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The Importance of Rhetorical Leadership for Managers During Times of Uncertainty in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper explores the importance of rhetorical leadership for the managers, working in the service industry of Pakistan, in the uncertain times. In high-volatility industries, such as the hospitality industry, where operations are disrupted by external environmental factors and shocks, rhetorical leadership may play an important role as it focuses on persuasive communication which may keep the employees motivated and teams aligned. Hence, by interviewing 40 academicians and industry professionals at managerial positions, with the use of semi-structured interviewing technique, this qualitative study determines the importance of implementing rhetorical leadership to enable the managers sustain the morals of the employees and build resilience in the crisis situations. The results of the study indicate that rhetorical leadership is vital for managers navigating in uncertainty as it enables fostering a shared purpose and emotional resonance among teams, shaping organizational reality and cohesion to align employees with core values, empowering employees with clarity, confidence, motivation and accountability, reframing crisis into opportunities, last but not least, cultivating overarching resilience and adaptive capacity for organizational stability. Major practical implications of the study are to necessitate the indulgence of rhetorical leadership and its importance within real organizational settings, while the theoretical implications are enabling the study to fill the gaps in the leadership and communication literature.

Introduction

Leadership is crucial for steering organizations through periods of uncertainty, majorly in industries that are particularly vulnerable to external influences (Dow et al., 2023). In such turbulent environments, the effectiveness of leadership often determines whether an organization can adapt, maintain stability, and meet its objectives (Kim et al., 2018; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022). The service sector, particularly restaurants and the hotel industry, is remarkably sensitive to shifts in economic conditions, customer preferences, and regulatory changes (Bligh & Hess, 2007; Mehr, 2024; Gössling et al., 2021). These sectors are steered by human interactions, where strong leadership and clear communication are essential for smooth operations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In these challenging circumstances, the ability of managers to effectively navigate disruptions—whether economic, political, operational, or health-related -- becomes critical to an organization's survival and success (Bundy et al., 2017). At this point, leadership plays a significant role in determining how managers handle operations. This paper aims to explore the role of rhetorical leadership and its importance for managers in the service sector, particularly in the context of Pakistan during times of volatility.

Rhetorical leadership is a leadership style grounded in classical rhetoric, where leaders exercise persuasive communication strategies to inspire, motivate, and guide their followers toward achieving organizational objectives (Allard-Nelson, 2001; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014). Unlike traditional leadership models that focus on decision-making, strategy formulation, and crisis management, rhetorical leadership highlights the potential of language as a tool for impact and engagement throughout the audience at customized levels (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). This approach becomes especially central during periods of uncertainty, when a leader's ability to communicate a clear vision, address concerns, and unify people behind a shared goal is crucial (Dow et al., 2023; Ulmer et al., 2007). Rhetorical leadership holds noteworthy significance for managers in the service sector, where both the quality of service provided and the emotional well-being of employees and customers are deeply influenced by the leadership style adopted (Grint, 2005). In such environments, effective communication and the ability to rally individuals around common objectives can profoundly impact organizational success and employee morale at the workplace (Tourish, 2020).

In the service industry, particularly in restaurants and hotels, managers have been observed to face a variety of unpredictable challenges. They are bound to oversee daily operations but also manage teams in real-time, addressing issues as they arise within day-to-day operational settings. Such challenges demand not only technical expertise but also strong interpersonal skills, such as effective communication, trust-building, and the ability to foster teamwork (Kane & Patapan, 2010; Liao et al., 2022). When external crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, threaten organizational stability, employees and stakeholders turn to their leaders for guidance, reassurance, and direction (Hühn & Meyer, 2023; Maitland et al., 2021). In such situations, rhetorical leadership becomes an essential tool for maintaining organizational stability and steering the workforce through times of change, by uplifting morale through positive persuasion and inspiring confidence in the face of uncertainty (Seeger & Ulmer, 2002).

Traditional leadership theories, which focus on strategic decision-making and operational efficiency, may not be fully equipped to address the complexities of leading during times of uncertainty (Boin et al., 2016). Within the academic debate on the models that deal with organizational engagement and mobilization,

Bligh et al. (2004) argue that a major shortcoming lies in the fact that they do not take into consideration the central role played by communication, particularly in cases where it has to work under a regime of uncertainty (Cornelissen et al., 2015). The rhetorical leadership paradigm, in turn, presents a more sophisticated analytical perspective, where the role of language as the means of creating organizational culture, aligning stakeholders, and generating a sense of collective purpose and unity is brought to the fore (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). By means of the effective use of rhetoric, leaders disseminate messages that are adjusted to the emotions, values, and beliefs of their audience, thus encouraging employees to take up the challenges and remain focused on common goals (Shamir et al., 1993).

The necessity to lead effectively through rhetoric becomes critical in the service industry, where external shocks (economic recession, changing customer needs, or outbreaks) may trigger a sudden drop in service delivery (Bhaduri & Root, 2021). As an example, during times of recession or the COVID-19 pandemic, managers must send clear, compelling messages that explain upcoming challenges, support morale, and motivate long-term concentration on the organization's goals (Liu et al., 2020). Through the use of rhetoric like framing, storytelling, and appeals to shared values, managers create operative unity and purpose that sustains morale and productivity in situations of uncertainty (Sonenshein, 2010).

Nevertheless, the service sector is people-oriented where employees and customers are both central to the service provision process. The emotional and psychological well-being of employees significantly impacts the quality of service and, ultimately, customer satisfaction (Hühn & Meyer, 2023; Pugh, 2016). As a result, rhetorical leadership is particularly valuable in addressing the concerns, fears, and anxieties of employees, while simultaneously promoting a positive organizational culture (Mishra et al., 2014). By tailoring communication to the needs and concerns of the audience, managers can help employees navigate periods of stress and uncertainty, which can, in turn, lead to higher levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and resilience (Men et al., 2020).

The increasing complexity of the global economy, along with the growing interdependence of sectors, has made the need for effective communication in leadership even more pressing (Gapud & Hair, 2023; Bundy et al., 2022). In volatile times, when levels of unpredictability are high in organizations, communication has an even greater role to play. Persuasive, strategic communication may assist leaders in overcoming the change process, motivating people, and keeping the organization on track (Griffin & Grote, 2020; Clampitt et al., 2021). Although there is extensive literature regarding leadership during crises, there is still a lack of study regarding the role of rhetorical leadership in the service industry, especially in emerging markets such as Pakistan (Darvishmotevali et al., 2020; Gapud & Hair, 2023; Khan et al., 2021).

The proposed study will help fill this gap by exploring the importance of rhetorical leadership to managers within Pakistan's service industry, especially during uncertainty. In doing so, it will provide compelling insights into how rhetorical leadership can enhance services sector's management and how effective communication strategies can help the organizations remain stable during crises (James et al., 2022). The results of the study may have considerable practical implications for managers, offering guidelines to enhance leadership capabilities in unstable environments and promote long-term organizational success (Denis et al., 2023).

In times of uncertainty, leadership plays a crucial role in determining an organization's ability to navigate challenges and maintain stability. This is especially true for industries more prone to external shocks, such as the service industry, including restaurants and hotels (Prayag et al., 2020). Such industries face unique vulnerabilities due to economic fluctuations, changing customer trends, and regulatory shifts (Hall et al., 2020). In this context, effective leadership during volatility becomes a critical determinant of organizational survival and success.

While conventional leadership models focus on decision-making, crisis management, and operational efficiency, they often overlook the necessity of strategic communication for engaging employees during uncertainty (Ruck & Welch, 2022). The concept of rhetorical leadership -- centered on persuasive communication -- presents a compelling alternative. Rhetorical leadership involves crafting messages that resonate with employees' emotions, values, and beliefs, inspiring them to pursue a shared vision and overcome challenges (Allard-Nelson, 2001; Fairhurst, 2021). However, despite its potential, rhetorical leadership remains understudied in the service sector, particularly during turbulent periods, such as economic or health crises (Tourish, 2020).

It is this gap which the current research will essentially fill by exploring the significance of rhetorical leadership to managers in the service industry in Pakistan in the context of uncertainty. Hence by exploring the use of rhetorical communication strategies, this research will contribute valuable insights into how managers can leverage persuasive leadership techniques to navigate the complexities of uncertainty, ensuring resilience and performance in a rapidly changing business environment.

Rationale of the Study

The Pakistani service industry is one that exists in a condition of perpetual uncertainty, as it is affected by the economic uncertainties, changing consumer needs, and other external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The conventional leadership practices are effective under stable conditions but most of them fail to handle the communication requirements that emerge in times of crisis. Decision-making skills are not the only needed skills that managers in this sector should possess, but also, the skills to be able to formulate a clear vision, assure stakeholders and rebrand the challenges into opportunities, by being persuasive. Rhetorical leadership as a field of study that prioritizes strategic use of words, emotional appeal, and storytelling can be used to fill this gap. Nevertheless, its use in the services sector of Pakistan, especially in situations where the cultural background and the volatile nature of the environment, require the specific approach to the communication process, which is not yet well-researched.

Moreover, although the literature already shows that communication is a significant aspect of leadership, little has been done to explore how the rhetorical skills can be applied in practice in the emerging economies and countries, such as Pakistan which are characterized by uncertainties which shape their organizational behavior. Hence, the results of the present study may signify that how persuasive communication builds confidence, motivation, resilience, teams, adaptive capacity, etc., in the middle of chaos. Such results may not only form a part in the academic discussion on leadership, but also, may give tangible information to be used by the organizations which are looking forward to empower their managers with the communicative instruments to deal with uncertainty. Additionally, the fact that the study focuses on the uncertain context of Pakistani services sector, it is critical to filling the gap in the

literature, and so, making it important to both the scholars and practitioners who are working to respond to the changing conditions of this sector's volatile environments by adjusting leadership strategies, particularly the persuasive ones.

On the basis of the above deliberation, the current research addresses the following research objective and question:

Research Objective

To determine the importance of rhetorical leadership for managers operating in times of uncertainty within the context of Pakistani services sector organizations.

Research Question

Is rhetorical leadership important for managers operating in times of uncertainty within the context of Pakistani services sector organizations?

Literature Review

Rhetorical leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes the strategic use of language to influence the behaviors of followers. According to Hart and Lind (2010), rhetorical leadership involves crafting and delivering messages aimed at specific audiences to shape their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Fairhurst, 2007; Shamir & Eilam, 2008). The concept of rhetorical leadership has, therefore, received much attention in the recent past as scholars and practitioners look for ways to explain the importance of communication in leadership, especially in the face of a crisis (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Dow et al., 2023). The purpose of this literature review is to discuss the key concepts, theories and studies that present the use of the concept of rhetorical leadership and its relevance to managers in the environment of uncertainty regarding the service industry.

The term "rhetoric" originates from ancient Greece, where it was considered the art of persuasion, particularly in oratory. Rhetoric is defined as the art of lately effectively using language to persuade and influence an audience and was famously defined by Aristotle (Herrick, 2016). As the years went by, this notion has been expanded to incorporate the practice of language in an organizational context, where the language can be applied as a leadership and communication tool (Allard-Nelson, 2001; Tourish, 2019; Barreto et al., 2023). Regarding leadership, rhetoric entails the communication of messages in a way that moves beyond appealing to the rational minds of the listeners but rather appeals to their emotions and core values (Maitlis, 2012). Rhetorical leadership thus does not only mean the provision of information but it involves the creation of perceptions, influencing attitude, and manipulation of people through the enforcement of positive persuasive communication during times of uncertainty (Clifton, 2020).

This kind of leadership is particularly significant during a time of economic upheavals when individuals require explicit guidelines to be able to be loyal to the organization and give consistent performance (Kane & Patapan, 2010; Liu & Maitlis, 2014). As Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) argue, leaders who excel in rhetorical skills can effectively navigate complex and ambiguous situations by framing challenges as opportunities and rallying their teams around a common purpose (James et al., 2017). This capacity to

inspire and unite people through communication is what distinguishes rhetorical leaders from other types of leaders, particularly in environments characterized by volatility and uncertainty (Boin et al., 2020; Hühn & Meyer, 2023). If one deeply dwells into literature, Hargie and Tourish (2009) point out the importance of rhetorical leadership in crisis, where the leader must deal with not only the practical issues but also the emotional and psychological factors in his or her team (Seeger & Ulmer, 2021). In such contexts, rhetorical leadership becomes the way of minimizing the level of uncertainty and providing organizations' employees with a sense of stability and confidence (Murray et al., 2024).

The sectors that are sensitive to the changes in the external environment and which are more affected by such factors as the economic crisis, pandemics, or shifts in customers' preferences are the service industries, including restaurants and hotels (Darvishmotevali et al., 2020; Prayag, 2021). Coombs (2012), in his study on crisis communication in the hospitality industry, called on leaders to use the rhetorical state to assure the employees and customers despite the existing turmoil (Smith & Riley, 2012). In this way, leaders can decrease the harm caused by uncertainty and ensure that there is order inside the organization as well as customer confidence (Bundy et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, environmental uncertainty has become an inherent feature of the business world, and, therefore, strategic communication management should offer direction (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). As discussed earlier, rhetorical leadership is not only about dealing with uncertainty but also is about creating the culture in the organization (Darvishmotevali et al., 2020; Su et al., 2022; Knight & Paroutis, 2017). Rhetoric in the opinion of Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) can be used by leaders to shape the organizational culture, norms and behaviors, thus creating empowered and resilient organisations (Denis et al., 2015). This is especially so in the service industry whereby the manner in which employees engage with customers is likely to either enhance or hinder the performance of the organization (Guenzi & Pelloni, 2019).

Research has also demonstrated that this leadership style helps in the process of manager empowering in that it offers them the means of expressing and putting into practice organizational objectives (Men et al., 2020). For instance, Kouzes and Posner (2017) noted that leaders who explain their visions and ideas passionately tend to make their managers more confident and willing to engage; this leads to enhanced performance (Vlachos et al., 2020). It is especially significant in the times of uncertainty when empowered managers can make a difference in keeping operations running, customers satisfied and organisations performing (Hill et al., 2021). In addition to this, rhetorical leadership is crucial in shaping positive working environment (Mishra et al., 2021). Leaders can build the feeling of purpose and belonging in the employees by communicating a strong vision with a clear set of expectations through the effective use of rhetoric as Bass and Riggio (2006) propose (Karanges et al., 2018). In turn, this increases teamwork, innovation and organizational effectiveness in general, which is essential to negotiate times of uncertainty (Myers et al., 2022).

In addition, rhetorical leadership is significant in the creation of a positive organizational culture (Schein, 2017). Following Bass and Riggio (2006) authors mention that when leaders use rhetoric, when they are able to paint a picture of the future and set goals, they are able to mobilise organizational members and make them feel that they belong (Ruck & Welch, 2018). As a result of this, it improves on the aspects of

teamwork, innovation and organizational performance which are crucial in managing change during the times of change (Zhu et al., 2019).

Despite the various advantages of rhetorical leadership, the approach has its difficulties and criticism (Tourish, 2020). As Collinson (2014) pointed out, concentrating on rhetoric may have positive as well as negative effects and may result in manipulation of people (Lange & Washburn, 2016). The weakness of persuasiveness when communicated in leadership is that the leaders may end up losing the trust of their followers whenever they are not in tandem with their actions and ethical behaviors (Brown & Treviño, 2019). This is especially the case in the service sector since customer relations and employee' satisfaction depend on the credibility of managers (Solnet et al., 2020). Moreover, the application of rhetorical leadership entails the leader's communication skills to match the audience and the situation (Clifton, 2022). According to Tourish and Hargie (2012), the direct form of rhetoric leadership may not be suitable for different type of groups and stakeholders, and this results in confusion and lack of interest (Ashford et al., 2021). This underlines the fact that leaders must constantly adapt in their emanation of rhetoric, especially in the light of new conditions and threats (Ancona et al., 2019).

Research Methodology

The present study takes an inductive approach to identify patterns or theories concerning the concept of rhetorical leadership in the service industry in times of uncertainty (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data collection involved two primary groups: 15 participants from academics (i.e., the academic faculty of Universities and Colleges in Bahawalpur) who have a background in the field of Management and 25 participants from the restaurant and hotel industry of Bahawalpur who are managers and higher rank employees, making a total of 40 participants. Multilevel sampling technique was adopted for current study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Convenience sampling was first employed to target the participants who could be easily accessed and had fundamental knowledge of the topics under study, while snowball sampling was used to approach the field related experienced professional and academicians on the recommendations of those who were firstly approached through convenience sampling.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data from the 40 participants in order to focus on the rhetoric of the participants' experiences and their attitudes towards rhetorical leadership, particularly for its role and importance for managers within organizations (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in uncertain times. This makes the responses of these 40 participants, the unit of analysis of the current study. The data analysis opted a thematic approach, which is inspired by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedures for coding, categorization, and formulation of themes from the responses. Ethical considerations have been kept upheld in the entire study, for example, participants were required to provide their consents before their interviews, and the data was analyzed in a way that maintained their anonymity, for example, their names were altered to pseudonyms. This methodological approach allowed for developing a clear and sound foundation for studying rhetorical leadership and its impact on managers and organisation's readiness in the conditions of uncertainty and vulnerability.

Findings and Analysis

Based on the respondents' responses and with the utilization of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis technique, this section of the paper analyses the five main themes which have been emerged and extracted from the transcribed interview data. Therefore, the analysis below, under the 5 themes, will enable in fulfilling the research objective (To determine the importance of rhetorical leadership for managers operating in times of uncertainty within the context of Pakistani services sector organizations) by answering the research question (Is rhetorical leadership important for managers operating in times of uncertainty within the context of Pakistani services sector organizations?).

1) **Importance of Rhetorical Leadership for Fostering Shared Purpose and Emotional Resonance in Managers**

   The concept of rhetorical leadership is particularly vital for the creation of organizational culture and for enabling the managers in organizations that are constantly being disrupted and are inherently unpredictable. The findings of this study, as evidenced by participants' response, assist in developing a deep understanding of communication, as both a strategy and asset, which is necessary not only to manage through the storms, but also, to build the anticyclone organizational culture (Peterson & Lee, 2024; Thompson, 2023). Under this theme, the findings from the respondents are presented together to determine the importance of Rhetorical Leadership and how it influences the roles of managers in organizations (Ashford et al., 2021).

   For example, one of the respondents stated, "*In times of crisis, communication becomes our lifeline. It's not just about telling people what to do but making them feel they are part of the solution and how significant they are for the organization*". When asked to further elaborate on his thoughts, the respondent added*, "Rhetorical leadership allows me to tap the emotions, values, and the teams' beliefs into cultivating our collective goals".* These quotes of the respondent underscore the emotional intelligence aspect of rhetorical leadership.

   Similarly, it's not simply about issuing commands but about creating a sense of *"shared purpose",* as suggested by another respondent, which is triggered by adding a persuasive value within communication and practice. In volatile environments, managers need to move beyond transactional communication and appeal to employees' values and beliefs to inspire their commitments. The ability to connect emotionally with the team fosters a sense of ownership, as the respondent added further, "*making them feel integral to overcoming the crisis*". Along the same lines, rhetorical leadership allows the leaders to craft messages that resonate on a deeper level, which enable in strengthening the "*teams' morals and encouraging collaborative problem-solving",* as maintained by another respondent.

   In particular to relating the roots of rhetorical leadership with environment uncertainty, another respondent asserted, "*May I remind you of the pandemic time when we had to adapt and revise our communication patterns".* This quote of the respondent suggests the significance of Rhetorical Leadership in the overwhelming times of uncertainty caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

Comparably, another respondent maintained, *"The uncertainty caused by pandemic was overwhelming, but through our rhetorical leadership, we, at higher managerial levels, were liable to reassure our teams, by reminding them of our mission".* He further mentioned that it resulted in a fruitful outcome of "*keeping them motivated*". Talking about the pandemic, another respondent argued, "*Even when the situation seemed bleak, I believed in our core value of efficient communication to go through it".* This highlights how rhetorical leadership enables managers to *"maintain focus", as claimed* by another respondent, in order for the organization to stay closer to its values during the uncertain times. Hence, amid crisis, when fear and confusion are prevalent, it's essential for leaders to provide "*clarity and reassurance*", as further added by the respondent, with the use effective and efficient communication, or, in other words, persuasive communication.

Overall, based on the arguments of the respondents, it can be stated that with the effective communication techniques, managers can remind employees of the shared goals and values that bind them together by resonating them through the logical and emotional appeals of rhetoric. This not only fosters a sense of stability but also helps maintaining the morals of the employees, by ensuring that the teams' purpose remains clear, despite the chaos unfolding around them.

2) **Importance of Rhetorical Leadership for Shaping Organizational Reality and Cohesion**

During the course of data interpretation, one of the most powerful themes which emerged out involved the significance of rhetorical leadership in shaping the organizational culture (Wilson & Carter, 2022) and reality for cohesion. Majority of the respondents quoted the fact that words have the power to "construct and reconstruct the reality". In other words, the language used by leaders is essential in establishing the reality of organizations (Nguyen et al., 2023). This indicates the idea that rhetoric is not merely the art of persuasion, but this art helps in creating stories which are used to transform the way people think and behave at their workplaces (Peterson & Lee, 2024; Thompson, 2023).

Likewise, one of the respondents came up with the analogy of rhetorical leadership as "uniting by minds", representing a leader as a conductor of symphony. Another respondent maintained, "*Rhetorical leadership is the unifying force which pulls together various people with different skills and opinions into one company and team".*

Moreover, the collected data implies that efficient rhetorical leadership influences the organizational climate, the establishment of expectations, and the organization for a concerted performance. The respondents also highlighted the fact that there is always some level of unpredictability in the organizations, and in such environments, there is always the need to embrace rhetorical leadership. According to majority of the respondents, the utterances of a leader offer directions especially when there is confusion and instability. For example, one of the respondents stated, *"Through persuasive storytelling, uncertainty can be presented to the teams in a manner that make them feel reassured and purposeful to embrace the uncertainties in order to grow".* Emphasizing on the important characteristics of rhetorical leaders, he further added, *"Such an ability to turn the uncertain situation into a positive drive*

is one of the primary characteristics of successful rhetorical leaders".

3) **Importance of Rhetorical Leadership for Navigating Uncertainty through Rhetoric**

As previously suggested, many of the study respondents emphasized on the importance of rhetorical leadership in the times of uncertainty and change. For example, in sharing his views about the matter, one of the respondents affirmed, *"In unpredictable environments, leaders must provide clarity and direction. Their words act as a compass, guiding teams through ambiguity and instilling confidence in the face of challenges".*

Similarly, another respondent in the field asserted, *"Rhetorical leadership is much more than clear talking; it is the creation of meaning and the creation of purpose".* He further elaborated on his thoughts by adding, *"Uncertainty can also be redefined as a growth opportunity through compelling narrative. What makes great leaders great is the way they frame problems as inspiring challenges that help people to be resilient and optimistic".* This implies that the leader's ability to transform potential threats into inspirational catalysts is the key to effective rhetoric and rhetorical leadership. Leaders who make the stories which *"reassure and energize"* the employees, and make them embrace change actively and see it as a driver of *"innovation and progress"* are, in fact, the great leaders, as suggested by another respondent.

In addition, the role of rhetorical leadership in building trust and alignment in the organization is also of a very high importance, as indicated by a number of respondents. In particular, one of the respondents argued, *"Leaders who use emotional hikes, authenticity and transparency in their communication have a culture of trust. It makes the employees feel valued and understood regardless of the situation at hand or benefits that are promised to them, which, in turn, brings loyalty and commitment to the vision of the organization".*

In a similar fashion, another respondent proclaimed that the rhetorical leaders who consistently demonstrate integrity and fulfill their promises are more likely to *"cultivate a culture of trust and collaboration within an organization".*

4) **Importance of Rhetorical Leadership for Empowering Managers: Building Confidence, Clarity, motivation and Accountability**

Another substantial finding resulted from the analyses of the data is the importance of rhetorical leadership in enabling the managers, in uncertain times, with motivational and emotional aid, to combat the environmental vulnerability (Nguyen et al., 2023). Such enabling, in fact, empowers the managers to build confidence, clarity and accountability in their employees. Along these lines, majority of the respondents remained clear that communication and interaction have strong link with internal morals in the services sector. This is because managers, who are involved in making decisions at the course of turmoil, have an opportunity to be empowered through the utilization of rhetorical leadership as it results in clarity, motivation, emotional resources and direction.

Similarly, from the interview data, it is also evident that the application of rhetorical leadership enhances the provision of a clear direction and the sense of purpose in the

managers. When the vision, mission and goals of an organization are effectively communicated, the leaders or managers assist the employees to have a clear perception of what is expected of them and how their efforts translate into achieving the organizational goals and objectives. For example, one of the respondents stated, *"This clarity, with the use of persuasive communication, which flows from the upper hierarchy, is the key, especially for employees, as it persuade them by ensuring that the future may sometimes appear rather foggy and hard, but they will get there. This assurance and motivation further empower both the managers and employees, and they feel capable and confidence to face any type of situational uncertainty"*.

Moreover, another respondent specifically elaborated on the motivational power of rhetorical leadership. The idea is that rhetorical leaders can create persuasive stories with their expertise in storytelling which help to motivate and mobilize employees to achieve success in any given circumstances. The respondent exactly said, "*The motivational impact of rhetorical leadership is further compounded by positive reinforcement and acknowledgement of employees' performance, thus, empowering them to assume higher levels of accountability. It has to be essentially noted that rhetorical leadership is highly useful in the professional development of employees and managers"*.

Another respondent added, *"It's important for the managers to see how other managers or leaders interact with others, what they add in someone's life at the workplace, how much emotional appeal do they add to resonate, and how they handle conflicts, as all of this helps in the enhancement of their communication skills and self-efficacy".* This development of self- efficacy is important in the leadership roles, as it enables the managers to take ownership of their roles and responsibilities, particularly, it is important during the times of crisis because it provides them with clear responsibilities and accountability.

Rhetorical leadership is also found to be promoting alignment and integration of managers and their respective teams, in the interviews' transcripts. Through transmitting values, goals, and expectations, rhetorical leaders can foster organizational identity that promotes cooperation and creativity across the entire organization. This sense of *"unity and purpose"* is specifically significant in the service industry where the concept of team work and synergy are prerequisites to success, as pointed out by a respondent.

Additionally, one of the respondents pointed out, "*Rhetorical leadership ensures that managers equipped to deal with uncertainty. With clear guidance, managers can guide their teams through the tough times. This is only possible through effective communication".* According to Adams & Roberts (2023), clear guidance should be emphasized, especially when dealing with change and uncertainty. Leaders who are skilled in rhetoric can ensure that their managers and employees are prepared to make quick decisions, provide direction, and motivate their teams even during crises (Garcia & Martinez, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand that communication in the process of dealing with uncertainty should not be overlooked. It is due to persuasive and strategic communication that managers are able to maintain team morals and ensure that everyone stays aligned and focused despite external

disruptions (Lee et al., 2025).

Likewise, according to another respondent, *"What rhetorical leadership does best is provide the tools that help managers face change. It trains them to change and to convey such changes to their teams. It is this skill that separates good managers from great ones".* This statement of the respondent emphasizes adaptability and communication skills that rhetorical leadership cultivates in managers. Managers who incorporate rhetorical leadership style not only navigate through change easily, but also, they effectively communicate those changes to their teams, ensuring everyone is on the same page (Smith & Johnson, 2023). This is particularly significant for the service industry where the service needs and the organizational needs may shift quite rapidly (Lee et al., 2024).

Furthermore, by mastering the art of rhetoric, managers can inspire resilience in their teams and lead them through transitions with confidence, reducing the anxiety that often accompanies change (Brown & Davis, 2023). Analogously, a respondent asserted, *"In the service industry, we always have to deal with unpredictable situations. Rhetorical leadership helps managers build resilience by equipping them with the communication tools to keep their teams motivated, even when everything feels uncertain". Interestingly, this quote is similar to the ideas of* Wilson (2025), regarding the matter.

Demonstrating resilience at the face of uncertainty itself is a very interesting idea. As previously mentioned, mangers in the services sector are often confronted with volatile circumstances -- whether it's a sudden surge in customer demand or a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic (Garcia & Martinez, 2023). Rhetorical leadership gives them the tools to communicate effectively in such situations, turning potential chaos into manageable challenges (Harris et al., 2024). Thus, keeping their teams motivated through clear communication and persuasive leadership, rhetorical leaders instill a sense of resilience and confidence in their employees and other managers in the times of adversity (Taylor & Clark, 2025). This is clearly the prominent strength of a rhetorical leader, and this strength is important in services sector where customer satisfaction is usually directly linked to the attitudes and performance of the employees (Adams & Roberts, 2023; King & White, 2024).

In a nutshell, majority of the respondents underlined that rhetorical leadership helps managers to deal with change and manage uncertainties. With the help of rhetoric, leaders can provide employees and other managers with the tools and strategies that enable them prepare for changes in the business environment, embrace innovation, and ensure that their employees are ready to face organizational change with optimism and determination. This is particularly relevant and fruitful in the tertiary sector, as the environment in which the organizations operate in this sector is constantly changing, and so the manager has to deal with the constant change and its pressure caused by uncertainty.

5) **Importance of Rhetorical Leadership for Cultivating Resilience and Adaptive Capacity in Managers**

What's more, as mentioned previously, majority of the respondents emphasized that rhetorical leadership plays a crucial role in helping managers navigate change and manage uncertainty

(Harris et al., 2024). Through effective use of rhetoric, leaders can equip managers with the strategies and tools which are needed to adapt for evolving the business environments and foster a culture of innovation (Taylor & Clark, 2025). Moreover, rhetoric can inspire confidence and resilience among employees, encouraging them to approach organizational change with optimism and determination (King & White, 2024). This inspiration is much needed to cope with the dynamic nature of services sector. Comparably, one of the respondents mentioned the similar thoughts, *"In today's unpredictable business environment, especially in the services sector, rhetorical leadership isn't just a strategy-it's a lifeline".*

Similarly, another respondent emphasized, *"Rhetorical leadership isn't just about speaking well; it's about guiding through words, equipping managers with the mindset and confidence needed to adapt to changes and innovations. This helps managers tackle crises and stress more effectively, fostering an adaptable and motivated team ready to handle whatever comes their way".*

Therefore, based on the theme, it can be concluded that the use of rhetorical leadership helps the organizations to understand, the specifics of the formation of organizational culture (Smith & Johnson, 2023) and the management of change processes by the managers in the context of the service industry (Lee et al., 2024), through resilience and adaptivity. In other words, rhetorical leaders have a potential to turn the chaos into the process of development with the use of their words (Brown, 2023), which builds strong organizational culture (Garcia & Martinez, 2024), and further helps other managers become leaders of their teams (Wilson, 2025).

It is, therefore, important to note that rhetorical leadership is not merely about communication, but also, it is about the style that fosters the enablement of people within an organization (Taylor & Anderson, 2024). Some of the advantages that rhetorical leadership offer to managers are communication, handling of crisis (Roberts, 2023), handling of stress (Patel & Singh, 2024), integration and cooperation (Thompson, 2025), developmental programs (White et al., 2023), and flexibility (Adams, 2024). These translate into the overall success of the organization, since they encourage creativity, excellent performance, innovation (Davis & Clark, 2025), resilience and adaptivity within the organization.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research aims to provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon of rhetorical leadership and its potential importance for the managerial bodies and employees in the organizations operating in the service industry. specifically, Universities, colleges, restaurants and hotels. For this purpose, qualitative research methodology was adopted and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 experienced managerial level employees and academicians to explore the phenomenon, thus, making their responses, the unit of analysis of the study. Moreover, these 40 respondents of the study were approached through a multi-level sampling technique, i.e., convenience and snow-ball sampling, to explore the importance of rhetorical leadership for the managers within the service sector organizations.

The analysis of the study demonstrates that rhetorical leadership is crucial for the managers navigating in the uncertain settings. Language and stories used by the managers at the leadership positions can be utilized in the process of building consensus and directing people's perceptions within an organization.

Accordingly, it empowers them to shape a cohesive organizational culture and a shared purpose by transforming ambivalences into clarity and threats into opportunities. By providing strategic guidance and emotional resonance, it develops managers' confidence to accept responsibilities and accountability for their actions, eventually cultivating the adaptive capacity and resilience necessary for the organizations and teams to not merely survive, but also thrive in the detrimental conditions resulted due to uncertainty.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

The study provides managers at leadership positions with a practical framework to empower their teams, provide clarity and build a resilient culture in their organizations, operating in the services sector, during volatility. It also implies the practical integration of rhetorical skills and fostering of shared purpose for reframing crises into leadership training at academic and organizational levels. Accordingly, it necessitates the indulgence of rhetorical leadership and its importance within real organizational settings. On the other hand, the study addresses a literature gap by validating the importance of rhetorical leadership in the context of contemporary markets. This warrants the need for both practitioners and scholars to consider leadership communication, especially rhetorical leadership, as not merely a communication tactic, but also, a core competency and a strategic resource to construct and reconstruct organizational reality by turning threats into a catalyst for resilience opportunities, cohesion, adaptation, and navigating volatile environments successfully.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study focusses on qualitative insights from one sector, services sector, with the selection of limited organizations which limits its generalizability in the other sectors and organizations operating under them. Moreover, the particular region selection for the study further adds to the limitation regarding the generalizability of the study. Future research may use quantitative or mixed methods research designs to investigate this topic area across diverse industries, cultures, and regions. In addition, future research may focus on theoretically linking these constructs, i.e., persuasive communication, managerial empowerment and organizational resilience, and so forth, in a more refined way. Last but not least, investigating the interplay between rhetorical leadership and other leadership styles may provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon of the importance of rhetorical leadership for Managers in the times of uncertainty.

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