

VOICES UNHEARD IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

The world turned upside down as the newly discovered virus affects millions of people across the globe. Covid-19 has pros and cons that need to be considered by everyone especially in the Philippine Education System. This study wanted to determine the actions taken by transformative leaders' despite of their challenges in Covid-19. It will deal on the contribution of ordinary employees in the University who were part of the skeletal force who worked during the pandemic. Their contribution is contributory in the success of the institution as it surpassed the ordeal of the COVID -19 pandemic. This study employed a qualitative method through a narrative inquiry, which employed, using coding, and themes. The respondents were chosen purposively since there were only few identified to be part of the skeletal force. Employees had various job descriptions and roles in the institution. They experienced a lot of devastation not only in their workplace but also in the environment and yet, they remained strong and brave while doing their job, accomplishing their role, improving their competence, and finishing their tasks as part of their performance-based contribution for the university. Their professional and personal growth will amplify their voices in the academic institution.

Keywords: experience, personal competence, change, transformative leader

INTRODUCTION

The world turned upside down as the newly discovered virus affects millions of people across the globe. Education, business, travel, leisure, and even social interactions experienced a drastic change in our so called "Normal Living." The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) caused a pandemic and an unprecedented psychological stress on people not only in the Philippines but also around the world (Lu, Wang, Lin, & Li, 2020). People across the globe experienced anxiety, depression as well as stress on the situation. The policy of home quarantine affects the mental health of everyone. People just tend to follow the rules and regulations given by the officials of the

government or institution. This means that coronavirus pandemic effect was large, fast, and has no boundaries. The Corona Virus Disease of 2019 has resulted to a global health crisis. As of November 10, 2020, about 50, 738, 093 million people got positive with covid-19 and 1,262,132 million have died. In the Philippines, this translates into almost 396,395 infected and 7,539 deaths (Worldometer, 2020).

Covid-19 has a pros and cons that needed to be considered by everyone especially in the Philippine Education System. Daniel (2020) described the COVID-19 pandemic as a huge challenge to education systems. The academic officials address this crisis as a big challenge on how they will cope with the situations, on how they will address the students as well as to what will be the response of the institution on the "New

Normal.” The Coronavirus pandemic outbreak increased the gaps in the education sector globally (Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma, & Alsayed, 2020). It created educational disruptions as well as the global health concern that seemed to hard to manage.

The government struggled as the COVID 19 has made its impact to the educational system. As cases of covid-19 rise inevitably, it is essential to have an adjustment in the learning process in formal education. Not only did the pandemic has affected different people in different ways but it has also affected the school calendar activities and the teaching modalities, especially in the Philippines. Undeniably, the academic institution practices have drastically been affected by this pandemic. Likewise, the pandemic has affected the most the ordinary people in the community of terms of the availability of resources whether financial matters, materials or health condition. They experienced difficulty in coping with the new system of education as the latter tried to answer the call of the present time, that is the transition from face-to-face to online learning. Fry (2001) stated that online learning refers to use of internet and some other technologies to create instructional materials for educational purposes or the delivery of instruction. Moreover, Hrastinki (2008) described the two types of online learning; synchronous and asynchronous online learning. In line with this, not all people know how to navigate the laptop or cellphones or worst they don’t have gadgets for online learning.

In addition, this research wanted to determine the actions taken by the transformative leaders’ despite of the challenges they faced because of the Covid-19. Another question to dwell on is whether they are effective leaders in the use of the blended learning. In addition, this study aimed to determine the processes they have gone through to continue their vision of inspiring and motivating students amidst of this pandemic, whether they have stopped doing actions to help the students. Likewise, this research will identify the factors that hindered the actions of the transformative leaders. Researcher wanted to amplify the voices unheard in the time of pandemic.

Conceptual Framework shows the interrelationship of the following indicators for each variable. It also reflects the focus of the study that

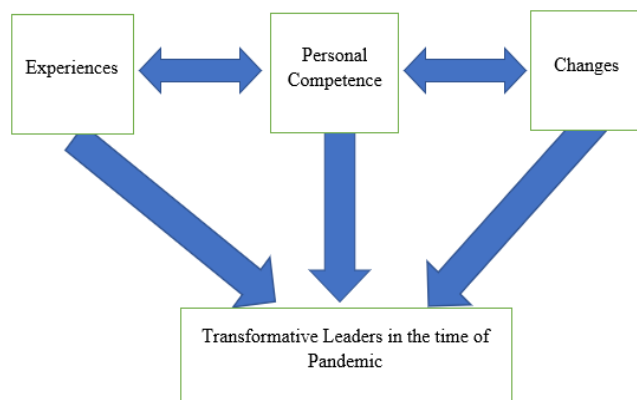


Figure 1. Transformative Leaders in the time of Pandemic

will be the basis and guide upon describing and further discussing the effects of pandemic among the transformative leaders in the time of pandemic manifested from each variable.

The relationship of the indicator experience to personal competence showed the development of one’s individual. Researchers used the experience as a technique to gain deeper insight into the needs and dreams of prospective users of new products (Visser, Stappers, Van der Lugt, & Sanders, 2005). This means that it can show the relationship of experience and personal competence by developing personality through learning from the past. Personal competencies refer to the personal attributes and abilities of humans that affect the results in workplace as well as in life. And personal competence can illustrate the relationship to change. Turner (1990) described those researches deal with change in a variety of roles. These are reviewed in order to formulate general principles governing role change. In this, researchers can perceive change as effect of pandemic to transformative leaders by determining the challenges and actions taken. Moreover, this framework will also reveal the transformative leaders in the time of pandemic by identifying their significant contributions to the organization that made them to feel proud. This study will also show the aspirations of the transformative leaders in institutions/organizations that they are serving.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY



This study dealt with the contributions of ordinary employees in the university who were part of the skeletal force who worked during the pandemic. Their contribution is inevitable in the success of the institution as it surpassed the ordeal of the COVID -19 pandemic.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following:

1. Identify the role/duties/responsibilities in the institution.
2. Find the number of years in the institution.
3. Determine the challenges met during the COVID 19 pandemic while serving as part of the skeletal force of the university.
4. Recognize the significant contributions that made them feel proud and achieved in their work.
5. Know the aspirations/dreams in the near future while serving the university.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method through narrative inquiry where coding and themes were used. Ohman (2005) stated that qualitative research methodology was focused on the individuals' lived experiences as they presented their insights, perceptions, ideas, feelings and attitudes. In addition, the research focused on the experiences and personal competence of the respondents that showed their aspirations in the future. This also employed the narrative inquiry which was a detailed examination about the structure as well as the content of the experiences or story of the respondents. Wells (2011) described the narrative inquiry as a method which was ideal for the research study of intra-and inter-personal process.

The respondents were chosen purposively since there were only few identified to be part of the skeletal force. A face-to-face interview was conducted to generate answers for the guide questions. The questions were translated in the vernacular to let the respondents better understand the questions. Answers in vernacular were also accepted so that the respondents can articulate their thoughts on the questions. Interviews in this study were important as a structured conversation where the interviewer asked questions to the interviewee and provided

answers which were essential for the reliability of the research paper. Opdenakker (2006) stated that face-to-face interviews have long been the dominant interview technique in the field of qualitative research.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Role/duties/responsibilities in the institution

The actions of transformative leaders are inspired by social justice and equity (Jun, 2011). Moreover, leaders during time of pandemic are essential to response on the challenges associated with Covid-19 and make critical decision as well (Ahern, & Lo, 2020). In the institution, there are various job description that will tell the role, duties, or responsibilities of specific employee. Likewise, the employees who were interviewed have different job descriptions. There were instructors or teachers, utility, secretary, document control officer in accounting office, and human resource staff. These employees help the institution to continue the legacy of giving not just quality education but also efficient services to all stakeholders. In addition, these employees are big part of institution's success particularly in the time of pandemic as skeletal worker. Their response on the challenges associated with Covid-19 and the decisions they made were essential particularly with regard to their job description (Ahern, & Lo, 2020). Due to a pandemic, transformative leaders need to think deeply on how they will contribute to the institution, how they will become effective and efficient employees. The respondents continue to



serve the institution, the teachers/instructors need to deliver instruction through different platforms online. Human resource staff members were the ones who handled the record maintenance, provide clerical support were on the preparation of different payrolls, preparation and computation of withholding tax of all employees, submission of monthly disbursement report to Commission on Audit, and assessment of fees during enrollment, preparation of vouchers, filing annual returns to Bureau of Internal Revenue and records management. On the other hand, those who are in the clerical office and document control office, their functions involved the coordination of the team of the Document Controllers, set-up the Document Control System, first line of contract in the case of an escalation of a Document Control related issue, gate keeper of the Document Control rules and procedures, arbitration technical authority role regarding Document Control issues, ensure that documents issued to users authorized timely and updated, and ensure proper distribution of the documents used in performing duties for the QMS of the respective units/college/office. These responsibilities were still made amidst the pandemic. They were part of skeletal workforce. Leach, MacGregor, Scoones, & Wilkinson (2021) attested that response to the needs of urgency are considering part of the post-pandemic transformations. In line with this, transformative leaders are very much affected in this pandemic and they need to rethink development and transformative actions to continue their goal in the middle of this pandemic.

Shields (2011) explained that transformative leaders are clear on their actions where goals are present to achieve as well as the processes are need to attain by them. Transformative leaders are not based their actions on the technical strategies and solutions rather than they are more on moral dialectic. Their approach always wanted to inspire others and respect others by giving out simple communication to address the gap of each other and how they will give solution to it.

The traits of the transformative leaders promote change for the success of the organization, a similar pattern of cultural perspective, and a continuous drive for the development and improvement of everyone. And in

this pandemic, they continue to serve the institution and work hard to do their responsibilities in accordance to their job description.

2. Number of years in the institution

In terms of years in service, there were novice employees and there were also seasoned employees. The respondents interviewed that they have been part of the institution for only two years but there were also those who have served the for more than two decades or 22 years in service. Meanwhile, the other employees were four years in service, some have nine years, 15, years, and 17 years. They worked not just for them but also for the institution and its stakeholders. According to Uppal et al. (2014), there is insignificant relationship between the number of years in service to the job performance of the employees. However, the commitment of the employees together with their job performance has significant relationship with their administrators or school leaders which was essential for the survival of the institution (Babalola, 2016). This was attested by Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, & Lin (2020) that leaders inspired employees will result immersive performance of the employees which will result to the retention in their workplace.

3. Challenges met during the COVID 19 pandemic while serving as part of the skeletal force of the university

The coronavirus disease or Covid-19 is the current outbreak in the world which started in Hubei Province in the Republic of China (Fauci, Lane, & Redfield, 2020). It is a kind of virus which is transmittable between humans and it has caused pandemic around the world (Yuki, Fujiogi, & Koutsogiannaki, 2020). It caused negative effects to different businesses and institutions both public and private sectors.

Undeniably, employees around the world have experienced loss of job because of the pandemic. Nonetheless, there were those employees who still have work and can work from their homes while others have to contend to being in the workplace as they are part of the skeletal workforce. They are considered as the frontliners.



On the other hand, this pandemic signifies a massive global health crisis (Van Bavel, Baicker, Boggio, Capraro, Cichocka, Cikara, & Willer, 2020). It has affected the health conditions of all people especially those employees that need to be present at their work for them to do their duties and responsibilities in the academic institution. Some employees are affected and got positive with Covid-19, while other employees were nervous to be affected also but yet they have to do their job even they have experienced difficulties. Indeed, it was stressful and risky but for them to have income, they needed to do their work as part of their role in the university. COVID-19 Pandemic was a big challenge to the institution, a transition from “Normal” to “New Normal.” The delivery of instructions before was face-to-face but today, flexible learning is the new way of delivering instructions to all learners whether synchronous class, asynchronous class or modular. This global crisis is a big challenge for all educational institutions due to CoVid-19 (Marsicano, Felten, Toledo, & Buitendorp, 2020). Ordinary employees gave their best to fulfill their role even their health and their families’ health may be affected. They wanted to strengthen the academic institution despite of this devastation CoVid-19.

Kelly (2011) defined pandemic as an epidemic that occurs worldwide. With this, the number of morbidity rate have risen and most of the countries have been forced to close their economy for the safety of their people by doing social distancing and lockdown. This pandemic has affected the lives of people not only in the economic status of the countries but most specially in the educational system not only in the Philippines but worldwide. This is the most challenging part of the employees in the time of pandemic. Transformative leaders may sacrifice their lives to serve the people. There is a big transition in the delivery of instructions or what they call blended learning; synchronous, asynchronous, and modular here in the Philippines. In addition, leaders are the ones responsible in handling this situation with the help of its people.

4. Significant contributions of employees that made them feel proud in their work

Performance-Based Contribution is one factor of ordinary employees to make them transformative leaders. The commitment of all employees is highly valuable (Bandula, & Jayatilake, 2016). It is highlighted that the commitment of the employees contributes on the success of the academic institution especially in this time of pandemic. Employees’ commitment has a great impact in the institution caused it shows the goals and values of institution which an advantage to attain the vision and mission through this performance-based contribution of transformative leaders. In this time of pandemic, employees are eager to accomplish their tasks given to them to sustain the services given by the institution. They hold onto their responsibilities to have a good outcomes or results caused of their works amidst CoVid-19. The idea of responsibility has become noteworthy of the various agenda (Blowfiled, & Murray, 2014). In different ways, employees gave assistance to all stakeholders for the reason that it is significant for employees to communicate and harmonize efforts across various tasks (Larkin, Pierce, & Gino (2012). Assistance is the action of transformative leaders or the ordinary employees to help in their tasks, activities or jobs. Transformative leaders are performance-oriented that can contribute changes in the organization through their attitudes and goal-driven.

5. Aspirations/ dreams of the employees in the University

Professional and personal growth are the primary purpose of the ordinary employees of the academic institution that can contribute a lot in the future while they are serving the university. Lowery-Moore, Latimer & Villate (2016) conversed that personal and professional growth in terms of knowledge, skills, confidence in abilities as well as dispositions will be the means of change in organization which absolutely influence the atmosphere of the university. Through the personal development of the employees, it helps to boost the confidence and ease the work of every individual. It will also attain the desired goal of the organization. In addition, Clarke & Hollingsworth (2002) attested that professional growth approach to personal development is to personal adequacy

that can use greater fulfillment as a practitioner of their job. Moreover, transformational principles of personal evolution will be used to induce professional growth and development. Most of the employees wanted to be promoted not to change their positions or duties but to increase their salaries to sustain the needs of their families. Pergamit & Veum (1999) defined promotion as the no involvement of change position but only to elevate the present position. Employees desires to have progress in their skills and knowledge to have self-improvement that they can use in their job and also help the university as well as the stakeholders who needs their services.

Leaders are inspired by others (Cherry, K. 2010). The goal of transformative leader is to change and transform the organization in a better way. Little thing or action can make better for the organization or institution. In the study of Montouri and Donnelly (2017), they stated that everyone can be a leader and everyone can contribute to the organization and that is called transformative leadership. Transformative Leadership affects the ability of individuals to transform the organization or even the community even they do not have position/s in the organizational structure. It is more on social equity that everyone has the right to make their actions and decisions that could help change and transform the organization. This leadership style focuses on social justice. Graham & Nevarez (2017) and Shields & Hesbol (2020) affirmed that transformative leadership operates equity, inclusions, social justice, as well as fairness. These aspects utilize to empower the people belong to marginalized communities.

In the study of Caldwell, & Anderson (2021), transformative leaders gave a respected model for university professors as they communicate with the learners as well as by helping them to learn and prepare for the challenges of the modern world. This means that the transformative leaders have an obligation to the learners to be some ethical leaders as they guiding their stewardships. In addition, Graham & Nevarez (2017) stated that transformative leaders address the needs of the diverse populations and empower individuals in the community.

CONCLUSIONS

The Covid- 19 (COVID-19) pandemic results unprecedented psychological stress in all people across the globe (Lu, Wang, Lin, & Li, 2020). Covid-19 has a pros and cons that needed to be considered by everyone especially in the Philippine Education System. And this is the time where ordinary people made big significant actions to sustain the services of the university. They are the skeletal work where they are prone to contact the virus thru transmission of the Covid-19 and yet they are brave doing their roles not only for themselves but also for the university and its people.

Employees have a vital role in the organization that contributes to the success of the university and these people are agent of change in both simple and complex actions. Their experiences in this time of pandemic developed their competence as doing their job that results to change for better way. Ordinary employees are the transformative leaders in this time while people are experiencing CoVid-19 and their voices are unheard but yet they are still doing their role to achieve their goal as an employee.

The CoVid-19 Pandemic has negative effects in the society in terms of loses of jobs, doing their roles in the university as an ordinary employee, affects their health and their families, delivery of instructions to the students, and adaptation to the new normal. But in spite of these difficulties, employees are committed and passionate to do their job.

They are eager to accomplish their tasks in the university. Their output will help the university to sustain the services and its people as well. And this is the performance-based contribution of transformative leaders in this time of pandemic. They are ordinary employees who are willing to extend their services for all stakeholders of the university to give assistance and accomplish their responsibility as an employee. Professional and Personal Growth will bring positive atmosphere in the workplace. In self-development, it helps to develop the skills, knowledge, confidence, dispositions, and attitude that will can be shared in the present job. Enhancing the competence is also enhancing professional attributes. Aiming for the self is also aiming for the others. It is the pathway to achieve the set goals of transformative leaders even the voice is unheard.



Definitely, time will come that their voices will be heard and be amplified.

Employees are having various job descriptions and roles in the institution. They are experiencing a lot of devastation not only in their workplace but also in the environment and yet, they are still strong and brave doing their job, accomplishing their role, improving their selves, and finishing their tasks as part of their performance-based contribution for the university. Their professional and personal growth will amplify their voices in the academic institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In future studies, the researchers may compare and analyze the experiences of the transformative leaders on the other variables and may use this study as their reference guide. They can also use other data with a bigger number of respondents to have good results in terms of developing competence of individuals, compare and analyze all the experiences, and be a catalyst of change. Research in the same context which utilizes quantitative methodology is also encouraged.

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