Article

Building resilience during uncertainty: Leadership from within

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Abstract: Covid-19 provided a catalyst for the changing working environment, significantly impacting the way in which leaders come to the fore and how followers are encouraged and developed. This paper considers the importance of Place Leadership in working with community environments during periods of turbulence and instability. The research adopted a narrative approach to exploring the leadership dynamics among spontaneous volunteering activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. A case study methodology was adopted focusing on a singular group of volunteers that emerged in response to the emergency setting. Qualitative data was gathered allowing individuals to tell their story by interpreting events and happenings. The findings emphasise the importance of a leader who shares the values of the group, and demonstrate authentic behaviours and effective leadership approaches, whilst also embedding a community culture. The research recognises the importance of Place Leadership within the community setting as a means for the leader to demonstrate effectiveness and achieve results. Interestingly, no single leadership style is acknowledged per se, however the importance of authenticity, shared values and being embedded within the community is focal. The research will be of value and interest to a range of individuals and groups within academia and wider community settings, including those working within the Third Sector. The paper considers the situation faced during the pandemic and may not be easily repeated but is perhaps an opportunity for learning in response to disasters, crisis situations and community needs.

Keywords: place leadership; resilience; community; third sector; self-managed teams

1. Introduction

The impact of Covid-19 has been significant on many areas of the working environment and has required organisations, leaders, and employees to consider how they can best meet the challenges presented. The importance of resilience for leaders, and those being led, is widely recognised and is a key consideration for community groups where the concept of collective resilience is of particular importance [1]. The ability of leaders to develop teams and provide vision [2] becomes an irreplaceable characteristic. However, community groups, and particularly those formed through spontaneous volunteering, defined as 'informal volunteering' by Whittaker et al. [3] possess characteristics which require a level of connectivity between the leader and the led, and as such the notion of Place Leadership [4] is significant. This paper investigates the role of Place Leadership in the formation of a community group during the Covid Pandemic, while at the same time considering the building of resilience among the group and its members.

A combination of narratives and lived experiences of the 'Scrubs' group, provides the focus of this study. This paper views all members of the group as spontaneous volunteers and so by defining the members as volunteers, the group is considered part of the Third or Voluntary sector.

RQ. How do dynamic forces of self-organized community groups cultivate individual and organisational resilience?

It is acknowledged that the findings of this study may not be directly repeatable, however the research is of value to organisations experiencing significant disruption, and to unplanned incidents and events that necessitate a crisis leadership approach.

2. Literature review

2.1. Resilience during uncertain times

Hamel and Välikangas [5] identify the quest for resilience as an opportunity to yield a significant return to an organisation. The concept of resilience has been explained as the ability to recover or rebound. Other terms used include springing back, bouncebackability and buoyancy. Fundamentally, it focuses on the ability to return to the original (natural) state. Cross et al. [6], suggest that resilience comes from interactions, making use of relationships and networks to develop strong connections, meaningful in nature but carefully selected and built over time. Alternatively, Bhamra et al. [7] suggest that the purpose of resilience is about the ability to return to a stable state after a period of disturbance. Consequently, resilience is an in-demand quality required for effective leadership and throughout organisations.

Luthans [8] identifies resilience, hope and confidence as being crucial to installing a positive organisational behaviour. He suggests that this combination provides for effective leadership, allowing leaders to cope with issues of change, uncertainty, and adversity, through resilience. Goglio et al. [1] discuss how community groups need to respond rapidly to complex problems and introduce the idea of collective resilience: a combination of innovation, adaptation, and change. This variable combination of change drivers leads to a perpetually changing environment that could be considered as fuzzy [8]. Bernard [9] suggests that resilience is required in order to maintain "social competence, problem-solving, autonomy and a sense of purpose and belief in a bright future". Bernard's [9] work is related to child and young people development, and so perhaps is not as transferrable to adults and their development of resilience, as first appears. Certainly, it does not indicate approaches to attaining the skills and competencies identified if they are not already present in the individual. That said, it is recognisable that resilience is a skill that is required in response to the changing environments. Therefore, it can be argued that resilience is a central component in the leadership arsenal for coping with change and disruption. Luthans [8] identifies the ability to "bounce back" as central to this. Walsh and Johnston [10] developed the Crisis Leadership Wheel (CLW) identifying ethical practices, leadership by example and authenticity as key components. Central to the effectiveness of the CLW Model is the concept of resilience, which allows leaders to respond to the trials and tribulations of day-to-day activity.

Visser and Jacobs [11] suggest that resilience takes effect at an individual level and an organisational level and creates a series of behaviours which will result in improving outcomes at these various levels. As such, this ongoing development interacts, and supports the other, suggesting that the development of resilience leads to the creation of a multi-level framework of resilient promoting processes which can

be drawn on to reinforce and support others when perhaps they are not as equipped in dealing with a particular type (or scale) of disturbance as they may be with others. As such this multi-level framework combines to increase the presence of resilience within an organisation [11].

Further to this, the development of an organisational culture characterised by resilience can be observed in the relationship that exists between individual resilience and levels of organisational resilience [12]. Greene et al. [12] suggest that employers seek to employ individuals who characterise resilience as a means of developing organisational resilience and as such support their culture and reinforce the organisation against uncertainty and change. This modelling type of behaviour then cultivates resilience, through immersing individuals, including leaders and leadership development processes, to perpetuate an ever-growing sense and culture of resilience [13]. Viewing resilience as an integral component of organisational culture leads to a consideration of the crucial role of leadership in shaping culture in start-up organisations [14] and this research offers Place Leadership for discussion as an effective and appropriate style of leading to cultivate individual and organisational resilience.

2.2. Place leadership

Beer et al. [4] suggest Place Leadership is founded on the social and relational connectivity between individuals and groups in a specified environment or place. As such it goes beyond traditional approaches to leadership and is often dependent on the context of the time [15]. Furthermore, it is rooted in a non-hierarchical, collaborative structure based on mutual, co-operative practices [15]. Alongside this, Lough [16] suggests that Place Leadership has relevance for the development of resilience within communities, and community settings, and contends that voluntary and organic leadership strengthen community resilience, through creating a close relationship borne out of a common need or focus.

As such, Lough [16] argues that leadership developed internally from within communities is more effective than leaders trying to work with communities. This has the benefit of both increasing engagement and building resilience from within. This links with the notion of self-managed teams, and in particular what the purpose of external leadership is [17]. Kazlauskaite et al. [18] recognise the impact that the working environment has on individuals and acknowledging the significant impact that the leader role can have on followers (or the led) and their individual responses. As such followers are likely to respond favourably where there are perceived shared values, which are outwardly espoused by the leader.

Woodward and Shaffakat [19] suggests organic leadership contain key elements including self-organisation, voluntary and temporal in nature, and propose that crisis situations promote organic leadership, as this style is adopted to lead the spontaneous "coming together" of those within an affected crisis area (p.3) They argue that it requires regular interactions, such as meetings and other forms of communications, and is fundamentally place based and is of particular relevance during periods of turbulence. Organic leadership and Place based leadership cannot be divorced from each other due to the need for constant interaction and the voluntary nature of the

leadership with trust playing a significant role [20]. As such, the overarching connectivity found in the relationship between Place Leadership and Organic Leadership, is clearly relevant when dealing with crisis situations in which leadership needs to be quickly established.

2.3. Third sector leadership

Often referred to purely as the Voluntary Sector, but more accurately viewed as the Third Sector, this over-arching term accounts for a range of not-for-profit organisations such as social enterprises, community groups and charities [21]. Alcock [22] questions whether it is actually a single sector, due to fundamental differences in the type of organisations and the focus (aims and objectives) of their aspirations. Terry et al. [23] acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of the sector. In addition, Billis [24] questions which organisations should be classified as in or out, and points to blurred boundaries within the sector as key to the question. Gilligan [25] notes the complexity of the voluntary sector and suggests that as such leaders within the third sector face a range of complex challenges that are borne out of the different ethos, approaches and structures that are embedded in them.

Much of the research into the third sector has focused on leadership activity, considering how leaders deal with human resource issues, or are related to approaches to leadership with a consideration of a variety on philosophies, styles, and models [21]. Much of the literary base has emanated from North America, with authors such as Handy [26] and Perry [27] focusing on the term 'Non-Profit' as a means of describing organisations operating within the sector. Less literature has emanated from the UK, and as such there is less written which is reflective of the variety of organisational forms that have come to exist in the UKs diverse third sector [21]. This lack of UK perspective provides a sound base for considering issues within this article. Furthermore, the paper contends that traditional models of leadership do not fit within the Third Sector either.

Research through the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership (CVSL) found that most leadership research within the sector concentrates on senior leadership, noting that in sizeable organisations senior leaders are often portrayed as adopting the heroic style [28]. This however ignores many organisations within the sector who may be relatively small in comparison, and who adopt differing leadership models. In the same way, concentrating on larger organisations, does not necessarily recognise diversity of organisations that make up the sector, nor the type or variation of challenges that the leaders of them, are likely to face. In particular, the larger organisations tended to be male dominated in terms of leadership, despite have a predominantly female workforce [29] whereas in the relatively small organisations it was common to find females in the leadership roles [28]. While not necessarily, relevant to this research, it does challenge the extent to which current literature truly reflects the Third Sector within the UK [30]. This is supported by Terry et al. [23] who suggested that by the very nature of the organisations within the third sector leadership is built more on a collective, shared, or dispersed basis and does not comply with models used in traditional business sectors. As previously discussed, leaders within the context of these smaller organisations will face challenges and conditions which differ from those

within larger organisations regardless of gender, but related more closely to the situation they are in.

An effective leadership approach to working with volunteers requires the development of an effective relationship between the volunteer and the leader [31], in which trust is built, and commitment to the cause is embedded [32]. Often transformational and transactional leadership are identified as fitting approaches when dealing with volunteers suggesting that transformational leadership will enthuse intrinsic motivation and transactional leadership will drive extrinsic motivation [31]. This is supported by Dwyer et al. [33] who propose transformational leadership, above other approaches, as a means of promoting the altruistic benefits of volunteering suggesting a feel-good notion to keeping volunteers motivated and keen to keep going. Gilstrap et al. [34] highlight the need for authenticity in the approach taken by leaders regardless of the theoretical model they adopt if they are to expect volunteers to engage fully. Walsh and Johnston [10] emphasise the need for authenticity and leading by example as two of the three critical foundations of the Crisis Leadership Wheel, arguing that volunteers require trust in their leaders to engage productively with the organisation and follow their example pf the leader demonstrating shared behaviours and building effective workplace cultures.

2.4. Crisis leadership and spontaneous volunteering

The workforce within the Third Sector consists of a combination of volunteers (unpaid) and paid staff. Most volunteers work for well-established Third Sector organisations, and as such are likely to have received training and targeted support to assist in their development. They may even have regular and consistent working hours. Arguably, it may be viewed from a leader perspective that there is little variance regardless of whether colleagues are unpaid or paid. Where a difference may be apparent is when considering motivation, which is likely to be different for those unpaid compared to those that are paid. Several authors [35–37], identify the concept of volunteering as unpaid work, and recognise that this may be unplanned or planned activity, informal or formal, regular, or one-off. This research adopts the use of the term 'spontaneous volunteer' to describe individuals who came together to form the group that is the main focus of this research [38]. The notion of Spontaneous Volunteering is considered under the umbrella Term of volunteering, often linked with unexpected events or disasters. It results in individuals coming to the aid of others, giving their skills, knowledge, and time to support in any way they can. Britton [39] defined this as people who "come together for the first time to pursue a specific task or series of related tasks prompted by changing, often unexpected situations requiring immediate action." In particular Britton recognises the unexpected situation that has arisen, the need for tasks to be completed and the coming together of people.

The initial response to the Covid-19 by spontaneous volunteers, within the UK, from an evidential basis lacks clarity, but there is growing literature coming through. It is therefore important to consider spontaneous volunteering through the lens of previously researched disasters and events, whilst recognising key differences that exist, and noting that the basis of the literature and developed theory are underpinned in different circumstance. Of note is the global nature of Covid-19, the scale of impact

affecting all, and the time projection—it was anticipated to last over 12 months. All previous events and disasters had tended to be localised, even when pan-regional, and were short time-bounded. All events, however, are based on a range of different and complex circumstances and as such may be useful to reflect on, particularly when contextualising the impacts of spontaneous volunteering and crisis leadership. A key point, drawn from the literature, suggests that spontaneous volunteers are often not well-received by the established emergency services and disaster response groups, with questions raised regarding whether the impact on outcomes, is positive [39]. This is often due to the perception that spontaneous volunteers are unskilled and unprepared, may need greater levels of supervision, while also increasing risk levels and potentially financial costs [39].

2.5. Emergent groups

Alongside spontaneous volunteering, the forming of emergent groups is common to many disasters [40] and are normally in situ and able to provide a response, before the arrival of a formal response team. Twigg and Mosel [40] classify emergent groups as individuals who come together in response to an emergency, who may be from the same community but are not particularly known to each other. Instead, they come together instinctively in response to the situation, and it is this forming of groups that inspired Twigg and Mosel's research. One of the key features of emergent groups, according to Kendra and Wachtendorf [41], is their apathy towards bureaucracy and their speed of response and creative approach to stepping up to the challenge at hand. Hollingshead et al. [42] acknowledges the intersection that these emergent groups have with the formal emergency response organisations and services. They highlight the importance of coordinated and collaborative efforts to ensure an effective response is delivered.

Like Britton [39], Jalali [43] notes that the involvement of emergent groups is not always valued by the formal emergency response organisations and services, and he evidences examples where governments have prevented emergent groups from getting involved. That said, encouragement and cheering was initiated by the UK government to recognise the positive impact and involvement of these emergent groups who came together spontaneously to support the fight against Covid-19.

2.6. Leadership during Covid-19

It is widely acknowledged, that dynamic and adaptive leadership is required during disruptive times when the environment is at its most active [44]. It would also be true to say the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on all environments to the extent that new processes were needed to develop dynamic and adaptive approaches in all walks of life. The pandemic resulted in existing practices requiring review and central to this was the way leadership was delivered, as decision-making was complicated by fast-changing, unpredictable circumstances. Prior research questioned whether leaders were able to make effective decisions in such a turbulent environment [45].

The Third Sector responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by swiftly adapting work practices, to continue normal services effectively with minimal disruption, particularly in customer-facing services [46]. This relied heavily on co-ordinating high numbers

of spontaneous volunteers. A plethora of research has highlighted the activities undertaken by organisations such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) to outline the impact of Covid-19 on the Third Sector. This growing base of literature has outline both at a national and international level how volunteers have helped support and aid the recovery. Central to this, the Voluntary Network are gathering information on projects and their findings to demonstrate how the sector responded, with the aim of demonstrating the positive impact that the Third Sector has in promoting creativity and collaboration.

2.7. Conclusion

The literature suggests that third sector leadership is a combination of several contributing features, which was then complicated further through the crisis situation. Spontaneous volunteering is most associated with natural disasters (earthquakes etc.), were individuals come together to in a time of need, and as such is not so associated with the creation of products for organisations (the NHS). Leadership in these situations is of significant importance, to meet the challenge of the environment, and relevance of Place Leadership coupled with Organic Leadership should not be underestimated.

3. Methodology

The research question asks: How do dynamic forces of self-organised community groups cultivate individual and organisational resilience? The research project focused on the lived experiences of a group of spontaneous volunteers who came together in response to the challenge of the first UK Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in March 2020, with an aim to understand how the self-organised community emerged. Furthermore, to develop an understanding of the impact of the created community on the resilience of the members, the development of organisational resilience and the potential effect on the locality they operated within, in terms of societal resilience.

A qualitative, narrative, case study design is implemented to offer insight into "real world settings" [47] using an ethnographic approach as supported by Vindrola-Padros and Vindrola-Padros [48] who advocate the methodology as appropriate for the collection of data in short-term periods of intensity and crisis. The researchers combined theoretical knowledge, alongside their own lived experiences to design a research approach that empowered the respondents to share their stories; forming a partnership connecting the researcher and the respondent, that provides a rich and deep understanding of the experiences [10,49]. Ethnography goes beyond the methodological boundary and supports the use and presentation of appropriate findings in a format relevant and significant to the story [50]. This is further supported by Gold [51] who advocates the adoption of a Wisdom Inquiry approach, in which researcher develop knowledge for action, in which research focusses on the solution to problems and phenomena. As such, conducting research, which is based on knowledge translation leading into application.

Whilst many emergent groups formed in response to the pandemic this "intrinsic case study" [52] is selected because of the remarkable features it displayed. These features include a start and end point akin to those displayed in project management,

the generation of funds to support the well-developed logistics and operating procedures, training and development support offered through online platforms and many more. The group was identified through social media platforms, and the researchers were able to observe how the development of the group, and the interactions of its members, had evolved through these social media pages and apps.

Contact with the group was made using online platforms and a dialogue opened with one of the founding members. Trust became an essential prerequisite to the project development with numerous conversations occurring prior to the research project beginning. Whilst this dialogue does not form part of the data set for this research, it remains a vital component of the methodology that enabled the project to proceed.

Initial interviews were held with six members of the group who had joined the group, followed by two interviews with founding members. The final interview was with the group founder. Purposive snowball sampling recognised the potential desire of participants to avoid the publicity that the community group had attracted. The researcher was able to build trust amongst the group by implementing this message and this proved valuable when requesting that the group founder take part in an interview as other group members were able to provide reassurance to them [53]. Ethical approval was granted via the school's research process. {Host Institution} ethical processes were followed and all respondents signed consent forms prior to any data collection activities. While the researcher did get to know each of the respondents reasonably well during the data collection phase, they were independent to the group and therefore a level of objectivity was kept. To ensure a high level of transparency and accuracy all respondents were provided with a copy of their transcript and asked to check for accuracy.

Semi-structured interviews following a 'Tell me about …' approach, with importance being placed on facilitating an environment where the participant could retell their story freely, with minimal interruption. Whilst supporting, prompting questions were implemented, the timing of this research (during the immediate weeks following the groups' closure) results in participants recalling their experiences during unique, one-off interviews [54] with the researcher adopting an active listening approach [10]. Adopting a participant led approach resulted in all interviews lasting between one and two hours in duration.

Two independent approaches to narrative analysis are proposed by Lieblich et al. [54], requiring the research to be considered as holistic or categorical. After consideration of both dimensions of the approach provided by Lieblich et al. [54] this research applies categorical-content analysis as the most appropriate method to analyse the information from respondents within a targeted group or community, recognising that the self-formed community is itself an experience shared by a group of people. This research project recognises the need to consider the context and setting of the pandemic when analysing the data, utilising a content analysis approach, to develop a structure and order to the narratives provided by the participants and therefore build a story of the events that offer insight into this phenomenon.

4. Findings

These findings represent the views and stories of eight members of a self-organising community that came together to offer support to their community in unprecedented times. The eight participants included the founder of the group P1, and a person who saw a social media post and contacted P1 to offer their skills and support, P2. As a result of P2s involvement, their partner, P3 who headed the social media and funding campaign became involved. The remaining 5 participants who retold their stories had no direct connection to each other prior to this community forming. The members of the community that evolved received no payment and was made up entirely of volunteers.

A key feature of this research is the importance placed on the authentic retelling of the narratives and stories of this group [10]. By acknowledging the participants connection and attachment to their experiences and memories, and the impact experienced both personally and as a community it enables reliable and rigorous data to be produced that builds the story.

The founder of the group P1 called the local GP surgery at the beginning of the March 2020 lockdown. The UK media was reporting a shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and highlighting the strain that was being placed on health professionals resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. "I started it from a phone call request ... from a GP surgery and I very foolishly asked if they needed anything else (laughing)" [P1]. The conversation confirmed that the media reporting was correct, and PPE was in short supply locally and this prompted P1 to offer to help to make and sew some masks, aprons, and scrubs.

P1 set up a Facebook group to share the idea to sew and make PPE and ask others to join the effort by donating money and materials, and time, P1 recognised that whilst stitchers would be needed there would be other demands to ensure that the PPE was produced and distributed, and so the request for support included anyone that would like to help whether they could sew or not. The view was that there would be a role for everyone and anyone whether that be cutting materials, driving, sewing and much more. It was a direct result of the appeal for support that P2 became involved, offering to help and suggesting that they could 3D print some visors to distribute alongside the masks and scrubs. They arranged to meet, adhering to government restrictions and guidance with P2 explaining that, "She explained what she wanted to do ... and where she was at … and I'd never met anyone like P1 before ... hit it off straight away … and got on board with the story and wanted to help". P3 is P2s partner, and they became involved supporting with organising, marketing, and fundraising.

Within 10 days, P1 recalled membership of the group grew to over 130 stitchers, "It mushroomed out very quickly into this group who everyone thought I was the leader but in actual fact it led itself … (pause) to a point it led itself." P2 also recalled that they were "inundated with volunteers ... set up automated form and to place orders... and day by day they would be a call with P1, organise a delivery run, up to ten drivers in the morning and another ten in the afternoon … monitoring 24/7." Members of the group confirmed that P1 was viewed as the leader—"the one in charge" (P4) and stories were shared of how P1, supported by P2 and P3, had the idea, organised the processes and co-ordinated the group. Group members viewed P3 as

reliable, organised, and able to give answers and reassurance... P3 recognised their involvement stating "I can't explain how much it completely took over our lives in a good way … we were fundraising because we wanted people to be part of it, rather than having to buy your material…" Three key roles had organically emerged and was recognised as successful by the group with P3 recalling how they "…just fell into our roles and we'd get together on a night-time (remotely) and doublecheck the lists for the next day, so no one missed anything".

P1 was reluctant to direct individuals autocratically instead preferring to enable and empower individuals to "crack on" and "fill your boots." There were times during their interview that they appeared surprised to be viewed as leading the group. They recalled "I was talking to a man high up in the NHS in the North of England and he was talking to me like I was Mike Baldwin in a factory somewhere, and I was like 'whoa ... whoa, you say you want 120 sets of scrubs but we are just a group of women doing this, you can't really stipulate what colour you want ... we do what we do (laughter)" (P1).

The group began to attract more attention and took opportunities to publicise and promote their efforts to encourage others to join and donate. The first scrubs made were produced from donated bedding, before the ordered material arrived. However, this proved to be a unique point of interest and with the media interested to report the 1000th set of scrubs produced by the group, the group used a donated Peppa Pig duvet cover to make the set and highlight their cause. Social media platforms were used effectively to update the local community and appeal for support and donations which proved successful. A local business owner responded by offering to print quantities of patterns needed for each garment and thanks to over £11,000 being raised by a crowdfunding campaign which enabled the purchase of fabric. The NHS requested items and provided rolls of fabric, and another organisation offered to machine cut the fabric to produce specific sizes and styles of products which improved the systems and was welcomed by the stitchers, "pre-cut scrubs … it was heaven sent!" [P8]. "The more we did, the simpler it became … it became more streamlined, wasn't really a massive change, we just evolved into that … because (P1) was doing it" [P5].

Support and guidance were readily shared amongst the group through the development of online chatrooms and two of the participants discussed the impact including a sense of involvement and belonging developing for the group—a community was being created. As a result of the items produced and distributed healthcare staff began to send messages and photos, thanking the volunteers and these were shared by P3 using online pages, forums, and platforms. P3 also created a video that was designed to show what was happening in each area of the community group and shared this, explaining that "every single person who sewed, or a driver, completely knew they were part of the group" (P3). Within the local area the group began to share their activities recognising that not everyone had access to social media and banners appeared at prominent sites within the main town.

The community grew to around 300 volunteers and P2 believed this was in part due to the drive, determination and enthusiasm displayed by P1. P9 had found joining the group easy and the message they had sent had been responded to quickly. P4 was part of the group of citizens who were termed as 'shielding' during the pandemic and was reassured that they were protected and their wellbeing was a priority for the

community, because of clear, transparent, and effective procedures being in place to protect all the participants.

Whilst the production of scrubs and PPE was the primary purpose of the group the evolution of a community was recognised by the participants with P1 observing how "it became this other thing that happened, this scenario that there was this sense of community that carried them all through and I think that was the best bit," P6 discussed the importance of the community in terms of their own purpose and the importance of contributing to the efforts to protect the healthcare workers.

The community produced some remarkable achievements including over £11,000 in donations and over 1000 sets of scrubs but arguably the greatest success emerges from the narratives of the community members who shared their accounts of their time in the group with humility. Each participant communicated the impact of the community group on themselves during a challenging and uncertain time. The following responses are direct quotes from participants. Significantly these quotes were not in response to a particular question or prompt but instead were provided during the narrative the participants gave when asked to talk about what they had done and how they had become involved.

"…an amazing sense of fulfilment, yeh I know we've done something special…" (P2).

"…we knew people needed it and we were sat at home doing nowt … try and help them, help loads of people (smiling)" (P3).

"…I don't know how I would have coped … in total lockdown … it benefitted me as well. I just think it's lovely to be part of the community … we are privileged" (P4).

"For me, it filled, a massive gap of having no purpose, and then suddenly had a purpose again" (P5).

"You felt like part of something … they really needed it … to not feel useless" (P6).

"I could see these butterfly bags, so I knew, absolutely … that they were mine and that was a fantastic feeling … I was part of this community, and I didn't know anybody … but I felt overwhelmingly part of a community. I really did feel part of a group" (P8).

"…contributing to a cause within the local community … I liked that" (P9).

The group from the initial idea, began operating, expanded, evolved, and planned to close down within a three-month period as P1 was aware of a delivery of 30,000 sets of scrubs due to arrive at the UK and "knew very early on that when that boat docked, we wouldn't be needed anymore" (P1). During the weeks that followed P1 was approached numerous times from a variety of media outlets but turned down each request and when asked why responded that they wished "to get on with it now ... never wanted to go on telly (colloquial term for television) ... on radio … I only did those things to get money in the crowdfund … can I get on with my life now please?"

5. Discussion

The purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of the role of leadership within community settings, focusing on an emerging group of spontaneous

volunteers at a time of crisis.

The research does not intend to provide a definition of leadership but instead consider the importance of Place Leadership both in a community setting, but also within the context of a crisis time.

5.1. Resilience

The Covid-19 pandemic created a fuzzy environment [8] which for many disrupted the normality that we had come to expect. Leaders came to the fore displaying key attributes, with a key component of this being resilience. The respondents clearly identified with a group cohesiveness [6], despite the limited opportunities to meet and commune. The identified leader of the group was able to portray a sense of hope and confidence [8] both in what could be achieved and how it would contribute and support those working in the NHS. This sense of vision [2] supported this sense of team which allowed for the group cohesiveness to develop and thrive.

Central to this was the leader's ability to cope with the uncertainty [1] that the pandemic brought, and a belief that there would at some point a return to stability [7]. This was in part attributable to the key characteristics of the Leader being identifiable as being rooted in the community and demonstrating authenticity within their character, actions, and behaviours.

5.2. Place leadership

Authenticity can be considered as a 'root construct' [55] fundamental to all leadership frameworks and can be argued as central to the notion of Place Leadership. The formation of the group, and what followed is key to staying true to values and beliefs and acting "with … conviction, to build credibility, and win the respect and trust of the followers" [56]. As such, the authenticity enabled the motivation of group members. This provided within the group and among its members, a sense of trust and engagement, alongside a sense of wellbeing. Central to much of this was the importance of the members and particularly the leader living within the community in which they operated, with clear identification [P6], aligning with Sotarauta and Beer [15]. This gave the Leader credibility with the group and with those joining and contributing to a 'one of us' or 'part of us' notion that involved them in the process, with a recognition that the leader was capable and willing to 'get their hands dirty' rather than an imposed leader taking a helicopter view and purely directing downwards.

5.3. Team building

Fundamental to the role of a leader, is the ability to build a team. Central to this was the ability to provide a vision of success and to spread that vision throughout the team. P2 and P3 acknowledged the impact that P1 had on them, drawing them into the group, noting their focus and passion. All team members identified with P1 as the leader, recognised and bought into the vision and most importantly recognised the role of leader. As such the leader took a participatory approach to leading using sub-groups that became fundamental to the running of the activity. This enabled an approach to

minimising in-group conflict to develop, through a 'one of us' identity. As such the use of sub-groups allowed others to demonstrate leadership characteristics (e.g., P3) and for individuals to help lead from within.

In addition, the leader adopted an inclusive approach to team building. The group consisted of a membership drawn from a broad spectrum of the community including the retired, students and educators, parents and carers, healthcare professionals and beyond. Some were as young as eight, while others were over seventy. Health and safety procedures were central to ensuring all who wanted to be involved and contribute, were able to. Effective communication was used via on-line chatrooms to maintain high morale, to provide support for each other when needed and empower individuals. Notably it was acknowledged that on-line communications did not suit everyone, so banners and posters were used to advertise what they were doing and to engage the wider community [P3]. Bidee et al. [2] note the importance of self-worth and inclusion in motivating a workforce. The approach to leadership taken by the Scrubs group demonstrated the development of an atmosphere that supported Bidee et al.'s [2] conclusions. Despite not having physically met, there was clearly a perception of fit and a friendly relationship among the group.

A further key element is the development of a shared culture among the group [57]. The culture within the group was clearly effective, with participants understanding their role, their purpose within the group, and the motivation for becoming volunteers. Important to the group's success was the development of a 'community culture.' At the same time, central was the creation of a favourable organisational climate [58] ensured elevated levels of performance, brought about by work ethos and open communication and development opportunities [59].

6. Conclusion

This paper sets out to consider 'How do dynamic forces of self-organized community groups cultivate individual and organisational resilience' with a focus on a grouping of spontaneous volunteers drawn together during a crisis situation. The findings suggest that leadership played a significant part in bringing together a group of individuals to create a cohesive community group that achieved an elevated level of performance and addressed a significant need effectively. At the centre of that group was an individual who despite being resistant to, and unassuming in the role, succeeded from belonging to, and clear understanding of, the community environment and therefore highlights the importance of Place Leadership in community groups. As such the research highlights the importance in building resilience, particularly during periods of uncertainty or crises, and the strength and contribution that leadership from within brings.

7. Generalisability and limitations

While the research undertaken relies on a small number of respondents coupled with a 'once in a lifetime' crisis event, it offers limited generalisability, with no statistical generalisability at all. However, as a case study scenario based on a single one-off event it does provide aspects of analytical generalisability [60] and theoretical generalisability [61] and would allow certain levels of generalisability if dealing with

similar one-off health-based crisis situations. The rarity of which does render some of the findings obsolete. Arguably, however, the generalisability, can be reflected more so in the way that individuals come together and effectively 'choose' a leader and to be led by an individual demonstrating inherent characteristics.

8. Implications for theory

This paper contributes to the theoretical base across a number of areas. The findings develop a link between concepts such as Place Leadership, Resilience, and Community, and positions the discussion within the Third Sector, and particularly within the context of crisis situations. The findings highlight the importance of leaders coming from within community groups, with the abilities and characteristics to be inspirational to those around them. This is particularly evident when dealing with volunteers, and more specifically spontaneous volunteers. Similarly, resilience is central to success, the notion of 'bouncebackability' is a personal one but needs the inspiration of the leadership role to be central to, and supportive of, it.

9. Implication for practice

Significance can be placed on the findings for anyone involved in volunteering, or community work. In particular, it is important to identify the right leader, noting the need for them to be identifiable as part of the setting/environment, having a close connectedness rather than being an imposed figurehead who does not understand the scenario, or empathise with it. Community groups need to reflect on leadership and consider who leads and recognise the importance of leader identity among the followers or led. While the extent of the crisis situation cannot be understated, it is necessary to understand the nature of shared identity in the need to respond, while recognising the 'anointing' and 'recognising' the leader they respond to.

10. Future research

This research focuses on one group within the UK, in the North, during a specified period of crisis. As such the research could be further developed to look at a wider sample or population, taking on board different types of crisis situations. It would also be useful to have an international dimension to identify the importance of Place Leadership.

This paper highlights the positive results of the creation of a strong and shared vision by a leader who connected with the community group, and as such has implications for further research to offer insight into, and develop an understanding of, the importance of shared values in creating resilience and promoting success in the plethora of organisations that make up the Third Sector.

Similarly, there remains scope for further research to investigate the relationship between Organic and Place Leadership, concerning whether the two concepts are synergistic or mutually dependent/independent/inter-dependent.

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