



Original Article

Leadership and Organizational Commitment of Vietnamese Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world as a massive and sudden shock. Organizations are having difficulties to complete their objectives while ensuring employees' safety whereas employees are suffering from mental and psychological health concerns, in addition to work difficulties, consequently affecting their organizational commitment. In this context, organizations and employees look up to leaders for their responses. The present study tackles leadership and organizational commitment of Vietnamese employees during the COVID-19 pandemic using the quantitative methodology. Participants are 267 Vietnamese employees who are currently working under heavy restrictions. The findings show that transformational leadership is the most prominent leadership style in Vietnam during the pandemic, following by transactional leadership. Transformational leadership has a strong and positive relationship with organizational commitment. Transactional leadership has a moderate and positive relationship with organizational commitment. The relationship appears to be weak and negative in the case of passive/avoidant leadership. The outcomes of leadership, most notably leaders' effectiveness in dealing with group and individual interests and members' satisfaction also show a strong and positive correlation with organizational commitment. The present study also delivers recommendation to leaders that the aspect of individual consideration should receive more attention as it helps to ease members' struggle during the crisis, increase their satisfaction, and consequently improve their organizational commitment.

Keywords: Leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organizational commitment, COVID-19, pandemic.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is considered a turning point in the history of mankind as it crosses geographical borders to affect the works and lives of everybody at an individual, national, regional and global level. It overloads health system, pushes economic and social systems over the edge and puts the world in a global lockdown. At the organizational levels, businesses, firms and organizations are forced to transform their way of working, particularly working remotely, to function and survive in the upheaval time. At the individual level, the pandemic creates more responsibilities for employees, such as home schooling or taking care of their children at home, in addition to mental and physical health concerns, such as isolation, depression and anxiety.

The organizational commitment of employees is affected by the pandemic. During heavy restrictions and lockdown due to COVID-19, “non-essential workers” are transited to remote working, however, working remotely can diminish employees’ identification with the organizations, putting the organization-employees bond in danger [1]. On the other hand, “essential workers” continue to report to work and face high level of stress due to continuous risk of being exposed and infected by the virus. Such stress negatively affects their mind and body, consequently reduce their commitment [2]. Moreover, many others lost their job or suffer job insecurity during the crisis. Job insecurity is a strong predictor of turnover intention, job motivation and job satisfaction, therefore an increased job insecurity caused by the pandemic adversely affect employees’ organizational commitment [3].

Given the uncertainties and upheaval of the pandemic, leadership is one of the decisive factors whether organizations make a breakdown or breakthrough. Leader should guide and lead individuals and organizations in the right direction [4]. Effective leadership needs to be trustworthy and reliable; acquires good communication skills; shows empathy,

sensitivity and willingness to support others; inspires and motivates members, and being capable of dealing with sudden or unexpected changes [5]. However, the pandemic generates an uncertain environment and gives leaders little time for preparation, consequently creating a massive challenge for them in both supporting their members while also continuing to encourage productivity, motivation, objectives achievement, and commitment. It can be said that the COVID-19 pandemic is an ultimate test for leadership [6].

The present study is conducted in the context of Vietnam. The country is amongst the first countries to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, due to quick reactions and measures, the impacts of the first three waves of the pandemic in Vietnam were much less compared to other countries. However, the country was massively hit by the fourth wave of infection on April 27th 2021, which was more impactful than the first three waves [7].

The present paper aims to explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations by evaluating leadership and its impacts on organizational commitment of Vietnamese participants. The paper contributes empirical evidence on the leadership practices being conducted during the crisis and their relationship with organizational commitment of employees. Moreover, the study supports previous researches by emphasizing the leadership-commitment relationship and provides suggestions on leadership practices to improve organizational commitment. In addition, there is a limited number of academic researches discussing the adverse impacts of the pandemic on Vietnam’s business and organizations, therefore the present study hopes to contribute insights and knowledge on the matter.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Leadership

The topic of leadership during environmental disruption has been discussed by many

researchers. To date, most researches about leadership during crisis has focused on organization-specific crises, which have both similarities (inducing anxiety and often leading to workforce reduction) and differences (how employees struggle with physical, mental and emotional problems, the level of the crisis, etc.) with the COVID-19 pandemic [8]. This prompts researchers to conduct more studies regarding leadership in the COVID-19 context. Ball [9] stated the philosophies of strong leadership during the ongoing environmental disruption, including: i) Ability to listen and directly address issues with members; ii) Building a frequent, interactive, safe and encouraging environment for members to share; iii) Identifying, communicating and maintaining clear purpose, vision and priorities; iv) Focusing on behaviors, outcomes, purpose and metrics that really matters rather than profit; v) Encouraging a culture and mechanism that enhance continuous improvement and change; vi) Maintaining integrity as leader; and vii) Preparing for unexpected events. Dirani [6] further added that in addition to frequently engaging employees, it is necessary for leadership to show flexibility as members are also unprepared for the disruption and need time to adjust to the new situation. The well-being of employees should be ensured, and decision should not be made impulsively, but rather should be made with certainty, action positive reinforcement.

Leadership competencies and effective practices during the COVID-19 pandemic have also been discussed. Leaders need to communicate to maximize trust and minimize stress and anxiety of members during uncertain time [5]. The communicated messages should be aligned, realistic, balanced and sent out via appropriate channels [6]. Communication should be constant to remain the leader-members connection, to allow them to be informed and to receive feedbacks critical for decision making [10]. In addition, they need to build trust and confidence in their followers [5]. Followers should be allowed to access objective information, to speak up and to ask questions

whereas leaders should be open, transparent and providing a sense of control through decision making [10]. Moreover, [8] suggested that leadership should put great efforts in engaging communal behaviors such as honesty, care, compassion, sensitivity and sympathy during the crisis. Effective leadership listens to a wide range of opinion and focus on asking questions, connects with members and genuinely cares about them and their welfare, creating a sense of togetherness [11]. Furthermore, [12] suggested that leaders must always seek to “say what they do, and do what they say”. Effective leadership should also behave consistently with what they ask employees to do [5]. During the crisis, it is required that leaders take responsibility and do so visibly, thus showing leadership’s accountability, risk-sharing with members, and exhibiting constancy, resilience, and how they can be relied on to continue persevere on behalf of their followers [10].

Meanwhile, other researches have been conducted focusing on leadership styles. Eichenauer et al., [8] argued that communal leadership is the most often desired leadership style by employees. This style of leadership focus on providing supports, displaying understanding, providing flexibility and expressing empathy to work – family balance during the crisis. While during the crisis, agentic and task-oriented behaviors such as clear communication are important, the author concluded that in both hypothetical crisis situation and reality, communal leadership is more important and is more indicative of supervisor likability. Ahern & Loh [10] claimed that authentic leadership encompasses honesty, concern and benevolence towards followers given the uncertainties and difficulties generated by the crisis. Authentic leadership responses to the crisis based on personal and professional values, serving as a guiding framework that inform decision making. Azizah et al., [13] concentrated on two common and main leadership styles, namely transformational and transactional leadership. Transaction leadership refers to the exchange relationship between

leaders and members in which each side “make a deal” to perform to meet each other’s interest and expectation. This style of leadership is often known as the way leaders maintain performance by satisfying the needs of members, however, it does not bind leaders and members in any way of collaboration, thus resulting in a routine, uncreative but stable organizational environment. In contrast, transformational leadership requires a responsive and an innovative environment. This style of leadership focuses on inspiring vision, teamwork and identifying common values through acknowledging individual achievement, appreciating members’ efforts and showing interest in their work, ideas, feedbacks and decisions. The author concluded that both transformational and transactional leadership have significant effects on work satisfaction and performance during the crisis.

2.2. Organizational Commitment

The concept of organizational commitment has been explained by several researches. Organizational commitment is the desirable work-related behaviors that facilitate organizational competitiveness and survival [14]. It is related to the harmony and interaction between employees and their organizations in terms of values and objectives [15]. Organizational commitment represents meaning and significance for satisfied employees to pursue their career in the organization and participate in various programs and activities of such organization [16]. Organizational commitment refers to the degree to which employees identify themselves with their organization and wish to maintain their membership in such organization [17].

The organizational commitment of employees are influenced by several factors, not just financial benefits. Stated that demographic factors such as educational level serve as determinant of organizational commitment. Highly educated employees often have higher demands, more opportunities and alternatives to consider, therefore their commitment to certain organizations might be lowered [18]. Konya et

al., [19] added that age and years of working in their organization also affect employees’ organizational commitment. Employees who is older and have been working for their organization for a long time often have higher level of organizational commitment because they better understand, adopt and synchronize the values of their organization with their own. In addition, older employees have less employment options, making their current job more attractive, encouraging them to commitment to their organization. Bahrami et al., [20] argued that personal characteristics, rewards, work values, and organizational structure are prominent determinants of organizational commitment. It also depends upon job enrichment and how much employees enjoy autonomy and freedom while working in their organization [17].

The importance of organizational commitment has attracted the interests of many researchers. Organizational commitment serves as a crucial instrument for evaluating and enhancing organizational performance [20]. Committed employees exert considerable efforts more willingly to achieve organizational goals and objectives [15]. Such employees have a stronger bond with their organization, resulting in positive attitudes, behaviors, and extensive participation in all quality measures to achieve performance [16]. Naz et al., [21] also stated that organizational commitment and its impacts are correlated with performance, motivation, satisfaction and absenteeism and turnover intentions, and highly committed employees result in better performance and higher work motivation, which are beneficial to the organization.

3. Methodology

3.1. Hypotheses

The present study proposes four hypotheses to: (1) examine which leadership style is the most prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam; and (2), (3) and (4) evaluate the

relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment in the aforementioned context. In this study, three common and main leadership styles are taken into consideration: transformational leadership, transactional leadership and passive/avoidant leadership.

Regarding hypothesis 1, the present study hypothesizes that transformation leadership is the most prominent leadership style during the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam. Azizah et al., [13] argued that even though both transformational and transaction leadership have significant effects on work satisfaction and performance during the ongoing crisis, transformational leadership is perceived to be more beneficial than transactional leadership. Employees, who have to go through traumatic experiences, need to learn to deal with sudden complexity and need to quickly learn how to adopt to the new reality [6]. While agentic and task oriented behaviors such as process management or frank communication are necessary to keep the organization functioning, actions that identify common values, appreciating efforts and acknowledging hardship by leaders are perceived to be more important by employees [8]. Strong empathic responses are particularly important at time when the lives of many people are disrupted [10]. Anwar [22] concluded that transformational leadership is the most effective and suitable leadership style during the crisis. Accordingly, it is argued that the leadership style in Vietnamese organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic is in-line with the aforementioned research findings. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is proposed:

H1: Transformational leadership is the most prominent leadership style in Vietnamese organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding hypotheses 2, 3, and 4, the present study hypothesizes that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are positive relationships between transformational and transactional leadership and organizational commitment whereas the relationship between passive/avoidant leadership and organizational

commitment is negative. The pandemic creates additional psychological, social and work demands that change how employees feel about their work and organization [1]. Employees might not have an adequate home environment to work remotely due to lack of technology, children responsibilities, in addition to COVID-19 specific issues such as isolation and depression [8]. On the other hand, frontline and essential workers face high levels of stress and anxiety due to risks of being exposed and infected, therefore lowering their commitment [2]. Recruiting new employees and enforcing organizational commitment of current members are shown to be a difficult task [23]. Those who are working remotely may have their identification with organizations diminished, harming their bonds with their organizations [1]. In this situation, members look up to their leaders for direction and assurance [24]. Being accessible and available for communication and especially personal communication allow leaders to enhance employees' commitment in the crisis as it helps to ease uncertainty; creates better understanding of personal role during difficult time; and strengthens salience of organization for employees [1]. Moreover, when leadership ensures employees' safety, it helps to generate better job reattachment and job engagement, consequently lower their levels of work withdrawal [25]. Rathi et al., [26] stated that transactional leadership enhance employees' motivation and performance, encouraging them exert greater effort and organizational commitment during the crisis. Concluded that transformational leadership implies greater efficiency, satisfaction and commitment, while passive-avoidant leadership adversely affect employees' satisfaction, effectiveness and commitment [4]. Therefore, hypotheses (2), (3) and (4) are proposed:

H2: there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment in Vietnamese organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H3: there is a positive relationship between transactional leadership and organizational

commitment in Vietnamese organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H4: there is a negative relationship between passive/avoidant leadership and organizational commitment in Vietnamese organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2. Research Design

The present study is conducted using the quantitative methodology. References are collected from different sources, including, books, journal articles and academic researches. Participants are 267 Vietnamese participants who are currently working for Vietnamese organizations under heavy restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Two questionnaires are adopted in the research, including the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) [27] and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) [28]. The MLQ consists of 45 questions

on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0= not at all to 4 = frequently, if not always. The OCQ consists of 18 questions of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Both questionnaires are translated from English into Vietnamese.

4. Analyses

4.1. Reliability Analysis

Firstly, the data set is examined by reliability analyses. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett’s test and Cronbach’s Alpha are conducted to test the reliability and validity of the data set. Table 1 shows that both the MLQ and OCQ achieve very high KMO and α values, with Barlett’s test p-value=0.000. These results indicate high internal consistency within the collected data set, also it is highly reliable and can be proceeded to further analyses.

Table 1. Reliability analysis

Analyses	KMO	Chi-square	df	Sig.	α
MLQ	0.957	9596.278	990	.000	0.946
OCQ	0.929	3398.333	153	.000	0.925

4.2. Leadership Styles in Vietnam

The MLQ helps to determine the most prominent leadership by assessing transformational leadership with 5 scales (idealized influence – attributes, idealized influence – behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration); transactional leadership with 2 scales (contingent reward, and management by exception – active); and passive/avoidant with 2 scales (management by exception – passive, and laissez – faire, meaning leaders do not get involved and often absent when needed). In addition, the outcome of leadership is addressed with 3 scales: extra efforts, effectiveness and satisfaction. The result of each scale is the average value of corresponding responses

divided by the number of responses. The result of each leadership style and leadership outcome is the average value of corresponding scales divided by the number of scale. The total result is calculated by the aggregate results of all responses divided by their number.

Table 2 demonstrates the MLQ results in the case of Vietnam. The findings show that in Vietnamese organizations during the crisis, transformational leadership is the most prominent leadership style, following by transactional leadership whereas the passive/avoidant leadership is barely identified. Transformational leadership in Vietnam is the most effective in idealized influence (attributes and behavior) and inspirational motivation. For transactional leadership, leaders are the most

effective in contingent rewards. The most significant outcomes of leadership are effectiveness and satisfaction. Based on these results, transformational leadership is the most

prominent leadership style in Vietnamese organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table 2. Vietnam MLQ results

Styles	Scales	Avg.	Total avg.
Transformational	Idealized influence (Attributes)	2.90	2.81
	Idealized influence (Behavior)	2.85	
	Inspirational motivation	2.91	
	Intellectual stimulation	2.84	
	Individual consideration	2.52	
Transactional	Contingent rewards	2.87	2.67
	Management by exception (active)	2.48	
Passive/Avoidant	Management by exception (passive)	1.21	0.95
	Laissez-faire	0.68	
Leadership outcomes	Extra effort	2.49	2.79
	Effectiveness	2.96	
	Satisfaction	2.93	

Table 3. Spearman's correlation analysis

		Organizational commitment
Transformational	Correlation coefficient	0.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	267
Transactional	Correlation coefficient	0.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	267
Passive/Avoidant	Correlation coefficient	-0.225**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	267
Leadership outcomes	Correlation coefficient	0.598**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	267

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.3. Leadership Styles and Organizational Commitment in Vietnam

4.3.1. Correlation Analysis

Spearman's correlation analysis is conducted to evaluate the relationship between transformational, transactional, passive/avoidant

leadership and leadership outcomes and organizational commitment.

Table 3 shows the results of the analysis. Transformational leadership has a positive relationship with organizational commitment at a strong level. Transactional leadership also has a positive relationship with organizational

commitment, but at a moderate strength level. Passive/avoidant leadership is negatively and weakly correlated with organizational commitment. Also, the outcomes of leadership appears to have a strong relationship with organizational commitment. These findings support hypotheses 2, 3 and 4.

4.3.2. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is conducted to examine the impact of transformational, transactional, passive/avoidant and leadership outcomes on organizational commitment.

Table 4 shows a significant linear relationship between transformational, transactional, passive/avoidant and leadership outcomes and organizational commitment ($p < 0.001$). The dependent variable is organizational commitment whereas the predictors are transformational, transactional,

passive/avoidant and leadership outcomes. These findings support hypotheses 2, 3 and 4.

Table 5 depicts that leadership outcomes help to predict 28.5% of the organizational commitment variance. Transformational and transactional leadership predict 26.7% and 19.6% respectively, while passive/avoidant leadership only predicts 3.5% of the organizational commitment variance.

In general, the analysis results show that there is a positive relationship in the case of transformational and transactional leadership with organizational commitment; and a negative relationship in the case of passive/avoidant leadership. Such relationship appears to be strong, moderate and weak for transformational, transactional and passive/avoidant leadership respectively. Accordingly, hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 are accepted.

Table 4. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Transformational vs organizational commitment	Regression	34.593	1	96.506	0.000
	Residual	95.979	265		
	Total	130.932	266		
Transactional vs organizational commitment	Regression	25.726	1	64.802	0.000
	Residual	105.206	265		
	Total	130.932	266		
Passive/Avoidant vs organizational commitment	Regression	4.605	1	9.661	0.002
	Residual	126.326	265		
	Total	130.932	266		
Leadership outcomes vs organizational commitment	Regression	37.309	1	105.604	0.000
	Residual	93.623	265		
	Total	130.932	266		

Table 5. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimates
Transformational vs organizational commitment	0.517	0.267	0.264	0.60182
Transactional vs organizational commitment	0.443	0.196	0.193	0.63008
Passive/Avoidant vs organizational commitment	0.188	0.035	0.032	0.69044
Leadership outcomes vs organizational commitment	0.534	0.285	0.282	0.59439

Table 6. Independent sample t-test (years of working)

			Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
			F	Sig. (2-tailed)	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference
LO	G4 vs G1	Equal variances assumed	0.198	0.657	2.120	142	0.036	0.34319	0.16191
	G4 vs G2	Equal variances assumed	1.726	0.191	3.114	185	0.002	0.37007	0.11882
EE	G4 vs G2	Equal variances assumed	0.140	0.709	2.527	185	0.012	0.31427	0.12434
	G4 vs G3	Equal variances assumed	0.007	0.932	2.163	166	0.032	0.29973	0.13854
EFF	G4 vs G1	Equal variances assumed	1.791	0.183	2.248	142	0.026	0.38300	0.17038
	G4 vs G2	Equal variances not assumed			3.289	129.827	0.001	0.43607	0.13257
SA	G4 vs G1	Equal variances assumed	1.794	0.183	2.397	142	0.018	0.44273	0.18472
	G4 vs G2	Equal variances not assumed			2.308	134.175	0.023	0.32176	0.13939

4.4. Leadership Outcomes and Organizational Commitment

4.4.1. Leadership Outcomes and Organizational Commitment Based on Years of Working

Figure 1 represents the results of leadership outcomes on Vietnamese employees during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the period of time they have been working in their respective organizations. To determine whether leadership outcomes are different for employees based on their years of working, the independent sample t-test is conducted. Their time of working for their organization is categorized into: group 1 = "less than 1 year"; group 2 = "1-5 years"; group 3 = "5-10 years"; and group 4 = "more than 10 years". The outcomes of leaderships and its components are coded as: Leadership outcomes = LO; Extra effort = EE; Effectiveness = EFF; and Satisfaction = SA. The independent sample t-test

compare group 4, which scores the highest (Figure 1) with group 1, 2 and 3 which score lower.

Results from Table 6 demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences between those with "more than 10 years" of working, compared to those who work "less than 1 year" and those with "1-5 years" of working experience in terms of leadership outcomes and its components, namely extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction. It appears that these outcomes of leadership become greater when employees spend longer time with their organization, compared to those who spend less time. In most cases, there seems to be no difference between those who spend "5-10 years" and those who spend "more than 10 years" working for their organization, with extra effort is the only exception. Generally speaking, it is believed that the longer employees work for their organization, the better the outcomes of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

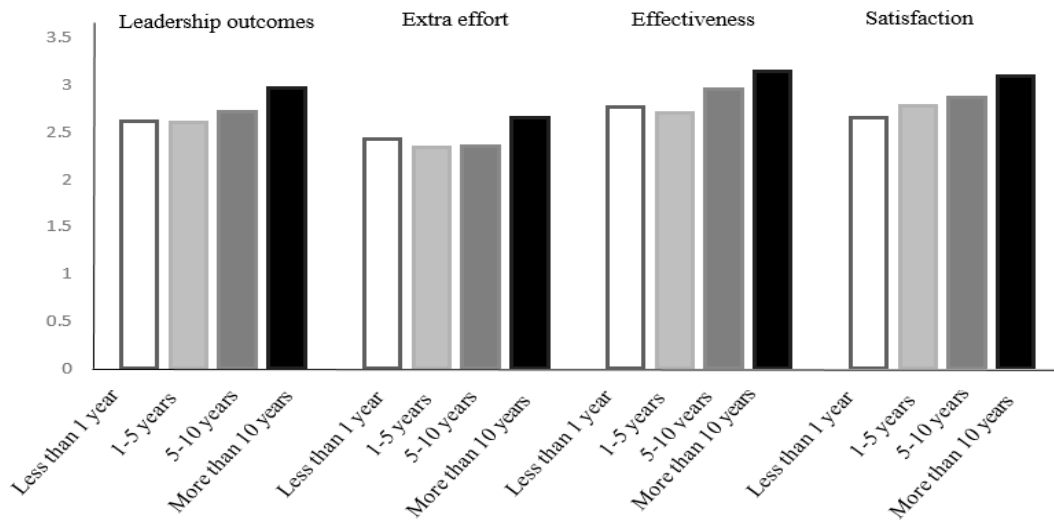


Figure 1. Leadership outcomes based on years of working.

Table 7 demonstrates the relationship between leadership outcomes and organizational commitment based on participants' years of working in their respective organizations. The results demonstrate that there exist positive relationships between leadership outcomes and its components and organizational commitment of Vietnamese employees ($p < 0.001$). Interestingly, such relationships are the strongest in the case of employees with "less than 1 year"

of working in their organizations. It is argued that even though the outcomes of leadership become the greatest in case of those who have been working the longest for their organizations, during the pandemic, such outcomes are particularly the most important for new members because they serve as deciding factors whether these new members would stay and commit to their organization.

Table 7. Leadership outcomes and organizational commitment based on years of working

	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
	Organizational commitment			
Leadership outcomes	0.690	0.619	0.497	0.543
Extra effort	0.634	0.615	0.431	0.451
Effectiveness	0.665	0.584	0.500	0.518
Satisfaction	0.618	0.533	0.447	0.515

4.4.2. Leadership Outcomes and Organizational Commitment Based on Age Range

Figure 2 illustrates the results of leadership outcomes on Vietnamese employees during the crisis based on their age range. To determine whether leadership outcomes are different for employees based on their age range, the independent sample t-test is conducted. Their

age range is categorized into: group 1 = "20-30"; group 2 = "31-40"; group 3 = "41-50"; and group 4 = "older than 50". The outcomes of leaderships and its components are coded as: Leadership outcomes = LO; Extra effort = EE; Effectiveness = EFF; and Satisfaction = SA. The independent sample t-test compare group 3, which scores the highest (Figure 2) with group 1, 2 and 4 which score lower.

Table 8. Independent sample t-test (age range)

			Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
			F	Sig. (2-tailed)	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference
LO	G3 vs G1	Equal variances assumed	1.901	0.170	2.735	157	0.007	0.35296	0.12903
EE	G3 vs G1	Equal variances assumed	0.178	0.674	2.721	157	0.007	0.35350	0.12990
	G3 vs G2	Equal variances assumed	0.002	0.969	1.985	135	0.049	0.27535	0.13869
EFF	G3 vs G1	Equal variances not assumed			2.989	137.805	0.003	0.39138	0.13095

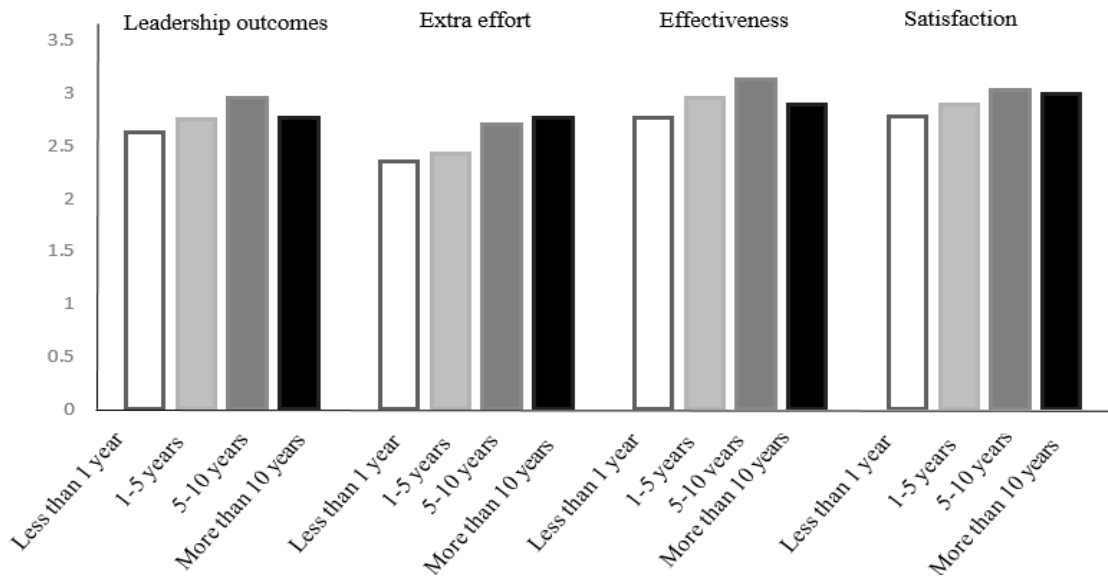


Figure 2. Leadership outcomes based on age range.

Findings from Table 8 indicates that there are statistically significant differences between those who belong to the “41-50” age range and those who belong to the “20-30” age range in terms of leadership outcomes and its components, namely extra effort and effectiveness. No difference has been found regarding satisfaction. It appears that satisfaction generated by leadership are not influenced by age. A possible explanation could be that during

the crisis in which everyone is facing restrictions and suffering mental and physical health, appropriate leadership practices that show empathy, understanding, supports, care, flexibility, motivation and communication accessibility can strengthen and considerably boost all members’ satisfaction, regardless of their age range. Also, there is no difference between the “41-50” and “older than 50” age range group, and between the “20-30” and “31-

40” age range group. The results express that the outcomes of leadership are different between younger employees and middle-age and older employees. Leadership outcomes become greater for older employees, compared to employees at younger ages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, appropriate leadership practices can better encourage middle-aged and older employees to be more effective and exert more efforts, compared to young employees aged 21-30 and 31-40.

Table 9 depicts the relationship between leadership outcomes and organizational commitment based on participants’ age range. The results represent a positive relationship between leadership outcomes and its components and organizational commitment of Vietnamese employees across all age range

($p < 0.001$). Such relationships appear to be the strongest for employees in the “20-30” age range. However, there is an exception in the case of Effectiveness in which this outcome has the greatest relationship with organizational commitment in the case of employees in the “older than 50” age range. It is argued that while the outcomes of leadership on employees during the crisis become greater for older employees, these outcomes are crucial for young employees whose experience in dealing with environmental disruption is insufficient. Employees who are “older than 50” are most likely more experienced in crisis situation than younger employees. Because these employees are the most vulnerable to the Corona virus, leadership outcomes that boost their effectiveness in utilizing their experience can highly impact their organizational commitment.

Table 9. Leadership outcomes and organizational commitment based on age range

	20-30	31-40	41-50	Older than 50
	Organizational commitment			
Leadership outcomes	0.624	0.565	0.517	0.617
Extra effort	0.586	0.501	0.455	0.456
Effectiveness	0.578	0.558	0.430	0.695
Satisfaction	0.570	0.519	0.488	0.506

5. Discussion

The findings from the present study illustrate that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam, transformational leadership is the most prominent leadership style, following by transactional leadership. Comparing to research that were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Truong & Nguyen [31] found that leadership style in Vietnam focus on keeping close supervision on subordinates to ensure the work is done well, managing tasks, centering on productivity, and stimulating teamwork. Mai and Dang [32] concluded that charismatic is the most influential leadership style. Mai and Lu [33] revealed that change oriented leadership in which leaders are flexible and encouraging creativity, innovation, and improvement, is a

more effective leadership style. Despite there is a limited number of research attempting to address the most common leadership style in Vietnam, it seems that leadership style has shifted from focusing on close supervision, managing tasks and production, ensuring deadlines and meeting objectives pre-COVID to inspiring employees, showing empathy and understanding, identifying common values and working together during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transformational leadership has the strongest positive relationship whereas transactional leadership has a moderate and positive correlation with organizational commitment. The relationship appears to be weak and negative in the case of passive/avoidant leadership. In this regard, the

leadership outcomes also has a strong and positive relationship with organizational commitment. This finding is in-line with previous research that during the crisis, while both transformational and transactional leadership have significant effects on organizations, transformational leadership is perceived to be more beneficial than transactional leadership [13]. Transformational leadership and leadership outcomes encourage greater organizational efficiency, in contrast to passive/avoidant leadership [4].

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affects employees' organizational commitment [29]. Remote working has interrupted the trust and relationships between employees and managers since most managers feel uncomfortable with their employees working at home due to lack of trust, therefore they try to control and monitor their employees more closely than pre-COVID [5]. In the case of Vietnam, transformational leadership is most effective in idealized influence (attributes and behaviors) and inspirational motivation. Leaders generate great influences on members, gaining and reinforcing members' trust, allowing members to put confidence in them. They inspire and motivate members, making team spirit aroused, sharing a sense of mission, and showing enthusiasm and optimism. Leaders strengthen their relationship with members through interactive communication and encourage communal values. Ahern & Loh [10] also emphasize that leaders need to build trust and confidence while coordinate initiatives to support their followers and organizational continuity planning. During the crisis, members often look up to their leaders for direction, instruction, and assurance. Leaders being accessible, available, and actively facilitating communication will enhance members' organizational commitment as it helps to ease their anxiety, generate better mutual understanding and enforcing members' trust in organization as a reference entity [1].

Under transactional leadership, contingent reward stands out the most. Leaders recognize and reward members for achieving

organizational goals and objectives. Such rewards might lead to an improved performance in both individual and group levels. Dirani [6] stated that during the crisis, organizations have to work under stress while facing difficulties in achieving their objectives, thus it is important for leaders to encourage psychological empowerment, facilitate positive reinforcement, show appreciation for efforts, works and job well done. In addition, it is argued that many members might have financial difficulties during the crisis, in addition to mental and psychological health concerns such as isolation and neglect, recognition and appreciation from leaders, in addition to financial rewards from completing tasks or objectives might help to ease their difficulties, improve their satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Another finding from this research is that the outcomes of leadership vary according to the diversity in age range and years of working in one's organization. This finding is in-line with previous research. Research by [34] conducted in Singapore found that outcomes from leadership behaviors such as productivity and satisfaction are higher for those who are older and have been working for their organizations for a longer time. [35] argued that age is related to the effectiveness of leadership, suggesting that managements and leaders should consider age diversity while practicing leadership. On the other hand, the present study's finding is contradicted with [36]'s research. The author found that leadership outcomes show no difference in working experience diversity. However, the working experience in the authors' research were only categorized as "less than 10 years" and "more than 10 years" whereas the working experience are more detailed categorized in the present study. It is argued that such vague categories might deliver the difference. Overall, the outcomes of leadership become greater on older employees and those who have been working for their respective organizations for a longer time. In contrast, these outcomes appear to have the strongest relationship with organizational commitment in

the case of younger employees and employees with less year of working in their respective organizations. In the COVID-19 pandemic, older employees are more vulnerable to the Corona virus compared to younger employees. On the other hand, because Vietnam has had experience in dealing with infectious diseases such as MERS and SARS in the past, it is possible that employees with longer years of working are more experienced and proactive in dealing with such environmental disruption. V. Konya et al., [19] added that older employees and employees with longer years of experience are easier to synchronize and harmonize with organization's values and practices. Therefore, during the crisis, appropriate leadership that expressing empathy, showing supports, and ensuring their safety can increase their satisfaction and effectiveness, and encourage them to exert extra efforts. For younger employees with less working year, they are less experienced in dealing with such environmental disruption while ensuring safety measures. In this situation, they look up their leaders for direction, instruction, and assurance [24]. In addition to being available and accessible, by guiding and leading them through uncertainties, leadership outcomes can generate greater organizational commitment.

The most significant leadership outcomes found in the present study are effectiveness and satisfaction. Overall, leaders are doing a good job in dealing with individual and group interests. Members are satisfied with leader's actions in regard to his/her leadership style, and the actions of leaders can generate an organizational climate which is appropriate and productive. In the present study, the effectiveness of leaders' action and members' satisfaction are shown to affect organizational commitment strongly and positively.

The present study provides recommendation for leadership to improve organizational commitment. During the crisis, many employees are suddenly forced to work remotely while still lacking an adequate home working environment [8]. Additional burdens and pressures are placed on them, such as homeschooling, or taking care

of their children and elderly at home, consequently giving them anxiety, depression and frustration [1]. A. Gabbiadini et al., [30] further added that females in particular are reporting higher level of psychological distress due to additional responsibilities such as household chores being added. In this context, it is suggested that transformational leadership should pay more attention to the aspect of individual consideration. Leaders should treat each member individually through understanding and sharing of needs, worries, struggles and difficulties. Leaders should show empathy and flexibility towards members while creating a climate in which each member can express honestly and freely. Leaders should recognize members' capacities, support them and their growth during this difficult time. As such, it will help to reduce their stress and anxiety, making them feel appreciated, supported, and satisfied, ultimately improve their organizational commitment.

6. Conclusion

The present study found that transformational leadership is the most prominent leadership style in Vietnam during the crisis. Leaders strengthen their relationship with members through generating and strengthening members' trust and confidence while inspiring and motivating them, showing enthusiasm and optimism, and encouraging interactive communication and communal values. Consequently, it has a strong positive effect on members' organizational commitment.

Transactional leadership is less prominent in Vietnam during the crisis, compared to transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has a moderate and positive correlation with organizational commitment, however, during the crisis, transformational leadership is considered more appropriate and beneficial than transactional leadership. Passive/avoidant leadership has a weak and negative relationship with organizational commitment.

The outcomes of leadership show leaders' effectiveness in dealing with individual and group interests and members' satisfaction with leaders' action and the climate they generate. It is suggested that leaders should pay more attention to the aspect of individual consideration, which can help to further enhance members' organizational commitment.

The limitation of the study is that the data is collected through online survey, given the complexity and uncertainties of the pandemic. Therefore, it is likely that the survey is only accessible with employees having internet and email addresses. Because of this, it is unfeasible to deliver a representative sample of every type of employees and organizations in Vietnam. Rather, the scope of the present study focus on Vietnamese employees with internet access and are working remotely under heavy restriction during the pandemic. Future research should be conducted in a larger scope and possibly after the pandemic is over to provide comparative results on the matter.

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