational leadership/ Covid-19/ Challenges/ 4 Dimensions of transformational leadership

31 pages

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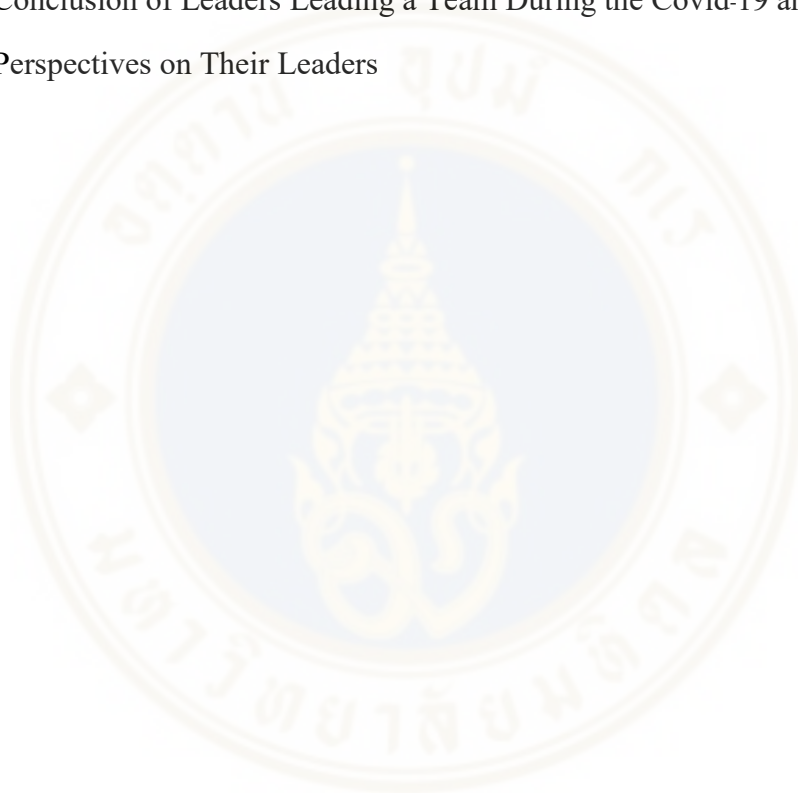
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has faced a crisis that no one could have predicted: the COVID-19 pandemic. Many organizations have suffered as a result of the crisis, some forced to close down the operation and others losing a significant amount of money. One of the factors was the government's lockdown regulations, which stopped organizations from operating regularly. Employees are required to work from home instead, which could result in decreased organizational performance because employees working from different locations might restrict communication capabilities since misunderstandings can lead to poor work. During the COVID-19 epidemic, employees have to be concerned for their own health as well as the health of others around them, such as family, which might cause them to divert their priority away from work and onto the well-being of their family. Thus, organizational leaders have played a significant role throughout this crisis since they are the key to determining whether an organization will survive the crisis. The leader should not just be concerned with an organization's performance, but also with keeping staff motivated and productive amid a crisis. Leaders have to change their approach and communication with employees to ensure that people do not feel overwhelmed by stress, whether from work or from their personal well-being. Each leader has their own style of guiding others, but such styles may not be appropriate during this crisis.

The focus of this study will be on those who work as sales representatives. The rationale for choosing this line of business is because they are badly impacted by the crisis since they are unable to meet with clients like they normally do. This has an effect on an organization's performance in terms of sales results. As a result, leaders have to adapt to the circumstances in order to keep employees motivated to meet sales targets

despite hurdles. Furthermore, the research questions below describe the purpose of this study.

Research question 1: What are the obstacles in leading a team during the Covid-19 crisis?

Research question 2: What are the differences in leading a team before and during Covid-19?

To answer these questions, this study used the qualitative data collection method, conducting in-depth interviews with both leaders and employees in order to gain a thorough understanding of both sides' perspectives on the genuine difficulties they face at work. Furthermore, this paper will gather concepts and theories regarding transformational leadership from the literature, with an emphasis on the impact that this leadership style has on employees during the COVID-19 period. The interviews will then be analyzed to identify which elements of transformational leadership are mentioned by the respondents.

Finally, the study's conclusion will support people in understanding the significance of transformational leadership on employees and organizations. This can help leaders to lead the team more efficiently through transformational leadership style if an issue arises inside a company.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of leadership

Understanding the meaning of leadership is important to analyze the influence that leaders have on employees and organizations. Winston & Patterson (2006, as cited in Gandolfi & Stone, 2016) define the leadership as “A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives.” Leaders are crucial in any organization since they are the key individuals responsible for determining the efficacy of the organization's operations and making crucial decisions that may have a substantial influence on the organization (Deng et al., 2022).

2.2 Leadership during COVID-19

Many organizations all over the world have experienced uncertainty and complexity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that the organization can endure the crisis, the leader has to step up and make a decisive decision to tackle an unforeseen issue that might emerge at any time during the crisis (Kaul et al. 2020). The pandemic forced many leaders to undertake substantial adjustments within the organization, in which they have to personally participate to assure that the organization has all of the capability in every area to address the problems (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Furthermore, as the COVID-19 has a major impact on employee performance, which therefore affects the performance of the organization, leaders have to make sure that

employee performance is in line with expectations (Meiryani et al, 2020). Therefore, it is extremely important for the leaders to be aware of what to do in order to maintain both organization's operations and well-being of employees during a crisis. Kaul et al (2020) highlighted six core principles that leaders require to properly manage an organization during COVID-19 as shown in figure 2.1:

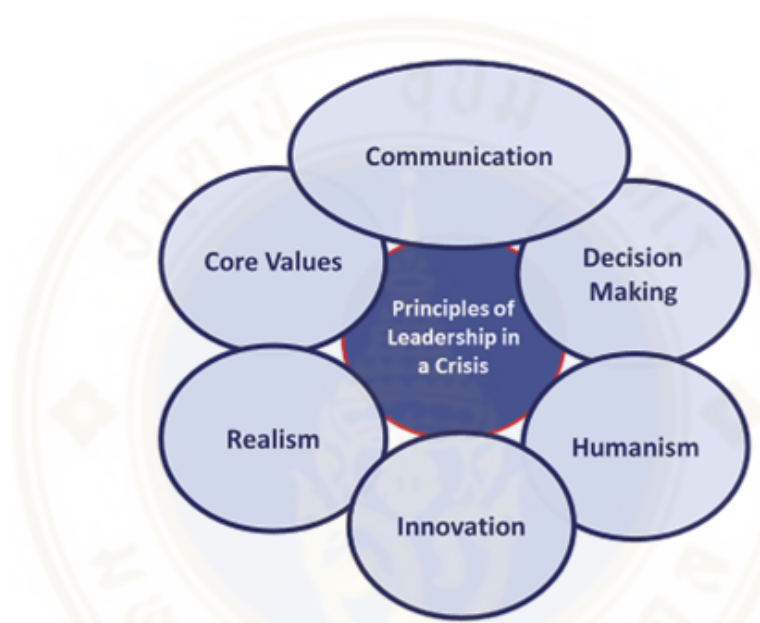


Figure 2.1 Core principles of effective crisis leadership (Kaul et al,2020)

1. Communication is an essential part of every organization's success. However, communication becomes even more crucial during a crisis since the complexity of government laws and regulations, as well as changes in organizational policy, can cause misunderstanding. As a result, the leader must provide a clear message on a frequent basis to ensure that employees are aware of current events (Eldridge, 2020).

2. According to Kaul et al (2020), during a crisis, decision-making should be flexible and not necessarily based on facts because things might change rapidly. As a result, leaders have to occasionally make judgments based on their current knowledge

and experience. The capacity to make rapid and clear judgments can empower employees with a sense of direction when problems develop, which is more likely during a crisis.

3. Employees' stress and anxiety levels can escalate during the COVID-19 period owing to a variety of circumstances, making them more prone to make mistakes and perform poorly than before the pandemic. Instead of blaming others for their errors, leaders need to first comprehend their conditions and then cooperate with them to avoid making the same mistakes again. Leaders should demonstrate compassion to employees through difficult times in order to develop a positive working environment (Kaul et al, 2020).

4. Kaul et al (2020) emphasizes that amid a crisis, leaders should be innovative, which means they should be cautious and smart while establishing a short-term plan that will help them deal with the unforeseen problems. This refers to the way that the organization's long-term objectives would not adversely affect the leader's thorough planning of the investments made during the crisis.

5. In this context, realism refers to the idea that a leader should be open and honest with their employees. Building trust with employees is essential for a leader to achieve cooperation during a crisis. Therefore, being truthful with staff members can assist leaders win their respect and increase their credibility, both of which are necessary to persuade staff to work toward the goals (Kaul et al, 2020).

6. Even in times of crisis, leaders should capitalize on the opportunity to remind all employees of the company's missions and core values to inspire them to take the necessary steps to support the organization (Kaul et al, 2020).

2.3 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that is commonly utilized in an organization. In the 1970s, James McGregor Burns used the term

"transforming leadership" to describe the ideas of transformational leadership. Until 1985, when Bernard Bass broadened the concept by naming it transformational leadership rather than transforming leadership. Bass's model explains the transformational leadership style in which the leaders develop a culture in which everyone works together to help one another, and followers in this culture are more likely to go above and beyond what the leader expects of them in order to get the most beneficial outcomes for the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1992, as cited in Cuhadar, 2022). Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that focuses on how a leader interacts with followers and meets their needs (Northouse, 2015).

2.4 Four dimensions of transformational leadership

The 4 dimensions that make up Bass's model for transformational leadership help to better explain the idea that a transformational leader is to work alongside followers to achieve the best result (Northouse, 2015). A deeper understanding of these 4 components would lead to a better understanding of the significance of transformational leadership.

2.4.1 Idealized influence

Idealized influence or charisma is a leader who acts as a role model and typically behaves in a way that earns them a great lot of respect from their followers and ensures that they can always be relied upon to complete the job (Northouse, 2015). Idealized influence can be categorized into two types: behavioral and attributional. The term "attribution" refers to a leader's quality based on the viewpoints of their followers, while the term "behavioral" refers to what followers believe about their leader based on that leader's actions (Northhouse, 2015).

2.4.2 Intellectual stimulation

Bass and Reggio (2006) defined intellectual stimulation as the method a leader uses to encourage followers to be creative and imaginative in order to explore a new approach rather than employing an established technique to complete the job. Leaders with this dimension seek to urge followers to challenge themselves to come up with their own unique answer to the problem (Northouse, 2015).

2.4.3 Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation refers to the way a leader may bring a team together by inspiring them to uphold the organizational vision, which can enable the leader to create a powerful team to help accomplish the shared objective (Northouse, 2015). A leader who possesses this quality usually motivates people to have the confidence and passion necessary to carry out their tasks to the greatest standards (Stone, 2005, as cited in Tran & Idodo, 2022).

2.4.4 Individualized consideration

Individual consideration is when a leader acts as a coach or mentor, listening to the needs of their followers and then successfully supporting them in meeting those needs. This often entails training the followers who are encouraged to strengthen their weaknesses and the leader who usually pays close attention to what skillsets their followers lack (Northouse, 2015).

2.5 Transformational leadership during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced an organization's leader to make significant adjustments in order to retain operational efficiency and help the organization to survive the crisis. Changes inside an organization can generate a sense of uncertainty for employees, causing them to feel insecure and unable to completely focus on what has to be done (Alavi et al, 2022). Transformational leadership has demonstrated its value, particularly during times of crisis (Rentala, 2022). In times of

crisis, transformational leadership enables successful collaboration between leaders and employees to accomplish the company's goals. Transformational leadership is seen as necessary because it can increase employees' motivation to go beyond their own interests which can provide superior job performance that benefits the organization (Bateman & Snell, 2007, as cited in Tran & Idodo, 2022).



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Primary data collection method

Following the study of the literature, data gathered from several authors helps in understanding the theoretical basis of transformational leadership and the impact that it has on both employees and organizations. The primary data is necessary in order to fully comprehend the topic. Therefore, gathering information from individuals who have gone through COVID-19 at work can certainly assist in answering the research questions that this paper is focusing on. A qualitative approach, such as interviewing, will be used to gather the information.

3.2 Interview method

The main source of data will come from an interactive face-to-face interview. This enables researchers to directly obtain data from managers' and workers' real-life experiences. The interview methods are as follow:

3.2.1 Sample selection

For this research, the interviewees comprise of 9 persons from 4 distinct companies in the same industry. They all work in the sales representative field, with 4 of them working as sales managers and 5 as employees. The reason for doing an interview with persons from this field is that they were heavily affected by the COVID-19 epidemic owing to the fact that they couldn't meet their customers like the way they used to. The information of interviewees is as shown in table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Interview list

Code	Company Code	Position	Gender
A	A	Manager	Male
B	A	Employee	Male
C	A	Employee	Male
D	B	Manager	Female
E	B	Employee	Female
F	B	Employee	Female
G	C	Manager	Female
H	C	Employee	Female
I	D	Manager	Male

3.2.2 Open-ended questions

Real-life experience of managers and staff is required to obtain key information for the research, thus open-ended questions are devised to allow the manager to freely talk about what their experience was like to lead the team during the COVID-19 and the challenge that they faced. An open-ended question will also be developed for employees to see different perspectives on team management throughout the pandemic. The open-ended questions are shown in table 3.2:

Table 3.2 Open-ended question list

Finding Factor	Interview Question
Leading a team before COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you please describe your leadership style before covid? • What do you do as a leader to support your team's performance? • What are the typical challenges you face as a leader in this company? • How did you overcome such obstacles?
Leading a team during COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you please tell me what actions your company took in the event of a pandemic? How did you respond to the change? • What are the challenges in leading your team during Covid? • Did you alter your usual leadership style? In what ways? • Have any of your employees ever approached you about an issue at work during Covid? How did you respond? • How did you engage and manage your employees to keep them productive during Covid?

<p>Employee perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the leadership style/team management like in your company prior to COVID-19? • Were there any differences in team management during COVID-19? What were the differences? • How does your manager's leadership style affect you? • As a sales representative, What are the challenges in your line of work during covid? Could you possibly provide an example of how it impacted your work? • How did you overcome a work challenge during covid? • Have you ever discussed the issues with your manager? How did he/she respond? • What do you like about your manager's leadership style during covid? • What are your suggestions on how managers could support you more during covid?
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3.2.3 Probing techniques

The probing technique will be used during the interview process. This technique will allow the interviewer to dig deeper into the answer of the respondents in order to ensure validity of the data and fully understand its meaning.

3.2.4 The interview

The interview will take the form of an interactive face-to-face communication. The interview will take place in the location that the interviewees prefer, giving them flexibility because they have to balance their time between interview sessions and work. By conducting an interactive interview, the interviewer can observe the interviewees' body language and gestures to determine whether they are comfortable and relaxed during the interview. During the interview, the conversation will be recorded using a smartphone, only with permission of the interviewee. If interviewees are doubtful about using a recording, note taking will be used instead. The interview will only last 20 - 30 minutes to avoid taking up too much of the interviewee's time. This includes interviewees introducing themselves, as well as asking open-ended and probing questions.

3.3 Research framework

This research will use the primary data gathered through interviews. The data from the in-depth interviews will be utilized to investigate the challenges that managers faced throughout the COVID-19 period. Besides that, information from employee perspectives will be used to support this matter. The main takeaway from the interview is to identify the difficulties in leading the team amid a crisis and how leaders handled them. Moreover, the data will be analyzed in order to determine whether transformational leadership should be used by the leader during a crisis. The research framework is as shown in figure 3.1:

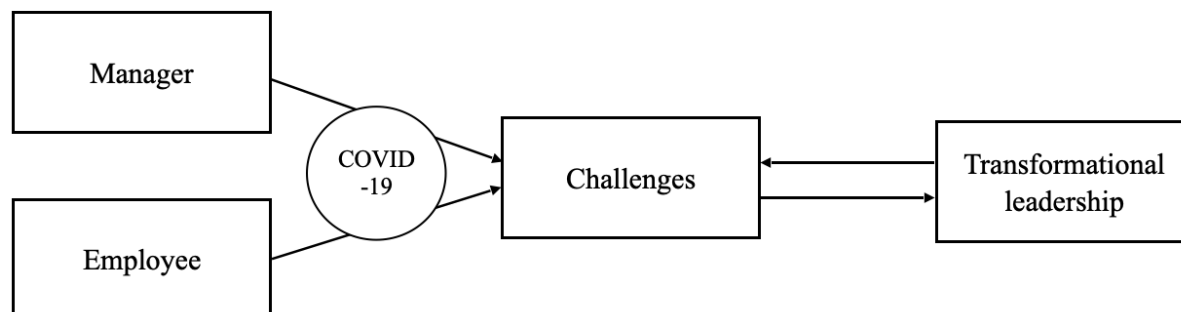


Figure 3.1 Research framework

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting data through interviews, a sample of the data will be analyzed and classified into three major categories: leading a team before Covid-19, leading a team during Covid-19, and employees' perspectives.

4.1 Leading a team before Covid-19

A set of interview questions were asked in this section in order to understand the leadership style that the managers normally used to lead their teams before the start of the pandemic. The interview's findings are summarized below.

4.1.1 Supporting a team

According to an interview, three managers prefer to support their employees only when required. Manager A stated, "I always allow my staff an opportunity to work freely because I have trust in their capacity to complete the assignment. If someone's sales result didn't reach the expectation then I would talk to them one-on-one to see what the issue was and how to fix it since the performance in this line of work is evaluated by the sales result at the end of each month." Similarly, manager I frequently assign tasks to individual employees and let them do it on their own. For instance, manager I stated that "At the beginning of the working day, I would meet with my team at the office and then we would discuss what has to be done for the day. Yet, throughout the day, I received many phone calls from my employees informing me of every issue relating to the job, therefore I had to collaborate with them to resolve the issues." Manager G also had the same response when she stated, "Given our line of business, I frequently instruct my employees which customers they should see each day and what they need to do.

They should get in touch with me for assistance if they need any” This implies that the three managers have confidence in their staff's capacity to complete the assignment; therefore, they simply need to set clear expectations and goals for them, while they are always ready to offer help if necessary. Manager D, on the other hand, prefers to work directly with his employees in order to keep an eye on their performance and offer them prompt support. Manager D said “I like working alongside my employees. I frequently accompany them out onto the field to meet customers, especially if they are new employees with limited expertise. This allows me to observe how they operate and teach them the skills they require for advancement.” Manager D went on to say that working alongside his employees helps to foster a healthy team environment and makes the task much easier to accomplish.

4.1.2 Coaching for development

Two out of four managers claimed they coach and guide their employees to ensure they can complete the task on their own. Manager D said that “Once I go out with my employee to meet consumers, I often have a talk with them about what they need to improve if they want to successfully close the deal with their customers.” She also gave an example that “I told my employees that if they happen to face a customer who won't buy the product because the customer thinks the price is too high, then I taught them that what they should do is acknowledge what the customer was saying and take note, and then tell the customer that you would get back to them after you have a discussion with your manager.” Also, manager A said that “I always want to get the best from my team, so the best thing I can do is coach and educate them until I am confident that they can deal with consumers on their own.”

4.1.3 Methods for motivation

Every manager has different difficulties leading their own employee, but the common difficulty shared by all managers is how to keep people motivated. The motivation strategies that managers used were incentives and personal feedback. Three

managers utilize incentives to motivate their employees. Manager D explained “The challenge for every salesperson is the sales result. Every salesperson needs to produce an excellent sales result for the company; otherwise, the company will be dissatisfied with the entire team, particularly myself. Hence, it is my responsibility to assure that my team is capable of doing so.” She continued by describing how she motivated her employees: “So what I did is that at the end of each month, I gave a gift card like a Starbucks card to the person who had the best sales performances. That may not be the finest award, but it can still motivate my employees to do their best.” Manager G also experienced the same challenge which she said that “It is my obligation as a sales manager to encourage my employees so that they can achieve the company's objectives.” As a result, she employs the same strategy as manager D, which is to provide a small reward to the individual who achieves the highest sales results. Manager I gave out his whole team a reward which he stated “We generally hold a team dinner every month. I planned this because I wanted to keep the team together and encouraged them to keep up the good work.” Meanwhile, manager A uses feedback to push his employees to keep up their performance. He stated that he wanted his employees to remain motivated all of the time, therefore he frequently provided feedback to them, letting them know what they did well and what needed to be improved.

4.2 Leading a team during COVID-19

In this section, interview questions were asked of each manager to determine if there has been a change in their leadership style in order for them to respond to the crisis situation. The findings are summarized below.

4.2.1 Frequent communication with employees

All four manager respondents stated that during the pandemic, they have contact with their employees more frequently than before in order to keep them informed of what is going on within the company. Manager A said that “It is a

challenging time for us during the Covid-19 since many regulations from inside the company have changed and we also have to obey government legislation, so I had to deliver clear communication to my employees to assure that everyone is on the same page.” Manager D also added that “I had to speak with my staff on a regular basis to keep them up to date on any changes that have occurred inside our company. I think communication is incredibly important at this time” she added, “and it's not just about me talking to my employees; I also want my employees to come and talk to me if they have any concerns so that I can assist them find solutions.” Manager G also mentioned that she has to keep her employees informed about the circumstances, so she invites them to an online meeting on a regular basis to explain what they need to know. She said that “I need to ensure that my employees are on the same page regarding the position that the company is in because if anything unexpected happens, everybody knows what they have to do.” Apart from excellent communication, managers have to be honest about the circumstance and communicate it to their employees. For example, manager I said “Whenever I had a meeting with my team, some of them would ask me about the situation, but I didn't have any answers for them, so I had to tell them honestly that I didn't know.” He goes on to say, “I think it's better to tell them you don't have an answer rather than attempting to find some misleading answer, especially during a crisis, since I don't want to confuse my employees with inaccurate information.”

4.2.2 Working together

Manager respondents all agreed that they needed to collaborate more closely with their employees throughout the crisis. Several things changed during Covid-19's peak time, namely not only how people worked but also how they lived. As a result, the leader needs to collaborate with their employees to ensure that they all get through the crisis together. Manager I said that “This pandemic taught me a lot of lessons, notably the value of collaboration. I used to let my employees work freely before the Covid and then hold a meeting for a discussion, but when the Covid hit, I had to gather my team together to discuss the problem and what we could do to support each other.” Manager I

added, “In times of uncertainty, it is critical for everyone to unite and work together so that we can survive the crisis.” Manager G also mentioned “During the Covid-19, I had to alter how I normally work. I had to collaborate with my staff more closely than usual since we needed to devise a new method of operation that was suitable for everyone. I need to know what others think about the strategy so that if there are any flaws, we can address them.” Furthermore, having a good collaboration will not only help the company during the crisis, but it will also have an influence on how the team operates in the long run. Manager A said that “I informed my staff that they needed to communicate with each other more frequently at this time since we have a lot of customers and one person cannot do it alone, so they had to help each other out.” When asked about the influence of collaboration on the team performance, he stated, “It certainly helped us a lot when everyone was working together during that time and even now, they still do, my employees, they still continue to work together more closely to provide the best support possible to their customers”

4.2.3 Understanding the situation of employees

All four managers agree that they need to be more empathetic toward their employees. The pandemic had an impact not just on employees' work but also on their well-being. Manager A said that “Once the lockdown period was over which we started going back to work out on the field again. Several of my employees have told me that they were anxious about interacting with clients because they could catch the virus at any time by meeting new people, and they don't want to spread the infection to their family. I completely understood the scenario that my staff were all in, so I allowed them to work from the office and contact their customers through phone call instead, and I reminded them that they should only go out to see them when absolutely required.” Manager G also added that “I didn't want my employees to be infected with the virus since it would affect them as well as others around them.” Then manager G was asked what she did in this case, and she gave the same response as manager A, allowing her employees to be flexible with their job.

4.3 Employee perspectives

Several questions were addressed in this section by an employee who has work experience with their manager. This will provide different perspectives to effectively analyze the change in their manager's leadership style. The results are summarized below.

4.3.1 Improve in communication

During the interview, employees were asked what they saw about the change in their manager's leadership style. All five respondents said that communication had improved significantly since the outbreak began. Employee B said that "When the Covid-19 occurred, my manager regularly talked to us about the change and the preparation that the company had established to respond to the pandemic. Every week, we attended a Zoom meeting to learn an update on the situation." He continued saying that "I really appreciated that my manager did manage to present us with the regular update because as an employee, we don't want to be kept in the dark and not know what's going on around the firm." Furthermore, employee E stated that "My company went through multiple changes throughout the Covid-19 time and my manager was the first to be aware of all of these adjustments in the team thus it was her obligation to notify everyone in the team. In my perspective, she did an excellent job of explaining the information since I fully understand what I need to accomplish. She then went on to explain her manager's communication method, adding, "She did it over Line chat, we have a Line group that we regularly use to communicate as a team. She gave all of the information in text, which made it easy for us to follow.

4.3.2 The importance of teamwork

Employees reported that they needed to work more closely with their team and management during the Covid-19. Each salesperson in this field normally has their own assigned customers that they need to take care of on a regular basis, but during the pandemic, they have coordinated with others to guarantee that their customers get the best service possible from the company. For instance, employee C mentioned that “I have about fifteen customers that I regularly contacted, but during the Covid-19 I have to work from home instead, therefore I need to coordinate with others colleagues more often regarding the matter so that we can help each other out. So, it's not only about my customers or other employees' customers; it's about everyone's customers, so we have to make sure that everyone is taken care of.” He goes on to say that sometimes he has to talk to his colleague's customer which he never met before but since his colleagues tested positive for the virus, so he has to do the job instead of his colleague. Furthermore, employee B emphasized that his manager worked with him a lot during the pandemic which he provided an example that “One day, my manager was calling me early in the morning and told me to meet him someplace else instead of an office. When I arrived, he informed me that he wanted me to join him to meet some new customers today. He asked me to assist him in convincing these customers to buy our products.”

4.3.3 Involve employee's opinion in decision making

Three out of five employees mentioned their manager had asked them what they thought the team should do in the Covid-19 situation. For instance, employee H explained that “My manager organized an online meeting with everybody in the team to discuss the matter. She was seeking feedback from all employees on the new way of working and the emergency response strategy.” Employee H continued, “It felt wonderful when someone took my thoughts into consideration because ordinarily employees like us wouldn't get an opportunity to speak our opinion regarding the plan or strategy because that is the duty of top management like my manager.” Employee F had a similar experience when her manager asked her how the team should approach

customers. She explained that “I proposed to my manager that we call customers more frequently to see if they have any needs or issues so we can assist them as quickly as possible.” Employee E also stated that her thoughts are not about supporting her manager in making decisions, but also about encouraging her teammates by offering ideas that might address each other's problems.

4.3.4 Encourage a safe and healthy work environment

Employees reported that their managers were dedicated to keeping them safe from the virus by ensuring that they worked in a hygienic atmosphere. Employee B stated “During the epidemic, my company established rules and procedures such as social distance and other hygienic standards related to Covid-19. Consequently, my manager took those regulations properly since he once called a team meeting to discuss those policies and procedures.” He went on to say that his supervisor sought to reorganize the way they work such that they had to have as little face-to-face interaction as possible. Employee C added, “We have to take social distance seriously in the office, therefore everything has been reorganized, including our workstations, to increase physical space between employees.” In addition, several managers pushed their employees to create a safe and healthy workplace environment. For example, employee E stated, “My manager was putting up a list of hygiene practices on a bulletin board that we should follow whenever we were at the office. We did follow them seriously because we wanted to keep our workplace virus-free.”

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In this paper, the information on differences in leading the team before and during the Covid-19 epidemic are obtained by interviewing four leader respondents. In addition, five employee opinions provided additional information about their leaders' abilities to manage the team throughout the pandemic. The outcome of the interviews is then analyzed to see whether transformational leadership characteristics were used. To conclude, leaders used elements of transformational leadership to lead the team during Covid-19. The findings are summarized in the research framework, as shown in Figure

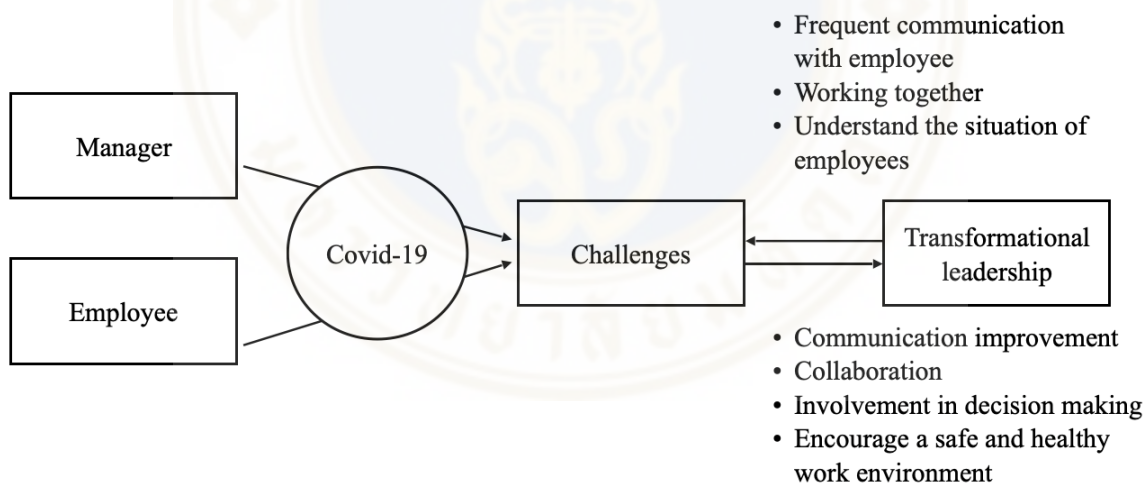


Figure 5.1 Conclusion of leaders leading a team during the Covid-19 and employee perspectives on their leader

5.1 below.

In comparison of the findings from the interview and literature review, it showed that some aspects from the interview data analysis are similar to the 4 dimensions of transformational leadership theory. In terms of leading the team before

the Covid-19, the findings show that some managers have already been using some aspects of transformational leadership such as giving employees autonomy to work, coaching, and motivation. In terms of leading the team during Covid-19, leaders and employees all agreed that communication has improved and they have to collaborate more during the crisis including leaders having to involve employee's opinion in a decision-making process. In addition, leaders show more empathy regarding the health and safety of their employees. These aspects are all related to the 4 dimensions of transformational leadership theory as shown below:

1. Inspirational motivation - This dimension directly links to the motivation as leaders inspire their employees to perform at their best by providing positive reinforcement, showing enthusiasm and trust toward the accomplishment of the task, and helping an employee to discover their own inner motivation for the task at hand. However, the result from an interview showed that interview leaders have adopted both transactional and transformational leadership styles when it comes to motivating their employees. For example, three interview leaders used reward as a motivation strategy, which is an extrinsic motivation that is a major component of transactional leadership style. Personal feedback can be considered extrinsic motivation, but in this case the leaders use feedback to inspire the team to keep working hard, demonstrating the transformational leadership style.

2. Intellectual stimulation - This dimension involves leaders encouraging employees to think critically, encouraging them to share their ideas and perspectives, and fostering an environment where new and innovative solutions can be generated during the crisis times which also supports autonomy by allowing employees to exercise their own judgement and creativity. By emphasizing this dimension, leaders inspire a sense of mutual respect, trust, and shared purpose which lead to a greater collaboration and teamwork within the team. According to an interview, leaders gave employees autonomy at work, allowing them to manage their own tasks until something was deemed critical, in which case leaders would provide assistance. This shows that the

leader believes in their coworkers' ability to finish the task, which is a key part of transformative leadership. Furthermore, employees mentioned that they had to work together with their leaders throughout the pandemic, resulting in the development of good collaboration.

3. Individualized consideration - This dimension involves leaders providing individual attention and support to their employee which link to coaching and mentoring an employee in order for them to achieve their full potential. Two leaders stated in an interview that they frequently work alongside their employees because they want to see how they are doing while interacting with customers. By doing so, they can observe them and teach them how to be a better salesperson. Moreover, leaders with this element also seek input and opinion of their team members and take them into account when making decisions which result in fostering a sense of teamwork and trust within the team. Employees stated in an interview that their leader asked them to express their thoughts before the decisions were made during the pandemic. This demonstrated that leaders trusted their employees enough to allow them to express their opinions, which resulted in great employee satisfaction. This dimension also links to a leader showing empathy by being concerned for their employee's needs and feelings during the pandemic. For example, because leaders are aware of the consequences if their employees catch the virus, all of the interview leaders did not force their employees to engage with consumers until they were absolutely necessary.

4. Idealized influence - Leaders serve as role models for their followers which helps in building trust and respect among the followers, which in turn improves communication and collaboration. In addition, communication and collaboration are integral components of this element, in which leaders can inspire employees to work together and communicate openly, encouraging them to share ideas and opinions. According to an interview, the leader did bring the team together to work closely with one another. This demonstrated that the key to fostering great teamwork and creating a better work environment is the leader.

In summary, transformational leaders empowers their employees to work autonomously while still providing guidance and support through coaching. This enables employees to feel more motivated and invest in their work. Also, some leaders used incentive as a method for motivation. In turn, all of this leads to more effective communication and collaboration between leaders and employees. By fostering autonomy, motivation, communication, collaboration, and coaching, the interviewed leaders created a positive and productive work environment that benefits everyone involved.

5.2 Recommendations

According to the findings, leading the team during the Covid-19 has shown to be a difficult task for leaders to overcome. As a result, it is suggested that transformational leadership styles have all of the necessary elements to assist leaders in successfully leading their team through a crisis. The following is a summary of the recommendation to leaders towards adopting a transformational leadership style in the event of a future crisis.

5.2.1 Transparent communication

The capability of the leader to effectively communicate with their team is fundamental to assuring an operation's efficiency. According to the employee interviews, the manager's effective communication during the crisis can have significantly assisted the employees in handling the issues. Therefore, this paper recommends leaders to constantly communicate clearly with their workforce, especially during difficult times. Also, to avoid employees from making assumptions that can cause misunderstandings, leaders should always be open and honest when communicating with their employees because they would like to hear the whole truth about the circumstances that they are in. Moreover, it may not be enough to instruct employees only what to do during a crisis but leaders should also communicate a clear vision to them. This is because transformational leadership involves establishing a vision for the future, successfully conveying that vision, and encouraging employees to take action

toward that vision. Employees may feel overwhelmed or apprehensive about the future during a crisis. This can give direction and purpose while also fostering unity and solidarity within the company. Leaders can also help employees adjust to shifting situations and come up with creative solutions to problems.

5.2.2 Show positive attitude

During the crisis, employees may experience confusion and a loss of direction with the company's direction. As a result, they could feel distracted by this, which might lead to bad performance. Employees will need someone they can rely on while they are in a difficult circumstance, therefore leaders should be encouraging and optimistic around them. If leaders are discouraged about the problem, employees will feel the same way. This can also assist a leader to earn the trust and confidence from employees who know that their leader can guide them through a crisis. When leaders display a positive attitude, they inspire optimism and hope, which can assist to lessen employee fear and anxiety. Furthermore, a positive attitude can help to sustain employee morale and motivation, which is especially crucial during these difficult times. Transformational leaders can generate a feeling of unity and purpose by being optimistic, which can help to build resilience and promote a sense of community. Thus, Leaders should act as role models for their employees, which is one of the aspects of transformational leadership style, idealized influence. This element involves leaders to serve as role models and encourage employees to emulate them.

5.2.3 Encourage employee involvement

Employee satisfaction rises when their thoughts and opinions are acknowledged, based on the interviews with employee respondents. Consequently, it is recommended that the leader should allow employees to participate more in such decision-making, but the leader would still have the final decision. In times of crisis, leaders shouldn't manage the crisis situations by themselves because it may be too much for leaders to handle. Thus, providing employees the freedom to express their thoughts

and ideas can help leaders get a new perspective on how to handle problems. In addition, employee involvement can be crucial in pushing the company's vision, mission, and goals, which will be beneficial to the company in the long term. Transformational leaders should push their employees to think creatively and critically, and challenge them to explore new perspectives and ideas. This can be achieved through leaders that cultivate an environment of intellectual curiosity and openness, and who inspire their people to question assumptions and challenge the status quo. Leaders should also provide their staff members with the resources and support they need to enhance their talents and abilities, which are an example of intellectual stimulation.

5.3 Limitation and further research

The limitations of this research develop from the data collecting process, which is the interview. The interview is deemed time-constrained in terms of setting the schedule so that both the interviewer and the interviewee have the same available day and time. As a result, it may be difficult to interview a large number of individuals, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

In terms of further research, it is suggested that people chosen for the interview come from a variety of industries. This would give researchers more depth of data that comes from distinct viewpoints of persons who operate in various industries. Furthermore, utilizing a mixed data collection methodology could save the time that researchers have to spend preparing the interview schedule for everyone participating. Thus, exploring the use of alternative data collection methods such as surveys, which may be advantageous in lowering the time constraints of the interview approach.

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