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COVID 19 Conflicts and Emerging Leadership Characteristics: A
Qualitative Study



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COVID 19 Conflicts and Emerging Leadership Characteristics: A Qualitative Study

Joshua Karani Magambo

Pan Africa Christian University: Department of Organizational Leadership

P.O Box 101166, 00101, Nairobi, Kenya

Joshua.Magambo@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Abstract

COVID-19 has resulted to global changes that have continued to instigate conflict in the hotel industry. This single exploratory qualitative case study purpose was to examine COVID 19 conflicts and emerging leadership characteristics during COVID 19 period at the Safari Park Hotel and Casino in Kenya. The target population of 20 departmental managers and sections from where a sample of seven participants was purposively drawn. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants from all departments and the data analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that conflicts were evident at individual, departmental, organizational, and externally with stakeholders. Finding further indicated that COVID 19 conflicts revolved around loss of income, employee relations, customer complaints and constrained resources. It was also found that leadership characteristic such as authentic, collaboration, innovation, and perseverance are critical during conflict. Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy is leadership development programs to incorporate conflict management, open and candid communication across the business, business leaders to balance between business needs and staff welfare as well as leaders to be provided with in service support that can complement their competencies in these critical leadership roles.

Key words: *COVID 19, Conflict, Leadership Characteristics*

Introduction

Conflicts are inevitable as long as there is human interaction with each other and with the environment (Madalina, 2016; Ukata & Silas-Dikibo, 2020). At corporate level conflict arises due to competition for scarce resources (Abioro, Odunlami & Ekpudu, 2019). For example, one party may perceive that there is unfairness or injustice (Tjosvold, Wong & Chen, 2014), others may feel that one party is impeding the other from attainment of desired goals (Mullins & Christy 2016), while work related changes such as work life balance can equally lead to conflict (Schieman, Badawy, Milkie & Bierman, 2021). Studies have confirmed that conflict in places of work is significant and on the rise (Katz & Flynn, 2013; Vaziri, Casper, Wayne & Matthews, 2020). In recent time, COVID 19 containment measures has been associated with conflict (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2020; Ochillo & Elsie, 2020; Bavel et al., 2020).

Globally, COVID19 stringent health protocols negatively affected labor market, demand for goods and services, production and supply chain (Elsafty & Ragheb, 2020; World Health Organization (WHO), 2020; ILO, 2020). More so, some organizations closed businesses, job and livelihood were lost (ILO, 2020; Ochillo & Elsie, 2020; Bavel et al., 2020), while in other cases, organizations that opted to remain open rescheduled work programs and resources reallocation (Hatak & Carnevale, 2020). These changes at corporate as well as individual level become source of conflicts. For example, working from home with minimal resources such as provision of

laptops, access to internet, minimal supervision, poor communication, and lack of trust contributed to work related conflicts (Corporate Staffing Services, 2020; Chen & Sriphon, 2021).

Justification for this study emerge from the extant literature on COVID 19 which has concentrated on the impact of COVID 19 on how to enhance organizational resilience (Sua, Traa, Huynha, Nguyenb & O'Mahony, 2020), the role of human resource management during COVID 19 (Elsafty & Ragheb, 2020), leadership in disruptive times (Harris & Jones, 2020), and enhancing operations in hospitality industry (Pillai, Haldorai, Seo & Kim, 2021), therefore the purpose of this study is to explore responses, experiences and reactions of business leaders in hospitality industry in Nairobi, Kenya and to appraise emerging leadership characteristics based on the consequences of COVID-19. Questions that guided this study include; (1) what has been your experience of COVID 19 conflicts at the hotel? (2) how did COVID 19 affect business operations? (3) what leadership characteristic are required during times of crisis as witnessed with COVID 19?

Literature Review

COVID 19

COVID 19 which is an infectious disease outbreak was conveyed to the World Health Organization by Chinese authorities on the 11 and 12 of January 2020, where 41 cases with the coronavirus infection had been diagnosed in Wuhan City in China. In an effort to mitigate the spread of the disease, governments around the world issued guidelines which included: adherence to hands and respiratory hygiene; physical distancing of at least two meters; wearing facemasks; avoiding crowded places; self-isolation; lockdown, cessation of movement, closure of national borders, suspension of sea, waterways, air and road travel, closure of schools and institutions of learning; closure of hotels, entertainments, worship places, request for workers to work from home, cancellation or suspension of social events that includes wedding, political events, burials, sports, and related ceremonies (KMH, 2020; WHO, 2020; Nicola, Alsafi, Sohrabi, Kerwan, Al-Jabir, Iosifidis, Agha & Agha, 2020; KMH, 2020; Logie & Turan, 2020).

The United Nations Development (2021) report titled 'Articulating the Pathways of the Socio-Economic Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on the Kenyan Economy' states that COVID 19 will have negative effects on Kenya's several sectors such as hospitality and manufacturing. According to Kenya's Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (2020), many hotels and restaurants in Kenya were forced to shut down their business and those which operate take away services were struggling to remain a float. Other sectors such as health facilities were equally affected. A study by Barasa, Kazungu, Orangi, Kabia, Ogero and Kaseram (2021), noted that COVID 19 disrupted access to health services in Kenya. This is similar to Pinchoff, Austrian, Rajshekhar, Abuya, Ochako, Tidwell, Mwanga, Muluve, Nzioki and Ngo (2021), a study in Kenya which found out that COVID 19 negatively affected women to an extent that they could not go to work. In other jurisdictions, such as the United States of America, COVID 19 led to business struggling economically to file for bankruptcy (Miller & Berk, 2020). In Spain, Filimonau, Derqui and Matute (2020), study found that COVID 19 has brought job insecurity in the hospitality industry. Likewise, in Canada, Schieman, Badawy, Milkie, Bierman (2020), found that work life balance related conflict was experienced amongst workers without

children at home. In Uganda, Katana et al. (2021), found that element of discrimination amongst communities was more prevalent during COVID 19.

Conflict

Humans' interactions and disagreements will arise because of access to and distribution of scarce resources, contrast of interest, unfairness, values, beliefs, norms, and people not just getting along (Tjosvold et al., 2014). People's differences are also among the many reasons there is conflict (Konopaske, Ivancevich & Matteson, 2018). According to Deutsch (2014), Folger, Pool & Stutman (2009), Tjosvold et al. (2014), conflict is either negative when it is destructive or positive when constructive. Destructive conflict arises when interaction of individuals or groups impedes the realization of institution goals, such as innovation, desired change, and job satisfaction (Ivancevich, Konopaske & Matteson, 2014; Kinicki & Fugate, 2016; Hjerto & Kuvass, 2017). On the other hand, positive conflict arises when confrontation of individuals or groups improves organization's performance, such as improving the quality of decisions, innovation and organizational behavior (Folger et al., 2009; Nawaz & Gomas, 2018; Lee, Avgar, Park & Choi, 2019). Conflict is bound to happen such as between workers in an organization (Fusch, & Fusch, 2015; Douglas, 2012). Conflicts frequent in an organization set up and are associated with the feeling of unfairness, injustice and incompetence of a member or group leader (Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue, Ishizaki, Tabata, Tsuchiya, Akiyama, Kitazume, Kuroda & Shimazu, 2009), thus a leader's response to conflict can either be helpful or counterproductive (Allan, 2014).

Leadership

As observed by Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013), the construct of leadership is underpinned by several theories. Despite this diversity, leadership is viewed as an influencing process where a leader motivates followers towards a common purpose or objective (Northouse, 2019; Yukl, 2013). To Hutagalung, Purwanto and Prasetya (2020), modern leadership styles focus on how to influence and motivate employees to improve the performance of the organization. As argued by Talu and Nazarov (2020), during COVID 19, leaders should have their followers interest above own, and demonstrate emotional intelligence as well as involving and collaborating with teams. During the unprecedented time posed by COVID 19, leaders must demonstrate rapid response and demonstrate effective communication (Al Saidi, Nur, Al-Mandhari, El Rabbat, Hafeez & Abubakar, 2020; Stoller 2020). Leaders must not only be seen as charismatic during the pandemic times, but should practice good corporate governance to guide in decision making (Roberts, 2020). Retaliating the important role of leadership during uncertain periods characterized by fear and insecurity of jobs, Oruh, Mordi, Dibia and Ajonbadi (2021), contend that leaders should be more compassionate. Bavel et al. (2020), feel that trust and compliance by leaders is critical during COVID 19. Forster, Patlas, and Lexa (2020), noted that during COVID 19, leader's collaboration and walking with followers is essential in the management of the crises. Moreover, Fusch and Fusch (2015), found that leaders who show respect to followers solved conflict much better while, Jit, Sharma and Kawatra (2016) examination of servant leadership and conflict resolution found that servant leadership characteristic of being patient, composed, and humility is an enabler in conflict management.

Safari Park Hotel and Casino

Safari Park Hotel and Casino (SPHC), situated in Nairobi Kenya is one of the high-end hotels in Africa. It occupies fifty acres of land donning African architecture that host 203 rooms, 36 suites, 167 deluxe rooms, over 20 conference rooms, and eight international restaurants staffed and stocked with international crew and brands (SPHC, 2020). Safari Park Hotel and Casino has an establishment of over 300 employees made up of senior management, mid-level management and other cadres. The top organ of the SPHC is the board that deals with policy issues and cascades down to the executive management and lower management for execution.

Methods

This study is based on constructivist paradigm because it allows for you to focus on a single concept or phenomenon (Andrew, Pedersen & McEvoy, 2011). A constructivism posits that humans seek to develop knowledge and meaning from personal interactions, experiences, and their own ideas (Creswell, 2015). It focuses on individual experiences and their interpretation of reality (Mogashoa, 2014). Constructivism is how people develop knowledge and meaning from personal experiences (Olusegun, 2015).

The study adopted an exploratory case study approach. As observed by Yin (2014), exploratory case study is concerned with answering the ‘how’ and ‘what’ question. A case study enables researcher to carry out a detailed and intensive analysis of a case which is bound by the context and the phenomenon of interest (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen & Kyngas, 2014; Yin, 2014). A case study was found appropriate for the research since it addresses questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’, which are vital in understanding cause and effect relationship. Further, a case study provides a researcher with the opportunity to engage in communication with the participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 2015). For that reason, the researcher was able to explore patterns which emerged after close observations, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic. Moreover, the researcher’s goal in this exploratory case study was not to plough through generalities but to have an in-depth understanding of how leadership styles emerged from COVID-19 conflicts within a five-star hotel context.

Participant

From a target population of twenty, a purposive sampling approach was used to identify seven participants from various department such as Executive, Human Resources, Front Office, Sales and Marketing, Finance and Service at the Safari Park Hotel and Casino. The choice of the participants was informed by nature of their job position which allowed them the opportunity to interact with aspects of the business. They were; thus, knowledgeable and potentially suitable to respond to the research questions.

Data collection

Data was collected through face to face interviews and audio recording. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), audio recording is very important since it gives the interviewer space to focus on questioning and listening, while recording provides accurate and unbiased data that can be used for direct quotes. Audio recording also allows the researcher to focus on

synchronization of observable social cues such as emotions, voice, and intonations which complemented the verbal interview data (Bryman, 2016; Yin, 2014). In a face to face interview set up, the interviewer is in charge of the interview process. Control of the interview process ensures all questions are answered, and the interviewee has the opportunity to ask for clarification which improves quality of data (Lavrakas, 2008; Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Interviews were scheduled at different times of the day and conducted at the site. Number of participants was thought to be sufficient to attain data saturation. In qualitative research, number of interviews needed to attain data saturation is not quantifiable but the researcher can take what he can get (Bernard, 2012 as cited in Fusch & Fusch, 2015).

Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes and examined leader's views on COVID 19 conflicts. During the interviews, COVID 19 protocols were followed which included maintaining physical distance of two meters, and wearing the face mask during the interviews as required by COVID 19 protocols. Prior to the interview sessions, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and encouraged to ask questions or clarifications. Participants were also assured of confidentiality of information that was to be collected. The choice of the questions was informed by the need to address study objectives which were: to identify the conflict areas associated with COVID 19, COVID 19 effects on business operations and to identify emerging leadership characteristics best suited to manage the situation.

Data Analysis

The data was subjected to a qualitative analysis which is a process that entails “description, classification and interconnection of phenomena with the researcher's concepts” (Graue (2015, p.8). An interpretive approach was used where transcription of the interviews and conversions of the observable actions of participants into written texts was prepared for analysis (Lune & Berg, 2017). The data was then subjected to thematic analysis, a process where a researcher extracts concepts as well as meanings from the data to document themes (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). To ensure data credibility, transcribed data was presented to participants and was confirmed as true reflection of interviews. Data then was subjected to a coding process. According to Saldaña (2015), codes are summative of words or phrase and they enable one to have a deeper insight and understanding of the data (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Schutt (2012) advises that data should be made more meaningful through coding for analysis. As observed by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), and Mayer (2015), coding of data gives the researcher the opportunity to present findings and to draw conclusions. Codes were initiated and linked to key phrases from where themes and subthemes emerged regarding COVID 19 conflicts areas and leadership characteristics.

Results

Key themes and subthemes that emerged from the data, as illustrated in Table 1, revealed that COVID 19 conflicts were predominant in the hotel.

Table 1: Themes and subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
Prevalent conflict areas	Individual Departmental Organizational Stakeholders
COVID 19 conflicts	Loss of income Employee relations Customer complains Resource constrains
Leadership characteristics	Authentic Collaborative Innovative Perseverance

Source: Author

Prevalent conflict areas of COVID 19 conflicts

From respondents to the question on what was the nature of COVID 19 conflicts in the hotel, there is evidence of individual conflict, departmental, organization conflicts, and external stakeholder conflicts. To maintain confidentiality, respondents have been denoted with abbreviation and numerical number to represent respondent one (R1) to respondent seven (R7).

Individual conflict

Individual conflict was seen to include conflict within an individual and conflict with other colleagues. Conflict within individuals arose from competing needs against scarce resources. Individuals would want to continue providing for the family but there was reduced income. Conflict was also experienced between two individuals in the same department and across other departments. Individuals expected to work in different job roles and in different departments experienced individual and inter individual conflicts. From the study data, below statements indicate the level of individual conflicts in the organization:

I know a majority of people are no longer able to meet their normal routine (R1)

There is confusion because no one is prepared, not individuals, or even departments, we are lost and have no answers to many of our staff and customer's questions (R2).

“..... generally, the entire hotel chain, I personally have to reassign work to other people from my section (R3).

Individuals have issues amongst themselves, with their departmental heads and also external clients (R4).

All levels of the hotel even at our homes we had issues (R5).

We were badly affected, loss of service charge and half salary then met you change your lifestyle, do away with personal projects (R7).

Organizational conflict

Organizational conflict was described as conflict that emerged and spread across departments. For example, staff were retrained and reassigned temporary tasks outside their regular department, and outside their normal working hours. This was done to ensure all units and sections were covered with as minimal staff as possible. Heads of departments were also required to supervise staff from other departments and to fill in when their fellow managers were away. For example, R1 said,

“There was conflict across the organization, from individuals, departments and the whole company, so were suppliers. Suppliers were inconvenienced in a great deal but we had to negotiate for best options”

Stakeholders' conflict

Stakeholders were conceptualized to include clients, suppliers, and public officers. Clients included walk in who patronize the facility as one off event, clients who have membership and regularly patronize the facility, and international clients on holiday or attending conferences. Unexpected closure of the entire hotel during lockdown, closure of specialized restaurants, closure of in-house facilities, and cancellation of events had devastating effects on these clients. The unfolding events also affected suppliers who were required to scale down or stop providing goods and service at all. On sudden and unprecedented country lockdown, participants stated:

There was shock, panic and confusion felt across the business and the whole country, I think. We experienced issues from clients who have been inconvenienced by cancelation of events (R1).

There was panic and cancellations of events. All department and in general, the entire hotel chain (R3).

Reiterating on supplier's inconveniences, R5 said “Our suppliers who were used to do huge supplies were now being asked to supply small quantities or not to supply at all. Some supplies request for goods were too small to even cover delivery costs but we had to also remain in business. We advise suppliers that we need to work together since brighter days are coming”

These statements are indications that conflict was experienced in many areas. At individual level conflict was associated with fear, loss of income and livelihood. Uncertainty was also felt which was associated with COVID 19 control measures especially rescheduling of work that led staff to work in shifts in some cases in unfamiliar department. Moreover, staff were also expected to take a pay cut and take unpaid leave. At the departmental level, conflict arose from work scheduling where staff from different departments were assigned duties in other departments which lead to role complexity as well as contravening of company work schedule policies. Conflict at the organization level was due to cancellation of events, conferences, and massive deployment of resources to comply with COVID 19 protocols. Stakeholders' conflict was closely related to companywide conflict since the major concern was change of dates, and price of items and cost of goods.

Conflicts associated with the COVID 19

The participants revealed that there were numerous conflicts. Notable COVID 19 conflicts were as a result of government healthcare measures that included closure of hotels and restaurants, cessation of movement, and social distancing. Specifically, COVID 19 conflict were around:

Loss of income

In regard to loss of income, R1 stated “the process was devastating; there was huge loss of revenue. R2, observed that, reduced pay and incentive to staff brought employees labor relations issues”. “Psychosocial issues arose due to loss of incomes” (R2).

Employees’ relations

Employee relations is about the prevailing relationship employee has with the surrounding environment which could include relationship with the supervisor, colleagues, customers and suppliers. All managers as well as supervisors concurred that COVID 19 resultants were major contributors to negative effects on employee’s relations. For example, R7 noted that fear and stringent measures brought issues of suspicion. “Imagine, staff were afraid of each other, customers were afraid of service team...teamwork and bonds were broken, people were affected psychologically which affected performance” R6 said: “You want something from the store, you go find the person who is supposed to issue is not there or the item is not there. This affects how you work and how you relate with other departments” In support, R1 stated that loss of income and reassignment of duties was a major source of employee complaints. However, through dialogue most of the issues are addressed.

Customer complaints

Managers generally agreed that there were challenges in customers and suppliers’ expectations vis a vis what was availed. R6 observed that in some instances, customers who were used to be served by a particular waiter would find unfamiliar faces. “Despite the fact that all have the capacity to do a good job at waiting for customers, some have particular preferences” (R6). Managers in production also talked of innovative ways that were devised to ensure regular customers were not inconvenienced a lot. R5 presented the innovativeness by saying “We had to re-engineer our menu, and despite closing specialized restaurants, we consolidated all in one areas to ensures that customers who wanted Asian cuisine such as Korean, Japanese, Chinese’s, European such as Italian as well as African could get these meals at a central place” Effects of events cancellation was described as devastating and eventful as alluded by R3 “Cancellations of events and resulting booking changes as well as price changes can be very emotive as they disorganize customer plans as well as the hotel”

Resources constrains

Hotel resources were extremely constrained as elaborated by R1 who stated: “Compliance took a lot of company resources especially with the needs to restructure client’s programs” while “the hotel resources are very strained, right now, this is not who we are, even when you look around business is down but we have to keep going with the little that we get. R3 stated “most of our resources have been redirected to meet regulations and to ensure we provide best services”. “We have competing needs and no options, this is how we have to prioritize” (R5). These statements indicate that cancellation of events and changes in prices resulted to customer complaints, while

the need to implement COVID 19 prevention measures such as reduced sitting area space, installation of sanitizers, cleaning of areas frequently, and fumigation strained the SPHC little resources. Emerging subthemes included loss of business revenue, employee relations, customer relations, resource constrain.

Leadership characteristics

Authentic, collaborative, innovative, and perseverance emerged as essential leadership characteristics during COVID 19. Five of seven respondents noted that a good leader will manifest these characteristics when their followers or the organization is faced with unprecedented and uncertain times.

This position is vividly presented in the statement made by R1 “A leader who involves others, one who is flexible, innovative such as in use of Zoom and new technology”.

R2 incarnated the humility of the leaders. He remarked, “One who with the ability to make people follow him, is open to staff, one who can be trusted, moral, and provide direction”

Similarly, R2 remarked: “Should be very visible where people will know they have someone to talk to and discuss issues that are emerging all the time”

R4 also preferred a leader “who lets people free to do what they feel. One who gives people empowerment”. To respond to prevailing situations, R4 noted that: “A leader at this time should be technological savvy, flexible and moral”. Such arguments essentially raise the need for leaders to be up to date with changing technology that is essential to lead a modern organization. As R3 puts it: “One who can preserver on an assignment. One with endurance and adherence”

Discussion

This study explored COVID 19 conflicts and emerging leadership characteristics in the hotel industry in Kenya. The study has demonstrated that conflict experienced at the SPHC is not extremely different from what is common in other organizations. Conflict pervades all parts of organizations (Abioro et al., 2019). Conflict brings along positive and negative results (Mullins & Christy, 2016). Negative aspects of conflict include undesirable emotions, poor coordination and communication, stereotyping by disputants, and hinders other perspectives. However, positive side of conflict can create opportunity where disputant can release their frustrations, and can lead to new perspectives when resolving conflict as outlined in the following sections of this study.

Prevalent conflict areas

From the findings, it can be argued that conflict was prevalent in various levels such as individuals, departmental, organizational and externally with stakeholders. Conflict at individual levels was based on their personalities and differences (Mullins & Christy, 2016). Individual and inter individual conflict was around the supervisor and the staff mostly due to role conflict that arose due to misunderstanding of what individual employee is meant to do, when and how to do it. Role complexity included aspects of ambiguity, and incompetence due to work rescheduling in others departments (Brumels, 2008). Not surprising, individual conflicts also affected how these individuals were working in teams. Team is synonymous to group of people working for a

common goal (Mullins & Christy, 2016; Konopaske et al., 2018). Conflict issues in teams rose from roles interdependency which happens when one department relies on the other department or individuals to accomplish their task which becomes input to another department or individual (Mullin & Christy, 2016; Konopaske et al., 2018). At SPHC, departments such as banquets and events rely on sales so does the catering and finance. Conflict at the organizational level was majorly on distribution of resources, and employment issues such as leave, salaries, incentives, and work rescheduling.

COVID 19conflict

Similar to Thornton (2020), study on impact of the COVID 19 on hotel industry, this study found out that the COVID 19conflicts effects on the business have been severe. Closure of national borders, cessation of movement, curfew and related health protocols have negatively impacted the hospitality industry (Cytonn, 2020; Thornton, 2020). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2020), estimate international tourist travel to decline by between 20 percent and 30 percent. In Kenya, the hospitality industry witnessed cancellations of both local and international conferences, meetings, exhibitions, and currency volatility (Cytonn, 2020). With COVID 19 containment measures, hotels such as Serena Group closed ten of its lodges in Kenya (Irandu, 2020), while in June 2020, Fairmont Hotel closed the Norfolk, Mara Safari Club hotels and terminated employees (Mwende, 2020). According to Kenya Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (2020), COVID 19effects have led to loss of revenue ranging from a low of Kes. 500,000 to above 2.5mil mostly from facilities that depend majorly on tourists. The hospitality sector also depends on performance of other sectors. According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2020), companies listed in Nairobi Stock Exchange on 12 March 2020, lost wealth of over Kes. 122 billion as a result of panic selling.

The study revealed that COVID 19 has affected employee relations. According to Kaushik and Guleria (2020), COVID 19 has affected not only employee engagement but also employee relations due to poor flow or unavailability of information, lack of face to face interactions. They therefore advise organizations to ensure they have in place mechanisms to enhance rapport, improve flow of information and interaction. Kniffin et al. (2021), observed that reorganization of employee work such as working from home, in some instances is done without clear considerations that these employees many lack working space at home. Likewise, (Baker, 2020) argued that employees and managers are working from home for the first time, which pose challenges on how these employees work is to be supervised. In another survey by Emmett, Schrah, Schrimper and Wood (2020), it was found that COVID 19 measures such as building of trust, in addition to rising safety and security concerns, issues such as trust, and worker's solidarity have been negatively affected.

Government containment measures that have been instituted across the country and globally have also had negative effects on SPHC customer relations. Customer relations at SPHC included engaging with customers to renegotiate on events rescheduling, pricing, deliverables as well as managing inaccessibility of hotel facilities. These issues are similar to Dixon, McKemma and et al. (2020) who found that COVID 19 disputes arising from hospitality bills payment have been on increase and have negatively affected customer's emotions.

The study further revealed that due to COVID 19, SPHC has been forced to redirect human resource assets from normal routine to working teams, while financial resources have been strained due to implementation and compliance with COVID 19 healthcare protocols. This is similar to World Bank Group (2020), report which predicted financial constrain in world economies and overall decline of gross domestic product. In Kenya, the Central Bank of Kenya (2020), report shows that the hotel industry redirected their resources to comply with COVID 19 containment measures such as renovation, and retraining of staff. This is not surprising since this study found out that during the lockdown, Safari Park Hotel and Casino embarked on renovation of all its facilities and retooling of staff.

Leadership characteristics

A leader has been described as authentic, servant, transformational and one who has a dyad relationship with the followers (Northouse, 2019; Luthans, 2008; Yukl, 2013). At the SPHC, prevalent leadership characteristics are authentic, collaboration, perseverance and innovation. Authentic means being a genuine, moral and character based leader (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014). Authentic leaders lead by example for they have the moral content. Northouse (2019), note that authentic leaders positively affect followers' moral identities and moral which makes followers to make more decisions. Collaboration in leadership involves joint efforts to accomplish tasks and it can also be used alongside, inspiration, consultation and integration to drive better results (Yukl, 2013). Collaborative leadership can leverage on the good will of the members since this would bring faster response to staff and business outcomes. The study revealed that collaborative efforts not only create more holistic results, but can create access to more information, expertise and skills than any one individual can bring (Northouse, 2019). Perseverance was also highlighted as an essential leadership characteristic. Participants felt that a leader should be consistent to a course of action. Perseverance determines what goals one sets for self, how much energy to extend and for how long can one hold (Bandura,2009). Participants also felt that during this time of COVID 19 pandemic, leaders are supposed to be innovative in how they manage business and human capital. Organizations that want to improve on employee's performance can adopt authentic leadership (Cottrill, Denise Lopez & Hoffman, 2014). To Brownlee (2020), communication, and adaptability are some of key leader's characteristic essential during COVID 19. Deloitte (2021) posits that resilient is best of leadership characteristic at the time of COVID 19.

Conclusion

Drawing form, the literature and data analyzed, COVID 19 was unprecedented and no organization was immune to its negative effects. However, corporate leaders can maneuver COVID 19 related conflicts by performing three key tasks; firstly, defining the task by explaining what need to be done as a priority at individual, departmental and organizational level; secondly, leaders must support employees with resources to ensure the task is attained; and thirdly, ensure there is harmony of the team by building effective relationships. The SPHC has done a lot by involving employees on decisions that the leadership is intending to implement. It is equally important to take cognizant that COVID 19 has disrupted business operations and brought new ways of managing resources. The SPHC adoption of ZOOM meeting has ushered a

new way of staff and clients' meetings. However, there is need to analyze how to use this facility to complement the existing facilities.

The leadership of SPHC should articulate a roadmap that motivates employees such as being enthusiastic, providing direction, providing hope and being empathetic. In the face of COVID 19, while leaders are expected to support business operations, the same should be extended to staff by providing psychological, physical, and financial support. SPHC can benefit more if the leadership is taken through a leadership development program and conflict management training. This would build leaders competences necessary to appreciate the role of leaders versus that of management, appreciate their followers and other business stakeholders' differences; and how to identify and apply appropriate conflicts resolution mechanisms. Organization should also encourage open communication across the business especially during time of crisis, leaders across the organization be trained on how to balance between business needs and welfare of the staff. Finally, the study emphasized the need to provide leaders with in service support that can complement their competencies in these critical leadership roles.

Limitations of the study

The study adopted a qualitative exploratory case study. Qualitative methods do not require use of a standardized tool, which could have been used in case of a quantitative method. However, this limitation was addressed by a systematic selection of the sample. Another limitation was possibility of bias creep in at different levels in data collection and analysis. To tackle this limitation, researcher was diligent in ensuring objectivity during data transcription, coding, recording and verification of transcription by the respondents. Use of data from only one sources was another limitation which can be a source for future studies to include variety of hotels and location outside Nairobi.

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