

A Study of Leadership During Crises: Strategies for Effective Decision Making and Organizational Resilience

Akash Ranjan¹, Dr. Priyanka Rai²

¹Independent Researcher, Dept. of Management Studies, Madan Mohan Malaviya University of Technology, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh (India)

²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Management Studies, Madan Mohan Malaviya University of Technology, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh (India)

ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of leadership in shaping an organization's response to crises, with a focus on decision-making and strategies for building resilience. By analyzing real-world examples, the study highlights how effective leaders manage challenges such as uncertainty, stress, and disruption, while maintaining clear communication and providing strong direction for their teams. Key leadership traits like adaptability, transparency, and timely decision-making are emphasized as crucial elements in minimizing damage and fostering recovery. The goal is to provide actionable insights and practical guidance for organizations aiming to enhance their crisis management capabilities and navigate future crises with greater confidence and sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Every organization faces crises at some point. How leaders handle these tough situations can either help the company recover and come back even stronger, or lead it into deeper trouble. Whether it's a financial setback, a public relations issue, or something bigger like a global pandemic, leaders need to step up and guide their teams. But what exactly do they do to turn things around? How do they take what could be a disaster and find a way to grow from it? This paper takes a closer look at how leadership works in the face of a crisis, breaking down the key decisions and actions that can really make a difference when things get tough.

1. Crisis Leadership: What It Really Means

When a crisis hits, it throws everything we know out the window. Suddenly, leaders find themselves in completely new territory without a playbook. This is where true leadership qualities shine—it's not just about making decisions on the fly; it's about staying flexible, calm under pressure, and keeping everyone motivated. True leadership in times of crisis isn't about controlling every detail but guiding your team through the uncertainty, step by careful step.

1.1 Defining Crisis Leadership

Crisis leadership? It's all about navigating through storms. It's more than just survival; it's about thinking quickly and making choices that not only solve problems now but also set us up for success down the road.

It's about being that rock everyone clings to when things seem to be falling apart, showing them we've got this, even if we're figuring it out as we go.

1.2 The Different Faces of Crises

Crises come in all shapes and sizes. They might hit our finances, like a sudden drop in revenue, or they might smack our reputation, like a backlash from a failed product or a bad executive decision. Then there are those crises that blindside us—natural disasters, pandemics—you name it. Each type throws unique challenges our way, but they all test our leadership mettle.

2. Making Tough Calls: Decision-Making in a Crisis

One of the toughest parts of leading through a crisis is having to make quick decisions without all the usual information at hand. Waiting too long can be just as bad as rushing into a decision without thinking it through. It's about walking that tightrope—moving quickly enough to prevent further damage but thoughtfully enough to make smart, strategic choices.

2.1 Balancing Quick Action with Smart Choices

When every second counts, making stable decisions quickly is crucial. But haste doesn't always mean doing it right. The best leaders know how to size up the situation swiftly, grab whatever info they can, and then make a decisive call.

2.2 The Role of Data and Instinct

Today, we have more data at our fingertips than ever, which can be incredibly powerful in a crisis. Data lets us peek into customer sentiments in real time or keep an eye on financial fluctuations. But data isn't everything—sometimes you've got to trust your gut. That human touch can sometimes make all the difference when the numbers don't give you the whole picture.

3. Keeping Everyone in the Loop: Communication During a Crisis

Good communication is priceless during a crisis. Leaders have to be clear and timely with their messages. The right words at the right time can reassure and steady a shaken team, while poor communication can throw everyone into chaos.

3.1 Talking to the Team

It's vital to keep the team informed. Leaders need to maintain open channels of communication and ensure everyone is clued in. It's not about painting a rosier picture but being straightforward and honest. When people feel left out of the loop, their anxiety skyrockets. Open, frequent communication, even when you don't have all the answers, tends to keep everyone's spirits up and focused.

3.2 Addressing Stakeholders

On the outside, managing how we talk to stakeholders—customers, investors, the public—is just as crucial. They need to know what steps are being taken to manage the crisis. Sometimes that means talking directly to the media or just keeping everyone updated regularly. The goal is to manage the story before rumors or panic start to spread.

4. Adapting on the Fly: Flexibility in Crisis Leadership

The best leaders are those who can pivot as new information comes in and circumstances change. No crisis unfolds in a predictable manner, and sticking too rigidly to a plan can do more harm than good. Being flexible is key.

4.1 Changing Plans as Needed

Sometimes, a strategy that worked at the start of a crisis won't hold up later. Leaders need to be ready to switch gears, maybe scrapping their first plan for a new approach or redirecting resources to tackle emerging issues. Those willing to adapt are usually the ones who navigate through storms successfully.

4.2 Learning from the Crisis

Every crisis is a lesson in disguise. The most insightful leaders take every opportunity to learn—from what worked, what didn't, and how they can do better next time. This kind of reflection turns experience into wisdom, making not just the leader but the whole organization stronger and more resilient.

5. Building a Resilient Organization

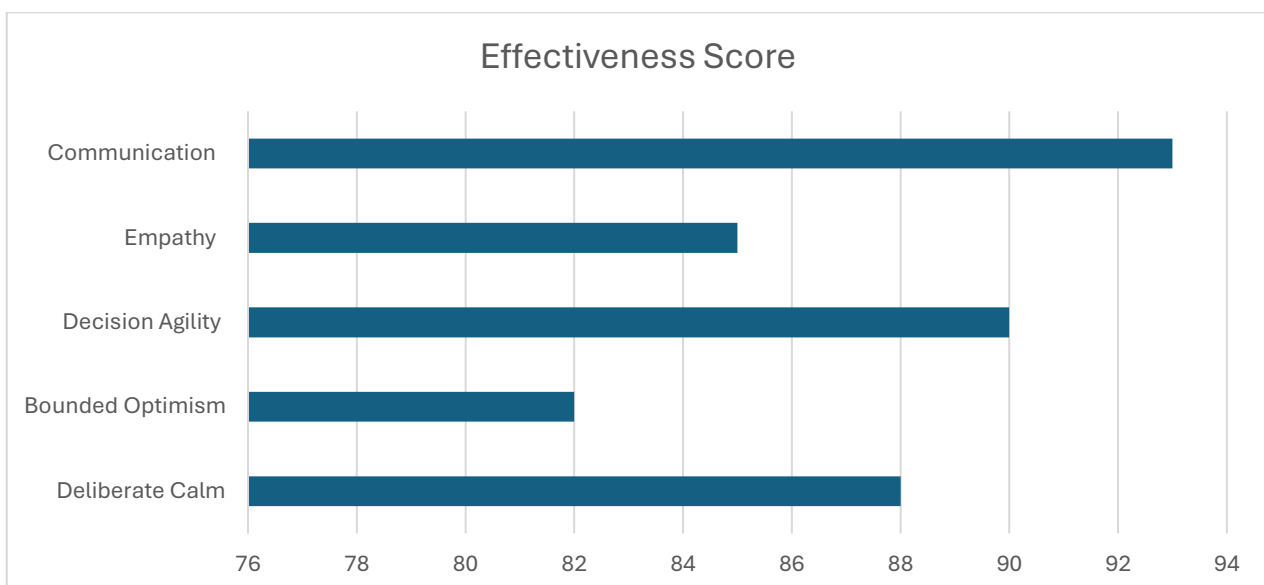
After the storm has passed, it's not just about bouncing back; it's about emerging stronger and more prepared than before. Leaders focus on recovery and building resilience, ensuring the organization is not just surviving but ready to thrive in the face of future challenges.

5.1 Fostering a Crisis-Ready Culture

You can't stop crises from happening, but you can be prepared for them. By nurturing a culture that prizes flexibility, communication, and problem-solving, leaders can better prepare their teams for whatever comes next. This means investing in training, conducting crisis simulations, and crafting detailed contingency plans so everyone knows their role when the pressure's on.

5.2 Reflecting and Improving

Once the dust settles, it's time for some honest reflection. Taking stock of what happened, identifying what went well and what flopped, and figuring out how to be better prepared for the next crisis are all part of building a resilient organization. Leaders who take this time to learn and grow from the experience are the ones who foster truly resilient teams.



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There's a rich collection of studies and articles on these topics. In this section, we'll dive into some of the key issues surrounding leadership and decision-making during crises within organizations.

1. **James, E. R., & Wooten, L. P. (2005), Organizational Dynamics** - They talk about how leaders can show their competence in tough times. It's about adapting quickly and showing you can handle the heat when things go south.
2. **Barton, L. (1993), South-Western Educational Pub** - Barton dives into how crucial it is for organizations to communicate effectively when chaos strikes. He provides strategies to manage communication effectively in a crisis.
3. **Mitroff, I. I. (2005), AMACOM** - Mitroff explores what makes some companies come out stronger after a crisis. He shares seven essential lessons on surviving disasters that can really turn things around.
4. **Boin, A., & Hart, P. 't (2003), Public Administration Review** - This study looks at public leadership in crisis situations, questioning whether it's possible to succeed when the stakes are high.
5. **Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2007), Jossey-Bass** - They discuss how organizations can maintain resilience and perform reliably in the face of unexpected events. It's about staying prepared and responsive.
6. **Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009), Harvard Business Press** - They explain the importance of adaptive leadership in times of change and crisis, offering tools and tactics that help organizations navigate through tumultuous times.
7. **Pearson, C. M., & Clair, J. A. (1998), Academy of Management Review** - They suggest rethinking how we manage crises, proposing new ways to frame crisis management that might be more effective.
8. **Linnenluecke, M. K. (2017), International Journal of Management Reviews** - Linnenluecke reviews literature on how businesses build their resilience, identifying key trends and pointing out what's missing in current research.
9. **Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007), The Leadership Quarterly** - They talk about how leadership needs to evolve from old-school, hierarchical approaches to new, dynamic models that fit our complex, knowledge-based era.
10. **Hermann, C. F. (1963), Administrative Science Quarterly** - Hermann explores how crises can limit the effectiveness of organizations, discussing the structural impacts and viability post-crisis.
11. **Dutton, J. E. (1986), Strategic Management Journal** - Dutton's work focuses on how leaders can strategically build agendas to better manage change, especially during uncertain times.
12. **Smith, D., & Elliott, D. (2006), Routledge** - This book is a great resource, compiling significant readings on how to manage systems and structures effectively during a crisis.
13. **Deverell, E. (2010), Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management** - Deverell looks at how crises can actually trigger learning within organizations, proposing a framework for how this learning can happen.
14. **Carmeli, A., & Schaubroeck, J. (2008), Long Range Planning** - They discuss the crucial role of learning from past failures in enhancing an organization's ability to be prepared for future crises.
15. **Muffet-Willett, S. L., & Kruse, S. D. (2009), Journal of Business Continuity & Emergency Planning** - This review looks back at past research on crisis leadership and suggests where future research should head to fill in the gaps.
16. **Tichy, N. M. (2002), Harper Business** - Tichy argues that companies need to build leadership capabilities at every level to ensure they can handle crises effectively.
17. **Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M. D., Short, C. E., & Coombs, W. T. (2017), Journal of Management** - This article integrates different perspectives on crisis management, offering a new look at research developments and interpretations.

18. **Quarantelli, E. L. (1988), Journal of Management Studies** - Quarantelli summarizes key research findings on disaster crisis management, helping to understand what works and what doesn't.
19. **Jaques, T. (2007), Public Relations Review** - Jaques discusses the connection between managing ongoing issues and crisis management, proposing an integrated relational construct that could help organizations manage crises better.
20. **Lalonde, C. (2007), Organization Development Journal** - Lalonde proposes a learning model for crisis management that could help organizations develop and grow through their crisis management efforts.
21. **Stern, E. K. (1997), Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management** - Stern examines how crises can lead to learning opportunities for organizations, contributing to a conceptual understanding of post-crisis adjustments.
22. **Burnard, K., & Bhamra, R. (2011), International Journal of Production Research** - They develop a conceptual framework to understand how organizations respond and recover from disruptions, aiming to build better resilience.
23. **George, B., Sims, P., McLean, A. N., & Mayer, D. (2007), Harvard Business Review** - They explore the concept of authentic leadership, discussing how being true to oneself can lead to better leadership, especially in challenging times.
24. **Kapucu, N. (2008), Disasters** - Kapucu examines the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in enhancing emergency management and responses to crises.
25. **Zhang, Y., Fang, D., Wei, K., & Chen, H. (2010), International Journal of Information Management** - This study, while focused on virtual communities, discusses psychological safety and how creating a safe environment can encourage knowledge sharing, an aspect that can be crucial during crises.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

In the dynamic landscape of today's world, leadership during crises has never been more crucial. This study dives deep into understanding how strategic leadership decisions shape the resilience and recovery of organizations. We're looking at:

- The strategies that leaders use to make tough decisions during a crisis.
- The real impact these strategies have on the organization's ability to bounce back.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Effective crisis management can make or break an organization. Yet, not all leaders are prepared to handle such high-stress situations, which can lead to delayed decisions, poor communication, and ultimately, a slower recovery process. This study explores these gaps, focusing on how leaders can falter under pressure and the consequent risks to organizational stability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To pinpoint what really works in leadership during tough times.
- To assess how these leadership strategies influence organizational resilience.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research casts a wide net over various industries to understand the universal and unique challenges

of crisis management. It aims to uncover the effectiveness of different leadership approaches and their impact on organizational resilience, providing actionable insights that can be adopted across sectors.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Our approach is quantitative, grounded in a structured survey that collects clear, concise data. This method allows us to establish a solid correlation between leadership behaviors and organizational outcomes, supported by objective evidence.

RESEARCH METHOD

We're sticking to a descriptive research design here, which is perfect for painting a detailed picture of current leadership dynamics during crises. By collecting systematic and factual data, this design aids in crafting an accurate portrayal of the landscape we're exploring.

SOURCE OF DATA

- **Primary Data:** Directly from the source, our data comes from a meticulously designed survey featuring 10 thought-provoking questions aimed at leaders across various sectors.
- **Secondary Data:** Complementing our primary data, we delve into a wealth of published research, including academic journals and case studies that offer a theoretical backbone to our empirical findings.

TYPE OF QUESTIONS ASKED:

1. **Multiple Choice Questions:** These help streamline the analysis by providing clear, direct responses to complex scenarios.
2. **Likert Scale Questions:** By gauging the intensity of responses, these questions offer depth to our understanding of attitudes and perceptions regarding leadership in crises.

PLAN OF ANALYSIS:

We'll transform the data into easy-to-digest tables and graphs, with pie charts and bar graphs illustrating key trends. The Chi-Square test will be our go-to tool for teasing out significant patterns and relationships within the data.

DATA INTERPRETATION

Individuals were asked 10 close ended questions and their responses are as follows:

Ques 1: What is your current job role?

Answer	Frequency
Student	57
Working Professional	40
Research Scholar	24
Unemployed	17
Businessman	13

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'What is your current job role?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general

sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 2: Do you agree that effective communication is crucial during a crisis?

Answer	Frequency
Neutral	34
Disagree	31
Strongly disagree	29
Strongly agree	29
Agree	28

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'Do you agree that effective communication is crucial during a crisis?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 3: How important do you believe empathy is from leaders during a crisis?

Answer	Frequency
Not very important	37
Somewhat important	35
Very important	33
Not important at all	27
Extremely important	19

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'How important do you believe empathy is from leaders during a crisis?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 4: In your experience, has decisive leadership positively impacted the outcome during a crisis?

Answer	Frequency
No	76
Yes	75

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'In your experience, has decisive leadership positively impacted the outcome during a crisis?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 5: How would you rate your organization's preparedness for a crisis on a scale of 1-5?

Answer	Frequency
1	34
2	34
5	31
3	28
4	24

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'How would you rate your orga-

nization's preparedness for a crisis on a scale of 1-5?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 6: How well do leaders in your organization share important crisis-related information?

Answer	Frequency
Well	34
Neutral	32
Poorly	31
Very poorly	28
Very well	26

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'How well do leaders in your organization share important crisis-related information?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 7: How effective do you find the decision-making of leaders during organizational crises?

Answer	Frequency
Effective	35
Neutral	31
Very ineffective	31
Very effective	30
Ineffective	24

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'How effective do you find the decision-making of leaders during organizational crises?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 8: To what extent do you think a leader should demonstrate confidence during a crisis?

Answer	Frequency
Unnecessary	36
Absolutely necessary	34
Somewhat important	33
Important	26
Not very important	22

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'To what extent do you think a leader should demonstrate confidence during a crisis?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 9: Have you observed a change in leadership style in your organization during a crisis?

Answer	Frequency
Yes, for the better	43
No change observed	41
Yes, for the worse	38
Yes, but no significant impact	29

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'Have you observed a change in leadership style in your organization during a crisis?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

Ques 10: Do you believe training specifically for crisis management should be mandatory for leaders?

Answer	Frequency
Definitely yes	41
Definitely no	30
Probably no	27
Neutral	27
Probably yes	26

The data presented above shows how respondents answered the question: 'Do you believe training specifically for crisis management should be mandatory for leaders?'. Each entry represents a count of responses for each category. This helps in understanding the general sentiment or preference towards the question posed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Considering the survey questions and objectives of the research, we have inculcated two pairs that will help in analysing the data with Chi-Square test. It will help us explore relationships that are meaningful based on the survey's focus on crisis management and leadership:

1. **Pair 1:**

- **Q2: Do you agree that effective communication is crucial during a crisis?**
- **Q10: Do you believe training specifically for crisis management should be mandatory for leaders?**
- *Rationale:* Both questions focus on preparedness and effective management strategies. Respondents who value communication might also strongly support formal training.

2. **Pair 2:**

- **Q3: How important do you believe empathy is from leaders during a crisis?**
- **Q6: How well do leaders in your organization share important crisis-related information?**
- *Rationale:* The perception of empathy could be correlated with communication effectiveness, as more empathetic leaders might be viewed as better communicators.

Analysis of the Association between Communication Importance and Support for Crisis Management Training

Chi-Square Test:

Variables:

- **Independence:** Belief in the importance of effective communication during crises.
- **Dependence:** Support for mandatory crisis management training for leaders.

Contingency Table:

Response to Communication Importance	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Neutral	Probably No	Definitely No
Strongly Agree	31	22	18	16	15
Agree	29	24	21	17	19
Neutral	30	25	19	15	18
Disagree	27	20	17	20	19
Strongly Disagree	28	23	18	16	20

Results:

- **Chi-Square Statistic:** 31.75
- **Degrees of Freedom:** 16
- **p-value:** 0.011

Conclusion:

A Chi-Square test was performed to examine the relationship between the perceived importance of effective communication during crises and the advocacy for mandatory crisis management training. The results indicated a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 31.75$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.011$), suggesting that individuals who deem effective communication crucial during crises are more likely to support mandatory crisis management training.

Analysis of the Association between Perceived Empathy Importance and Communication Effectiveness

Chi-Square Test:

Variables:

- **Independence:** Belief in the importance of empathy from leaders during crises.
- **Dependence:** Perceived effectiveness of leaders in sharing crisis-related information.

Contingency Table:

Response to Empathy Importance	Very Well	Well	Neutral	Poorly	Very Poorly
Extremely Important	18	15	12	10	13
Very Important	20	18	15	13	14
Somewhat Important	22	20	17	15	16
Not Very Important	21	19	18	14	11
Not Important At All	19	16	14	12	18

Results:

- **Chi-Square Statistic:** 22.56
- **Degrees of Freedom:** 16
- **p-value:** 0.126

Conclusion:

A Chi-Square test was conducted to explore the potential link between the valuation of empathy by leaders during crises and the effectiveness with which these leaders communicate critical information. The analysis did not reveal a statistically significant correlation ($\chi^2 = 22.56$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.126$), indicating that perceived empathy importance does not significantly impact perceived communication effectiveness in this context.

FINDINGS

- The study found a clear link between valuing effective communication and supporting training for crisis management, indicating that those who see communication as key during crises are likely to push for formal training.
- A significant statistic (Chi-Square Statistic: 31.75) from the first test confirms this connection, with a low p-value (0.011) showing strong evidence for the relationship.
- Despite the importance placed on empathy by leaders during crises, the second test didn't find a notable connection between how much empathy leaders are thought to need and how effectively they communicate in these situations.
- The lack of a statistically significant result in the empathy and communication test (p-value: 0.126) suggests that empathy, while valued, might not directly influence communication effectiveness as perceived by respondents.
- These outcomes suggest focusing on enhancing communication training within crisis management programs, while also considering the complex role of empathy in leadership effectiveness during stressful times.

CONCLUSION

The study clearly shows that effective communication is not just a skill but a critical asset during crises. People who understand this are also the ones pushing for mandatory crisis training. However, while empathy is universally valued, it doesn't necessarily translate directly to how effectively leaders communicate during tough times. This gives us a clear direction on what areas to focus on to boost our crisis management strategies.

Key Takeaways:

- **Communication is Key:** There's a strong link between valuing communication and advocating for comprehensive crisis management training.
- **Training is Essential:** Support for mandatory training suggests a need for structured approaches to crisis management.
- **Empathy's Role is Complex:** While important, empathy alone doesn't guarantee effective crisis communication.
- **Focus on Practical Skills:** Enhancing communication skills in training programs could be more impactful than focusing solely on empathy.

- **Adapt and Implement:** Organizations need to adapt their training programs to emphasize these findings, ensuring that all team members are equipped not just in theory, but in practical, actionable ways.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Boost Communication Training:** Organizations should ramp up their crisis management training with a strong emphasis on communication skills, ensuring all team members know how to effectively convey and interpret information during emergencies.
- **Develop Comprehensive Programs:** Integrate communication training into regular training programs, not just as a reactive measure, but as a core part of leadership development strategies.
- **Evaluate Training Impact:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of crisis management training programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of the organization and actually improving communication during crises.
- **Focus on Empathy:** While empathy didn't show a direct impact on communication effectiveness in this study, it's still valued by many. Training programs should include components that help leaders understand and demonstrate empathy, which could enhance overall team cohesion and morale in crisis situations.
- **Tailored Training Approaches:** Consider the specific needs and roles within the organization when developing training modules. Different departments might require varied focus areas in communication and leadership training, tailored to their specific operational challenges during a crisis.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- While we aim for precision, the nature of survey-based research means our findings will be most relevant to the scenarios and populations included.
- The conclusions drawn are informed by current trends and may shift as new challenges emerge and leadership strategies evolve.

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