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LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN UNPREDICTABLE SITUATIONS IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Leadership plays an important role in accepting changes and challenges so that company can attain predetermined goals or objectives in a more effective manner, especially in unpredicted global pandemics situations. This report highlights the importance of effective leadership and people management in the transformation of an organization. It describes the workforce as the source of competitive advantages and as a contributor to achieving a high level of performance and purposes even in the worst pandemic situations. It also defined various strategies that are required to retain and develop employers' brands and explain how strategies can enhance the employees' commitment and engagement within the organization. The theories and concepts also consider this for dealing with several changes. It concludes that leadership is an important resource of the business organization, in the implementation of changes forces by the external environment. To meet the aspirations of the organization, resilient leadership strategies would be a useful tool in the worse business environments.

Disciplinary: Management Sciences.

1 INTRODUCTION

Change is inevitable; thus, dynamism is a key feature for any business entity's survival. The rule of everchanging applies to all organizations, hence every organization always focusing on making changes and improve their existing system to endure vying work environments.   The need for change is usually forced by external and internal organizational factors. Organizational external factors such as new regulation, enlarged competition, modern technologies, labor unions, climate change, etc., whereas internal factors such as the execution of new technologies, management policies, product/service specifications, etc. However, the process of change itself a complex process, and therefore many times it gives negative results due to unexpected resistance from the different sources.

To successfully implement change, effective leadership and management could be the major factor in the process. At the same, it has been observed that organizational leaders had faced heightened pressure in organizational change formulation and implementation (Pawar & Eastman, 1997). While conceptualizing the organizational change, it is defined as "a relevant environmental shift that demands intentional organizational responses to contain new procedures, rules, values, processes, and personnel belief system" (Seeger, et al., 2005 Porras & Silvers, 1991, p. 52;). With the reference to the stated definition, an organizational change is considered as a robust area of analysis that primarily focused on strategic change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979). Organizational change has always been complemented by the planned strategies, aligned with the organizational goal. Thus, the implementation of a flexible strategic change process, it helps the organizational system and members to upgrade and modify the existing system under the requirements of new circumstances. Such as a different way to contain new technologies, contingencies, processes, and personnel values (Kanter,1983; Mintzberg, 1984; Barczak et al., 1988).

Change management is defined as the conversion of the individual, team members, and organization from currents to specific future states so that vision and strategies can be implemented. This will define about workforce for competitive advantages. It formulates strategies for workforce retention and development as well as enhances their commitment and efficiency within the organization. The present research study is an attempt to define the leadership approaches, theories, concepts, tools, and techniques that are interconnected with organizational changes. It expounds intellectual capacity, leadership abilities, and managerial capabilities that are concomitant with the change management and contribution of people to achieve goals or targeted vision of the organization.

The outcome of the organizational change process is highly influenced by leadership practices. Thus, leadership can be recognized as the art and quality of an individual to motivate and influence employees' behaviors to act to attain tasks or objectives. Leadership is an ongoing practice, aimed to energies the skills and capabilities to extract the best results from the people, through positive motivation to achieve organizational goal. In such a way, leaders play a vital role in the organization as the source of bringing new ideas and to create a corrective path in the organizational change process. The importance of leadership highlighted by many researchers such as "Successful leadership not only develops vision, mission, strategy, and cultural value of the organization for change, but also empowers and motivates employees in change commitment." (Gill, 2002).

In change management, the transformational leadership style gained high attention among the researcher and academician. Transformational leaders are recognized as charismatic, vision-oriented, confident, and trustworthy leaders, easily reap the trust and belief of employees. It has been highlighted in research that transformational leadership has a significant positive relationship with the employees' performance even in the organizational change process (Liu, 2008; Herold, et al. 2008; Paulsen, et al. 2013). In comparison to transactional leadership, transformational leadership brought positive outcomes, especially in change management (Eisenbach, et al. 1999; Hill et al., 2012). Empirically, it evident that transformational leadership has been optimistically associated with employees' performance in change processes (Herold et al.,2008). The process of the organizational change management system requires minimal alterations in the daily activities and formal interactions, which progressively improves the performance. in implementation of the strategic change, it may impact the organization and its members in negative, thus it has been indorsed that the

stepwise change model would be beneficial at the operational level (Johnson & Scholes 1999). To develop effective implementation plans, Johnson & Scholes (1999), (p. 46) classified four types of strategic change stages such as continuity, flux, incremental, and transformational. In the continuation, Despite, et al. (1996, pp. 23–7) provided three categories of organizational change like developmental changes, transitional changes, and transformational changes.

This study analyzes the conceptual models and qualitative researches, highlighting the importance of effective leadership and change management in the present scenario. References have been taken from the research article, studies, and theoretical models published in reputed journals, to provide insights into leadership in change management, to deal with the inverse conditions of business environments. In the current business situations where organizations are encountered with the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a need to understand the importance of leadership and change management for organizational sustainability. Thus, extensive literature has been provided in the subsequent parts of the study, which highlights and provides the guidelines to deal with the inverse business conditions with effective leadership and change management processes. This study research questions are to highlight the importance of effective leadership and change management in the transformation of the organization, to explore strategies that are required to retain and develop employers' brands, to highlight leadership strategies that work in uncertain businesses environment like Covid 19 pandemic, and to highlight suitable change management models during unprecedented Covid 19 situations.

2   LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MODELS

Every business organization has to operate in a dynamic environment that keeps on changing with time hence, there are several concepts, tools, and theories in association with organizational change. In the change, process organizations must adopt these concepts into their system so that the whole work process can be carried out effectively and efficiently (Tiwari, 2011). Some change management models that can help the organization to accept changes are described below:

Lewin's model of Change: Lewin's (1947) have proposed the model of change in which three steps are formulated to accept the change can be a useful tool in global pandemic situations (Figure 1). The suggested three dimensions of the model are the best fit to diagnose and implement the change. The first step 'unfreeze' involves that business organization must realize the need for bringing change and hence, the current working process must be modified with several means with relevance to the current pandemic situations. In continuation, the communication of the change process has also an important impact and should be available for every organizational member (Lloyd and Walker, 2011).
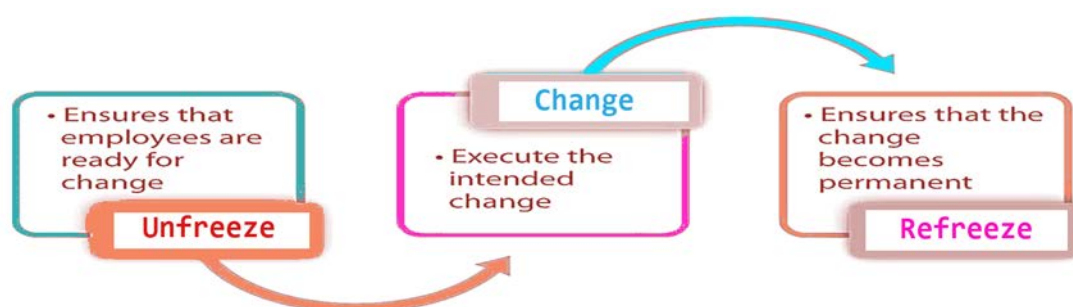

Figure 1: Model of change (Lewin, 1947).

In the second phase of the model, implementation of the change phase involves introducing the required changes into the system so that the work process must be conducted in a new way for smooth functioning in the pandemic environment. The last step refreeze involves monitoring the changes that have been implemented so that critical evaluation can be performed, and steps must be taken to remove any barrier which has been formed. Leading organizations in the pandemic can adopt this change model so that changes can be introduced effectively and results in accomplishing the ultimate organizational goal.
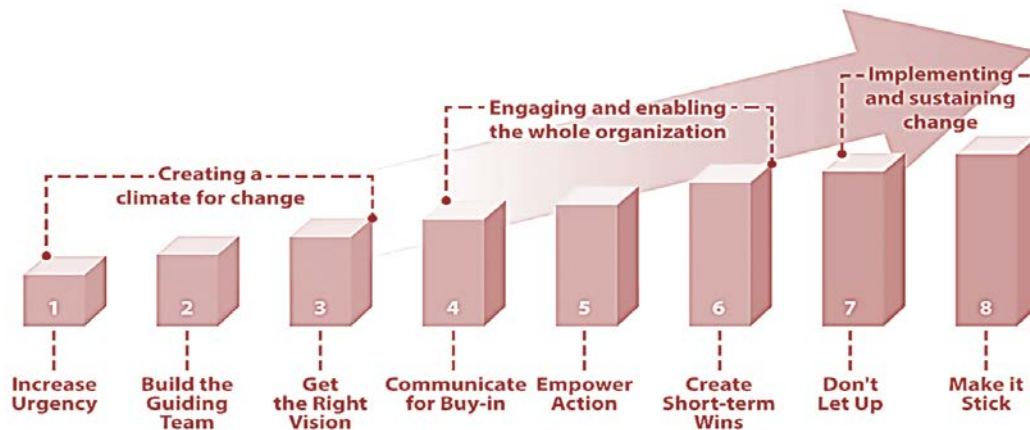
Figure 2: Kotter's (1996) Eight-step Change Model.

Kotter (1996), the 'Eight-step Change Model' of planned change is another suitable tool for sustainable change in the pandemic work environment. The model is also based on Lewin's change model, highlighting the focus on the organizational workforce at different levels of the change management process. In unpredictable pandemic situations, leaders can initiate the change by acknowledging the sense of urgency, forced by the external environment. Followed by creating a team of key team players for developing the new vision in such an environment. The coalition among team members shaped the organization towards successful change initiatives. Further, three steps in the process are entitled to engaging and enabling the whole organizational members in the pandemic situations, through the proper communication channel, empowering them for their respective tasks, and assigning them short-term objectives. Last two steps in the process responsible for anchoring the new changes into the organizational culture and system and ensuring the benefits attained through change endeavor are retained for a long.

3   LEADERSHIP OF MANAGING CHANGE

In the successful implementation of change, the role of leadership highly significant and foremost, supported by the corporate values and communication channel. "Leadership, in The Leadership Trust's view, is about showing the way: using personal power to win the hearts and minds of people to work together towards a common goal" (Gill, 2001). The major challenges for the global leaders in the change process are in form of creating a successful and sustainable work environment for sustainable organizational growth (Nixon 2002). In the continuation, the multiple dimensions of transformational leaders help to understand the requirement of change and face the challenges of change emotionally and intellectually (Dubrin 2001). Whereas the leader's most difficult task in the change process is to aligning all organizational members to adopt the change, develop the future vision, strategy formulation, and synergies the efforts towards the organizational goal (Hooper &

Potter 2000; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

3.1 LEADERSHIP AND WORKFORCE AS A SOURCE OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

In the present scenario, it is difficult to manage the workforce and develop people due to tough competition so this study defines that how effective a team can be formulated for achieving common tasks or objectives in a well manner (Koustelios, 2014). Leaderships play a crucial role in creating effective environments in the organizations by forming a skilled team, and management of people to get work done by them. In which Human resource departments function becomes more crucial to recruit or select the best candidates for their organizations, who can complete work and can perform the activities of the organization in a well manner. Contemporary management can be considered while making the strategies and formulate an action plan to create a better workforce within the firm. There is a possibility of contributing more to sustainable competitive advantages within an organization. Change management plays a crucial role in every business firm which depends on environmental factors that affect the firm in various ways (Berger and Berger, 2011).

The human resource function is very important for every business firm that must be performed in a very effective way to be succeeded. HR managers of leading organizations always focus on improving organizational performance and increase productivity with the help of formulating strategies and allocate tasks among employees as per their quality or ability so that they can focus on accomplishing particular tasks or objectives in a good manner. Organizations' emphasis is to develop the human resource by offering extra benefits and motivate employees by appreciating their performance so that they feel more valued and important person within the firm. Managers focus on conducting several programs such as training and developing and learning sessions so that better knowledge can be given to them (Bolman, 2017). This will support enhancing worker's skills, abilities, and capabilities to perform better and attain set targets or business goals. In the competitive and global business environment, modern business setups required an effective HR system, to perform various tasks such as select, develop and produce workforces with increasing performances which will support in defining organizational positions or justify investments as well. Better workforces and skilled people always contribute more to the firm in increasing productivity and profitability by performing every task in better ways.

3.2 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR PEOPLE RETENTION & DEVELOPMENT

In the present era, business leaders are generally recognized as per their workforces to achieve competitive advantages. Human resource is one the best component as well as important aspects for appropriately running an organization. This department takes responsibility to attract and retain more talented employees within the firm therefore, effective strategies are required to create a better organizational workforce in an impressive way (Deal, 2017). In the modern world, a shortage of skills can be seen because various firms are focusing on appointing skilled and experienced holder's persons for building a good brand image and increase work productivity as well. Every business has a reputation in the marketplace regarding its products or whatever it sells. They also have a reputation like an employee, so this is defined as the employer branding which is very necessary or important for every firm to achieve particular competitive advantages. Firms can improve their business performance and efficiency in the future by hiring more talented and skillful employees and also by accepting various changes and challenges within the firm. Leaders can support improving individual's

performances by providing better guidelines and conducts training and development programs to attain set targets.

High Performance Working (HPW) concerns with various aspects that create a culture by considering transparency, open lines of the communication process, and trust within the firm.   It also defines the traditional hierarchical structure which plays a vital role in increasing higher performance and most HR managers must consider while formulating better strategies or plans as well. Many organizations used this for attracting many fresh talents, ideas, and make a skilled workforce environment to achieve competitive advantages efficiently. There should be an effective structure in the organization that operates business functions, create a flatter structure for every employee so that they can feel happy, engaged, motivated and understand the visions or missions of the firm in a more efficient manner. HPW plays an important role in business firms as it is defined as the general approach used for managing entire operations or functions to stimulate employees' involvement and commitment to accomplish set targets or goals with a higher level of performance. High-Performance Working (HPW) can be defined as the fundamental series in which included processes, practices, and policies that must put into place to improve the performance of each employee.

On the other side, HPW can be categorized into three major areas such as high employee involvement, human resource practices, and rewards and commitment practices as well. It is beneficial for the deployment and redeployment of employees for improving performances in well manner. Nowadays every organization requires understanding the dysfunctional behaviors within the firm which are responsible for creating disputes and conflicts among employees and also create barriers in retaining several skilled persons towards the firm, therefore, they have to consider this more effectively.

3.3 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCEMENT OF EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT

Employees are key people in a successful organization because they play a vital role in getting the best possible outcomes and accomplish set targets or goals efficiently. Employees attitudes regarding any business firm have significant impacts as it describes their behaviors how they approach a particular job and also treat customers to satisfy their needs or meet desired expectations in an effective way (Caldwell, 2012). This concept was old but in recent times, many researchers and experts believe that a high level of employees' engagement always contributes more to the business firm as they bring higher profitability growth as well as increase productivity so that company can build its brand image among competitors. Employee engagement and involvement must be required to achieve better organizational goals or objectives with formulating strategies and managing the entire team workforce (Doppelt, 2017). According to (Kumar and Pansari, 2011), every business firm tries to make an effective workforce by boosting individual morals and motivate them to accomplish the set targets in a well manner. Organizations should also consider employees' development by allowing them to come up with new innovative ideas and creative thinking so that company can grab such opportunities and try to achieve competitive advantages in the present as well as in the future.

Performance management: This is an important aspect that supports managing entire tasks or work by dividing several works among employees to achieve competitive advantages in a well manner (Drucker, 2012). This included some necessary activities which must be performed by the employees so there should be proper involvement and engagement of each individual so that they will

be able to accomplish the set targets or objectives and meet with desired goals effectively and efficiently. Its main aims are to focus on every individual performance and manage these in the company by ensuring effectiveness as well. Every organization should consider performance management in the transformation of business in the future that supports building a strong relationship and attain various outcomes in better ways.

Positive Employee Relations: This is another technique or strategy for every successful organization. It is necessary to have better relations among people that focus on both as individual as well as group of people so that effective relationships can be built more effectively. Positive relations play a vital role in the organization as in this consider the managers, supervisors, and colleagues who work with each other to accomplish particular targets or goals in a more efficient way (Fisher, 2011). This included several components for building better relationships such as communication procedures, the employment process, negotiating styles, HR culture.

3.4 LINKING LEADERSHIP APPROACHES TO HPW LEVEL

It has been recommended that leadership approaches should as per the level of the firm which helps in transformations of businesses in the future (Hailey, 2013). There should be required effective leadership styles or approaches for managing team and workforce in any situation within the organization. It can be categorized by three levels of an organization such as strategic, tactical, and operational.

Strategic level: Leaders play a crucial role in formulating proper planning and strategies for achieving targets or goals. This included several aspects such as strategy, directions as well as a decision-making process that should be in a favor of the firm and also maximum utilization of available resources through allocating them among different activities and also decide specific goals or visions of the firm.

Tactical level: This is defined as the second level of the firm where supervisors or managements generally plan for emphasizing the current operations of different parts of the organization to achieve short-term goals or advantages. Leaders perform their tasks by allocating works and influence every individual for attaining particular goals and perform (Johnson, 2016). It is generally made for developing several areas of the company such as marketing, production, finance, plant facilities, and many more.

Operational level: It is related with day to day transactions and daily operation that operated by the organization for achieving goals. It is the process of linking the tactical goals with formulating strategies and attain those more efficiently. This defines some aspects such as milestone, success, and conditions and also explain how these portions can be formed for proper planning. Therefore, leading organizations are using leadership styles or approaches which is based on Contingency theory to handle any critical situations and make better organizations. (Kumar and Antony, 2011).

3.5 INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP TOOLS FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Leadership plays an important role in achieving business goals and generate more profits for the organization. The manager generally considers the leadership instruments for creating healthy environments, effective workforces, shaping the structure, and create a culture more specific so that targets can be attained. Continuing Professional Development:(CPD) for the development of employees is a process for tracking as well as documenting the skills, knowledge, and experiences that gain maximum benefits as formally and informally as per the work. Companies should consider

the CPD for managing the work so that they can develop it more effectively.

4 RESILIENT LEADERSHIP ACTION IN PANDEMIC SITUATIONS

Being a resilient leader, an individual easily able to regain balance and respond to the adverse situation. In the global pandemic situations, the sustainability of businesses is only possible with empathy for personnel and communities, thus resilient leadership processes are an essential component in a firm's progressive growth (Southwick, and Charney 2012). Resilient leaders play a significant role in the adoption of crisis, recover from the setbacks, maintaining a healthy working, and harnessing the resources of wellbeing (Southwick, et al. 2014; Krystal, 2008; Reich, et al. 2010). In any pandemic situation, there is a requirement of clarity and decisiveness in the organization's policies for managing the transactions. In which a reliant leader identifies all key contributors to the business process and ensures the interest of the stakeholders.

4.1 EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP

In adverse business conditions, leaders first need to become aware of employees' mental situations. Employees may encounter several emotional disbalance in such environments. If leaders acknowledge, identify, and accept their employee's situations, they will be more open and discussing the problems. Thus the need of the hour is to work on the emotional awareness and sensitivity of employees, to be "in touch with their feelings and to help followers stay in touch with their own feelings as well' (Hein, 2008). Thus, for effective leadership in change management empathetic people, management and self-awareness are considered as the key components. Emphatic leadership behaviors enable individuals to be in a position in the shoes of staff, consumers, stakeholders, and their environments, and to interact and engage effectively with them (Silard 2009). In continuation, Goleman (2005) prompted the emphatic leadership behaviors as the growing importance of people retention, emphasis on the team's behavior, and globalization.

4.2 PRIORITISING AND DECENTRALISING LEADERSHIP ACTION

In the complex business environment, challenges created by unpredictable pandemic situations cannot be monitored and managed by a leader alone (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). Thus, for effective management in the crisis a decentralizing hierarchical approach, setting the business priorities and collective knowledge management are likely to be more successful (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Berjaoui & Karami-Akkary (2019) supported that the distributed responsibility of leadership is more effective and leads to multiple perspectives in decision making, which also keep the team members motivated and rewarded. The decentralized model allows for the enhancement of skills and abilities of the members to accomplish their roles (Sorensen & Stanton, 2013). Fernandez and Shaw (2020) emphasized that leaders utilize the concept of a shared leadership model to attain the common organizational purpose in the crisis without disruption.

4.3 DECISIVE LEADERSHIPS

Decision making a crucial factor in every business situation, especially when your business encounters an unpredictable pandemic situation. A rapid response is recognized as the characteristic of decisive leadership, as the delayed decision may negatively influence performance and productivity. The decisiveness characteristic of leaders in the global pandemic situations reflects a substantial variation in decision making related to the strict measure among different countries. The rapid responses and early decision-making were found beneficial in controlling the spread of diseases

(Boccia et al 2020; Hale et al. 2020). In such situations, leaders also ensure the coordination and information sharing with all key factors into the system so that the early decision can be implemented effectively. Many countries leaders show an early decision making and coordination with all sectors to deal with the pandemic situations such as Singapore formed a taskforce before its first confirmed case (Lee et al. 2020), creation of the "National COVID-19 Monitoring Authority" in Tunisia in early stages (OECD, 2020)., the involvement of public and private sector in Covid 19 responses plans (Ministry of Public Health Lebanon Novel coronavirus 2019. 2020), etc., Thus, a leader must be able to take the early decisions and quick actions with coordination of all key elements to ensure the wellbeing of the workforce, society, and businesses.

5   CONCLUSION

Organizations' leaders enriched with humanistic and charismatic qualities, accelerate the way for success in the competitive and unpredictable work environment. The companies' leadership should take effective steps in implementing the change and to identify the stakeholders of the company, who are going to get impacted by the change. All the stakeholders need to be informed and fully briefed about the risks and issues associated with the process of change management. For example, considering the branch teams, the company has prepared a variety of responses from the customers through a transition phase of implementing change, it is not just aimed to make the people understand the change but also, they embraced it. From the analysis of the facts, it can be observed that the leader's effectiveness and competencies in leading the change have become essential in initiating the change and people management. The competition laid by the long-lasting financial institutions must lead this change in the institution. the financial institutions left the company incapable of change and that made a situation is unable to evolve and grow. The company leadership should take effective steps in implementing the change.

Highlighted examples of real applications of the theoretical change management models and leadership strategies in the change management process, which can be a useful tool in the current pandemic situation,   thus based on the discussion some recommendations have been formed for the practitioner and managers.

Suitable Change Models: Identifying the suitable change model to initiate the change depends on who is initiating the change, experiences of a group or an individual of people are equipped, and how much guidance that the employee requires during the process of change.

Effective communication process: Management makes sure that proper communication process must be followed so that every individual is well acquainted with the system.

Building Effective Relationship: This will support improving work performance and create a positive environment or climate in a better way.

Investing in people: Underinvestment in talent only amplifies the cyclical nature of the industry. To ensure the people meet the aspirations of the organization they must emphasize continuous development and skill-building to drive performance through a wealth of courses, training centers, internships, and mentorship programs to pass on knowledge to the next generation.

Putting purpose at the core: There will be a greater need to understand, articulate, and strategically plan around purpose, as it becomes even more core to business strategy. And there will be greater demand from consumers for more purposeful businesses.

Focus on sustainability: Businesses will be under increased scrutiny by stakeholders to ensure that they are sustainable – environmentally, economically, and socially. This will be an opportunity for businesses to establish leadership in sustainability, particularly in countries where it has been low on the agenda.

More collaboration: There will be a rise in the emergence and/or significance of pre-competitive collaboration within industries. The emphasis will be on collective impact to solve common challenges.

In this Covid-19 pandemic situation, organizations need to have an action plan in response to the circumstances. The organization's leadership must develop an appropriate mechanism in identifying the risks associated with the uncertain environment and must be acted on with the strategic change implementation. To begin with, acceptance of the challenges of crises, which is one of the crucial factors in the response strategy. Second, focusing on the organizational strength motivates its members to create value and initiate necessary modifications even in the worst situations. For organizational sustainability, the management approaches must be extended to all organizational members. In which open and transparent communication would be the added feature to develop an interdependent relationship among the organizational members. Further, the long-term organizational goals should be targeted to achieve by the short strategies' implementations, makes an organization more dynamic and flexible in the erratic business environment.

6   AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Information can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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