

Examining Post-Pandemic Behavioural Change in Managing Team Agility: A Study of Leaders in Multinational Corporations in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to solicit insights into behavioural change in managing team agility in the wake of the recent Covid-19 pandemic. The objective is to inform corporations in their transformational strategies in developing leaders and clarifying the behaviours according to a redefined meaning of team dynamics for organisational resilience. The mounting competitive pressures from external environments during the pandemic is pressing multinational corporations (MNCs) in Malaysia to swiftly address the daunting challenge in adapting to team agility developments to become resilient to change. Leaders now need to step up and embrace the swift unpredictability at the workplace; hence, requiring leaders to think and behave differently in order to effectively lead their teams. There have been many dramatic work-related impacts of the pandemic, creating reverberations across organisations and worker interactions. Organisational thinking in terms of behavioural change in managing team agility becomes of utmost importance as the future beyond the pandemic remains uncertain. Whether it was at the start of the pandemic when major shifts in working arrangements were required to help curb the initial spread of COVID-19 at the workplace, to the more recent scenarios of finding a suitable style or method in leading and managing adaptable teams, organisations seem to be still struggling in defining the right formula in shaping leader behaviours that can serve teams in building organisational resilience. The overarching environment is compelling MNCs to obtain a crucial step on ensuring workforces are equipped with the right skills that are paramount to effective leadership in the hope of adjusting the team and organisation to tap into the ability to think in an agile way. Decisions, too, need to be made more quickly, and abruptly in such unprecedented times of rapid market shifts. The research conceptual framework is designed to determine the behavioural change that facilitates managing team mindset in embracing the process of behavioural change to achieve a newly defined concept for team dynamics. This research will analyse the meanings of 1) unlearning; 2) teaming; 3) collaboration; 4) agile; and 5) simplicity. These concepts will be relooked to form a new understanding of how leaders contribute to the effectiveness in managing team agility post-pandemic. The qualitative methodology is employed, and data will be collected using survey questionnaires, followed by in-depth interviews of MNCs team leaders using semi-structured interview instruments. A survey questionnaire designed based on items measuring the five concepts of team agility will be disseminated to fifty team-based employees of electrical and electronics (E&E) MNCs. The E&E industry is identified for sampling as it is the key driver in Malaysia's industrial development and ranks as the seventh-largest exporter in the world. The data collection exercise continues with the conduct of five focus group interviews of five strategy level leaders each. In-depth interviews will be conducted with ten, or more to reach saturation, agile practising, and non-practising leaders. A detailed protocol is designed to ensure adherence is met for rigour and reliability in the study. Quantitative findings shall then be synthesised with qualitative findings through triangulation for sense-making.

Keywords: post-pandemic, behavioural change, managing team agility