

Sensemaking View on Servant Leadership in Crisis Discourse

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Abstract: This study is based on leadership in crisis time - a panel discussion after 62 leaders' discussions in various workshops. Analysing the data through the sensemaking typology for organisations - using sensemaking typology (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2020) and coming up with servant leadership theory offers a fresh and welcomed view in servant leadership study - revealed how servant leadership and especially the readiness to shift in sensemaking helped to overcome the crisis. The leaders used the four typologies: immanent, involved-deliberate, detached-deliberate, and representational sensemaking in various ways for a servant purpose. For example, seeing the personnel with new eyes and allowing them to act freshly, lowering barriers, and bringing others' potentiality to use helped to tolerate crisis. To demonstrate, leaders with detached-deliberate sensemaking found a new direction and valued co-work whereas when acting with the immanent sensemaking they held on to routines and kept the focus on the basic task. In brief, the servant-first attitude was emphasized for the leadership to be willing to set oneself in use as well as create an atmosphere where others can work on their best and emerge from others capabilities for them to serve the common good.

Keywords: Leadership, Sensemaking, Crisis, Change Management, COVID-19, Servant Leadership

1. Introduction

Heini's story: *"In the sixth grade, my classmates and I selected a silver ring to symbolize our collective identity and to commemorate our time in primary school. There was a debate over which ring to choose, with initial support for one option that I advocated for. Nevertheless, I reconsidered my position and began to advocate for a different ring, which ultimately received the most votes. This experience demonstrated the capacity of leadership to influence decisions. The experience provided an insight into the significance of leadership in determining outcomes and the influence of leadership on shaping others' opinions. This experience may have involved principles of change leadership and leadership psychology, as I observed firsthand the ability of a leader to influence views and redirect thinking."*

"My interest in leadership has been a constant since my earliest recollections, prompting me to reflect on its nature since childhood. Over an extended period, I have engaged in either active or passive leadership practices. In addition to personal experiences, observations of successful and unsuccessful leaders have prompted reflection. The dissertation will analyse leadership in a variety of contexts, with a particular focus on the ability to influence others, as demonstrated in crisis-driven change management".

The global pandemic of 2020 presented a significant challenge to the leadership, requiring the development of innovative approaches to problem-solving. In a crisis, the necessity for trying novel strategies becomes apparent, as the efficacy of traditional methods may be limited. Leaders must be prepared to adapt, fostering resilience, and embracing uncertainty. In the contemporary era, crises are a regular occurrence, rendering the leadership role more challenging. The research questions are as follows: *How do leaders make sense in times of crisis? What kind of leadership is required to overcome the crisis and prevent the loss of an institution's identity?*

The study demonstrates that leaders who recognise the potential in their employees and empower them to act independently can contribute to an organisation's resilience in the face of crisis. The research indicates that a leader's aptitude to facilitate a shift in sensemaking (SM) is a crucial factor in the ability to survive a crisis. Furthermore, leaders who survive a period of crisis exhibit characteristics that are analogous to servant leadership. The aim of this paper is to gain insight into the sensemaking factors that contribute to the ability to survive a crisis, to improve leadership skills, and overcome a crisis without impeding the fundamental task at hand. We encourage them to embrace diverse approaches to sensemaking and to cultivate a servant leadership mindset, which is beneficial for the institution they serve.

2. Research Design and Research Gap

Here we present the methods we used to analyse the data. As a theoretical framework, sensemaking was chosen because it lends itself well to the concept of leaders being forced to face the unknown and survive a crisis situation. In order to validate our research and make it credible, we chose to use triangulation as our approach

to the data. After analysing the data and comparing the findings with leadership theories, servant leadership emerged from the midst of them by showing similarities with sensemaking types in crisis discourse.

2.1 Sensemaking as a Theoretical Framework

The concept of sensemaking was first introduced by Karl Weick (1995) to describe the manner in which individuals structure and make sense of the unknown in order to act. Sensemaking is the process of developing a plausible understanding of a changing world, testing that understanding with others through data collection, action, and conversation, and then refining or abandoning it depending on its credibility (Weick & Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005). The importance of sensemaking is particularly evident in the context of leadership, where it is crucial to navigating ambiguity, complexity, and change, and communicating a clear and compelling vision to others (Combe & Carrington 2015). The concept of sensemaking has been studied from a variety of perspectives and levels of analysis, including individual, group, organisational, and inter-organisational sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson 2014). Furthermore, sensemaking encompasses a multitude of interrelated processes, including cognitive, emotional, social, and organisational sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Maitlis 2005, Weick 1993). Considering these characteristics of sensemaking, it was deemed an appropriate methodology to deal with the data presented in this article.

Empirical phenomena are the focus of sensemaking research, which examines how cognition and language use influence the process of making sense of complex and uncertain situations (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2020). Methodologically, the study utilises Sandberg and Tsoukas' (2020) various types of operating in sensemaking as a foundation for analyses of leadership discourse (see Table 1). The study proposes that sensemaking can be considered a leadership capability that enables one to act in the unknown and involves different cognitive, emotional, social, and organisational processes.

Table 1: Sensemaking types and outcomes (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2020)

Types of sensemaking ↓	Where SM is located	Ontological underpinnings of SM	Purpose of SM in accomplishing organizational activities	Specific sense generated	Core constituents of SM sense-action nexus →	temporality	embodiment	language	Outcomes →	learning
Immanent	primary practice world	absorbed coping	enacting routine activities	practical sense	unified	practical (immediate-anticipatory) existential	principally bodily; minimally cognitive-discursive sensing	performative	stability, rigidity	new practical sense: new skills & routines
Involved-deliberate	primary practice world	involved thematic deliberation	restoring interrupted activities	contextual sense	partly unified, partly separate	practical (immediate) pragmatically chronological (retrospective-prospective)	partly bodily; partly cognitive-discursive sensing	mostly performative	higher flexibility, adjustment	new skills & routines, new direction
Detached-deliberate	primary practice world	abstract detachment	re-viewing problematic/problematised activities	conceptual sense	temporarily separate	pragmatically chronological (retrospective-prospective)	little bodily; mainly cognitive-discursive sensing	mainly representational	renewal	questioning organizational identity, new conceptual sense
Representational	secondary practice world	theoretical detachment	explaining problematic /problematised activities	spectatorial sense	completely separate	analytically chronological (retrospective-prospective)	minimally bodily; principally cognitive-discursive sensing	representational	renewal, disconnect with practice world	learning from the process

2.1.1 Triangulation as Analytical Perspective

Triangulation of qualitative research data allows research findings to be validated and enables the data to be viewed from multiple perspectives, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and ensures accuracy and neutrality. (Dzwigol 2020, Casey & Murphy 2009). The subsequent triangulation process is illustrated in Figure 1. The triangulation process helped to analyse the data, starting with the sensemaking analysis.

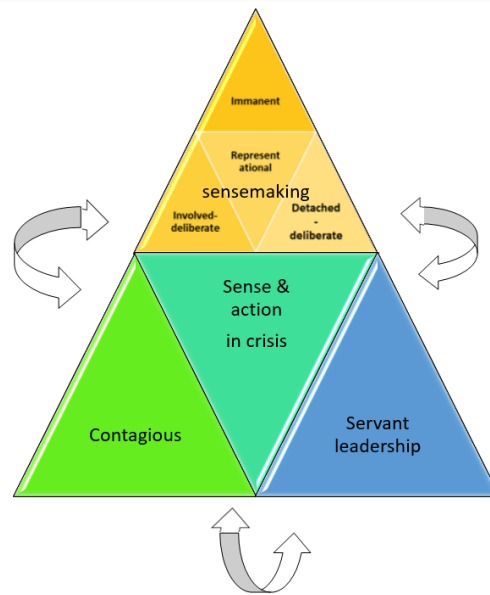


Figure 1: Triangulation processes in crisis leadership

2.2 The Research gap and Approach With a Servant Leadership Perspective

As one of our main findings was the connection between sensemaking in crisis discourse and servant leadership, it deserves a closer look. Sensemaking and servant leadership haven't been combined in this way before, which makes this research unique and significant. A considerable body of research has been conducted on servant leadership over the past forty years. However, literature on leadership in time of crisis has been lacking. There is a desire for further advancement in the theory and methodology of servant leadership. (Eva et al 2019). One potential avenue for this is the combination of sensemaking with servant leadership. Furthermore, there is a research gap in how servant leaders are developed and trained (Eva et al 2019). This study addresses this gap, as the crisis period is forcing leaders to practice servant leadership or develop in their crisis management, which can offer further research material of servant leadership development. The loss of belonging and family-like tribes in our societies has resulted in the unfulfilled needs of individuals. (Eva et al 2019). Servant leadership can help to bridge this gap and provide guidance and support during times of crisis. Leaders represent an authority, a close leader, or even a parent, and when staying distanced, they leave people missing their presence. Servant leadership can fill the gap in this. Especially in crisis, people need someone to show them direction and offer them presence and comfort.

Additionally, there is a paucity of experimental designs within the field of servant leadership. It is recommended that researchers consider including as many competing variables as possible within their research design to demonstrate the true effects of servant leadership (Antonakis et al 2010). In their analysis of instrumental leadership, Antonakis and House (2014) argued that the existing transformational leadership research does not include instrumental leadership, which has led to an overstatement of the effects of transformational leadership. Moreover, they challenge the validity of existing meta-analyses which do not take into account the effects of instrumental leadership. The combination of servant leadership and sensemaking has not yet really been researched. This approach could potentially offer new insights and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

3. Data Analysis

3.1 Data: Panel Discussion in Crisis Time

In the spring of 2021, during the global pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus, the "Prayer Breakfast" event was held in Rovaniemi, Lapland, Finland. The objective of the event was to empower leaders from various sectors by facilitating the exchange of experiences and ideas related to leadership. This event is collaboratively organised by local churches, academic institutions, and the Arctic Centre on a biannual basis. Due to pandemic restrictions, it was transitioned to a virtual format. The inaugural Prayer Breakfast in 2017 was designed to facilitate the unification of regional leaders, the establishment of connections, and the enhancement of

leadership skills. The attendees of the event were drawn from a diverse range of fields, including the military, education, business, politics, and others.

The 2021 event was hosted by a member of Congress and featured discussions on "Leadership in Crisis Time," moderated by leadership students. Both of us authors of this paper were involved in the organisation of the event too. The panelists included the mayor of the city, the bishop, the infectious diseases head physician, the university director, and an entrepreneur. Prior to the event, the panelists were invited to share one challenge they had faced in a crisis with the organisers in advance of the event. The panel moderators asked open-ended questions and encouraged the leaders to participate in the discussion in a balanced manner. The panel discussion was designed in collaboration with the university leadership department, and the panelists were provided with some discussion questions pertaining to leadership in crisis situations in advance. The questions were designed to elicit responses that reflected the progression of the crisis. The moderators began by inquiring about the initial understanding of the crisis and the subsequent evolution of the situation.

The questions delivered in advance to the panelists:

1. How do you ensure the well-being of your employees? What actions have you taken for this?
2. How do you practice self-care? What has helped you to cope?
3. What challenges have you encountered in leadership/work? How has leadership/work evolved?
4. How can one maintain a sense of purpose at work during a crisis?
5. If you could wish for support during the crisis, what would it be?

Following the panel discussion, the participants were divided into ten workshops in order to deepen discussion on the challenges presented by the panelists which had been delivered to the workshop hosts. Following the workshops, the ideas generated were recorded in the event chat and collated by the panel hosts. Following the panel discussion and workshops, the event concluded with brief prayers delivered by representatives of various churches. Thereafter, the bishop concluded the meeting in conjunction with the congressman. The panel and the workshops were recorded in Teams video recordings and subsequently transcribed. The video of the panel discussion was made available online for the general public to access and learn from. In this study, we first transcribed all the recordings in order to be able to analyse the panelists' statements using sensemaking.

Challenges presented by the panelists to workshops:

1. When a crisis arises, where can you find enough time, and what are you willing to reduce to make time to deal with crisis-related matters?
2. What methods can managers use to enhance the significance of work during exceptional times?
3. As remote work becomes more prevalent, how can work communities increase their support for one another? Additionally, how can a "give time to think" management culture be supported in expert work?
4. How can the government better understand the situation of small entrepreneurs and sole proprietors, particularly in the Lapland region? What strategies can be developed to improve understanding of the specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs, especially in the north, including the substantial resources required for organizing tourism?
5. How can access to and sharing of information be ensured during a crisis? What approaches can be taken to maintain the motivation of the management team during a crisis?

3.2 Sensemaking Types in Crisis Leadership

The study examines how leaders make sense of complex and uncertain situations in times of crisis. The data collected from a panel discussion between leaders in five fields during the corona pandemic (COVID-19) crisis and 10 workshops of 62 leaders discussing leadership challenges was analysed using the theoretical framework and analysis method developed by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020). The authors argue that there are four types of sensemaking. This paper proposes that leadership discourse can shift between these types in response to situational factors. The leadership may either shift or remain within the selected understanding. The study examines the dynamics of shifting and staying and their effects on leadership. In times of crisis, the collective dimension of sensemaking is particularly salient, as decisions are made for and on behalf of others.

This study examines the manner in which leadership decisions are shaped by the opinions of others, with an analysis of panel discussions serving as the primary methodological approach. The study identifies the dominant themes that emerge in the discussion and attributes them to collective phenomena and sensemaking's

emotional and cognitive contagiousness (Cristofaro 2022). A framework proposed by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) was employed to categorise statements according to different types of sensemaking (see Table 2). The decisions on sensemaking types were informed by Sandberg and Tsoukas' definitions, which focus on the sense-action nexus, temporality, embodiment, and language.

Table 2: Statements made during the panel discussion clustered according to the sensemaking types. The first number indicates the order of the statement, while the following letter(s) and colour distinguish the speaker. The second number denotes the order of the speaker's statement.

Immanent SM: routine activities 6.M1 starting point: the basic task is the fundament of the organization 11.M6 challenging situation 16.T1 trying to keep the work going despite the interruption 18.T3 telling basic things, what has been done: practical things 19.T4 telling the goal: back to normal situation/situation earlier 53.P8 Explaining the basics of the organization (size, resources) 61.JU57 saw the practice from the situation 107.M54 basic task: giving advice	Involved – deliberate SM: interrupted activities. 7.M2 interruption very exceptional “Wuhan” 8.M3 finding corresponding to the history: Spanish sickness 9.M4 seeing the possibility to come over the crisis: compering to the past 10.M5 analysing what to do: 12.M7 coming back to basic task: not spreading out more & taking care of the people: no more deaths 20.R1 what interruption caused 23.R4 coming back to basic task: maintaining 28.U2 thinking the future: soon over 40.U14 thinking the positive sides 41.U15 what's possible 42.U16 meeting near ones 48.P3 making up a task for himself / 49.P4 giving reason to the organization: saying it in a bit new way	Detached- deliberate SM: problematic/problemitized activities./ 4.Jus.4 new, challenging situation: decisions had to be made, direction to be shown and taken care of the neighbours 5.Jus.5 how has the leadership been in Covid time? 13.M8 going more to the details of the interruption 14.M9 serious matter 15.M10 cowork with other organizations 21.R2 analysing the situation with a group 22.R3 relying on experts 25.R6 finding own strengths to cope the situation: organizing 26.R7 finding a new way to cope together with others 27.U1 picturing the interruption: having an interruption meeting 29.U3 finding good points in the situation and reasoning them	Representational SM: problematic/problemitized decontextualized activities 1.Jus1 The start of the crisis: naming the interruption 2.Jus.2 Finland in exceptional conditions: interruption occurred 3.Jus.3 everyone met the interruption 24.R5 giving orders/statements 54.P9 giving orders, suggestions 81.M28 important in the team 82.M29 cowork 83.M30 interaction 84.M31 openness 85.M32 knowledge is coherent, 86.M33 based on the current knowledge, 87.M34 not extravagant, 88.M35 not underestimated 92.M39 our strengths 93.M40 network with other organizations: 94.M41 sharing information 95.M42 coherent information
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The sensemaking statements were grouped according to sensemaking type to facilitate an overall understanding of each type (immanent, involved-deliberate, detached-deliberate, and representational SM). Following the analysis, a description of each sensemaking type in a crisis was formulated. They are presented below accompanied by citations from the original panel discussion and compared with servant leadership attributes.

After gathering the data, a theoretical framework was established. Subsequently, the analysis of the data and comparison with leadership theories revealed that in crisis situations, the characteristics of servant leadership were dominant. The attributes of servant leadership emerged as key to overcoming the crisis. The analysis of the data by sensemaking revealed that the attributes of servant leadership become dominant in crisis time leadership. The findings indicated that leadership must be flexible and responsive to the prevailing circumstances. Leaders are able to shift between different forms of sensemaking, contingent upon the specific sensemaking requirements of a given situation. A crisis, such as the global pandemic of COVID-19, compels leadership to adapt and utilise the novel tasks and capabilities of others to overcome the crisis, or even more: to leverage the benefits of the crisis to enhance one's leadership and to share the main task with others.

The ability to shift and a servant leader attitude abled leadership to maintain the basic task, find importance in ordinary work, make necessary changes, analyse the past and benefit from it in the present, analyse workers' behaviour and how they cope, support workers, and build up the community. In essence, leaders could leverage the advantages of diverse sensemaking types for the betterment of the situation. The challenges that the different sensemaking types pose for leadership are also worth of considering. For instance, the wide responsibility and the challenges in the face of change are pertinent issues. Further analysis could be conducted to examine the outcomes and consequences of this shifting and contagious nature.

The sensemaking types in crisis leadership that emerged from the analysis are then presented with original situations from the panel discussion. Following the citations, each sensemaking type is shown in the light of servant leadership characteristics. This shows the equivalence between each sensemaking type and the servant leadership attitude.

3.2.1 Immanent Sensemaking and Servant Leadership in Crisis

Leaders with immanent SM are concerned about losing control of the fundamental task, particularly when a crisis occurs, which can lead to difficulties. The interruption of a situation is perceived as a frightening and uncertain occurrence, which can result in a cessation of work by the leader. Those with an immanent SM are particularly susceptible to confusion in such circumstances and may seek external assistance to overcome the

crisis. Immanent SM leaders perform their duties well in the absence of interruption and concentrate on the basic tasks. Consequently, those leaders place a high value on the work routine and see it as a source of satisfaction. Such individuals derive contentment from the completion of fundamental tasks and strive to maintain this state as long as possible.

"How to preserve the sense of the meaning of the work during a crisis, yes...and my answer to that is that the best way is to always return to that basic task."

"I throw the ball ... to the state. And for those in charge of taxation, that they see the workers' insurance like that."

As in immanent SM, so servant leadership is rooted first in serving, the fundamental task of a leader. As in immanent SM so in servant leadership the slogan of the leader could be: "Do what you need to do." "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead." (Greenleaf 1977). Servant leaders find fulfillment in the basic tasks, what is for them necessary to do. In a crisis, the main thing is to see about others to survive. Servant leadership represents a distinctive approach that places a premium on the needs of others, prioritising self-sacrifice and collective benefit over personal gain or fame, whereas performance-oriented leadership takes the profit of people to create growth (Sendjaya 2015).

3.2.2 *Involved-deliberate Sensemaking and Servant Leadership in Crisis*

Leaders with involved-deliberate SM are inclined to return to the fundamental task at hand and employ all available means to facilitate a return to normalcy. The fundamental task is the basis of all subsequent actions. They view time in a manner that encompasses the past and the present. Those with involved-deliberate SM apply the insights gained from past experiences to inform their actions in the present. Leaders with involved-deliberate SM analyse the situation and the reasons for the interruption. In the context of crises, they are willing to accept assistance from others and are prepared to implement minor adjustments if this facilitates the continuation of the fundamental task. In the context of a crisis, the well-being of the workers is of paramount importance, and it is essential to maintain hope. Such individuals are adept at coping with crises. When leaders with involved-deliberate SM perceive an impending disruption, they embrace it and initiate a response. The role of the leader is strong, encompassing the following responsibilities: bringing together divergent perspectives, encouraging constructive dialogue, analysing the situation, ensuring the well-being of employees, providing support and guidance, and assuming accountability.

"Bringing something positive, hopeful, creative and maybe even humorous from everyday life into such small situations is certainly good to laugh together and together experiencing even small positive things is surprisingly empowering for each of us leaders at the same time."

"We have our own little unit, which in the front line, in a certain way, like fighting, works to ensure that we have the right picture of the situation and that we have a defence with all their numerous partners."

Servant attitude is found in involved-deliberate SM especially in serving others and supporting their growth. Eva et al (2019) define in their article: "Servant leadership is about (1) someone or something other than the leader, (2) one-on-one interactions between leaders and team members, and (3) an overarching concern towards the wellbeing of the wider organisational stakeholders and the larger community. Servant leaders seek to identify the will of a group and help to clarify that will. Servant leaders are deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within their organization (Spears 2010). Individuals are regarded as objectives of support for growth and as a form of capital.

3.2.3 *Detached-deliberate Sensemaking and Servant Leadership in Crisis*

Leaders with detached-deliberate SM are seeking a new direction. Coworking and networking are important. They analyse everything, including their own behaviour, and identify their strengths. They maintain perseverance as a community and utilise skills from involved-deliberate SM by learning from the past and developing deeper meanings. In the event of an interruption or change, leaders with detached-deliberate SM maintain the feeling of importance of their work but try new things. Leaders appreciate understanding and support in attempting novel approaches in the context of a crisis, despite the inherent uncertainty of the outcome. The detached-deliberate SM approach necessitates the development of skills to facilitate change and to analyse the optimal direction and actions to pursue. Leaders must maintain cohesion within the workforce, and they can foster a sense of community and facilitate the exploration of new possibilities. In the context of a

crisis, the role of the leader in detached-deliberate sensemaking is challenging, as they are required to navigate uncharted territory without the benefit of a clear set of instructions.

"Yes, people have the ability when there is a common goal, there is trust, there is courage, there is such a sense of security that it is possible to present solutions even if they have not been tested to the last degree, so it does help. In a crisis, you need the ability to learn and creativity, and if you as a leader can encourage people to do that, then we will probably manage."

"You have to change the changeable and try to carry that task forward in those exceptional circumstances and through that create something that also secures continuity, a sense of permanence when so many blocks change in people's consciousness and environment."

As in detached-deliberate SM, servant leadership is positively related to commitment to change (Kool & van Dierendonck 2012). Servant leadership is of personal growth and accepting to serve first and lead after, but it has a great benefit to changing society (Song 2020). Servant leaders think beyond routines and are supporting to dream (Spears 2010), which supports to see things in a new way.

3.2.4 Representational Sensemaking and Servant Leadership in Crisis

Leaders with representational SM look back to the crisis afterward, analysing how the situation unfolded and how the various actors managed. They collect coherent information and learn from the situation and from others involved. Leadership is perceived as a collective endeavour, and the value of re-establishing connections with other actors is recognised. Leaders with representational SM analyse the causes of the crisis and identify the fundamental questions that have been raised by the crisis. In this form of leadership, there is a risk of losing sight of the fundamental task and the actors involved by becoming detached from the actual situation. The leader who adheres to representational sensemaking may be perceived as an outsider.

"We have had a huge number of joint meetings like this. Where we have exchanged a situational picture and also operating instructions and this has probably made us stronger."

"But when I think about what this pandemic has caused?...Yes, it has raised such fundamental questions. Especially that time a year ago in the spring, when just like the fear of death."

Foresight is a characteristic that enables servant leaders to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of decisions for the future (Spears 2010). Servant leaders analyse past and present to learn from them.

4. Contributions

Through the use of field experiments, researchers can not only advance the research on servant leadership but also advance the practice of servant leadership within organisations. (Eva et al 2019).

The findings of this research have several implications for both theory and practice. The outcomes provide empirical evidence and insights into how leaders utilise sensemaking as a key capability when coping with and thriving in crises. Additionally, the results illustrate how decisions are made and the specific areas on which leaders need to focus on the context of crises. Moreover, the research findings underscore the intricacy and heterogeneity of sensemaking processes, which encompass diverse cognitive, emotional, social, and organisational dimensions. The research demonstrates which of these dimensions influence the decision-making process of leadership. In practice, this work enables the identification of which dimensions affect crises. The findings provide practical guidance and recommendations for leaders facing crises, including the use of sensemaking to act in the unknown, to communicate and collaborate. Furthermore, the research identifies some of the challenges and potential pitfalls that leaders may encounter when attempting to engage in sensemaking efforts, as well as strategies for overcoming these challenges. This study also demonstrates which statements are most prevalent in discussions and the reasons behind this. Furthermore, it provides insights into the contagiousness of discussions. The research also demonstrates which statements are particularly prone to contagion in discussions and the underlying reasons for this. When leadership is aware of this phenomenon, it can be cognizant of the contagiousness of certain statements and refrain itself from being drawn into unproductive or unwanted directions simply due to the influence of human behaviour.

The findings of this research can be further investigated with other groups to ascertain whether they are corroborated in different situations and across a range of crises. It is important to be cautious when interpreting and generalising the current results to other contexts and settings until further investigation has been

conducted. The findings have significant implications, including advancing the understanding and application of sensemaking in leadership research and human behaviour, and providing a novel and rich dataset for further analysis and comparison.

5. Conclusion

The capacity to lead effectively in times of crisis hinges on the leader's disposition to embrace a proactive stance and a readiness to adapt their sensemaking approach to the demands of the ongoing crisis. In particular, the sensemaking process in managerial discourse emphasises the importance of servant leadership in various ways. The present study aimed to examine the leadership dimensions that are particularly salient during crises and to identify the different perspectives on servant leadership sensemaking transitions that are highlighted in such contexts. The study demonstrated that servant leadership, which can shift between sensemaking types in various situations, is beneficial for organisations in the context of crisis challenges. It is noteworthy that the capacity to survive a crisis necessitates a servant leadership disposition. Servant leadership is inherently suited to navigating crises, whereas crises compel leaders to demonstrate these qualities to survive. Consequently, the servant leadership evolves naturally within the organisation as a means of overcoming crises.

In conclusion, this paper sought to examine how leadership makes sense of complex and uncertain situations and can act effectively in times of crisis. The sensemaking theoretical framework and methodological approach were employed to analyse the data collected from a panel discussion with five leaders from different sectors. The leaders shared their experiences and insights on leading in a time of crisis. The study found that sensemaking is a crucial leadership capability for navigating the unknown, involving a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, social, and organisational processes. Furthermore, the study demonstrated how leadership can employ diverse forms of sensemaking in the context of varying circumstances. Leadership may be exercised through the utilisation of the immanent type of sensemaking for decision-making purposes, or through the examination of behaviour and the subsequent application of detached-deliberate sensemaking for the development of the manner of action.

Notably, further research indicates that leaders were influenced by a variety of statements, resulting in a lack of consensus and a tendency to deviate from the original topic during the discussion. This phenomenon appears to have occurred unconsciously and can be observed to have an impact on leadership. From this, we can derive insights into the principles of human discussions and the factors that contribute to the spread of ideas and statements in such contexts.

The paper discussed the implications, limitations, and contributions of these findings for theory and practice. It also suggested some directions for future research, including expanding the sample size and the data sources, using different methods of data analysis, and comparing different types and levels of leadership and crisis.

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