

# Leadership qualities needed in pandemics: a critical analysis

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## Abstract

Globally, the pandemic caused by COVID-19, has put in brakes to activities in the entire world. As on 3 July 2020 world has 34,45,519 cases affected by virus and a death toll of 2,42,623. Except few countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Vietnam and North Korea almost all other countries are affected. The death toll varies from country to country; US having the maximum 65,960 deaths while Nepal, Bhutan, Vietnam, North Korea do not have any deaths so far. The control under certain conditions has been the most important factor in a nation and the strategies adopted by the leaders have played the crucial role. In China itself, it was controlled with a heavy hand. In India too the control has been very significant for low number of affected and deaths. The leadership qualities such as deep vision, formation of strategies, timely decision making, control of manpower, health administration, lockdowns, curfew and financial aspects to ensure minimum damage to men and economy. He has to maintain strict discipline to ensure lockdowns and curfews and also have to keep in mind the needs of the lower strata. He has multifarious task for which he has to select suitable persons to manage the affair and control. This paper does the critical analysis of the leadership qualities needed in pandemics and the strategizing, decision making and effective application of the decisions

## 1. Introduction

COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease 2019) has been declared as pandemic by World Health Organisation (WHO). The virus originated in Wuhan in China, where first death by COVID-19 was reported on 27 November 2019 was flooded with casualties by January 2020. A time came when over 5 lakhs were affected in Wuhan itself. Soon after, the effect of this disease spread globally. The most effected immediately were Iran, Italy and Spain. By March 190 states were affected and COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by WHO. The toll went on rising exponentially globally [1, 2]. On 03 May 2020 the casualties globally are 34, 45,519. The table given in the table below shows a very grim situation.

**The Most Affected**

Nations	Deaths	Confirmed
USA	67,448	1,160,838
UK	28,131	1,82,260
FRANCE	24,760	1,68,396
SPAIN	25,100	2,45,567
ITALY	28,710	2,09,328
GERMANY	6,812	1,64,967
China	4,633	82,877

Kind courtesy The Tribune, 3 April, 2020

Some countries controlled it with a heavy hand. For example North Korea sealed its borders with China and strictness brought the result with no casualties so far. However, certain countries were caught relaxing as their leaders did not read the situation and took delayed actions. They woke up only when the casualties started mounting at a great speed. European countries Italy, Spain, Germany and England as well as USA, Iran were the worst hit. This happened because of their leaders did not take appropriate remedial action in time. For this very reason this paper has been written for the world leaders to show up qualities needed under such calamities.

A pandemic is the one which is causing global damage. COVID-19 is not only pandemic; it has also created uncertainty. Combined pandemic and uncertainty created fear and to an extent, panic. This panic was well seen in India when the labourers started walking individually and in small groups for long distances. Some even died during long trails. Fear of the unknown is always the most dreaded. The world does not have any treatment for COVID-19 as yet. Since it is a Nano-material and contagious, scientist and doctors are not able to definitely locate where from this disease started, how it started and what is the ultimate treatment for this. It is also not yet known whom, when, where this virus will infect and likely to transmit the disease. The invisible has to be made visible and then confronted with the killing agent for a fight out.

Scientists have not yet found the detailed characteristics of this virus. Lacking this they have not yet found the treatment for this disease. Observing the symptoms, they have advised certain precautions like social distancing, staying and working from home, not coming in direct contact with outsiders, washing hands with soap after any outside contact, keeping nose and mouth covered with mask, sanitising self, home and surroundings and any material which may cause transfer of this virus etc. The time period of this disease to be in action is 14 days.

To fight this pandemic the responsibility lies on the UNO, the national, state and even at local level leaders. Discussion here is primarily on national level leaders. The qualities required for these leaders are discussed in the following paragraphs.

## **2. Strategic, Tactical and Technical Control**

Control of such critical situation is very essential at strategic, tactical and technical level. Strategic planning is done at the global and national level to counter the effect of the pandemic

### **Planning**

**Knowledge:** When such a pandemic strikes, people are looking for direction and guidance, and that's why leaders must exert their influence to shape the best way forward. To ensure this, leaders must have strong knowledge about the pandemic. They must have all the facts of the past and the present situation about the pandemic and study the action taken earlier for such diseases to evolve future course of action. Since controlling pandemic is not an individual task, the leader will require certain teams to perform this task. These teams may be (a) Team of Experts (b) Teams of planners and (c) Team of executors. Detailed discussions are needed first to draw the outlines and then to go into detail and tying up nuts and bolt through guidelines and rules and implementation.

### **Framing of Guidelines and Rules**

To bring positive results it is essential that we have an optimum use of what is available and work out what additional is needed and how to acquire it. Rules are framed to ensure the best use of men, money and materials based on the results of such previous pandemic and action plan made to meet the existing pandemic.

### **Implementation:**

There may be excellent plans but these plans do not produce desired results if not implemented properly. For this there has to be proper selection and forming of teams and the role of each team and their members must be clearly defined.

### **Task distribution**

Role of each authority must be clearly defined to ensure maximum control. Even when the leaders find the things are going out of his control he has to have patience and analyse the direction of the change of situation. Knowledge of past cases, previous events in the present context and the action taken earlier under such conditions must be analyse and applied logically and systematically to ensure that actions must match the situations. Any over-reaction may be counter-productive and any under reaction may allow the situation to go out of control. To ensure that the outcome is positive very balanced judgement and decision making is needed watching the rolling out results and changing the control situation wise. Continuous monitoring thus becomes very essential. Watch the situation intently and change according to the situations requires. Be continuously creative and Innovative.

### **Expert Guidance and direction**

Teams of experts are needed for continuous evaluations and analysis and preparing strategic, tactical and technical plans thus is the most important step to ensure effective decision making for such controls. Leader must be visible at the front to all his teams and those affected. Executives in the workplace or working from home should find you available at any time. Fighting such a deadly virus is not only causing fear but also causes stress in the in the minds of the individuals as well as their families. They must be occasionally talked to and encouraged for their good jobs. This was seen in India when the leaders asked entire India to show solidarity and cheer up the medical, police and suppliers working in most difficult circumstances against COVID-19 and the nation stood for them cheering up. Later this cheering up was done by some other European countries as well. The field workers must be listened to intently and helped where needed. Infallible communication is essential to ensure that there is no wedge from top to bottom. Layers of actions must be flat as far as possible for faster communication and minimum of misunderstanding.

### **Human Resource management:**

The leaders are the kingpins around which the entire set up revolves. There is no place for any misgivings. For this the leaders have to be truthful and exact. Arranging for the right man for the right job at the right time is most essential under such circumstances. Men require essential tools for performance of their duties. For their tasks they must be properly equipped. Providing right type of equipment at the right place too is essential. Certain countries like Italy, Spain, Iran and even USA failed to have sufficient ventilators as they did not foresee the impending impact did not order their companies to manufacture these in abundance or alternate to purchase from other countries. The results were mounting casualties. Additional funds will be needed for hiring the experts, creating infrastructure and equipment which has to be arranged at top priority ad at a very short time. Failures occur if the planning is not made considering all situations. Timely SWOT analysis and action there upon, thus become important. Selection of experts, field workers and assistant too is of utmost importance. In case, the right man is not at the right place at the right time and is not properly equipped the completion of task may not be possible. Leaders have to show total honesty and integrity in planning organising, developing and supervising the entire operation They must communicate their plans and actions effectively, take strong and firm decisions when needed,

delegate and empower after due deliberations and place the right man at the right place at the right time, be accountable for all actions taken by them.

In fact they must be an inspiration for all those involved in the operation and those who are to be treated. The national leaders have to be a firm beacon light instilling confidence in one and all. He should have clarity of the objective, deep knowledge and expertise in directing, and guiding towards the objective and available at hand to provide all resources and assistance needed.

They must instil confidence by first being fully confident about achieving the aim and ensuring that the selected personnel have full confidence in fighting such pandemic. When they work with commitment and passion, others are bound to follow them and they all together march towards the aims and objective making it easier and approachable, may be whatever difficult level it may have..

Most important to build confidence is ensuring the safety and security of the personnel up to lowest level. Right place, right equipment, right training and guidance and right assistance ensure the confidence of the people working towards the objectives. Leaders must show empathy with the people you deal with. Humanistic approach is the best approach. However, when hard decision is needed, evaluate the results, pros and cons and the situation objectively and critically. Once convinced never falter and enact these firmly.

Situation may arise when under stress and uncertainties the leaders may have to take hard decisions. These actions must be taken without delay if convinced. However, the leaders must control stress over themselves and ensure their own safety and security as well so that they remain in the saddle and wade through the sea of difficulties. It has been seen that certain leaders do not care for their own health risks. We have the examples of Prime Minister of England and health Minister of Iran who did not care for their self and were the casualties leading the nations in limbo. Health safety with all precautions from the pandemic must be strictly observed. Resting, sleeping, eating and exercising regularly and properly when under stress become more important. All precautions which are supposed to be taken by others should also be taken by the leaders as well e.g., washing hands, social distancing, regular health check-ups, wearing masks etc., must be taken regularly and all public must made aware through their own leadership that they are following what they are asking others to follow. President USA Mr Trump thought it to be a bravery not to wear mask. Such risks are not warranted since this is no bravery.

Leaders who stand by their men, taking strong decisions and challenges when needed to do everything possible for performance of the responsibility, taking responsibility in case of failures, delegating responsibility and authority effectively and monitoring the situation continuously while remaining in loop ensures that the epidemic is controlled [3-6].

### **Other effects**

The leaders have to be fully conversant with the sociological, economic, political and geographical effects and should prepare his government and the people for normalising the situations in all these fields. Stock markets, hotel business, the tourism, cinema, aviation, construction business, consumer durables, textiles, manufacturing Industry, service industry and poultry are such fields which have been seriously affected. To bring them on rail whose investments and efforts will be needed which have to be planned well before.

All problems bring opportunities. Leaders must be continuously looking forward to availing opportunities. The human resources are tested. The people who worked exceptionally can be singled out for better future tasks. It can be seen that as a result of the pandemic, the lock-down of transport has ensured the entire environment clean and green. The sky is clear, the ozone layer once breached is recovering and the flora and fauna coming to its original. What was a beautiful scene for the Jullundur in Punjab residents seeing the snow bound hills of Himalayas from their roof-tops. The breathing problems

are getting reduced. The TB may also be controlled. The leaders must also plan for the future by taking lessons from the faults and taking advantages from the better outcome.

### **3. Conclusion**

The leaders must be both democratic when dealing with public and dictatorial when taking hard decisions. When hard decisions are needed, evaluate their outcomes intently. Once convinced never to go back and enact these firmly. Soft but firm may be the rule for implementation. They must select, delegate and empower their subordinates after due deliberations and place the right man at the right place at the right time. Showing empathy with the people being deal with, with a humanistic approach is the best course. Since all strategies and decisions may not bring desired results and there may be failures one after the other leaders must never say die. We have seen the head of Italian Government on the verge of throwing his hands, which is not expected of a genuine leader. A leader must continue till success and should have strong resilience to bear the effects of each failed action and build on it to be successful. People especially in democracies are needed to be taken along from their hearts. Hence their feelings must be taken into consideration. Strong motivation must ensure that they all feel attached emotionally. 'Safety and security of your men should be at the foremost' as is the dictum of Indian Military Academy. Leaders must not show their authority through force. Authority is judged by the actions and results. Rather than being haughty have humility in mind and heart. The judiciousness and equality is the basis of all the decisions. A leader of a country is the leader of all; hence he has to think and act for all. He cannot afford to be partial like a mother who treats all her siblings equally.

All plans, decisions and actions should be very transparent so that all the people feel that the direction being followed is correct and is benefitting all of them equally. Nothing should smack of mala-fide or tribal tendency. The decision of sending Corona affected persons from Sindh and Punjab being shifted to Mirpur stealthily in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir by Imran Khan has bounced back by sudden upheaval in POK against Imran Khan because it was not justified on the balance of equality and justice.

Above all the leaders has to be visionary. They must see the impact from all angles and the effect of their plans and actions at a global angle. Prime Minister of India Mr Modi's action of one day self-curfew was a wonderful step and appreciated globally. The direction for honouring the hospital and police staff by cheering them on that day was with a good intention but was not adopted in the spirit of the lock out. It was because the procedures were not clarified to the public in general and pre-warnings of wrong actions were not given. Order of Lockdown for 15 days without catering for the arrangements for stay and food of the labourers and poor strata misfired as these labourers started on long journeys in view of their losing the jobs and in fear of hunger hovering over their heads. However, the overall effects of all his actions were positive and were even lauded by UNO body. Hence leaders must also very sensitive to the reactions not only from his people but also from the world.

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