

Policy Development for Crisis Management in the Context of Sri Lanka


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The paper aims to explore the key policy devising measures under crisis management in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. A key argument in the study is that building policy for crisis requires the understanding of both governance capacity as well as legitimacy. Through the theoretical lens of crisis management and resilience building, the study explores the key literature on the topic to arrive at a conceptual framework which is further explored through mixed-method research. The study explores the phenomenon in the context of Sri Lanka and its mechanism to deal with the pandemic. Fifteen interviews were conducted, followed by a survey covering key sectors of tourism, information technology and education to understand the extent to which crisis management strategies were achieved in the policy procedures. The article identifies some key themes: political capacity, stakeholder involvement, input capacity and throughput capacity in the overall governance system that requires further improvements, including the gender differences in accepting the policy decisions, which can be explored in future work for greater insight.

Key Words: crisis management, COVID-19, resilience building, governance capacity, governance legitimacy

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Introduction

Life crises often strike without warning, and there is rarely enough time to prepare for such eventualities. Such critical situations can occur because of both internal and external influences, which can have serious consequences if not managed carefully (Bhaduri 2019). Therefore, due to their disruptive character, crises may have a detrimental influence on businesses as well as other stakeholders involved in operations (Bundy et

al. 2017). Crises can be manifested in various forms, ranging from terrorism and civil war to governmental reactions and management, to name a few (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997; Bruce and O’Hair 2020; Nemeč 2020). Thus, it can be surmised that a crisis may disrupt society’s regular flow, shatter tranquillity, and jeopardise the legitimacy of public policy and the state (Boin et al. 2016).

In dealing with the growing threat of crisis, the concept of resilience has gained significant interest from individuals and organisations, to continue their operations without facing unforeseen disasters (Valero, Jung and Andrew 2015). Crisis management and resilience are often understood as two dimensions dealing with uncertainty (Williams et al. 2017). While crisis management focuses on the extraordinary circumstances, resilience considers both incremental and sudden changes, which provides an advanced understanding of how crisis management can be further improved (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). Moreover, given the complexity of a crisis and its impact on society, many governments globally depend on timely collaboration and coordination in devising public policy for crisis mitigation (Oh 2021).

Existing research on crisis management has pointed out the need for a greater number of stakeholders in policy decision making and expanding the knowledge base (Willi et al. 2020). It is significant to understand how policy needs to be framed in dealing with such crises: more specifically, on the administrators’ capacity and the concerns surrounding legitimacy in the actions taken in mitigating the challenges arising from adversity.

Existing literature has pointed out the need to explore the effectiveness of crisis management implementation and the combination of governance capacity and legitimacy as essential dimensions (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). Research on the topic has identified both legitimacy and capacity as central concepts in the exploration of crisis management (Ma and Christensen 2019). Despite the importance of the two dimensions of crisis management and resilience, there is not yet a clear consensus of their use as separate understandings (Prayag 2018). Given that both concepts play an important role in understanding uncertainty, the study aims to fill the gap in research by further strengthening the theoretical underpinnings of the two concepts and distinguishing their role more comprehensively in overall policy framing. The study aims to introduce a new theoretical model by combining the understanding of crisis management, governance capacity and legitimacy that is linked to the over-

arching outcome of resilience to gain a holistic picture of certain policy decisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most destructive crisis witnessed by this generation, and the state of normality is a 'luxury' term under the ongoing challenges witnessed throughout the pandemic (Grover 2020). Given the significant pressure exerted on governments to balance their respective economies whilst ensuring the health and safety of the general public, much attention has been given to the topic of crisis management by scholars and policymakers (Glover et al. 2020; Bromfield and McConnell 2020). In addition to the need to build resources and capacity in the face of the pandemic, it is imperative to assess the extent to which the policy decision-making process is aligned with the expectations of the public and other stakeholders (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). The study aims to tackle this policy issue in the background of the pandemic adding significant value to studies of what has been learned in global policy from the COVID-19 pandemic context (He, Shi, and Liu 2020).

The study aims to explore the phenomenon in the context of Sri Lanka, where strong measures of prevention and mitigation of the pandemic in the country were observed since its onset in March 2020 (Ratnasekera et al. 2020). The Sri Lankan government established a task force comprising administrators, disease specialists, military and social personnel who were able to utilise most of the available resources to tackle and prevent the pandemic situation (Hettiarachchi et al. 2021). The government further provided social assistance such as LKR 5000 for many of the vulnerable parties of society to support their livelihoods during the economically challenging period of the pandemic (Robinson and Kengatharan 2020).

The governmental measures, however, met with many challenges. This was vastly due to shortcomings in communication among certain responsible institutions as well as poor resource management, to name but two (Hemachandra et al. 2021). Further, the lack of consistency in certain government decision making in regard to resilience building, coupled with the spread of false and misleading information surrounding the pandemic, highlights the risks of both governance capacity and legitimacy in the context of Sri Lanka (Amaratunga et al. 2020). Despite the challenges of the pandemic crisis presented in Sri Lanka, it has also sparked a growing belief in using the challenge as an opportunity to be self-sufficient and develop specific capacities. This idea was encouraged with substantial support for local enterprise development in order to champion re-

search and development (Jayasena and Chinthaka 2020). Sri Lanka has had a strong track record of facing crises, and dark experiences that have tested the country's capacity and enabled the nation to build resilience to move forward despite setbacks (Karunarathne et al. 2021).

Thus, the study aims to take the case of Sri Lanka and its COVID-19 policy to understand this phenomenon. Moreover, by focusing on crisis management through the lens of capacity building and governance legitimacy, the study aims to understand its impact on resilience building. The research question encapsulating the above research problem is as follows: To what extent do governance capacity and legitimacy in regard to crisis management lead to resilience building?

The paper is divided into six sections. Following this introduction, the next section presents the literature review consisting of crisis management, governance capacity, governance legitimacy and resilience building. The third section presents the research process covering the methodological section, followed with the fourth section of findings in answering the key research question. The fifth section discusses the findings in line with literature and the paper ends with section six which also includes study limitations and potential for future work in the area.

Literature Review

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Facing challenges in life is identified as part and parcel of human understanding. However, a crisis is identified as an unexpected event that does not allow an individual sufficient time for preparation and requires careful handling to ensure minimum damage (Bhaduri 2019). A crisis can often shatter the peace and order of societies and is often recognised as a 'rude surprise' in regard to the establishment of the legitimacy of organisations (Boin et al. 2016). In modern complexities, humans face many obstacles that are not limited to economic, social, and environmental challenges but also include other manufactured crises that lead to the loss of human life and displacement (Kosuda et al. 2020). Crisis management as a definition has multiple understandings and cannot simply be limited to one categorisation, as highlighted in the literature (Bundy et al. 2017; Coombs and Laufer 2018).

In understanding crisis management, the crisis could be identified as a serious threat to the fundamental values and norms of a specific social system, requiring critical decision making within minimum time dura-

tion (Ererdi et al. 2021). Although 'crisis' carries multiple meanings, most of them guide individuals and the organisations facing such situations to take certain important actions (Zamoum and Gorpe 2018). The term 'crisis' could have multilevel understandings varying from a person or an organisation to a country as well as an eco-system. A personal crisis, for example, can be emotional meltdowns, an economic crisis is the drop in business activities, and an ecological crisis is the threat towards species survival (Boin et al. 2016). Crisis is also a time when many seek leaders whom they expect not only to identify pathways towards solutions but also avert threats and minimise potential damage (Boin et al. 2016). Effective leadership during a crisis could provide the required assistance to individuals as well as the organisation with their vision, traits and performance abilities to achieve recovery from external disruptions (Bhaduri 2019). The leadership qualities exhibited during the crisis are also vital for a balancing act of interests amongst various stakeholders as well as to meet the need for strong negotiation skills in compromising and achieving the relevant objectives (Christensen, Lægred, and Rykkja 2016).

Despite many organisations and individuals identifying the importance of proactive strategy development to face a crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic is identified as a global crisis. This pandemic is a deviation from other crises due to its significant global impact as well as the wide-spreading negative effects on respective economies across the world (Abdoul-Azize and El Gamil 2021). The unique nature of the pandemic crisis could also be interpreted as a 'novel crisis' due to its unprecedented and transboundary nature (San, Bastug, and Basli 2021). The pandemic has tested the ability of many organisations to switch and embrace technology and online platforms to ensure continuity of essential work as well as that of businesses to reduce their vulnerabilities and risks of running out of business (Abdoul-Azize and El Gamil 2021). Businesses are expected to reinvent themselves not only to survive during COVID-19; such innovations and novelty allow them to exploit some of the unique opportunities presented during the pandemic crisis (Liu, Lee, and Lee 2020). This notion is closely connected with the idea of conducting proactive research with clear communication lines for early detection and preparation for any unforeseen changes (Miguel et al. 2022).

Although the topic of crisis has gathered significant momentum recently, from a management perspective there is still a lack of research on the topic of crisis management and its implications (Bhaduri 2019). One of the key developments on the topic has surrounded the work of Herbane

(2010), conceptualising crisis as a three-step process of identifying a particular threat, followed by devising a certain response and finally identifying its impact upon implementation. This idea could also be recognised from the perspective of pre-crisis and post-crisis developments. This line of reasoning helps to identify certain factors at a prior stage before a complex scenario, a post-analysis to analyse the lessons learnt from a specific disaster situation and potentially avoid a recurrence of a similar event (Ayadi, Arbak, and de Groen 2011). This viewpoint is taken even further in the management literature, which aims to conceptualise crisis as two broad spectrums of work: one identifies crisis as an event and the other focuses on the crisis as an inevitable process in motion (Williams et al. 2017). Due to the growing concerns of such challenging circumstances, there is significant attention paid to the extent to which individuals and organisations could successfully prepare for such challenges (Parker et al. 2020).

GOVERNANCE CAPACITY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Governance capacity as a topic has gained significant attention in several fields such as environmental research, climate adaptation, capacity building, and public administration (Koop et al. 2017). Further, governance capacity is identified as a systemic process to analyse, study, and adapt creatively to the problems and challenges faced through a network of diverse players (Innes and Booher 2003). Developing governance capacity in a policy framework also requires the room to introduce new integrative strategies in addressing any additional changes required throughout the process. A key interest within the topic of governance capacity has been in its ability to not only communicate with various actors but also ensure the interactions are effective between the different levels and functions as well as domains (Edelenbos and Teisman 2013). Moreover, governance capacity is identified under four key areas of interest of delivery, coordination, regulatory and analytical capabilities (Lodge and Wegrich 2014). Delivery capacity is identified as crisis handling; coordination is combining disparate organisations for joint action; the regulatory aspect focuses on control and oversight; and analytical capabilities comprise analysing information to provide advice on potential vulnerabilities (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). The above-mentioned administrative capacities are identified as essential in regard to overall crisis management, and this leads to the first assumption of the study on a positive relationship between governance capacity and crisis management.

GOVERNANCE LEGITIMACY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Governance legitimacy as a concept is identified as a complex relationship between various government authorities and citizens (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). Although an institution coordinates many activities to reduce transactional costs and create opportunities, certain decisions taken should supersede self-interested reasons and appeal to moral judgement (Buchanan and Keohane 2006). Legitimacy, therefore, could be identified as the acceptance of a certain community of a particular regulation (Bernstein 2005). From a crisis management perspective, it means how individuals perceive the actions of government officials in certain tasks (Christensen and Ma 2021).

Despite the concept of legitimacy discussed as an overall concept, one of the important explanations is the delineation of the concept under three categories: input, output, and throughput legitimacy for effective governing mechanisms (Bekkers and Edwards 2007). Input legitimacy primarily deals with the participants' inputs and ideas concerning the process of developing laws and regulations, throughput deals with the processes and the interactions of all actors involved in the governance process, and finally the output aspect deals predominantly with the effectiveness of certain policy outcomes in regard to the general public (Schmidt 2013; Haggart and Keller 2021). Particularly, throughput legitimacy is an interesting concept as it allows space for debate, reasoning and learning opportunities to understand certain policy choices that are decided (Kleine 2018). The umbrella concept of legitimacy, therefore, is a complex procedure which not only identifies the various inputs through governing institutions to reach policy outputs but the throughputs could also have multiple ways in which these policies are developed for effective governance (Schmidt and Wood 2019). This, the legitimacy perspective assesses the people's perception of how the respective parties handle a crisis and whether their decisions are supported by the public. The positive relationship between governance legitimacy and crisis management is identified as the second key assumption of the study.

RESILIENCE BUILDING AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The role of legitimacy in a context of crisis is not simply limited to our understanding of the actions of a certain government in each scenario but also to what extent these actions are being assessed by the public and other stakeholders (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). Literature has already identified both governance capacity and legitimacy as key focus

areas essential in preparing for a crisis or a pandemic situation (Christensen and Ma 2021). One of the key developments within this idea is how the accumulation of crisis management strategies could potentially lead to resilience building (Koronis and Ponis 2018a). Literature on both crisis management and resilience has identified them as two aspects of the same challenge, and how crisis management is conceptualised provides avenues for theory building on resilience (Williams et al. 2017).

Resilience as a concept has emerged from multiple bodies of literature and subject areas and is identified as a process of returning to normality and thriving after post-traumatic experiences (Pfefferbaum et al. 2008; Koswatte 2015). Resilience is also a broad conceptual umbrella with all concepts leading towards the ability to adapt during adverse conditions. Given this idea, resilience could be applied to almost any functional system to understand how they are threatened with changes in the environment as well as to understand how one would alter their behaviours to fit into such changes (Masten and Obradović 2006). Given the nature of uncertainty and volatility, resilience is inherently identified as a dynamic concept as opposed to possessing uniform and static dimensions (Resnick 2014).

A key distinction to be made in the literature surrounds the concept of resilience as well as crisis management. Despite both ideas discussing disaster and crisis, the application of resilience shows a wider scope in its application (Prayag 2018). While conventional crisis management literature focuses on how to escape adversity and minimise impact, modern societies need to explore the capacity to absorb and adapt under the complex phenomenon which is discussed under resilience (Koronis and Ponis 2018b). This idea is further extended in the case of resilience which goes beyond not only extraordinary circumstances as often discussed under crisis management, but also extends to subtle incremental changes to match the needs of the environment (Prayag 2018).

Resilience is also interpreted from the viewpoint of multiple levels affecting individuals and organisations as well as the environment in dealing with unforeseen challenges (Tasic et al. 2020). Much emphasis is placed on individual-level resilience as it is identified as a key factor in developing resilient organisations (Kantur and İşeri-Say 2012). While some who face trauma are unable to concentrate and become confused, there is another group who demonstrate signs of strength and endurance under similar situations (Mancini and Bonanno 2009). From an individual standpoint, resilience could be therefore identified as the ability

of an individual to recover and return to a favourable position despite adversity (Luo, Eicher, and White 2020). In identifying the various dimensions of individual resilience, having a sense of financial comfort is a pivotal dimension (Fullerton, Zhang, and Kleitman 2021). Therefore, from a financial lens, building resilience focuses on vigilance and alertness in money spending and control in the long run (Hua, Chen, and Luo 2018; Klontz, Britt, and Mentzer 2011). In this study, resilience building is identified through the idea of economic resilience behaviour and having financial strength to adapt in difficult situations is demonstrated to be key in exploring the phenomenon.

Governance legitimacy is an important democratic feature where public policy is implemented through elected officials (Cosens 2013). This could also be interpreted as the level of confidence the public has in the policymakers as officials in power to carry out the plans and ideas (Turner et al. 2016). The confidence invested through legitimacy is crucial, especially during challenging circumstances. During a crisis, governance legitimacy allows the parties and authorities to provide a joint and coordinated indication and clear message to the public to continue to place confidence in the authorities making the right decisions (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). Previous work has highlighted perceived legitimacy to be positively associated with resilience building (Cisneros 2019). On the other hand, governance capacity is identified as the structures, formal as well as informal processes, and elements of the administrative scope (Christensen, Læg Reid, and Rykkja 2016). The capacity building process is identified as a crucial element to learn, reflect and improve on previous mistakes and errors (Albright and Crow 2021). The aspects discussed, such as analytical capacity, explain the optimal resources required to face a disaster successfully as well as the required competencies to mitigate such challenges which are essential for resilience building in organisations (Christensen, Læg Reid, and Rykkja 2018). However, in a situation of high trust and civil, friendly society, the public has high confidence in the authorities (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020). Furthermore, in a high trust situation, the capacity levels of the government will also be affected, which would require further analysis. Finally, as inferred in the literature, the consistent ability to manage the crisis, in the long run, could potentially lead to an avenue of resilience-building. The positive relationship between crisis management and resilience-building was identified as the third assumption of the study. Based on the above arguments and organisational theory framing, the following conceptual model is identified.

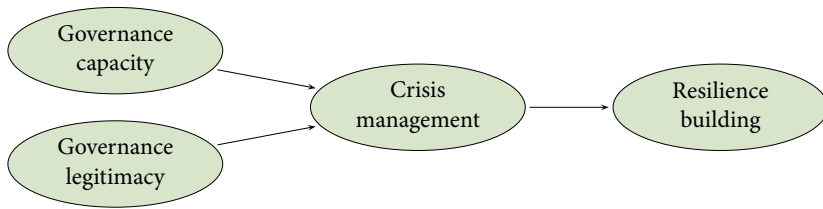


FIGURE 1 Conceptual Model

SRI LANKA AND COVID-19

COVID-19 has had devastating impacts on many global economies across the world and the island nation of Sri Lanka has felt its impacts quite significantly. The Sri Lankan economy contracted by 3.6% in the year 2020 which is the worst growth performance of the country while many of its key sectors such as tourism, construction and transport are struggling to recover from its effects (The World Bank 2021a). The tourism sector, which accounts for 12.5% of the country's GDP and over 250,000 employers, was one of the most impacted industries in Sri Lanka in the pandemic (Karunarathne et al. 2021). As the pandemic situation was announced as global, the country also was swift in imposing quarantine rules and regulations as well as the integration of the healthcare services, other official employees and the Sri Lankan forces to develop administrative processes in controlling the crisis (Jayasinghe forthcoming). Large-scale testing and vaccination programmes were carried out despite the limited resources of the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka for managing and coping with the stressful circumstances associated with the situation (Perera et al. 2021). The organising of various responsible parties was also identified as part of the government task force, which was also responsible for the wide distribution of essential items such as food and medicine for the affected public as well as certain benefit packages to low income and elderly individuals (Jayasuriya 2020).

Research Process

METHOD

The study was conducted as mixed-method research where qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously and analysed separately. This methodology enabled the researcher to assess a complex phenomenon qualitatively as well as via numbers and basic statistical tools (Creswell 1999). This is the most used technique in mixed method re-

search as it brings together the different strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative work (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). The study used a combination of initial interviews which were complemented through a quantitative survey in the similar population selected for this study.

THE SAMPLE

The study has adopted a convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a tool used by researchers to make use of their accessibility to certain networks (Bryman and Bell 2015). Although convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy, it is usually possible to obtain a certain specific understanding of the selected audience. The study has identified the sectors of education, tourism, and IT as the key areas for the research process. The selection of the sectors was primarily based on the World Bank Contingent Emergency Response Components (CERC) pool funding for Sri Lanka to uplift some of its key sectors which included the three identified in the study (The World Bank 2021b). Moreover, the three sectors selected in the study have been recognised as some of the crucial fields for a developing nation such as Sri Lanka (Ranasinghe and Sugandhika 2018; Nuskiya 2018; Adikaram, Khatibi, and Yajid 2016). Given the relevance of the sectors, the sample selected was not representative of the population of Sri Lanka but was related to the three key sectors chosen for the study's purpose.

INTERVIEW DEVELOPMENT

As the first stage of the study, fifteen interviews were carried out. The study identified the interview respondents who were from the education, IT and tourism sectors and were active members in their respective field. The selection of interview respondents was chosen from the alumni network of the researcher's academic institution. A summary of the interview respondent details is shown in table 1. A semi-structured interview guideline was prepared which consisted of more thought-provoking questions towards the latter part of the study to gain greater engagement from the interviewees (Underwood and Mensah 2018). The semi-structured interview guideline was developed based on the initial literature review discussions, and it helped to gain deeper insight and knowledge into the survey results and substantiated the understanding of the topic. The interviewees had the opportunity to be familiar with the questions beforehand, and the interviews were transcribed to identify key themes surrounding gov-

TABLE 1 Interview Respondent Profile

| Participant | Gender | Age | Sector |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-----------|
| A | M | 20–30 years | Education |
| B | F | 20–30 years | Education |
| C | M | 40–50 years | IT |
| D | F | 20–30 years | Education |
| E | F | 30–40 years | IT |
| F | M | 20–30 years | IT |
| G | F | 20–30 years | Tourism |
| H | M | 30–40 years | IT |
| I | M | 20–30 years | IT |
| J | F | 20–30 years | Education |
| K | F | 20–30 years | Education |
| L | F | 20–30 years | Tourism |
| M | M | Above 50 years | Tourism |
| N | F | 40–50 years | IT |
| O | M | 20–30 years | Education |

ernance policies and their impact on resilience building. The qualitative components were analysed using the identification of potential themes discussed in the results section. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed before the analysis process.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

The study carried out a convenience sampling technique distributed through an online survey via Google Forms. The material was in the English language, and due to the COVID-19 restrictions, an online survey was decided as the most feasible option. The survey included a 7-point Likert scale covering aspects of governance legitimacy, governance capacity and resilience building. The survey was distributed from mid-August to late September 2021. The primary sample consisted of 133 responses that cover the key sectors of education, healthcare, and tourism. The survey responses consisted of students who are predominantly in the educational sector completing their degree programme. The tourism sector consists of students who have graduated and found employment with the tourism sector as well as independent individuals from the tourism sector firms where the university maintains industry relationships. The IT sec-

tor consists of students who have recently graduated and joined the sector who are also part of the alumni network as well as individuals from IT companies with whom the university has certain business partnerships.

The questionnaire used in the survey gathered information on demographic variables, namely gender, size of household location of residence, level of education and the respondent's opinion on whether COVID-19 is 'controlled' or 'not controlled' in Sri Lanka. The survey achieved a response rate of approximately 80%. The study also took into consideration that, given the sample was a convenience sample that was based on the researcher's access to data, there is a possibility of a certain bias in the data. The sample had an inclusion criterion of only selecting respondents from the education sector who are actively pursuing their degree at the university, members active in the tourism sector and related professions as well as members who are actively employed in IT and related work. The study excluded respondents from the tourism and IT sectors who were currently on internship programmes and had not completed their degrees.

MEASURES

The survey was developed using established scales for dimensions and constructs. The study measured governance capacity adopting the scales of business model experimentation of European SMES as well as some of the more established scales (Conway, Woodard, and Zubrod 2020; Lopez-Nicolas et al. 2020). In terms of governance legitimacy, the study has adopted the scales from the work of the Pakistan medical services in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic (Khan et al. 2020) as well other established scales of Lopez-Nicolas et al. (2020), and Conway, Woodard, and Zubrod (2020). In terms of resilience building, the study focused on financial resilience dimensions that were initially developed under economic resilience behaviour (Hua, Chen, and Luo, 2018). The original dimensions included items such as 'I would change my money-saving routines' which were changed and adapted to fit the current context which focused on financial resilience dimensions. The operationalisation of the dimensions is shown in table 2.

Findings

The sample consists of 133 respondents, out of which 51 (38.3%) were males, and 82 (61.7%) were females. The number of people living in a household varied from 1 to 7 members, and most of the households had

TABLE 2 Operationalisation Table

| Construct | Definition | Items | References |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Governance capacity | Ability to face diverse concerns using a diverse network of players | <p>We need military officials right now to take action to stop the spread of disease.</p> <p>The government needs to severely punish those who violate orders to stay home.</p> <p>It is vital right now that the government strongly enforces social distancing measures.</p> <p>The government is involving other sectoral actors to combat the COVID-19 outbreak.</p> <p>There is a lack of budget or financial support in response to this outbreak.</p> <p>Most of the poor people will not have access to existing healthcare facilities if they are infected by COVID-19.</p> <p>There will be a lower supply of basic goods products for daily use.</p> <p>Poor people will suffer from food and nutritional deficiency.</p> <p>The formal education system will be hampered.</p> | Adapted from Lopez-Nicolas et al. (2020), and Conway, Woodard, and Zubrod (2020) |
| Governance legitimacy | The complex relationship between the government and the general public | <p>I think we should spend most of our government resources right now towards bringing down a vaccine for COVID-19.</p> <p>I think a government stimulus package during the virus spread is a good idea.</p> <p>I think it is a good idea for the government to give individual citizens the LKR 5000 allowance during these difficult times.</p> <p>I distrust the information I receive about COVID-19 from my government.</p> <p>I think the government is not giving the whole story about the pandemic situation.</p> <p>The government is making timely decisions at the right time.</p> | Adopted from Lopez-Nicolas et al. (2020); Khan et al. (2020); Conway, Woodard, and Zubrod (2020) |
| Resilience building | Ability to adapt to difficult situations successfully | <p>The Coronavirus has impacted me negatively from a financial point of view.</p> <p>Shutdown or lockdown or social distancing will have an economic impact in the future.</p> <p>I have had a hard time getting needed resources (food, essential items) due to the Coronavirus.</p> <p>I have lost job-related income due to the Coronavirus.</p> | Self-developed based on Hua, Chen, and Luo (2018) |

four members (45.9%). Most households had at least two members earning (49.6%), and the remaining householders had a single member out of 3–4 members earning. Most of the respondents (75%) belong to the 20–30 age group. Ninety-seven (72.9%) were from the Western Province. Regarding the level of education, 90 (67.7%) of the respondents were university undergraduates, followed by 35 (26.3%) who possessed at least a master's degree. Area of employment saw the education sector comprising 60 (45.1%) followed by 41 (30.8%) from tourism and 32 (24.1%) from the IT sector. Income levels saw over 52 respondents (39.1%) below LKR 30,000 monthly income and over 43 (32.3%) individuals recording an income of above LKR 100,000. In terms of the ability of the government to control the COVID-19 situation, 101 (75.9%) believed in its inability to control the pandemic situation.

To explore the understanding of whether COVID-19 was successfully controlled, we have now identified the majority who said it was not successfully controlled. However, other variables were not significant based on the demographic factors except for the number of people in the household. As the study adopted a mixed-method approach, why individuals believed the government was unable to control the pandemic situation was explored using qualitative answers, which were analysed using NVivo to recognise potential emerging themes based on this issue. The study identified four themes, namely, political capacity, stakeholder involvement, input development and throughput development. The four themes identified are discussed in greater detail below. The following section on qualitative data presents how the above-mentioned themes emerged.

POLITICAL CAPACITY

According to the participants, an emerging issue regarding the responses to this question is the topic of political capacity, identified as the ability for government actors to have a transparent procedure amongst government stakeholders. The lack of transparency mentioned above is emphasised through the statement below.

- A The government plays with people's lives. They never go for a proper lockdown [...] This president and all the henchmen around never listen to the health ministry and their warnings. The real facts are not coming out. When people start worrying about this matter, slowly the government changes the topic until the people gets distracted. So the government is out of control.

The lack of procedures is further explained as timely decisions are not being made, and the general public has a strong impression that the measures regarding the pandemic are made simply as political propaganda rather than a strategic prevention mechanism.

- D The government has not taken proper actions at the right time, and I feel they are just using it to cover other political matters.

Closely linked to the idea of political capacity are formal regulation procedures and policy principles. The policies and regulations are identified to be crucial as they allow the preventive measures to be implemented efficiently. Rules and regulations in place should decrease any vulnerabilities, and the key assumption is that the stronger the rules and regulations are, the higher the level of legal capacity which can, in turn, strengthen governance capacity. However, a key reason as to why the respondents believed the policymakers were unable to handle the pandemic situation is explained as:

- J I think the government should be more strict when it comes to imposing laws regarding COVID-19 and should take necessary action to control the inappropriate behaviour of people which leads to the spread of COVID-19.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Making decisions at the government level requires close coordination and organization of tasks. This requires key officials and individuals from different expertises and areas at the policy level to have a clear idea of their respective duties and roles during the pandemic in order to take swift decisions. The lack of such cohesiveness and involvement by key stakeholders has made recovery difficult. The stakeholders such as healthcare officials, police forces, and other religious parties who have not taken collective decisions are discussed below.

- B The small strategies implemented by the government to try to control the pandemic did not effectively work. The PCR Testing and the vaccinations are a mess. The lockdowns imposed were ineffective due to people being able to move between districts. The government is encouraging festivities to be held, which is an obvious red flag.

The involvement of relevant stakeholders also highlights the responsibility of the general public as well as other enforcement processes. The lockdown period was one such example where individuals highlighted

their displeasure at how certain rules were not taken seriously by individuals, causing concern among many.

E Most of the time people are outside, but I can't say it's not successful or successful because some people are coming outside to get some essentials or go to the bank, and some of them are coming outside for fun, so it's hard to identify who's coming out for buying essentials.

The medical officials, as well as other government actors not coordinating the vaccination programme during the pandemic, were also clearly highlighted in the interviews as this demonstrates the lack of clarity and understanding of the overall process by certain key stakeholders making policy-level decisions.

H There seem to be irregularities in the distribution of the vaccine, where certain individuals below 30 are not vaccinated in certain programmes whilst the others do. The absence of a streamlined/clear cut process makes the success of the programme doubtful.

INPUT DEVELOPMENT

As the pandemic ensues, individuals strongly believe in the need to have the right resource base and structure in place to develop a pandemic prevention strategy. The input strategies, from identifying patients to isolating areas of concern as well as having a systematic strategy of how the vaccination programme should take place, needed initial thought before the implementation process commenced.

L The government didn't take necessary actions. Now the virus has been spread all over the country.

When initial plans and strategies were discussed, there was a need to look at certain best practices around the world, as highlighted by certain respondents. However, it was also emphasised that these practices would require adjustments to suit the Sri Lankan context and requirements. Many participants believed that rules and regulations regarding pandemic control needed enforcement as there was a lack of social obligation by individuals and serious consequences needed to be communicated to the general public if the rules and regulations were not followed as instructed.

O I think the government should be stricter when it comes to imposing laws regarding COVID-19 and should take necessary action to control the inappropriate behaviour of people which leads to the spread of COVID-19.

The pandemic situation getting out of control was also due to the lack of another key input of communication platforms. The general public lacked the awareness of the seriousness of the virus spread, and there was a strong necessity for clear, reliable information to be constantly fed through media outlets to make the public aware of the danger and the repercussions of the virus spread.

F There is no clear information to prove the real situation. As an example, the records of death are not reliable.

The lack of input extends beyond the obvious pandemic situation directly impacting the economic situation of individuals. The policymakers needed a strategic plan to ensure people had their basic needs fulfilled. The strategy also required solutions and alternatives for daily income earners to ensure their financial sustainability. General dissatisfaction concerning the lack of such input was visible among the responses of the interviewees. For instance, one respondent highlights the fact that certain procedures were hidden by policymakers to cover the lack of key inputs as answers.

A The government is trying to suppress it [sic] and move the country forward because many people are poor. The government is trying to hide the fact that if the country closes down, they will have to be given allowances, which will limit their exploitation.

THROUGHPUT DEVELOPMENT

Similar to the respondents' idea of having certain key input mechanisms, there is also a requirement to ensure the mechanism is functioning effectively throughout the process. The respondents have found it difficult and confusing, with the lack of continuation of certain initiatives, which has reduced their trust in the government.

G The systematic and orderly manner in which the first COVID-19 wave was controlled was not seen in the second and third waves. In short, in my opinion, despite the full potential to prevent a third wave, the people were allowed to celebrate the New Year as they wished and a third wave was opened.

As mentioned by many interviewees, the vaccination process was a key instance of the lack of throughput development. Individuals who managed to get their first vaccination felt the second vaccination process was not organised in time, which led to frustration and a lack of trust in regard to the government's process in controlling the pandemic.

TABLE 3 Descriptive Statistics

| Statistics | Governance capacity | Governance legitimacy | Resilience building |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Mean | 16.75 | 12.05 | 6.72 |
| Standard deviation | 2.297 | 1.861 | 2.035 |
| 95% confidence interval | (16.35,17.14) | (11.73,12.38) | (6.36,7.07) |
| Minimum | 10 | 8 | 4 |
| Maximum | 22 | 16 | 12 |

K Most of the people who got the 1st dose, weren't able to get the second dose at the right time, so the effectiveness of the vaccine will surely decrease.

The throughput mechanism also needs to be flexible in adjusting to unforeseen changes, as seen with certain cases of manipulation in the system. The public expects the government to have certain contingency plans and the capacity to act once certain manipulative behaviours are seen in the overall process of pandemic control.

There are people who were hiding this COVID-19 from them because they want to do their business. When they are told that they could not do their business. And the parties like PHI officers, also do not take any action because they were receiving money from that kind of people.

Thus, based on the interview data, how the themes emerged were revealed.

In the next step, a quantitative analysis was performed using the scores developed for the dimensions, namely, governance legitimacy, capacity and resilience (table 3). The range of governance capacity was 5–25. Governance legitimacy had a range of 4–20. The range of resilience-building was 3–15.

Based on the findings, we can identify governance capacity with a maximum and minimum score of 22 and 10, respectively. The average of 16.75 is skewed towards the highest score possible for governance capacity, implying the sample believed the government could control the pandemic. Governance legitimacy has an average of 12.05, which is halfway in the range. This score implies the sample had a divided opinion on the trust placed in government action in controlling the pandemic. However, resilience-building indicated an average of 6.72, which is closer to

the minimum. This shows that the resilience-building ability of the respondents was lower under the pandemic situation.

With this understanding, a two-way analysis was conducted to further explore the relationship between the response to ‘whether the pandemic was controlled or not controlled in the country’ and the demographic variables. In terms of gender, most of the male respondents (88.2%) believed the pandemic was not controlled, with 69.6% of females upholding the same opinion. Based on the chi-squared test, gender was significantly correlated with the response to this issue ($\chi^2 = 6.05, p = 0.014$) Therefore, it can be concluded that opinions differ between males and females.

In terms of the size of households and their beliefs, one third had one member believing the pandemic was controlled. However, with the increase of members in the family reaching 4, they tend to believe the pandemic was not controlled. Thus, it can be observed that compared to smaller families, larger families believed the pandemic was not controlled. Furthermore, there was no association between income and the belief in pandemic control. Subsequently, the two groups were compared based on their scores for capacity, legitimacy and resilience building, and the results are as follows.

COMPARISON OF SCORES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS, ‘CONTROLLED’ AND ‘NOT CONTROLLED’

In further exploring the idea on governance capacity in the two groups, the average is higher (mean = 17.87, SD = 1.995) for those who said ‘controlled’ when compared to those who said ‘not controlled’ (mean = 16.41, SD = 2.283). This difference is highly statistically significant ($t = 3.150, p = 0.002$). This result shows that if the stakeholders could collaborate, the response to this query would have improved. When comparing governance legitimacy scores between the two groups, the average is higher (mean = 13.20, SD = 1.77) for those who said ‘controlled’ relative to others (mean = 11.71, SD = 1.754). This difference is also highly statistically significant with $t = 4.073, p = 0.000$. It was observed that the varying levels of trust in the government and their policies, as showcased by the public opinion, regarding the pandemic control resulted in this difference.

When comparing the two groups concerning resilience building, the average is higher (mean = 6.77, SD = 2.18) for those who said ‘controlled’ when compared with those who said otherwise (mean = 6.70, SD = 2.003). However, this difference is not statistically significant ($t = 0.157, p = 0.876$). This implies that respondents believe that the government

TABLE 4 Model Summary

| -2 Log likelihood | Cox & Snell R Square | Nagelkerke R Square |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 110.164* | 0.208 | 0.315 |

NOTES * Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001.

TABLE 5 Variables in Equation

| Variable | B | SE | Wald | DF | Sig. | Exp(B) |
|------------|---------|-------|--------|----|-------|--------|
| Capacity | 0.286 | 0.116 | 6.096 | 1 | 0.014 | 1.331 |
| Legitimacy | 0.472 | 0.152 | 9.603 | 1 | 0.002 | 1.603 |
| Gender(1) | 1.508 | 0.556 | 7.364 | 1 | 0.007 | 4.518 |
| Constant | -13.014 | 2.803 | 21.553 | 1 | 0.000 | 0.000 |

should take responsibility for controlling the pandemic where individual resilience has no role to play. The model is statistically significant (table 4).

On average, the score for governance capacity was significantly higher for those who said ‘controlled’ compared to those who stated otherwise. The higher the governance capacity score, the higher the chance of believing COVID-19 is controlled. A positive response to this question is 1.33 (odds ratio = 1.33, p -value < 0.05) times more likely if the respondents’ score on capacity is increased by one unit. This can be achieved by increasing stakeholder involvement and building collective problem-solving abilities.

On average, the score for governance legitimacy was much higher for those who said ‘controlled’ in comparison to those who said otherwise. A positive response to this question is 1.6 (odds ratio = 1.6, p -value < 0.05) times more likely if the respondents’ score on capacity is increased by one unit. This can be achieved by focusing on input and throughput building capacity.

Gender was found to be significantly correlated with the positive re-

TABLE 6 Model Summary Household

| -2 Log likelihood | Cox & Snell R Square | Nagelkerke R Square |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 106.429* | 0.230 | 0.349 |

NOTES * Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001.

TABLE 7 Variables in Equation Household

| Variable | B | SE | Wald | DF | Sig. | Exp(B) |
|------------|---------|-------|--------|----|-------|--------|
| Capacity | 0.314 | 0.121 | 6.698 | 1 | 0.010 | 1.369 |
| Legitimacy | 0.455 | 0.151 | 9.131 | 1 | 0.003 | 1.577 |
| Gender(1) | 1.496 | 0.569 | 6.922 | 1 | 0.009 | 4.465 |
| Household | -0.668 | 0.355 | 3.549 | 1 | 0.060 | 0.513 |
| Constant | -12.031 | 2.889 | 17.345 | 1 | 0.000 | 0.000 |

sponse on the opinion whether the pandemic was controlled or not. Moreover, according to the findings, the chance of females responding positively relative to males is more than fourfold.

The number of people in a household was included in the model, and the following results were obtained. The model is still significant, and the other odds ratios were not affected. However, the household is only marginally significant (odds ratio = 0.513, p -value < 0.1), indicating an effect that is almost halved when people living in a household increase.

Discussion

Research on governance capacity and legitimacy in crisis management is on the rise with the present COVID-19 situation spreading across the world (Christensen and Læg Reid 2020; Di Mascio, Natalini, and Cacciatore 2020). The present study contributes to this phenomenon by not only providing the context-specific characteristics of the governance legitimacy and capacity but further providing evidence as to how the process would lead to resilience building. Although the literature has discussed legitimacy and capacity in detail, its connection in regard to resilience building as an antecedent is relatively understudied. One of the key findings has been the political capacity of the Sri Lankan government mechanism. The findings revealed that the public is keeping a close eye on every action of the government and are knowledgeable enough to question the rationality of certain procedures. This idea is consistent with the findings of Sørensen and Torfing (2019) as the growth of competent and assertive citizens spots the complexities in society more than ever before; the elected politicians and their capacities are consistently challenged. This idea could be further linked to having a wider idea of the positions and the roles of respective actors. The political capacity dimension is linked to governance capacity as having certain accounting practices and making sure fair and effective decisions are taken, while

balancing the interests of various parties is also part of this idea (Mees and Driessen 2011). The governance capacity framework further explains this as enabling rules of the game, explaining everyone's role and how they should be interacting as people with power (Dang, Visseren-Hamakers, and Arts 2016).

Another crucial development from the findings is stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process. The study findings show that for governance legitimacy to materialise, there is a strong need for stakeholder involvement of those who are willing to take responsibility both formally and informally. Especially under the topic of the output legitimacy process, the involvement of the stakeholders at the final decision-making stage is discussed, showing the link of this dimension to the overall governance legitimacy building process (Klijn 2011). Despite COVID-19 pushing high-stake decisions to be made with little stakeholder involvement, the ethical approach requires open and inclusive decision making to be practised (Norheim et al. 2021). This is further explained in the work of Christensen and Lægreid (2020), emphasising making meaning, participation, and trust-building amongst political leadership as well as other administration officials. The value of trust-building is further shown in the results as when the trust is greater, the confidence of the Sri Lankan public in pandemic control is far superior. Additionally, developments focusing on public participation in regard to an integral political governance model could be adopted as a stepping-stone to build trust and ensure that all stakeholder engagement can be guaranteed in making policy decisions (Sørensen and Torfing 2019).

The input capacity identifies some of the first steps necessary at the start of the governance process in the case of a pandemic. For example, despite having certain resources at hand, processes such as vaccinations have systematically not taken place. The results are consistent with the previous findings that indicate that regardless of governments' possessing resources and relevant experts at their disposal, the handling of the pandemic has been severely mismanaged, and therefore unsuccessful (Christensen and Lægreid 2020). This idea can be linked to the overall idea of input legitimacy of the governance capacity framework which discusses some of the first steps needed for effective decision making (Klijn 2011). In terms of the input legitimacy, the findings demonstrated the inconsistency of the government policy in controlling COVID-19 and the lack of public participation and their feedback in the required steps towards the control of the pandemic.

In building the case of legitimacy, we must also understand what choices are to be made at the end of a process. In defending governance legitimacy, the steps initiated at the onset need to be complemented at the very end, which is the output. As the majority believed that the government was unable to control the pandemic, a key is to identify their responses to some of the decisions of the policymakers. As governance is identified as a process needing legitimacy from the start (input) towards the very end (output), there is a third dimension, the idea of throughput legitimacy. The throughput dimension primarily focuses on the complexities and the advanced decision-making process, which can be managed through the constant flow of information between the relevant actors involved. The throughput linked with the outcome is another significant point in the overall process as it allows democracy and the people representation of the decisions taken by the respective policymakers and practitioners (Popelier 2020). The higher the flow of information and transparency between the stakeholders involved in decision making, the greater throughput to establish legitimacy. This further stresses that a more inclusive and joint decision-making process will not only find short term solutions for the pandemic but has the potential to deliver long term strategic socio-economic objectives of revitalisation after COVID-19 (Bekker, Ivankovic, and Biermann 2020).

A critical discussion based on the quantitative analysis is the difference of females responding to the pandemic control compared to the males. This corresponds to the idea of both governance legitimacy and the capacity of the policy decisions developed in the research. Females believed that the pandemic was controlled to a greater extent compared to their male counterparts. This is consistent with previous findings, as evidence has shown gender inequality in attitudes towards COVID-19 based on how both men and women are impacted in their occupations and other realities (Reichelt, Makovi, and Sargsyan 2021).

The study also focused on resilience-building, which was initially discussed in the literature review. The literature suggested the possibility to control a pandemic through capacity building and legitimacy, leading towards resilience building (Blanchet et al. 2017). Despite the study results not showing significance, the literature infers, and suggestions provide, sufficient evidence to explore the phenomenon further in line with crisis management literature to identify the possibility of resilience development (Koronis and Ponis 2018a). This is potentially an area for future research as both legitimacy and capacity discussed in crisis management

literature have shown hints and possibilities of being an avenue for resilience building that needs to be theorised in future lines of work (Koronis and Ponis 2018a; Christensen and Ma 2021). Overall, the study has helped to develop the theoretical underpinnings of both governance capacity and legitimacy in the case of crisis management and further supports the idea of building resilience in the long run through this process. This is a key theoretical contribution as existing work on policy framing has yet to discuss the role of resilience in greater detail.

Study Limitations

The study predominantly adopted a convenience sampling technique which is inherently biased and should not be identified as a true representation of the actual case of Sri Lanka (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016). Given the study utilised the university networks in collecting data, the study might be influenced by a degree of sampling bias (Jeong and Park 2020). Although this means that some of the key findings of the study are not generalisable, the development of governance capacity and legitimacy as driving towards resilience building is identified as an avenue for future empirical work. This is a crucial point despite the use of convenience sampling lacking generalisability; the technique is crucial when socio-cultural and other factors influence the overall outcomes (Andrade 2021). Despite the other two groups not knowing each other, education sector respondents do tend to know each other so they might have a certain bias. The study identified resilience building as a key outcome but requires greater empirical work in future to address its development.

Conclusion

Crisis is inherent in the business environment, and COVID-19 has been one such phenomenon that has caused chaos and destruction for multiple lines of work. In this article, governance legitimacy and capacity were identified as two mechanisms that aid in the successful management of a crisis. Moreover, the study assessed how these variables could assist in the development of resilience. Further, both the qualitative and quantitative findings pointed out several key themes (political capacity, stakeholder involvement, input capacity, as well as throughout capacity) in the overall governance system. An interesting finding from the data was that gender was a moderating variable in making decisions as females had a higher tendency to trust the government decision-making process in the pandemic efforts as opposed to male participation, which requires

more exploration in future lines of work. The results support previous research and work on both governance capacity and legitimacy and provide a niche for future work to explore its connections to resilience building via extensive exploratory studies.

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