



CRISIS LEADERSHIP IN DEALING WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW STUDY

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Abstract

This research aims to uncover articles published on crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employs a systematic literature review approach by analyzing articles published between 2020 and 2022. Initially, a total of 979 articles were identified, which were then narrowed down to 29 articles based on inclusion and quality criteria. The extracted results regarding crisis leadership issues during the COVID-19 pandemic are categorized into 4 major journal groups: management and leadership, health, social, and education journals. Emerging issues within crisis leadership include gender post COVID-19, academic leadership, administrative leadership, public health leadership, digitalization & virtual leadership, fault lines of leadership, and leadership approach. The changes in crisis leadership have led to the emergence of new leadership strategies, such as virtual collaboration across boundaries.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap artikel-artikel yang terbit tentang kepemimpinan krisis di masa pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi sistematik literature review dengan menganalisis artikel-artikel yang diterbitkan pada tahun 2020-2022. Di awal pencarian diperoleh 979 artikel yang kemudian berdasarkan kriteria inklusi dan kriteria kualitas terpilih sebanyak 29 artikel. Hasil ekstraksi dari isu kepemimpinan krisis pada masa pandemi COVID-19 ini tersebar ke dalam 4 kelompok jurnal besar yaitu jurnal manajemen dan kepemimpinan, kesehatan, sosial, dan pendidikan. Isu-isu yang muncul dalam kepemimpinan krisis diantaranya gender post COVID-19, academic leadership, administrative leadership, public health leadership, digitalization & virtual leadership, fault lines of leadership, dan leadership approach. Perubahan-perubahan kepemimpinan krisis yang muncul strategi kepemimpinan baru yaitu bekerja secara virtual dengan berkolaborasi lintas batas.

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the Coronavirus 2019 pandemic, or COVID-19, has placed significant pressure on social, economic, and governance structures worldwide. At the forefront of this crisis are national leaders and heads of state, burdened with the responsibility of devising responses to the unfolding pandemic. While the unique challenges faced by these world leaders may vary due to their social or political circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic presents issues that can be universally applicable. Socio-political differences among nations and cultures can influence leaders' capacity to respond in terms of form and function. However, the crisis itself transcends boundaries and endangers populations regardless of demographics (Crayne & Medeiros, 2021). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that the ubiquity of the COVID-19 threat would yield uniform responses from global leaders. However, leaders have reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic in highly diverse ways, ranging from swift social and economic interventions to downplaying the severity of the virus, shifting responsibilities, and even declaring the virus a hoax.

When a nation or organization faces a crisis, the spotlight turns to its leadership. Leaders are regarded as the individuals best equipped to navigate challenges and make necessary decisions amidst crisis situations. The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that demands precise and swift handling from leaders in decision-making (Gasa, Prabayanti, & Purnomo, 2022). The decision to transition to remote work or "work from home" (WFH) was rapidly made, especially by institutions employing collaborative leadership models that benefit from higher levels of innovation and collaboration agility (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic stands as the greatest global crisis in our lifetimes, and effective leadership is crucial for communities to confront it. Effective leadership here involves uniting people, providing clear perspectives on the situation and necessary responses, and mobilizing the population to act in the most effective manner to control the pandemic (Haslam et al., 2021). An autocratic approach might not always be effective in the long run. A servant leadership approach is more conducive to involving teams and management structures to support effective leadership during challenging times (Sanders & Balcom, 2021). Crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic is a bold and transformative revolution that ultimately becomes irreversible (Harris, 2020). Although there's no one-size-fits-all approach to leading through a pandemic, lessons drawn from this pandemic can be applied for future instances. The identity leadership model (Haslam et al., 2011) posits that a leader's ability to do these things is based on their capacity to represent and advance the collective interests of group members and to create and instill a sense of togetherness. Therefore, for leaders, fostering a sense of togetherness is a key resource needed to rally support and energy from the populace. To comprehend the phenomenon of crisis leadership, a review of articles emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary. Given the presented background, a systematic literature review is needed for the issue of crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is a combination of science and art; the science pertains to theory and evidence, while the art is grounded in everyday practice (Claus, 2021). Crisis leadership entails a series of actions taken by a leader to effect immediate behavioural changes in a community and achieve necessary outcomes (Mutch, 2020). Effective crisis leadership requires the identification of emerging threats, initiating efforts to mitigate them, and addressing their consequences. After the acute crisis period has passed, the focus shifts to restoring a sense of normalcy. The term "crisis leadership" differs from "crisis management." Crisis management is more operational, involving processes such as diagnosis, decision-making, and resource mobilization. Crisis leadership encompasses the oversight of crisis management but also provides a vision, direction, and a broad conceptual understanding (Mutch, 2020). Effective crisis leadership and how different leader behaviours are perceived by subordinates in three crisis contexts—managing remote work, managing layoffs/leaves, and managing essential workers—are explored (Eichenauer et al., 2022). Due to the significant disruptions caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, supervisors within organizations face leadership challenges as they strive to manage work-from-home arrangements, the health and safety of essential workers, and workforce reductions. Responsible leadership offers an integrative view of leadership in the context of COVID-19, indicating that effective crisis leadership is the result of a relational leadership approach that

integrates the leader's personal qualities and attributes and a clear understanding of complex lessons. The challenges of leadership brought about by the global pandemic are profound (Maak et al., 2021).

RESEARCH METHODS

A systematic review is conducted to examine crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three research questions are posed to present a comprehensive study of crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of providing an unbiased summary and interpretation of findings (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2012). This review follows the guidelines for systematic literature reviews provided by Kitchenham & Charters (2007) and adheres to the practices of other systematic reviews.

A. Search Strategy

In the first step of the process, a search was conducted using the Publish or Perish (PoP) application with keywords related to "crisis leadership COVID-19 pandemic." Based on these keywords, the search was expanded to include analogous terms, such as replacing "crisis" with "cris*s," "disrupt*," "radical," "bankrupt*," "failure*," "event*," "accident*," "disaster*," "pandemic*," "war*," "recall*," "strike*," "massacre*," "terroris*," "scandal*," "turbulen*," "bad times," "shock," "jolt," and "death." The keyword "leadership" was searched using analogous terms that might arise, including "manager*," "leader*," "CEO*," "supervisor*," "top management team," and "board*." Utilizing these keywords resulted in a total of 979 articles.

B. Study Selection

In this stage, selection was performed based on titles. This selection process narrowed down the initial pool of 979 articles to 441. From this data, the information was stored using Mendeley and exported into a ".ris" file format for input into Covidence.org, which facilitates the PRISMA review process.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Articles written in the English language. 2. Journal articles published between the years 2019 and 2022. 3. Journals with a reputable standing in either Scopus or WoS.
Exclusion Criteria:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Articles not written in the English language. 2. Journal articles published before the year 2019. 3. Journals lacking reputation outside of Scopus or WoS.

Source: Data processed by author (2023)

Based on the PRISMA stages using the Covidence application, a total of 29 articles were obtained from the initial selection of 979 articles. Since the utilized Covidence version is free, an initial manual screening was conducted, resulting in 441 articles that were subsequently imported into Covidence.

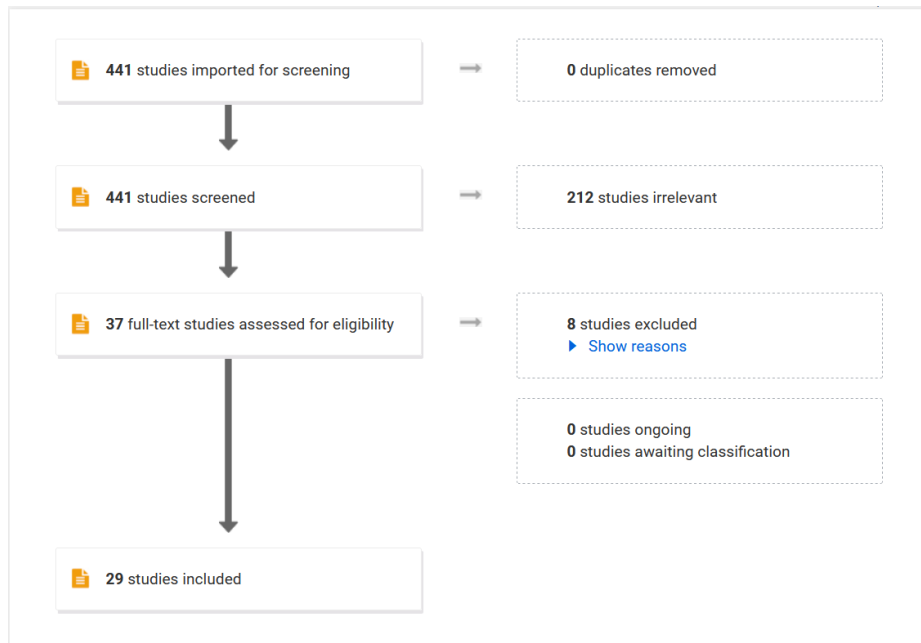


Figure 1. Covidence Application
Source: Data processed by author (2023)

C. Quality Criteria

The selected 29 articles are further analyzed through comprehensive reading of the entire content (full review). This thorough review is conducted to assure the researchers that the quality of these articles justifies their further extraction. The quality criteria considered involve the alignment of the article's content with its title and abstract. The chosen articles exhibit a profound relevance to the researched issue, demonstrating a substantial connection with the subject matter under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the gathered data, several crucial findings have been identified that are important to unveil. Below are the results of the analysis aimed at addressing the research questions:

1. Distribution of Articles Discussing Crisis Leadership During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The findings from the available data based on the emerging journals can be observed from the sources of these journal publishers. The following are the groups of journal publishers that appear in the context of crisis leadership during the pandemic:

Table 2. Grouping of Journals Based on Publishing Journal Names

Journal Categories	Journal Name	Number of articles
Leadership and Management Journals	Journal of Leadership Studies	3
	Knowledge Management Research & Practice	2
	International Journal Business and Management Research (IJBMR)	1
	Leadership	3
	Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	2
	Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	1
	Journal of Change Management	1
	Emerald Publishing	1
Health Journals	Healthcare Management	1
	ISEA	1
	Journal of Advanced Nursing	1
	Hospital Pharmacy	1
	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	1
	International Journal of Hospitality Management	2
Social Sciences Journals	American Psychological Association	1
	Kappan	1
	Social Issues and Policy	1
	Journal of Professional Capital and Community	1
	PLOSONE	1
	The American Surgeon	1
Education Journals	Journal of Education and e-Learning Research	1
	New Zealand Council for Educational Research	1
Total		29

Source: Data processed by author (2023)

Based on Table 2, the issue of crisis leadership is distributed across various journal categories. These categories include leadership and management, health, social sciences, and education journals. This demonstrates that crisis leadership during the years 2020-2022 is discussed from diverse perspectives. crisis leadership has emerged as a prominent topic that resonates strongly, as during this period, leaders play a crucial role in resolving issues within organizations, nations, or specific regions. Crisis leadership is of paramount importance in addressing urgent and critical challenges. This addresses the research question in the first point, which pertains to the distribution of articles on crisis leadership.

2. Crisis Leadership Issues During the COVID-19 Pandemic Emerging in Published Articles

Based on the analysis using Nvivo 12, the distribution of issues concerning crisis leadership is related to several aspects, including:

1. Gender
2. Post COVID-19
3. Academic Leadership
4. Administrative Leadership
5. Public Health Leadership
6. Digitalization & Virtual Leadership
7. Fault Lines of Leadership
8. Leadership Approach
9. Leadership in Configuration in Crises
10. Making Sense of Crises
11. Reflection & Lessons Learned
12. Identity Leadership

3. Changes in Crisis Leadership Occurring during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Based on the data from the found articles, some of the changes in crisis leadership that have occurred include:

- A. Leaders will be better positioned to manage crises effectively if they focus on achieving power through followership.
- B. Leaders who view their group as a solution to the crisis tend to be more effective in harnessing the group's strengths.
- C. Leaders are more likely to drive compliance with their policies when they recognize that people can be resilient but need to understand what is being asked of them.
- D. Leaders secure followers by building and leveraging a shared social identity.
- E. Leaders will be more effective if they treat group members with respectful fairness and as equal partners.

Crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred changes, with the following three aspects undergoing transformation:

- A. Leading Organizations in Difficult Times During the Pandemic, leaders must not only strategically guide their organizations through the current crisis and achieve desired outcomes, which requires navigating change and making swift decisions, but also reposition the organization for long-term future success.
- B. Leading and Managing Distributed (Virtual) Workforce New Leadership Skills emphasize behaviors that are caring and supportive towards employees in distributed (virtual) settings. Leaders display emotional intelligence, empathy, flexibility, and the ability to build trust to enhance the employee experience. Most work is done from home under new and more stressful circumstances.
- C. Building Resilience Leaders must practice self-care and put on their own oxygen masks first. Building resilience within themselves requires significant humility.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research findings and discussions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

A leader is one or more individuals who select, equip, train, and influence one or more followers possessing diverse gifts, talents, and skills, focusing followers on the organizational mission and objectives, resulting in followers willingly and enthusiastically expending spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in collective efforts to achieve the organization's mission and goals. (Mutch, 2020).

Crisis leadership entails a series of actions taken by a leader to effect immediate changes in people's behaviour and to achieve required outcomes. Drawing on leadership during Hurricane Katrina, effective crisis leadership involves recognizing emerging threats, initiating efforts to mitigate them, and addressing their consequences. Once the acute crisis period has passed, the task shifts to rebuilding a sense of normalcy. (Mutch, 2020).

The issues related to crisis leadership encompass various aspects, including gender (Windsor et al., 2020), post-COVID-19 (Lagowska, Sobral, & Furtado, 2020), academic leadership (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020), administrative leadership (Alam, 2020), public health leadership (Glenn, Chaumont, & Dintrans, 2020), digitalization & virtual leadership (Hutajulu, Susita, & Eliyana, 2021), fault lines of leadership (Maak et al., 2021), leadership approach (Spyridonidis et al., 2022), leadership configuration in crises, making sense of crises (Spyridonidis et al., 2022) (Crayne & Medeiros, 2021), reflection & lessons learned (Ion et al., 2021), identity leadership (Haslam et al., 2021), and transformational leadership (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022).

Leadership changes occurred both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Swift leadership responses are essential for effective crisis management, sending a clear message to all stakeholders that leadership understands the seriousness of the coronavirus issue and takes steps to address it (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020).

The analysis indicates that the effects of COVID-19 definitely lead to a shift in leadership behaviours focused on:

1. Leaders must make strategic decisions during times of crisis to achieve optimal long-term work outcomes.
2. Leading, managing, and nurturing distributed (virtual) individual and team workforce. New leadership skills emphasize behaviours that are caring and supportive towards employees, displaying emotional intelligence, empathy, flexibility, and the ability to build trust to enhance the employee experience.

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