

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: AN OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Crisis management has become an important of different governments throughout world. Different governments are taking different contextual measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis. The efficiency and reputation of the government is at stake during crisis situations. The responsibility of managing the crisis rests on the administrative officers engaged in various crisis management activities at the field level. These grass root level officers execute the crisis management plan of the government effectively for the larger good of the citizens. The officers by the virtue of managing different projects and executing different programmes are better prepared to handle crisis. They are well aware of various problems and other challenges faced by citizens during crisis situations. They have exposure to different crisis on regular basis considering the frequent natural crisis affecting the states. Natural disaster, pandemics, and any other law and order situation poses severe crisis for the government. Public service officers are the frontline leaders to handle crises.*

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**Keywords:** *Crisis Management, Natural Disaster, Pandemics, Natural Crisis, Public Service.*

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### Introduction

It has been noticed that there are many factors affecting crisis management. Agile work force are better equipped to manage the crisis because they are proactive and adaptive in nature. Agile employees do not become panic in crisis situations and they are quite resilient to bounce back from different problems. Similarly, the nature of the job or popularly known as job characteristics can also be a factor influencing the crisis management. The nature of the job incorporates necessary skills and abilities among the government officers to manage a challenging and difficult situation in an effective manner. In crisis situation, field level officers are in a state of urgency to reduce the impact the crisis and save the peoples' lives. They need resources and freedom in decision making to carry out the crisis management plan. Therefore, higher administrative support is highly essential for the field level officers. We have discussed one vital challenge faced by government that is crisis management.

Similarly, another important challenge for the government is the citizen centric service delivery. Citizens need timely and fast service for their various requirement from the government. In the twenty-first century, e-governance has become the choosen platform for the delivery of various citizen centric services. E-governance service delivery, like any other service delivery is affected by certain factors. Such factors may enhance the effectiveness and quality of the service. It has been seen that engaged employees are expert in delivering better service. They understand their job and also the customers' expectations. Meaningfulness of work also motivates the employees to be more engaged leading to better service delivery. Similarly, public service motivation encourages the employees to tender quality service to citizens and it also influences work engagement. To investigate the influencing factors in crisis management and also the delivery of e-governance service with higher quality, two objectives were developed.

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**Objective 1:** To find out the factors and their interrelationship affecting effective crisis management in government sector.

**Objective 2:** To find out the interrelationships among factors influencing e-governance service quality

in order to find the objectives of the study two different studies were conceptualized to be undertaken as follows:

### **Study 1: Theoretical Framework**

Workforce agility refers to the ease, flexibility, and quickness of an organisation's workforce to face the changes in the environment, to adapt an unpredictable and uncertain environment and respond to it positively (Bosco, 2007; Breu, Hemingway, Strathern, & Bridger, 2002; Plonka, 1997). An agile workforce is proactive, adaptive, resilient, and generative (Dyer & Shafer, 2003). Agile workforce has a positive mindset for learning and self growth. They have good analytical and problem solving skills. They take risk, experiment, and initiate new action as per the context. So, such workforce can manage a crisis situation in a better manner. Proactive employees believe in continuous learning to perform their job in a better manner and constantly scan the circumstances for opportunities and threats (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). Adaptability is the ability and motivation of a person to handle ambiguity, deal with uncertainty, and change to better fit to the changing environment (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Pearlman & Barney, 2000). Resilience refers to the ability to sustain in adverse conditions and bounce back to the previous normal with more strength and vigour (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011; Seligman, 2011). Resiliency is a work attribute to perform under high stress and complex environment (Sherehiy et. al., 2007). Positive attitude towards change, tolerance of uncertainty and unexpected conditions, and acceptance of variation in opinion are qualities of resilient employees (Al-Faouri, Al- Nsour, & Al-Kasasbeh, 2014). This indicates that an agile workforce will better manage a crisis than a workforce with lesser agility.

Job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) talks about job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback as potential motivators on the job that provides meaningfulness to the work. Skill variety refers to the wide range of skills required in the work. Non-routine, and non-repetitive jobs motivate employees (Zaniboni, Truxillo, & Fraccaroli, 2013). Crisis situation requires different skills among employees. This helps the workforce to make the maximum use of their agility and manage the crisis. Task identity is the degree of identification with a task or job. It helps in directing the efforts towards the goals and increases the responsibility and accountability of the employees that is required in a crisis situation. Task significance is the positive feeling of the employee regarding the impact of his work on the lives of people and organisation. Task significance leads to job satisfaction, personal initiatives, helping attitude, and job performance (Raub & Blunschi, 2014). Autonomy refers to degree of freedom, independence, and discretion in decision making (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). In crisis, employees have to work immediately to manage the critical situations. Job autonomy and employee empowerment facilitate problem-solving, induce intrinsic motivation and productivity (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Feedback gives clear information about the performance of employees.

Job complexity is a characteristic that is more likely to influence the job outcome in line with the above job characteristics (Farrell & McDaniel, 2001; Sturman, 2003). Job complexity propels for independent judgement, creativeness, and originality in performance (Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976). This indicates enriched job characteristics will induce better CM.

In government set up, all instructions, decisions, and procedures flow from higher administrative machinery to the bottom level operational employees. Therefore, higher administrative support (HAS) is needed for the government employees managing crisis situation. Crises of different size, duration, and complexity have raised importance of HAS in managing them and providing security to citizens (Heller, 2012; Kapucu & Van Wart, 2006). HAS can promote employee empowerment and autonomy for better CM.

The above literature supports a direct and positive influence of workforce agility, HAS and Job characteristics over CM. However, it also indicates that there might be a positive relationship between HAS and workforce agility, and between Job Characteristics and workforce agility where HAS and Job Characteristics are probable antecedents of workforce agility. Furthermore, from the literature, we have already proposed that workforce agility has a positive association with effectiveness of CM.

### **Major Findings**

To explore the causal relationship, and test the hypotheses, structural regression analysis was carried out with the help of AMOS software. Four models were tested to test the four hypotheses.. In the First Model, the influence of Workforce Agility, Job Characteristics and HAS was tested over CM taking Workforce agility, Job Characteristics and HAS as independent variables and CM as dependent Variable. It was observed that workforce agility, HAS and job characteristics positively influence CM significantly. The result supports out Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3.

We found that workplace agility mediate the impact of Job Characteristics over crisis management partially. On the other hand workforce agility mediates the impact of HAS on crisis management fully.

### **Discussion**

It was observed that HAS and job characteristic act as antecedents of workforce agility which in turn induces effectiveness in CM. HAS provides that freedom to act, react, and empowers employees for taking any decision at their level. This enables employees to be agile. Similarly enriched job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, feedback, and job complexity contributes to workforce agility. Variety of skills enables employees to be quick to respond and adapt to new situations contributing to higher agility. Task identity increases the responsibility and commitment towards the job, and employees get involved with job resulting in skillfulness, expertise and agility. Similarly, when employees feel their job as significant, it motivates them to perform productively. The intention and attitude for productivity is likely to be a significant factor propelling individuals to be agile as per the job and environmental demand. Feedback gives a scope for revision, correction, and improvement. Constructive feedback and a systematic feedback system make employees flexible, adaptable, and learning.

### **Implications and Limitations**

The respondents of the study are administrative officers in various government departments of Odisha, India, and gives a good representation of various age groups, qualifications, and experiences. The findings of this study will be helpful for government agencies and departments in creating an agile workforce for effective management of crisis. The study is not free from limitations. The data were collected taking individuals as unit of analysis. However, as management of crisis is primarily a team work, data from departments as unit of analysis would have strengthened the findings of the study.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of the study was to investigate the impact of job characteristics and higher administrative support on crisis management via work force agility. The results indicated that work force agility positively influences crisis management. Job characteristics and higher administrative support influence workforce agility as well as crisis management. Workforce agility mediates the relationship between job characteristics and higher administrative support partially and fully respectively. In government set up, agile employees are in a better position to manage a crisis due to their multitasking nature of job. They are also adaptive. Job characteristics like skill variety and task significance also influences workforce agility as well as crisis management. Higher administrative support is highly essential for supporting an agile workforce leading to effective crisis management. The research findings will help in better policy making for crisis management and also in creating an agile work force. Team level data would have enhanced the research findings.

### **Study 2: Theoretical Framework**

E-governance has been implemented by various governments across the world as it promotes effective, quick, and transparent administration through engaging citizens in governance process and by providing citizen centric services. It aims at strengthening the bond between government and the consumers of its service by providing accessible, transparent, cost effective, accountable, and responsive public service (Chandrashekhar et al., 2008; Chen & Hsish, 2009; Singh, 2012). Though e-governance is an effective method of governance, evidence implies that the adaption of e-governance at the local level is slow (Coursey & Norris, 2008). E-governance service quality (ESQ) depends on the government employees who extend those services to consumers. It was observed that supportive, responsive, and engaged employees may extend the best possible e- governance services because of their high levels of creativity, task performance, and customer orientation both in public and private organizations. Accordingly, this study investigates the antecedents of WE and examines the influence of WE on ESQ.

It is probable that employee's motivation to serve and their engagement with the work activities may play crucial role in deciding the quality of e-governance service. Individuals with higher engagement are absorbed, voluntarily involved in their work (Chen & Chen, 2012; Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005.), show higher creativity, innovation, entrepreneurial attitude, task performance (Ismail, Iqbal, & Nasr, 2019; Menguc, Auh, Yeniaras, & Katsikeas, 2017), and exhibit high level of energy, experience positive emotions (Orth & Volmer, 2017). Such employees will accommodate consumer needs and aspiration and are likely to contribute to better quality e-governance service (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Karatepe, 2013).

Literature indicates that factors such as job characteristics (Holman & Axtell, 2016), and behavioural attributes (Mäkikangas, Feldt, Kinnunen, & Mauno, 2013) affect WE. Job characteristic such as meaningfulness of work (MOW) and behavioural attribute such as public service motivation (PSM) can be crucial factors in inducing WE. It enhances employees' functioning and well-being at work, makes employees attitude towards their job positive.. Hence, MOW increases the value of the work and is more likely to induce engagement with one's work role (Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012). Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed. PSM can be an individual's attraction, commitment, compassion, and self-sacrifice for serving the public interest (Perry, 2000). It reflects an individual's desire, affect, motivation, dedication, and determination to fulfill the rational need of the public, their societal interest selflessly often compromising self-interest (Kim & Vandenberg, 2010, Ritz, Brewer, & Neumann, 2016). Accordingly, satisfied employees are motivated and more engaged in work. It has already been proposed that WE will lead to higher ESQ. In such context, it seems, PSM leads to better engagement to deliver better e-governance service.

Due to routine of the government jobs, often the administrators fell settled with of work activities they do over years. They are accustomed to do similar work for a particular period of time. It might not be easy for all the service providers to accept and adapt to any change in the routine work. Employees who are prepared for any change may find it easier to accept and adapt to changes. ESQ is often depends on the mindset of the service providers to accept the change in their role. In government departments providing e-governance service, change preparedness of the employees will play a crucial role in ensuring better service. Accordingly, change preparedness of the administrators might be a moderator that regulates the strength of relationship between WE and ESQ. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Change preparedness will moderate the relationship between WE and ESQ.

### **Major Findings**

In the first model, MOW and PSM were taken as independent variable predicting work engagement, and work engagement predicting ESQ. The result indicates that both MOW and PSM Predicted work engagement. Similarly, work engagement predicted ESQ (Table 2). To examine the influence of PSM on ESQ and the mediating role of WE, a model was run with PSM as independent variable, ESQ as dependent variable and WE as the mediator variable. It was observed that PSM has strong influence over ESQ (Table 3). However, the effect of PSM is fully mediated by WE. To test the moderating role of change preparedness of the employees over the ESQ, structural model was run with WE as independent variable, ESQ as dependent variable and change preparedness as moderating variable. The results indicated that the interaction of WE and change preparedness significantly predicted ESQ indicating a strong moderating effect of change preparedness over the relationship between WE and ESQ (Table 5).

### **Discussion**

It was found that, higher is the WE higher is the ESQ. When individuals are engaged and involved with the work activities, they understand their job better and deliver better services. When MOW and PSM increased, individual's engagement with the job and its activities went up. MOW gives a sense of satisfaction to the individuals that the work they are doing has significant impact on other's life. The sense of satisfaction motivates for higher WE. PSM is likely to work as an inducer of effectiveness where individuals are associated with jobs and activities related to public service such the public administrators in our study. In such contexts, higher is the PSM, higher will be the individual's engagement with the job. It was observed that, PSM has a strong effect over ESQ. However, PSM instead of influencing ESQ directly, induces WE in the service providers and individuals with a higher WE delivers better e-governance service. Change preparedness, on the other hand was found to be a crucial factor that moderates the strength of relationship of WE and ESQ. Where employees are prepared to accept, and initiate change, WE results in higher quality service delivery in contrast to the quality of service delivered when employees are not supportive, not prepared or against any kind of change in the organization. A mind set of accepting change positively magnifies the quality of service provided by the

engaged employees. Employees with low WE and low change preparedness will deliver poor quality services. Accordingly, it was evident that WE is a critical factor for effective and quality e- governance service delivery where change preparedness is a moderator and PSM and MOW are antecedents of WE. Literature indicates that meaningful work can be developed with individual job design characteristics such as challenging, autonomous, and task significance (Kahn, 1990, May, et al., 2004, Kira & Balkin, 2014), on the job social interactions (Wellman & Spreitzer, 2011), and by creating a person–job fit (Kahn, 1990). These can be used as a source of MOW. Similarly PSM can be induced by providing autonomy at work, productivity feedback, higher administrative support (Raut, Das, Gochhayat, & Das, 202; Vandenabeele, Brewer, & Ritz; 2014) and a set of values, norms, and beliefs set for public institutions. Government organizations need to create a work culture where motivation to serve will be induced substantiating the meaningfulness of the work activities. Such work culture with meaningfulness of work and public service motivation will lead to effective and quality service delivery (Gochhayat, Giri, & Suar, 2017).

### Implications and Limitations

The findings provide a better understanding about the e-governance service delivery and the conceptual framework behind effective and quality e-governance service. Research findings will help in policy making and the public service providers to focus on appropriate areas to enhance the quality of e-governance service to the consumers. The study has few limitations. The study has taken responses from the e- governance service providers. However, data on ESQ from the consumers would have given more insights about the conceptual understanding. Secondly, the responses might have contained social desirable responding. However, the respondents were volunteered to participate in the survey which was more likely to minimize the extent of social desirable responding. Notwithstanding the limitations, the study has provided a conceptual framework for enhancing the quality of e-governance service to citizens.

### Conclusion

To achieve the objectives, two different studies were undertaken. The first study examined the effect of workforce agility, HAS, and job characteristics on CM of government departments. The results indicated that higher workforce agility, higher HAS and enriched job characteristic contributes to better CM. HAS and enriched job characteristics in terms of skill variety, task identity, task significance, feedback and job complexity induces agility among the employees. An agile work force effectively manages crisis in comparison to the work force without HAS and without enriched job characteristics. The second study investigated examined the influence of PSM and MOW over WE and explored the mediating role of WE in the relationship between PSM and ESQ. It also examined the moderating effect of change preparedness in the relationship between WE and ESQ. WE was found to be a critical factor for effective and quality e- governance service delivery where change preparedness is a moderator and PSM and MOW are antecedents of WE.

A flexible, adaptable, and learning workforce will be agile to manage crisis better. Job complexity challenges an individual, tests the potential, and pushes the limit of employees, making them creative and unconventional and develop agility. Agile workforce is good at collaboration, cooperation, knowledge sharing, and empowerment and can handle uncertain and difficult situations. Government organizations and public administration departments need to focus on creating a work culture that motivates the service providers to serve people along with designing the job characteristics to add meaning to one's work. The administrators and individuals engaged in such work need to be trained and prepared as change agents, who will recognize the need of change, will always be prepared to initiate and accept a required change.

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