Can Authentic Leadership Increase Volunteerism in Fire Disaster Management?

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

There is few researchers study on factors to influence volunteer to dedicate on the collaboration in fire disaster management which shape more effective fire disaster management. Interestingly, we found that although the fire disaster management is managed under a small unit, the outcomes of the Magelang District fire prevention technical unit are overwhelming. The key is authentic leadership to shape community involvement and volunteerism as well as government officials and private sectors to join collaboration. The leader introduced the incentive to join the collaboration as well as institutional arrangement both internal and external institutions that in the short term push significant trust to enhance the effectiveness of fire disaster management. It is the persistence, example and risk taking as well as personal knowledge on fire management and regulation of the head of unit that lead to eagerness of the volunteers to work beyond duty.

1. Introduction

The global warming has shaped more hazardous fire disaster than ever before. Therefore, the inter-institutions collaborative governance has been received importance due to complex, unpredicted and hazardous situation take place during the disaster. However, studies on collaborative governance confirm that culture shift from individual competition to collaboration that is crucial in emergency is not only difficult but somehow almost impossible to perform (Waugh & Streib, 2010). These conditions are to included: need to share financial resource and risk, leadership style, disposition to collaborate, high interdependency, and trust (Bryson, Crosby & Stone 2006). On the institution aspect, Ansell & Gash (2008) highlight the incentive to participate, institutional design and power and imbalance to form a better collaboration. Ansell & Gash (2008) stated that face to face dialog to build commitment and trust is the key of successful collaborative governance in public sector.

The importance of collaborative governance in disaster management is unquestionable. The large scope area, possibilities of death toll and social-economic problems during and after the natural disaster have led the urgent need of using collaborative governance. As the community involvement and voluntarism are the key of collaborative governance at local level (Waugh & Streib, 2006), the leadership style is crucial in forming these activities to ease the catastrophic consequences of natural disaster. The volunteerism and community programs are crucial because in time of crisis the government assistance may take long to arrive at scene. The leadership style also determines the quality of networking process in achieving the common goal by multiple organizations (Silvia, 2011). The nature of high complexity and urgency in fire management required the highest level of integrity and high task complexity awareness as core of leadership competencies (Mau, 2017).

Instead of significant role of leadership importance to collaboration effectiveness, some studies still observe the ineffectiveness of natural management disaster cause by leadership. Aoki (2011) found that decentralization affect the public leaders’ command and control on disaster management. Complicated hierarchy, standard operation procedure and rank in public sector (Waugh & Streib 2006), vertical and horizontal collaboration (Aoki, 2011; McGuire & Silvia, 2010), and political blame game (Boin & ‘t Hart, 2010) decrease the effectiveness of leadership style in managing the emergency management. In conclusion, the complex public agency structure leads to less collaborative action.
(McGuire & Silvia 2010). However, the high political influence on leadership can be reduced through repeated technical communication (Cabral & Krane 2016). Many has studied the shape of institution command, network and leadership to for collaboration but few focus on community involvement as social pressure mechanism to form collaborative governance. This study focuses on local community involvement and volunteerism to shape collaborative governance.

After examining the challenges encountered with volunteerism in collaborative governance, this research explores how to form such collaboration can be achieved in practice and how to advance research on this topic. The discussion ultimately provides new insight on factors to influence community role in collaboration that has been the core of fire disaster management. Past studies inform about the community preparedness and organization to face hurricane (Kapucu 2008), local culture and any geographic information to form better information technology system (Goldstein & Butler 2009; Schafer et. al, 2008), social capital to influence community preparedness (Bihari & Ryan 2012). Simo & Bies (2007) found that non-profits organization in collaborative emergency management have been crucial especially in filling the gap of bureaucratic and formal public organization response in emergency. This study is different with those studies for it uses leadership perspective as the leading factor of community volunteerism.

Leadership is crucial in planning and executing a policy especially policy with in emergency in nature. Therefore, this study focus on elaborating authentic leadership as a tool to increase effectiveness in leading the emergency embedded in fire prevention and suppression policy. This study is aimed to enhance understanding on how leader can influence public policy and increase public participation to deliver better fire prevention policy.

The fire management is a big task in any country, including Indonesia. Indonesia is located in ring of fire or Pacific Ring of Fire. This means that as a region around much of the rim of the Pacific Ocean where many volcanic exist, Indonesia is very vulnerable to eruptions and earthquakes. Indonesia has Furthermore, as many eruptions take place, it will trigger fire both natural and man-made. Therefore, the fire prevention and management is a must activity to be performed in countries like Indonesia to prevent bigger victims and damages caused by disaster.

Magelang district is one of disaster prone areas in Indonesia that selected as object of study due to its unique characteristic. This district is huge in area of 1,085.73 square kilometers and has big number of population compare to other district in Indonesia. According to Magelang district Statistic (2021) Magelang district is divided into 21 sub-districts that consist of 372 villages which consist of 2,700 backwoods, 45 orchard, 3,448 community areas and 10,981 neighborhood areas. On the population, there is 1,299,859 people living in this district which consist of 654,989 male and 644,870 female and also has population density of 1,197 people per sq.km (Magelang district Statistic, 2021). With such a high population density, Magelang district is considered as high priority area to be alert for it frequently is having natural disaster that will lead to high casualties and damages. This high frequency of eruption and tsunami is due to existence of Merapi Mountain, one of the most active volcanic mountains in Indonesia. The risk is even bigger because 36.56% of villages in Magelang Regency are located on slopes/ peaks.

The high risk of disaster can be mitigating by the existing of specific unit. The existence of Magelang district municipal police and firefighting management unit is important to prevent and minimize the lost caused by the fire related disaster. This unit has been promote a sustainable program to mitigate the bigger damages caused by fire. According to Magelang district municipal police and firefighting management unit, there are free training on the fire drill management and other trainings that has been periodically provided to not only health public institution but also all school from kindergarten to junior high school (to include both public and private schools) and also free training to mitigate gas leak and explosion for all schools in Magelang district, as well fire evacuation training for fire fighter (https://satpolpp.magelangkab.go.id/). However, despite all the efforts, the number of fire occurrence, casualties and damages still exist (table 1).

Table 1.1 Number of fire occurrences, losses, casualties in Magelang District from 2018-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire Occurrences</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fires</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land &amp; building loss</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land &amp; building loss (houses)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land &amp; building loss (others)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material loss (million rupeiah)</td>
<td>8,168</td>
<td>6,551</td>
<td>37,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead victim</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://magelangkab.bps.go.id/indicator/166/841/1/jumlah-peristiwa-kebakaran-kerugian-dan-korban-di-kabupaten-magelang.html

The table above showed the material lost caused by fire steadily increased despite lower number of occurrence. It showed that the fire has emerged in more crowded and huge public facilities that caused bigger material lost.

The Magelang district municipal police and fire management and firefighting technical service unit is therefore is selected to study the fire management that can prevent bigger causalities and damages. This unit has achieved many important achievements despite limited authority received and funding given. However, the material damages still prominent despite the effort spend. As many problems faced despite its huge achievement by the unit, this research is intended to study the leadership in collaborative fire management efforts using below research problem:

How authentic leadership shaped the collaborative fire management in Magelang district municipal police
and fire management and firefighting technical service unit?

2. Theory

As governance approach has moved from centralized to decentralized approach, the leadership has become more important than before. The state and non-state actors’ participation has been crucial in collaborative governance (Connick and Innes, 2003; Smith, 1998), as the result public official role in collaboration has increased over time. Waugh & Streib (2010) posed one of factor official’s involvement in collaborative effort is the significant risk to life and property, there is high political risk if the official fails to take proper action. The inter-agency and inter-organization communication has required assertive leadership that is able to create true engagement in collaboration trough meaningful collaborative design.

Scholars in public administration have determined a certain leadership style in disaster management. Coleman (2017) has provided guidance on different forms of trust to be developed, interact, and functioned in collaborative resource management efforts. The great leader anticipates and plans for significant disruptions (Schultz, Thompson, McCaffrey, 2019). The leadership is essential in fire management, as it required securing emergency collaborative effectiveness.

The public officials, therefore, has to be able to master such authentic leadership style to build such meaningful collaboration. The rapid changing environment, increase of natural and man-made massive destruction as well as the emergency situation embedded in fire prevention management has push the need for leader to lead the collaboration in emergency situation. Waugh & Streib (2010) posed that that there is an urgent need of collaborative processes or some combination of command and control and collaboration in emergency. Communication is an essential skill in collaboration. These skill is best described as to effective interaction with other government officials and with the broader disaster relief communities (Drabek 1987), and to manage communication with hundreds of community organization that is not linked with state and local government agencies (Waugh & Streib 2010). To build the effective communication, it is essential to conduct frequent interaction, this interaction lead to include participation in planning and training exercises (Waugh & Streib 2010).

Authentic leadership is best understand by elaborating character of and factor to determine an authentic leadership. Chan & Chan (2005) introduced three viewpoints on authentic leadership, which include intrapersonal perspectives, intrapersonal process, and developmental perspective. He adds detail on the first viewpoint where the leadership is formed by interpersonal characters, such as leader’s self-knowledge, self-regulation, and self-concept. On the second viewpoint, Eagly (2005) suggested that leadership is nurtured by relational relationship created by leaders and followers. On the last viewpoint, Avolio & Gardner, (2005), Gardner, et. al, (2005) and Walumbwa, et. al (2008) argued that the leadership is growing through the leader’s positive psychological qualities and strong ethics. Hence, any monumental and challenging events can shape the better authentic leadership style due to strong willingness and ability to cope with the challenges.

As the authentic leadership should be nurtured, a leader must possess some quality to secure its ability to cope with complex challenges. Every leader who aim to develop authentic leadership must have understanding on purpose, strong values about the right thing to do, establishing a trusted relationships, demonstrating self-discipline and act on their values, and passionate about their mission (George, 2003). Those leaders who possess these characteristics should be able to seek through solution for any defiance they face. In order to implement the authentic leadership, one must take possession of several factor including self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Luthans, & Avolio, 2003). The nature of fire prevention and suppression is challenging, and catastrophic, an authentic leadership must be possess by any leader involve in the management that require cohesive collaboration.

3. Research Method

This study uses case study to provide bounded explanations of single cases or phenomena where a unusual cases presents (Yin 2018). The collection of evidence in this study follows six principles proposed by Yin (2018) which include: Plan, Design, Prepare, Share, Analyse and Collect. The method is selected due to possibility to use all data to include documents, archival records, interviews, and direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts that may ease the difficulty to collect primary data during covid-19 restriction.

4. Results

This study confirmed the use of authentic leadership to increase firefighting and fire prevention management. This study has supported Chan & Chan (2005) on interpersonal characters. The head of unit is able to persuade the local officer and private actors to fund the programs despite the more current crucial condition caused by covid-19. He knew that his responsibility of saving lives and reducing damages are considered as high priority by the law and regulation and therefore can be shifted to other parties who has higher authorities such funding to secure the firefighting efforts. He knew that by giving them detail descriptions on amount of funding with saving lives and reducing damages, the chance of bigger commitment is established. The head of the unit also supported nurtured leaders and followers relationship (Eagly, 2005). He, most of the time, has performed supervision and find alternative solution to the problems whenever needed as well as accompany and example to his follower. The head of the unit has been persistent in finding solution rather than complaining on problem which allows the follower to inspire by his action. This study supported leader’s positive psychological qualities and strong ethics (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, et. al, 2005; Walumbwa, et. al, 2008). He builds a strong connection with every actor without asking for personal return even though he has chance to do it. He has prioritized subordinate and fire fighters as well as institution and community for his entire decision making. He is not
underestimating network building but focus on increasing with strong belief that he can increase the chance of saving lives and reducing damages by maximizing it.

The study supported the need of authentic leadership that secures ability to cope with complex challenges which surrounded fire management practices. The head of unit is best example of interpersonal characteristic (George, 2003) on having understanding on purpose, strong values about the right thing to do, establishing a trusted relationships, demonstrating self-discipline and act on their values, and passionate about their mission. He gave example of being supportive to his follower by his presence in office, trainings and meetings. He showed do not mind to established contact with someone in lower position than him. He always enthusiastic and easy to talk with related with his responsibilities. Most importantly, he has no regret in spending more time beyond office hours and involving in live saving effort that can take his lives.

Specifically this study supported the Walumbwa, et.al (2008) on Authentic Leadership Questionnaire [ALQ]) which consist on leader self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. As the leader of a small institution, the head of regional firefighting unit in Magelang District is aware of his role in shaping the collaboration through his presence in every situation especially in emergency regardless of the time, condition and situation. His action where he always leads in the discussion by providing detail data and information related with past, present and future need to mitigate the fire disaster lead to trust between local officials, private actors and volunteers to secure the commitment needed in the collaborative firefighter and fire prevention. His perseverance in finding the solution for every difficult situation i.e. finding the location for evacuation training for multilevel storey buildings even when there is no funding available result in admiration and respect of his follower includes firefighters and local officers to better serve the community.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The authentic leadership is the important aspect to shape the volunteerism. The head of unit is both capable, and knowable to lead the local officer and private to fund the training and equipment for the firefighter despite the limited funding and authorities of the unit and other important priorities related to covid-19 mitigation. It is the unique communication by frequent and formal as well as formal communication to emphasized the responsibilities of the local and private officers to protect the communities and infrastructure that has successfully brought back the officers to fund the activities. The example and empathy have shaped to the follower, including the fire fighters to work beyond duty. Without his example in taking risk and his empathy in his presence as well as his unending efforts to secure the training need, the followers will not eager to take risk.

References


