

The Agile Mindset:

A Proactive Business Behavior to Survive in New Normal Era

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Abstract—The global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted every aspects of life. The current outbreak has severe socioeconomic consequences across the globe creating another disruption, which has led to dramatic changes of way of life and businesses. As developing countries, both Gambia and Indonesia suffer tremendously. The study assesses relevant discussions related to business transformation in surviving the new normal era. The paper addresses some of the pandemic related issues to business life in the Gambia and Indonesia. As the crisis happens not only nationally but also globally with challenges that require both immediate and long-term action. Business proactive a right action versus employee concern dictate a balancing order to serve all needs.

Keywords—agile mindset, business behavior, new normal era, COVID-19

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently the world has been shocked by the outbreak caused by corona virus. This virus started to spread on December 2019 in Wuhan, China then continue spreading across the globe until 11 March 2020 WHO confirmed the outbreak as global pandemic. The spread of the virus is very fast and some people that are infected do not show any symptoms which caused the death of many people that are vulnerable. The antidotes that have not been found yet and transmission through contact between humans in social activities are the cause of death causing hospitals and paramedics overwhelm in handling patients. The pandemic has negatively impacted the global supply chain as it has both health and economic ramifications on national economies, moreover 215 countries are facing a health emergency and world economic growth has been corrected sharply so that it does not enter the brink of recession. Every country's leaders implement social distancing policies to break the chain of this outbreak, which further have fatal consequences for the world economy. The slow pace of the world economy has closed many countries for their primary needs, including Indonesia and Gambia.

Currently, the Gambia faces an unemployment crisis of 35.2% (UNDP, 2020). GDP percentage growth will plummet to a negative 2.4%, while unemployment will further increase from 35.2 to 35.9 %, and food poverty will also significantly

increase. Whereas the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) of Indonesia stated that the current unemployment rate is 4.2% and will increase to 9.2% this year. Indonesia's GDP is expected to be negative 1.20% and household consumption fell 5.51%. The biggest impact of this pandemic is the middle to lower class of the society. Many employees of private sectors or factories have been laid off. Whilst Indonesia government implementing Large-Scale Social Restriction (LSSR) or known as '*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar/PSBB*', Gambia government declared a "State of Emergency" and instill a curfew. These both policies causing some self-employed, self-owned businesses, motorcycle/car taxi services cannot operate normally. Services industry such as hotels and travel agents cannot work and laid many of their employees because of the social distancing protocols. Nevertheless, some people are disobeying the regulations because not working or opening their businesses meaning no money coming in, but still money coming out of their pockets hence risked not having an income.

The COVID-19 epidemic supposed to make people's healthy behavior change better. However, there are still groups of people who are not aware of the importance of healthy behavior both physically and mentally. This is because there are still many people who have a strong belief in destiny, where something that happens has been arranged or predestined. In Indonesia this concept is known as '*takdir*' which comes from Arabic – Qadar, whilst in the Gambia is known as '*Yallah Bakhna*' in Wolof language and '*Allah Warta*' in Madinka language. This concept belief that there is a bigger power beyond human power that has determined how things in the world happen, including the life and death of living things. Both Indonesia and Gambia are countries where the people are predominantly Muslim. In Islam, belief in destiny is a pillar of faith, so anyone who claims to be a Muslim must believe in destiny. Believing in destiny supposed to make a person humble and not arrogant, because one's understands that the success, advancement and goodness that happens is not solely due to his/her own intelligence and abilities but rather has become a destiny that determined by God. However, destiny should not make them lazy either, because humans still have to try to carry out their nature, do good, carry out orders and stay away from God's prohibitions if

they want to succeed because God has ordered humans to always try and pray to change their living conditions.

Unfortunately, this belief in destiny has been brought to a certain level by certain groups of people, where this has made them have a mindset and behavior that makes it difficult for them to change their lifestyle. The strong religious beliefs in both Gambia and Indonesia created strong and strict conservative mindset resistant to change especially changed not sanctioned by religious doctrines. This study seeks to dissect the methods and efforts needed to not only be able to adapt and survive, but also how to be competitive in the uncertain new era. The article, contrast COVID-19 policy recommendation against business behavior as an approach to not only survive but be competitive in the new normal era within the framework of agile mindset.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the emergence of the coronavirus (COVID-19), the whole world shutdown, major activities grind to a halt. The COVID-19 has exposed the merits and the demerits of agility in the organisation. Worst of all, millions of employees are laid-off from their jobs most of those employees affected are the ones in arranged work practices compared to employees with a fixed-term employment arrangement. Employees in the governmental employment more secure with their jobs compared to private sector employees. Governments in developed countries with big economies were able to give some form of support to their people during the period of the lockdown but poor developing countries with little or no resources, people suffer. The Gambia and Indonesia Governments gave out help to the poorest one-time support but not sufficient for the entirety of the Covid-19 era. One key positive practice of agility during the pandemic is the ability to work from home (WFH).

The negative aspect of Covid-19 effect is the immediate layoff of employees when the organisation is stressed. Also, organisations that were not shutdown as deemed essential business, the employees worked nonstop especially employees in the health sector or in food manufacturing industries or grocery businesses (supply-chain industries) with high exposure or risked of the virus or death.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Business Behavior*

Business behavior is determined and influenced by both external and internal culture of the organisation. COVID-19 has created a new global (universal) culture that has changed and transformed day to day social and business interactions. Cultures are specific actions identified, approved and accepted by an entity that defines new ways of doing things to help adjust or adopt to a new demand. Business behaviors as actions are provoked by changes either internally or externally induced. The COVID-19 induced changes are both positive and negative as well as short-term and long-term according to

predictions. The new normal era corona virus behaviors relate to universalism versus particularism approach for each country. The Corona virus created universal cultures that created universal behaviors.

World-wide effects of COVID-19 on Business Behavior:

- Worldwide lock down of travel and business
- Sharing of Information/Misinformation
- Collective Worldwide Action (WHO)
- Lack of World leadership
- Blame game (lack of Responsibility)
- Scramble for Resources to Survive (Survival of the Fittest)
- No hand shakes
- Wearing of mask at all times
- Social distancing
- Rationing to daily or weekly staff roll (50%)
- WFH (work from home)
- Technology aided work practice
- Video conferencing
- Digital transaction (shopping, banking, etc.)
- Hand Sanitization
- Disinfection of the Workplace
- Redundancy
- Slicing of employee salaries
- Create more flexibility in the organisation (relax bureaucracy)
- Governments intervention to support organisations
- Create New Opportunities for Business
- Create Opportunity for Corruption

Ahmad and Seed [1] identified futile behaviors and competencies which may cause failures to SME businesses, such as:

- Inability to conduct proper market research may impact on the failure to formulate strategic plan and have clear business direction.
- Inability to find trustworthy business associates, select reliable supplier and hire competent staff.
- Incompetence in recognizing and responding opportunities and making good business judgments.

- Failure to manage large number of employees, manage fast growing firm, and administer large firm because of lacking management, financial and relationships skills.
- Inability to maintain close personal relationships with customer and lack of personal contacts.
- Poor selection of advisors.
- Incompetence in obtaining or using the latest technology.

The most important challenge for employers is to create a balance between corporate profit and employee health and well-being. The few businesses that remained operational as essential businesses often forced their employees to work long hours to meet up with the demand. Others also forced employees to work due to governmental pressure against their will for the fear of infection. The agility mindset works to whose advantage. In the Gambia massive layoff of employees in the hospitality industry as the country heavily rely on tourism for its economy. This provoked a protest by the people and therefore pushed for government intervention with financial support for the hotels [2].

B. Agile Mindset

Agile mindset itself is a way of thinking or assumption of one person or a group of people. A mindset may allow someone or group of people to accept or deny certain behavior, choices, tools or idea. Denning [3] emphasized that for successful implementation, having agile mindset is far more important than having any agile organizational structure, system, process, platform or methodology. He further detailed the characteristics of having agile mindset among others:

- More focus on added value and innovation for both customer and user which is embedded in the goals, attitudes and values; rather than on profit or financial matters.
- Managers should see, and act as enablers, instead of controllers, so that he can focus on the talents and capacities of his knowledge workers.
- Instead of using bureaucracy for coordinating work, the use of structured, iterative and customer-focus practices is preferred.
- Transparent and improve continuously on products, services and work methods.
- Demonstrate communication that are open and conversational, instead of hierarchical and top-down communication.
- Empower teamwork and networks of teams.

Thus, Miler and Gaida [4] define agile mindset as “as a set of one’s attitudes, behavior and ways of thinking that enhance their team’s effectiveness at work following the agile values and principles to the benefit of all.” Furthermore, Doz [5]

added that strategic agility is needed to face the rapid and uncertain challenges because it is flexible and adaptive but having meaningful and consistent efforts. People can be focus on a continuous way of improvement and change, then becoming more flexible when working in agile way. Being agile empowers teams to work faster and take decision more democratic since anybody in the team can be the decision-maker. Furthermore, having agile mindset means that someone is adaptable, have a long-term goal and cultivate the curiosity and eagerness to learn new things. Thus, developing an agile mindset is essential and having an agile mindset means living the values through action.

Despite the importance of having agile mindset, changing one’s mindset is quite difficult. According to 2012 survey on barriers to agile adoption [6], the inability to change their organizational culture resulting 52 percent was the number one barrier, followed by a general resistance to change (41%). As some people in both Indonesia and Gambia are difficult to change, moreover leaving their comfort zone. Thus, to successfully implement and adopt the agile mindset, the benefits most serve all needs.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive analysis study. The choice of the two countries as place of study is because the researcher is an Indonesian by nationality who lived in the Gambia for six years. Living in a country for certain number of years and mingled with the inhabitants can provide a deep understanding of the people’s behavior and mindset.

V. DISCUSSION – THE NEED APPLYING AGILE MINDSET IN BUSINESS BEHAVIOR

The Indonesian government makes several efforts to overcome this problem by providing several assistance programs for lower-level communities so that they can fulfil the basic needs. One of the programs implemented is direct cash assistance (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai/BLT*), where government distribute Rp. 600,000.00 per months for 2.6 million people or 1.2 million household [7]. Whist, Gambia government provided Covid-19 relief package distribution to 163,603 households across the country [8]. However, the assistance provided by the Government which supposed to help lower-level society, have actually made the society dependent during the pandemic. Moreover resulted in the emergence of new social problems. Based on the social worker’s point of view, people who receive assistance are not functioning socially or are unable to carry out their social functions which mean the condition where people are able to carry out their social roles properly so that they can solve their problems and meet their needs.

The key to overcome this pandemic is dominated by the behavior of the community itself, the community has made a strategy so that they can live safely side by side with COVID-19 by changing their daily behavior thus not only survive but also more competitive in the new normal era. In order to

survive the new normal era, require cooperation with various parties, business, employees, government and society. This pandemic condition is extraordinary that innovation is needed to help solve this problem. Relations between and among key stakeholders is important to optimize from the challenges and opportunities introduced by the COVID-19 for innovations.

Society need to possess positive behaviors so that they not only able to survive the new normal era, which is completely uncertain and fluctuate quickly, but also can increase their competitiveness. Many researchers have promoted the important and need of being agile when rapid innovation is a source of competitive advantage [9] or facing turbulence or disruptive changes [10,11]. Whilst Doz [5] emphasizes that this agility strategy has started to become the key to determining performance in industry. Doz [5] also adds that industries have begun to realize the need to implement agile strategies. Janssen and van der Voort [10] further emphasized on the importance of a strategy for implementing an agile approach when dealing with the crisis, especially how Dutch government responses using agile and adaptive governance to Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Thus, this agile thinking is necessary to survive from Covid-19 pandemic because inevitably people are forced to adapt to the rapid and uncertain change. Therefore, people need to be adaptable, creative, able to think outside the box, continue learn new things in the current situation since this extraordinary condition is not only experienced by Indonesia and Gambia but also many countries in the world.

Furthermore, for the business to survive need to adopt and implement the standard protocols to protect both their employees and customers. The agility is needed to understand the situation, adapt quickly, come with solution for every problem, then continue learning. Some businesses started utilizing digital or social media platforms that are available to market and enhance their business viability. This pandemic condition is very extraordinary that it spur innovation as key to adopting or living to survive with the virus. Relationship building, cooperation and working with others through strategic alliances help to engage in ways to help the business to continue to profit, grow and sustain.

However, with many businesses closing and filing bankruptcy, industries in e-commerce recognize rises profit margins during the pandemic since the social distancing protocols and stay at home trends has created a new lifestyle where more people started utilizing digital shopping, digital banking and even digital traveling. The point is, businesses that can quickly riding the wave can survive and those who cannot, will be flushed out of business.

VI. CONCLUSION

To conclude the paper has established that agile mindset can without doubt help businesses to survive by adjusting and adopting to the challenges. The agility for business survival should always accommodate all needs, both for employer and employees. But quite often, employees are asked to sacrifice more for the organisation to survive crisis. The research has determined that not all business entirely affected at the same level of destruction as businesses in the e-commerce business are making profits. Other businesses that were able to immediately diversify and introduced other strategic measures has help to stay in business.

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