

Quintessential leadership of 21st century – paving through the pandemic

Athulya Nair, Mita Mehta*

Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, Maharashtra, India

* Corresponding author
mita.mehta@sims.edu

Abstract

Purpose: Organizational Leaders need to respond quickly to crises with their innovative ideas using the nascent technology. During times of crisis (Pandemic – COVID 19), this is relatively challenging due to the situation's lack of knowledge and uncertainty.

Design and Methodology: This article essentially focuses on a set of qualities that leaders should hold in today's day and age. We have considered the literature in leadership over past years, how it has evolved, the literature around the stages in a crisis, and what kind of skills are required to sail through each of these stages. We have collected information about how companies have reacted towards the Pandemic – COVID 19 by interviewing the top management for our data.

Findings: In the last stage, we have analyzed the data and presented the utmost skills, which will be sought after in a leadership candidate. Each of these skills has been associated with a particular Leadership style, which has a people orientation. We have introduced new terminology that is Quintessential Leadership.

Originality: Findings of this research give a new model to the existing literature.

Keywords

Leadership style, Leadership Development, Crisis Management, Leadership Skills, Transformational Leadership

Imprint

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1 Introduction

The World Health Organization (Internet – WHO, 2020) has declared the outbreak of the Novel Corona Vi-

rus as a Pandemic – on March 11, 2020. With its impact worldwide, there is a fight for life, health, businesses, the economy, and the safeguarding of employees. The current situation, more than anything, can be referred to as 'unpredictable,' 'uncertain,' 'unreal, and 'unstable.' To fight for the businesses and employees, the top management and the Human Resource (HR) Leaders are at the front line to ease the transition phase and reduce the impact of this pandemic among the employees [1].

COVID-19 has brought in the new nuances of culture and engagement. The spread of the virus each day has proved to be emotionally challenging for the employees. The physical distancing and the isolation measures, which were abruptly adapted, have completely changed the ways of working. Remote working has become the new normal.

Engaging the employees in these crises without compromising productivity becomes one of the major challenges for organizations [2]. Thus, the higher management must bring innovative measures and systems to make it through the gauntlet, which is when managers have to prove themselves to be leaders. This paper focuses on the skills, which leaders must possess to sail their companies through tough times and survival in the post-COVID-19 scenario. The two equally important responsibilities that leaders have in any crisis are resolving the problem and implementing the preventive measures meticulously.

1.1 Objectives

The main objectives of this study area:

1. To understand and gain insight into the role of senior management in organizations to combat crises like COVID-19 and what may come.
2. To understand how certain leadership skills and competencies prove to be essential to romp through the crisis.
3. To study different types of leadership styles and proposing the most relevant style for the situation.

2 Literature review

This paper examines the literature on Leadership development, crisis management principles, and theories. COVID-19 is a Pandemic that created a peculiar circumstance wherein people were confined indoors due to the lockdown declared by the nation. Hence, the data is collected mainly through interviews and online questionnaires.

We have chosen to conduct qualitative research. It is important to gain in-depth knowledge about the underlying reasoning and motivations behind every action [3]. Every organization has its own story on dealing with this pandemic, particularly as the minds and mindset of leadership vary from organization to organization. We have resorted to narrative research, as the elements in the course of action chosen are relevant to a particular organization. Narratives help humans make sense out of unsure and uncertain environments; we believe in the given context and reflective nature of data, this may be the most suitable, according to Augenstein & Palzkill.

The targeted respondents are the people at top leadership positions. After gathering the data through various means like stories, questionnaires, and interviews, the data were critically analyzed. Data were collected from 22 top management executives through telephonic interviews and online questionnaires [4]. The sampling technique used is a mix of judgment sampling and snowball sampling. We first picked up senior HR professionals and then went by their references. Our sample included senior management executives from various industries (education, manufacturing, consultancies, banking, financial services, IT, automobile, FMCG). It included both males and females across different age groups spanning from 25 years to 65 years. These leaders were asked questions on the immediate steps taken by their organization due to the lockdown, productivity while the entire workforce was working from home, creating extraordinary employee experience through digital means, and new skills and qualities, which has emerged during the pandemic. Though few commonalities were observed, every company has its own story [5].

The initial transcription and re-transcription of data were organized to identify subthemes and form a meaningful pattern using coding and clustering. At each stage, the result was well-examined, and adjustments were made iteratively. Our main idea is to simply create a more appropriate understanding of the Pandemic situation, to have an open discussion for strategies, after that, guided by a practical reason [6].

3. Leadership skills in crisis management

3.1 Leadership development

Leadership Development is very important in integration and crisis management. The decisions made

have a wide range of post effects. Leadership Development has no specific theory, but it is a mirror of leadership theory, according to Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, which is being followed in every organization. Day et al. argue that if we may just find out and settle on the 'correct' or 'right' leadership theory, its development would certainly trail. There have been various leadership theories, and each of these theories is associated with different skills [7].

The skills approach stresses an ability that can be acquired for successful leadership. Investigation on leadership skills in the past has directed to a huge number of representations and contexts that propose a set of skills necessary for successful leadership. In his research, Katz mentioned that effective leadership requires three skills: technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. These skills have continuously been modified, and with every new research, newer skills appear [8].

As coined by James McGregor Burns, transformational leadership is another form of leadership that has been most researched over the last few decades. It holds so much importance as it addresses the requirements of leaders of recent times and the challenges they face. Transformational leadership gains relatively optimistic outcomes of traditional development programs of management, as stated by Collins & Holton; Dvir et al.; Lanaj et al., Towler.

In Collaborative leadership, improving the quality of life in an organization, increasing human growth and potential, satisfaction, productivity, and increased organizational effectiveness are valued consequences of work, as observed by Finch. When revised to make the workgroup accountable for the planning, organization, direction, and control of work, the design of work culture and the locus of decision-making marks the emergence of this leadership approach, as researched by Finch [9]. A collaborative culture has been depicted by Kramer & Crespy as to how it could be created in an organization. The collaborative philosophy is always at the center and leads to recruit members of the collaboration. They then consciously develop a collaboration climate. One could explicitly communicate the desire to collaborate post, in which direct communication occurs.

Empathetic leadership signals that empathetic emotions are an important international leadership behavior concerning the leader's performance, as in an evaluator study by Sadri et al. The authors found

that the leaders who show empathy from their subordinates stand considered better performers than their managers [10].

Responsible leadership is the skill of developing and maintaining quality association with stakeholders, where leaders' primary task is to weave a web of inclusion. As studied by Maak & Pless, making sure that the leader himself is an engaged networker, who assures that the organization is 'in sync' with stakeholder expectations, can move multiple stakeholders helps build a sustainable business, as studied by Maak. The authors have argued that the setting of leadership has changed over time. With new responsibilities that the leaders have concerning the stakeholders have broadened the view from a leader-subordinate relationship towards a leader-stakeholder-relationship [11].

Adaptive leadership is another popular term in the 21st century. Adaptive leadership works of the literature reveal how managers retort to the organizational changes, utilizing an adaptive leadership style, which may be a combination of dynamic and rigid practices, as recorded by Yaghi. The continual changes in organizations create peculiar circumstances those imperious executives to combine transactional and transformational practices to survive and excel, thus the emergence of adaptive leadership. Cognitive complexity has been identified by Yukl, Gary, & Mahsud, Rubina, social intelligence, empathy, situational awareness, and self-awareness as characteristics and competencies that enhance adaptive leadership [12].

3.2 Crisis management skills

A typical business crisis scenario has been identified by five different phases, according to Coombs, Mitroff & Pearson; Pheng, Ho & Ann, which are signal detection, preparation, and prevention, damage containment, recovery, and learning. The capability to think critically is a vital quality of effective leaders [13]. It is the development of common sense – accurately knowing what to do next, as observed by Mcvey. Nothing but common sense and hands-on experience play an important role in crises, helping to recede the crisis.

The different competencies were identified by Wooten, L. P., & James, E. H., which leaders must possess in each phase of the crisis. The first phase of signal detection involves two competencies - *Sense making* and *Perspective taking*. *Sense making*, as Weick et al. rightly say, talks three important questions: what an event is? How does it take place? and how to handle

such an event? Sense making ability is to make sense of a series of events, rather than just focusing on one discrete event, as researched by Wooten & James [14]. Figure 1 shows the Phases of Leadership Competencies in Times of Crisis

Perspective-taking is the ability to assume the perspective of one another, helping and ensuring the employee's well-being through the crisis.

Source: Wooten, L. P., & James, E. H. (2008)

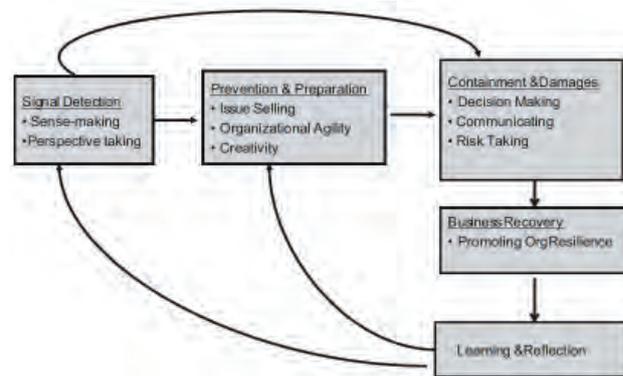


Fig. 1. Phases of leadership competencies in times of crisis

The first competency associated with Prevention and Preparation phase is *Issue Selling*, which is characterized by a set of behavior often shown by persuasion and influence to direct the top management towards a particular direction. Change agent in issue selling requires the leader to be influential and persuasive, as in an evaluator study by Wooten & James [15].

Organizational agility, as recorded by Nafei, Wageeh is the key to the organization's success. It refers to having thorough knowledge about the business to work across organizational functions and departments to achieve the task.

Creativity denotes the novel and useful out-of-the-box ideas, products, services processes, or procedures, as studied by Amabile, which comes in with the present circumstances. The ability to think on feet and plan for many contingencies, considering the vulnerabilities, requires an ability to break through and envision ways to go beyond traditional and contemporary thinking [16].

The containment and damage control phase requires skills like *decision-making* under pressure. According to Smith & Ellsworth, undesirable emotions, such as fear and anxiety, which creep in during a crisis, can severely and unfavorably affect a leader's skill to make wise decisions, as stated by Wooten & James. Therefore, the capability to make quick decisions when poised under pressure, converting the threats into op-

portunities, becomes a core competency to effectively managing the crisis [17].

One of the most essential and important skills is *effective communication*. Crises like the current COVID-19 have made social distancing and remote working the new norm. In this digital world, there is nobody language. The speech has to be persuasive enough, confident enough, and empathetic enough. Communication in these times is used to optimistically shape the stakeholders' thoughts and feelings of the situation and the organization, as stated by Coombs.

Leaders do not believe in unnecessary risk and tend to stick to habitual behavior. During the crisis, the decision-makers of the organizations incline to become more conservative and restrictive in their information sharing, as observed by Staw, Sand elands, & Dutton [18]. To overcome the crisis, the leaders have to adapt different modus operandi with creative thinking and invention to abate the crisis by taking calculated *risks*.

Competencies required while recovering from the crisis are promoting *organizational resiliency*. The crisis can work as a compound for thinking differently, bringing out innovations about what is probable for the organization, as studied by Brockner & James. Emerging from the crisis in a better state than the pre-crisis state is the most required form of business recovery.

It has been observed that leaders tend to stop at the recovery phase in crisis. At the same time, Mitroff says crisis management comprises post-crisis activity in *learning and reflection*, as recorded by Wooten & James. The crisis can be perceived as an opportunity when decision-makers espouse learning alignment, as researched by Brockner & James and use earlier experience or the experience of others to evolve new routines and behaviors that eventually change the way an organization works [19].

3.3. How organizations react to crises?

Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) endorses actions that improve the strategic performance of employees and establishments, as stated by Garavan et al. It highlights the optimistic change in management, which allows organizations to survive in an increasingly complex, competitive, and global environment, as observed by Grievies. A model was proposed by Garavan, later developed by Wang, Jia, & Hutchins, Holly & Garavan, Thomas, which influences the types of SHRD activities, organizations and establishments may adopt to ease crisis management [20]. Level 1 in the model shows the array of outside

factors that form the role of SHRD; Level 2 aspects of the organization's structure, culture, and leadership; Level 3 - Different stages of values and uniqueness of jobs; Level 4 -Individual expectations, attitudes, employability, and cognitive characteristics.

Strategic partner models envisage that HRD specialists will be key players at the chief table and adopt a multiple stakeholder approach to the management of HRD, as researched by Armstrong. Strategic partners play the role of change agents; trigger the need for necessary training in context to the crisis, job and competency analysis, etc. That would help in leadership development [21].

3.4 Leadership concepts

The leadership concept is a set of representations and conventions, as studied by Kjellström et al., related to a leader and his/her leadership role in respective organization culture, as recorded by Probers and James.

A crisis is always probable to endorse the appearance of *charismatic* leadership, as recorded by Bass, as people drop their sagacity of worth and control, becoming infirm, needy, and hapless, according to Pearson & Clair in such situations. This powerful leadership prototype is imbibed through how the children have been nourished by their parents, as stated by Popper & Mayselless [22].

The crisis comes with a lot of strain, conflict, and group negotiation; these characteristics are supreme for leadership development that are new skills to emerge, making the individuals and organizations re-address and re-evaluate their deeply embedded leadership concept observed by Probers & Turnbull.

Leadership and its effectiveness are an appropriate mix of five interconnected spheres of influence, as researched by Zaidi & Bellak. These are:

- Turbulence, which comes with the opportunities
- People as the relationship
- Vision when manifested in beliefs, values, goals, and actions
- Change, as is inevitable, extends to systems, organization, and individuals
- Leader captures the mindset and gives perspectives to situations and strategies.

This Whole Persons Approach (WPA), as researched by Zaidi & Bellak, proves to be an adaptive and powerful technique for leadership needs valuation and leadership program design and helps the HR professionals make informed decisions.

4 Methodology

COVID-19 crises have thrown a new challenge to the business managers; the officials of higher echelons were compelled to wear their thinking caps and form new strategies to ensure that the work is being done, despite the social distancing [23]. The situation calls for a change, and specific leader behaviors like communicating, coaching, involving, team building, and motivating prove to be the predictors of successful implementation of organizational change, as researched by Gilley et al.

Leaders who participated in the research were urged to express their views on new work from home culture, creating an extraordinary employee experience while working remotely, emerging leadership skills, qualities, etc. The role of leaders will change, and there will be a new perspective in which the leadership will be viewed. The experiences and learning's gained during the pandemic will be carried forward to resolve any issues or ambiguities in the future.

Leaders being visible and using the right rhetoric are considered proficient crisis decision-makers, as studied by Helsloot & Groenendaal. Authors say that giving meaning to the unfolding crisis is the most significant determinant of leadership perceptions during a crisis [24].

Decision-makers with limited rationality cannot manage decision-making in crisis alone. As recorded by Simon, neither could be completely relied upon the analytical calculations, according to Garrett, considering its inherent uncertainty and complexity. Such situations require the involvement of multiple sectors, organizations, and all its stakeholders, Government, statutory compliance, thus the emergence of **collaborative leadership**. The system-organizational structure, culture, and goals; Actors – all the stakeholders; Environment – stress, time pressure, uncertainty, complexity, etc.; Capacity – hardware and software, interoperability, etc., together adds to the cognitive and operational base for *collaborative decision-making*, according to Kapucu & Ustun.

Communication is the basis of *collaboration*. Having effective communication tools that could work digitally is of utmost importance in this scenario. With the new virtual working and mandated social distancing, communication has become digital through phones, videos, emails, and text messages. Thus, the importance of communication has increased manifold. In remote working situations, the associates get ample

time to focus on their tasks without office distractions. Though goal-oriented action is great for productivity, disinterestedness and isolation tracing from lack of connections with fellow workers could reduce engagement and motivation [25].

Employees' health has emerged to be the top priority during these times. Our research shows that organizations ensure that employees are not stressed by ensuring frequent communications and organizing webinars on healthcare tips and stress management. Human Resource Department is conducting weekly calls with their employees as part of the new employee assistance program. The issues and challenges faced by the employees are addressed. Psychosocial support to the employees and Free/Confidential chat lines for emergencies were provided in certain companies.

New employee assistance teams have been designated to ensure that all the employees, even the newbies, can make use of the systems seamlessly by arranging simulated meetings with clear objectives.

COVID-19 pandemic did not come with an advanced signal. Thus, the signal detection phase in the crisis management model, as observed by Mitroff & Pearson, was scrapped off. The next step is containing the damages, which is through enabling efficient work mechanisms virtually. We have observed that the satisfaction, which the leaders feel with the new *work-from-home* situation, is quite industry-specific. The pandemic and the complete lockdown after that have allowed the leaders to reevaluate the different job roles. Only 13.6% of the entire sample feels that productivity has come down; again, it is industry-specific. It is also noticed that many job roles are done much more efficiently while working from home and do not require the contemporary work style. The job types, tasks, and roles are to be relooked, and companies will continue to work from home for the roles, which work better that way.

The crisis comes with its sensitivity and expects the leaders to make a sudden and effective decision to calibrate using very limited information. The prompt decision, which came from the leadership of majority organizations on the announcement of lockdown, was to ensure that the work does not stop. For the same, it was ensured that the employees have systems and laptops. Many organizations even brought out schemes for the employees to buy the office furniture to feel like their office workspace, even at home.

The major issue while working from home is the internet connectivity issue. Most organizations have tried to install a stable connection to be taken care of at their employees' homes. Work-from-home comes with many factors. There are huge distractions observed, lack of motivation, and the never-ending household chores. Thus, it is very difficult to make sure that the employees are continuously contributing. As there is no supervision, there has to be a sense of integrity and sincerity among the employees.

The manufacturing industry is the most affected due to the new WFH norm. Types of machinery will have to work with minimum human interaction and minimum human touch points, call for innovations. Factors like articulate vision and providing individual support of Transformational Leadership have shown the highest positive relation to the climate for organizational innovation, as studied by Sarros, J. C., Cooper, B. K., & Santora, J. C.

Employee experience term now has seen the utmost significance. Companies are trying their best to engage the employees and create an amazing experience making them work from home. The various steps taken in this regard are maintaining 100% transparency and communication, digital and technology up-gradation, free learning platform subscriptions, webinars on stress management, and employee health. Surveys are taken

so that the employees could let the management know the problems, which they face. The management could take appropriate decisions to curb them. Frequent calls have been mandated in most organizations, events like birthdays are still being celebrated virtually. Appreciation for small things has proven to be very effective in motivating the workers. A special task force team was formed, and the communication channel is formed.

Managers in different organizations have dealt with the situation in different ways according to the nature and business of the company. The effectiveness of such strategies will come out only over time. Pandemic has proved to bring out the real talent – the so-called *most active people* have gone in *hibernation*, and the hidden stuff is surfaced.

Data analysis and identification of sub-themes are shown in Table 1 for four transcript code examples. Similarly, subthemes were extracted from all the transcript codes. The skills and qualities were identified to the leadership style associated with, which was later mapped, which was done to all the transcript codes. A total of 21 subthemes were derived.

There were 20 different qualities and skills that have emerged during the analysis to ensure the subthemes. These 20 skills and qualities have been aggregated into five findings mapped to a particular leadership style in Table 2.

Table 1

Data structure – transcripts decoding

Inter-viewee	First-order code examples	Subthemes
I 1	Arrangements for WFH, how to ensure employee safety, how to arrange their travel, how to form a quick response team to monitor, connect with employees 24/7 for their support as well as business continuity	Employee safety Ensure employee connect Formation of a quick response team Business Continuity Plan
I 2	Move equipment and facilities in 24*7*365 connectivity mode, set up office @ homes in 72 hours, constant communication (Day-1 to 3: only Environment, Health, Safety, People@ home and Psycho-social support, Free/Confidential Chat line for emergencies), (Day-4 and 5: Generally about the global ecosystem, our business, but no mention of COVID-29 or related matters), (Days 6 and 7: Their ideas as to how work can be organized, personal and family issues, etc.	Business continuity Plan - New ways of making it work - the movement of office space into home space Employee health and welfare Continuous Communication Ideation – Brainstorming
I 3	Ensured that communication is done to everyone. Team leaders were given the discretion to decide on how to engage with their teams. A daily meeting of team leaders was arranged. Individuals who are otherwise not too active were reached out to separately.	Continuous communication Employee engagement creation Diversity and Inclusion
I 4	The system was allocated to the maximum possible employees with access to required systems to ensure that employees' workflow is not affected during WFH. Timely guidelines on social distancing, improving productivity in WFH, health management, etc., are shared with the employees	Business continuity Employee health and welfare Timely guidelines

Table 2

Aggregate findings

Aggregate findings	Skill Associated with the kind of leadership
<i>Employee health and well-being</i> are the top priority among the Leadership cadre. Even the families of the employees need care.	<i>Empathetic Leadership</i>
The digital era is here, and the future will be guided by it. Huge investment and extensive usage of <i>technology</i> are the only way to sustain the business.	<i>Transformational Leadership</i>
Ensuring that with all the new norms in place, no employee is left behind. Everyone is taken care of is one of the most important qualities of leaders.	<i>Responsible Leadership</i>
The new world requires <i>ideation, innovation</i> , agile change management, which can only be done with a collaborative approach.	<i>Collaborative Leadership</i>

5 Results and discussion

Findings have been presented as follows:

Strategic People Management will take the next leap in restructuring the workplace, post COVID-19 era. Considering the current times, leadership development programs must become more employee-focused, developing behaviors like empathy, adaptability, responsibility, transformation, and collaboration. Our study showed that these behaviors are connected to certain skills, which can be developed with time and experience.

Communication within the virtual work environment, persuasion, and convincing your employees has become a new challenge for the leaders. Sensing and feeling the real emotions behind the zoom faces is another challenge. Networking and relationship management has always found their importance in the corporate culture; thus, these are taken care of virtually with new platforms, in newer ways. Leaders have to be adaptable, and if things go obsolete, they must do quick prototyping.

COVID-19 Pandemic has brought in new ways of working and proved that the Old ways of doing things deliver old results. Now, it is time that new ways of doing work efficiently are to be adopted and stick to them. It is time to *reimagining* our existing business processes, employee experiences, etc. Gone are the days of incremental changes. This new world calls for an exponential change in business processes, which requires a new flair to come into the picture, which could drive the working force to strive towards excellence, which kind of leadership is more or less a hybrid form, which we call as *Quintessential Leadership* of the 21st Century. The Figure 2 shows Quintessential leadership has five main pillars of its own:

- Adaptive leadership
- Collaborative leadership
- Empathetic leadership
- Responsible leadership
- Transformational leadership

These 20 different qualities have been identified as critical to sustaining the business post-COVID-19.

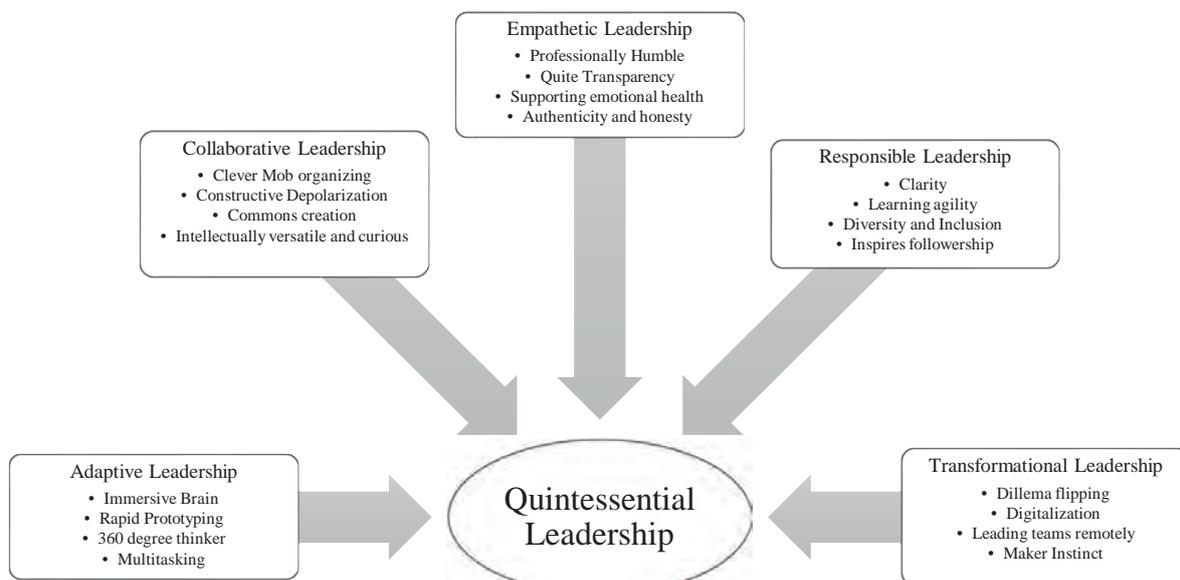


Fig. 2. Quintessential leadership – skills and qualities

Leadership Development is always associated with a cultural change, as recorded by Probers and Turnbull. The next cultural change is expected to be exponential. Thus, the leaders will be expected to develop these skills according to the needs and situations. Table 3 explained in quintessential leadership skills and qualities.

Post COVID-19 scenario would require turning the Business Model upside down, extensive usage of technology, and learning lessons from outside the domain are likely to be important. Agile change management will be the need of the hour.

6 Recommendations for future research

Our findings lead to the emerging Leadership qualities, which can tackle any challenges, which the VUCA world offers. Further research may enhance

our understanding of skills, qualities, and competencies, shown by the leaders, which may positively affect the organization. Larger and more varied samples could be used to evaluate, and cross-validate the results presented.

These skills and qualities have a huge scope of research in the future. Why is a particular skill important? What are the challenges faced in incorporating these skills and qualities? How can we develop, measure, and reward these skills? How could Leadership Development programs be tweaked to train the leaders in these skills?

Employee Experience creation in the remote working phenomenon is another scope for future research. There is a tremendous scope of research in understanding work roles, which are more productive when done from home.

Table 3
Quintessential leadership – skills and qualities explained

Sl. No.	Adaptive Leadership	Collaborative Leadership	Empathetic Leadership	Responsible Leadership	Transformational Leadership
1	<i>Immersive Brain</i> - Ability to submerge in new, unfamiliar environments and gain knowledge from them, moving out of their comfort zone.	<i>Clever Mob organizing</i> - Capability to make, engage with and nurture focused networks through intelligent technology or other means.	<i>Professional Humble</i> is an affable person who maintains an open-door policy and believes in people matter.	<i>Clarity</i> - Ability to ascertain through the chaos and inconsistencies to a future, which not everyone can see. Ensuring communication with clarity in confusing times.	<i>Dilemma Flipping</i> - Ability to turn confusion and uncertainty into opportunities in favor. Improving skills to succeed with challenges that cannot be resolved completely.
2	<i>Rapid prototyping</i> – Defined by designing and making quick, early versions of innovations, suiting the new norms.	<i>Constructive depolarizing</i> - Bringing people from divergent cultures towards a common, constructive experience.	<i>Quite a Transparency</i> - Maintaining an open and authentic stance about what matters.	<i>Learning agility</i> - Ability to gather maximum data and quickly identify what is more important and beneficial for the team.	<i>Digitalization</i> - extensive usage of digital technology, finding new and faster ways of doing things.
3	<i>360 Degree Thinker</i> - Planning ahead of time and making decisions, tools, and machinery with minimum human touch points, in line with the new norms.	<i>Commons creating</i> - Ability to seed, nurture, and grow shared assets that will benefit other players. Creation of settings with an appropriate mix of both cooperation and competition.	<i>Supporting emotional health</i> - providing extra comfort and monitoring signs of struggle, Sensing, and feeling the real emotions behind the Zoom faces.	<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i> - Taking the entire team together towards success, showing the real meaning of the leader-stakeholder relationship.	<i>Leading teams remotely</i> - Ability to handle the peculiar situations, wherein leaders were to attend and coordinate without any visual contact of their employees for weeks together.
4	<i>Multitasking</i> - Handling various functions simultaneously and effectively, with meticulous outcomes. Learn, Unlearn, and Relearn.	<i>Intellectually versatile and curious</i> - leaders need to think beyond their industries and take an interest in political, national, and international development.	<i>Authenticity and Honesty</i> , ability to be straightforward, genuine, and honest with the team. Set by values and great attitudes towards the people.	<i>Inspires followership</i> - Gaining the employees' trust by emerging as a role model under smart moves by taking responsibility in actions and executions.	<i>Maker instinct</i> - Ability to take advantage of one's inner surge to build and nurture things, also establish connections with others in the making. Future leaders require both can-do and can - make spirit.

In this world of digitalization, identifying the processes, which need the human touch, and human involvement, which could never be replaced by technology, is also a scope of research.

7 Conclusion

The COVID-19 has hammered the working and thrown the entire system haywire. The challenges that arose during the COVID-19 have forced the leaders to ponder and find new ways to meet the targets and respect the commitments. Our research has exposed the importance of certain leadership skills necessary to sail through the crisis and sustain the business in this changing world. Our research also shows a drastic shift towards people orientation, which was on paper to its reality, which will sustain for a longer period. A sudden shift was observed in the work culture and style to ensure business continuity. Although bearing in mind these ways and strategies in a situation, there might be a chance to identify new ways and means to gauge how effective social distancing could be during remotely working scenarios. When things revisit to normalcy, it will allow the executives and the leaders to reflect on what worked, what did not, and most significantly – why, which will help build up new knowledge.

Statement on ethical issues

Research involving people and/or animals is in full compliance with current national and international ethical standards.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

Author contributions

The authors read the ICMJE criteria for authorship and approved the final manuscript.

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