

# Tsunami Leadership and Organizational Turmoil & Mayhem

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## Abstract

*The theme and focus of leadership – and more specifically, bad leadership and/ or the bad deeds of leaders has received much attention in the past few decades. In this paper, what emerges from the literature review of various kinds of leadership styles is a less desirable or destructive type of leadership (also known as non-leadership); it can destroy or hurt organizational morale and the incumbents' motivation. The authors prefer to label it as "Tsunami leadership" or the vilest kind of leadership, a term that expresses or indeed simply indicates the outrage, disgrace and indignation of the leader's ineffectiveness, functioning like a non-leader and the enormity of the effect of such type of leadership that comes from the failure to anticipate changes caused by either personal issues, non-competences or environmental settings. Besides, there is also no significant trait of special quality which enables the leader to sustain in mobilizing any direction within an organization. The notion of Tsunami leadership is not a popular one; and it is an unethical version of leadership style or personality. It is rather a model that emerges in identifying the nature of non-leader in a position that (s)he fails to lead and/or bring about changes, let alone be effective, but still claims or worse, boasts to be successful in a certain way. The aim and purpose of this paper is to demonstrate and examine those traits, characteristics and behaviors that are reflected as Tsunami leadership which can jeopardize, risk and ruin an organization.*

*Tsunami leaders are like professional hit-man put in place to destroy or maim organizations and organizational morale as well as the spirit of their stakeholders.*

**Keywords** – Leadership, Tsunami leadership, instant noodle 'leaders', abusive leadership; chaotic vision, bullying leaders.

## Introduction

Many weak leaders or what is dishonourably called "fat cats" (several interviewees' inputs) exist and they are the non-capable ones who purposely create turmoil, difficulty and even commit mistakes or frauds in organizations to get personal advantages such as promotions, junket trips, bonuses and other perks. This type of leadership may, inevitably, put the whole organization into a black hole or in a disastrous situation. Bad leadership qualities can adversely affect potential organizational gains or benefits, not to mention the damage done to the organization's image. Furthermore, some research study has found that bad leader affects personal matters of employees such as physical health, raising the risk of heart diseases, and downgrade morale while working in office (Walton, 2012).

In this paper, the authors review and critically assess the theoretical and research literature on their term/label Tsunami leadership in order to understand the potential negative consequences of such (non)

leadership, the trajectories of their (non) leadership, and the relationship of Tsunami leaders to avoid models of leadership. The authors argue that the term, Tsunami leaders is inherently limited in scope, and propose a new definition of Tsunami leadership in order to reframe the discussion and better incorporate it in the field of leadership studies.

### **Definition of Leadership**

The English word “lead” is derived from the Old English term “lithan”, the Dutch term “leiden” and the Old French “leden” meaning “to go”, or “to cause to go with oneself” and “to guide or show the way.” The term connotes a sense of movement or journey from one place to another (Dictionary, 2013). Leadership, the driving force of organizations, often plays an important role in every profit or non-profit organization, society, and nation (Low, 2010). Leadership is “about creating the climate or culture where people are inspired from the inside out” (Wilson, 2008, pp. 9; Low, 2011a). Leadership can also be defined as the process of influencing others to facilitate the attainment of organizational relevant goals and this definition is applicable to both formal and informal leadership position in order to exert leadership behavior. (Ivancevich et al., 2008, pp. 413 cited in Low and Ang, 2012).

*Who is a leader?* Briefly, a leader is a head of a group. In an organization, the leader may occupy a top position. A leader, in one definition, is one who leads or inspires a group to achieve group objectives (Price and Price, 2013; Sloane, 2007). The aims to achieve the objectives are the main role held by a leader; there can be no leader without followers. And the presence of followers defines the presence of leader. To get followers, the content of what leader says must be understood by the followers. Consequently, those actions and messages must be congruent with the expectations, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the culture to what leader are communicating (Parry, 2001). In short, a leader is a person who has the skills and strengths which enables him or her to influence others to jointly perform certain activities for the achievement of one or more goals.

### **What Is Effective Leadership?**

The leader is a person who can be a good sample or more aptly an example or role model for the followers. It is worthy to note that particularly so in Asia where loyalty and compliance appears to be virtues stressed by the superiors, some malaise (the Hang Tuah syndrome or blind loyalty) may occur, and it is obviously terrible when one sees some of these so-called leaders (non-leaders) may not even know themselves or their own respective goals, and yet they simply or blindly do what their superiors ask them to do or worse, apple-polishing or licking the boots of their superiors (Low, 2013). Some leaders (may not be fit to be called as such) not thinking or analyzing, they simply follow their superiors blindly. Having no mind of their own, they actually hold no firm views of their own, let alone values. Unclear even of themselves, their stand or of their values, they simply or decisively follow the prevailing wind. Today, the North wind is blowing, so they join the North wind school. Tomorrow, the South wind is blowing, they move onto the South wind school. They therefore join cliques and go into office politics “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” (several interviewees’ inputs); the petty people – *xiao ren* – spend much time and effort developing a clique or network of contacts and/or partnerships that support or cover up for one another, and these managers/‘leaders’ get promoted very quickly, ahead of their peers (Low, 2013). Frankly, the authors feel that it is even a mistake on their part to compare them, these non-leaders with leaders yet such comparisons and contrasts are necessary and they have to be done to expose them. The general audience also needs to know what non-leaders’ actions that can be classified as unconstructive leadership behaviors or deeds.

According to Kets de Vries and Miller (1985), the most common trait among all effective leaders is the ability to awaken primitive emotions in their followers. For Confucius, benevolence or *ren* and loving-kindness must be upheld, the leaders need to take care of their people, and caring or compassion for the people is critical. The leader then serves, and servant leadership is practiced (Low, 2013). One of the leadership types is narcissism. Narcissistic leaders are attributed to portray some traits such as grandiosity, arrogance, self-absorption, entitlement, fragile self-esteem, and hostility but they have the charisma and grand vision that is vital to effective leadership (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006).

### **What Is Tsunami Leadership?**

Unlike narcissism, Tsunami leadership is an expression that speaks of the outrage of the leader's sheer ineffectiveness, non-leadership behaviours and the enormity of the effect of the type of leadership that comes from the failure to anticipate changes caused by both personal and environment's landscape. Of empty arrogance (he or she is really "an incompetent leader"; interviewees' inputs), such a leader may have some traits of grandiosity ("though claiming to have great vision"; interviewees' inputs), and there is "self-preoccupation with image, perks (and entitlements)", while having fragile or low self-esteem and they are better at "bullying others" (interviewees' inputs). (Here, to paraphrase Taite Adams' words, if one is worrying about one's image, reputation and perks, one is taking time away from doing leadership things that really matter. (See Taite Adams, cited in Goodreads.com, 2015). And unfortunately they have no charisma, vision or goals to achieve in an organization. Because of this, we label this type of leadership as Tsunami leadership at work. Similar to organizational hit-men sent to destroy the organization in surreptitious ways, Tsunami leaders are terrible or can bring about destructions to the organizations including their customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Tsunami, a Japanese terminology expressing a series of disasters caused by the displacement of a large volume of a body of water, typically an ocean, does not resemble normal sea waves; it has far longer wavelength. Although the impact of tsunami is limited to coastal areas, their destructive power can be enormous and they can affect entire ocean basins (Wells, 1990). Similarly, organizations may be analogous to having a horrendous damage like Tsunami when leadership experience disorientation. It means in such a leadership style, sometimes a leader's habits that are seemingly not so visible and intolerable, yet the impact can result in huge damage caused unexpectedly or worse in a ridiculous fashion. In this study, the authors have identified characteristics of leaders that have abnormal or unusual ways of leading resulting in great damage to their organizations within the organizational culture. Tsunami leadership, in this context, refers to a series of personality traits encompassing non-leadership behaviours, self-centric egoisms with high power in hand, and these also include having no vision and direction, failing to encourage or motivate subordinates, having difficulties or failing to learn from their mistakes, even minor mistakes; and failing to anticipate changes in the business landscape.

## **Research Methodology**

This research is based on a series of interviews – each time approximately 30 to 45 minutes though some interviews might stretch to an hour plus – conducted with a total of twenty business leaders from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Brunei (7 interviewees), Indonesia (7 interviewees) and Singapore (6 interviewees), and the period of study was from 1 April 2011 to 31 December 2013, a nine-month period. [For the interviews in Indonesia, the authors certainly wish to acknowledge and thank the efforts of a fellow researcher, Dr. Anshari Mohd.] The study relies on the qualitative research method – the interviewing method. It is significant to note that similar to Low's (2006) studies, being assured of confidentiality and anonymity, the interviewees expressed themselves freely.

This interview method is helpful because it enables more qualitative data to be collected from the respondents (Cavana, 2001: 134-135). To get more information and data from the various interviewees, open questions were employed (Cavana, 2001:142). By doing so, the respondents were able to speak more freely and they were also given the opportunity to express themselves while, more critically, allowing the researchers to gain more insights into Tsunami leadership; the questions were crafted as follows:

1. What are your views of Tsunami leadership?
2. What are your view(s) of a leader who is highly egoistic or arrogant? Perhaps a bully? Have you encountered such leader in any time of your career?
3. What is your opinion of a leader who is totally irresponsible? Have you met one in your career?
4. When and in what situations do you face such kind of leader?
5. Do you think your subordinates like such kind of leader? If no, why not?
6. Should leaders be self-centered, if not selfish and egoistic?
7. Have you ever encountered a non-leader who is in a position of a leader? In what kinds of organisations have you encountered?

Pilot-tested, these questions were modified based on several respondents' feedback; interestingly, it also allowed the researchers to gather more information on the various sources on incompetent leadership from these interviewees. The authors thus attempt to find out and understand the interviewees' perceived values of a leader who is a Tsunami leader.

## Findings

All interviewees or 100 percent voted that “Tsunami leaders did not keep their promises, not delivering their “promises” and most gave the remarks, such as “all the time, (s)he does not mean what (s)he says”. “They are hot air, giving many empty talks.” “He never keep his promises”; he always forget about what he promises”. “He lies to us all the time; for example, five years ago, he promised to raise our salary but it never happen to date”; “most of the time, (s)he avoids attending important decision making meetings by making excuses such as (s)he was called by the board of higher authority”.

Again all twenty interviewees (100 percent) felt that Tsunami leaders are bad role models and they set bad example to their followers. Some of their remarks are: “everybody must obey him (her) and listen to him (her) when (s)he speaks, if not, (s)he will not be happy and will try to get rid of you”; “(s)he is not open but narrow-minded; (s)he speaks indirectly to his or her subordinates (sometimes through third person) and all the times, appears boastful and blunt”; “(s)he scold people according to his or her mood of the day and (s)he blames people for the mistake when project is not doing well”; “I said I didn’t know, he took the opportunity to humiliate and belittle me; he did not show me how to do the job”; “ he always has reasons or excuses when his project is not doing well (or postponed); he would never solve his problem” (interviewees’ inputs).

Twenty interviewees or 100 percent also voiced out that “impatient” and even “intolerant”, Tsunami leaders are incapable of leading, managing and implementing change. Out of these, eighteen interviewees or 90 percent spoke of these non-leaders as incapable of team building, gelling people together and also “not promulgating good relationships or enhancing efficiency and productivity.”

Eighteen interviewees or 90 percent expressed that “Tsunami leaders never make things happen”. “we would never look up for him because he can never make things work”; “Tsunami leaders are not achievers; they never want to get things done”; “when things go wrong, it’s good not to call him because he would never correct the situation but blame you for the mistakes instead”. “Instead of letting everybody get going and making things work, he would divide and rule, start fault-finding and finger pointing at the people’s mistakes” (several interviewees’ comments).

Eighteen interviewees or 90 percent said that Tsunami leaders are not in control of their organisations and comments such as “he is always not in control of business such as the human capital and financial resources of the organisation”; “Tsunami leaders never focus on getting the job done. Abdicating responsibilities, they’ll create many unwanted or unnecessary things for people to worry and work on”; “he never make sure that we get the job done in time”; “mind you, he never knows what’s going on in the office most of the time”; “many times, he is not in the office but when asked he would say he is busy attending important meetings”.

Seventeen interviewees or 85 percent said that such “leaders can be highly arrogant” and they bully people, creating fear in people of them and their remarks included: “he would refuse, not listen to advice or any reasons when something goes wrong, he would arrogantly stress on getting it corrected ...or effect punishment”; “very often, I heard him scolding his staff with abusive words”; “all the time she bullies her staff by giving them urgent jobs at the last minute of the office hour and expects them to complete it before going home” (several interviewees’ comments).

Sixteen interviewees or 80 percent commented on Tsunami leaders as “being unfair”. Remarks included: “he uses his middle management to command and control us at work with overloads and limited manpower; he would ask us to work overtime from time to time”; “yes, he would not even give me a day off or overtime pay when I worked overtime for a stretch of week”; “our work is not equally distributed; some of his favourite staff are getting less work than us and I think this is unfair” (several interviewees’ comments).

**Table 1 shows some key responses verbalised by the interviewees.**

<b>Table 1: The Interviewees’ Responses on Tsunami Leaders</b>		
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Number of Interviewees</b>	<b>Percentage (%) of Interviewees</b>
<b>Tsunami leaders not deliver their goods (promises).</b> “Many broken promises exist”. “All the time, (s)he does not	20	100

mean what (s)he says”; “he never keep his promises”; “he always forget about what he promises.”; “He lies to us all the time; for example, five years ago, he promised to raise our salary but it never happen to date”; “often, (s)he avoids attending to key decision making meetings by making excuses such as (s)he was called by the Ministry or some board of higher authority.”		
<b>Tsunami leaders are “bad role models” and they set bad example to their followers</b> “Everybody must obey him (her), listening to him (her) whenever (s)he speaks. If not, (s)he will be most unhappy and she will try to get rid of you”. “Not open but narrow-minded; (s)he speaks indirectly to his or her subordinates (sometimes through third person) and all the times, appears boastful and blunt”; “(s)he scolds people according to his or her mood, and (s)he blames people for the mistake when a project falters”; “I said I didn’t know, he took the chance to humiliate and deride me; he did not teach or show me how to do the job”; “he always has reasons or excuses when his project is not doing well (or delayed); he would never solve his problems”.	20	100
<b>Tsunami leaders are impatient. They are not capable of leading, managing and implementing change.</b> “Impatient”; “they want or demand fast changes but without thinking through... (they) are not capable of leading or managing change.” “They do not know and are not skilled in effecting and implement change management” “It is often a rush-rush job”.	20	100
<b>Tsunami Leaders are incapable of team leadership and/or creating good relationships and harmony with high productivity.</b> “Not a team leader... divides and rules”; “did not generate good relationships among team members”	18	90
<b>Tsunami leaders never make things happen</b> “They divide and rule, you have locals and foreigners; things do not happen because there is no unity”. “We would never look up to him because he can never make things work”; “Indecisive, Tsunami leaders are not achievers; they never want to get things done”; “when things go wrong, it is good not to call him because he could never correct the situation but would blame you for the mistake instead”. “Rather than letting everyone get up and make things work, he would start fault finding and finger pointing at the people’s mistakes”.	18	90
<b>Tsunami leaders are not in control of their organisations</b> “He’s always not in control of business such as the human and financial resources of the organisation”; ‘tsunami leaders never focus themselves to get the job done; they will create many unwanted or not necessary things for people to worry and work on”; “he never make sure that we get the job done in time”; “mind you, he never knows what is going on in the office most of the time”; “many times, he is not in the office but when asked he would say he is busy attending important meetings”.	18	90
<b>Tsunami leaders can be arrogant and they do bully people (They create fear in people of them)</b> “Refusing or not listening to advice or reasons when thing goes wrong, he would arrogantly stress on getting it done or effect punishment”; “very often, I heard him scolding his staff with abusive words”; “all the time she bullies her staff by giving them urgent jobs at the last minute of the office hour and	17	85

expects them to complete it before going home.” “These leaders threaten”.		
<b>Tsunami leaders are not fair</b> “He uses his middle management to command and control us at work with much work and he would ask us to work overtime from time to time”; “yes, he would not even give me a day off or overtime payment when I worked overtime for a stretch of a week”; “our work is not equally distributed, I believe this is indeed unfair”.	16	80

### Analysis & Discussion:

From the scrutiny of interviews conducted, it appears that respondents are agreeable with the qualities or characteristics of such leadership, the Tsunami leadership which can lead an organization into turmoil and mayhem. From the analysis of the findings, tsunami leadership includes abusive leader, non-leader in a position of leader and leader with no subordinates’ support. Table 2 summarized the traits of Tsunami leadership that may bring about organizational turmoil and/or disruptions.

**Table 2: Tsunami Leadership Is:**

<b>Traits</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Abusive, incompetent and bullying.</b> Such leadership generates fear in people of the leaders and at the workplace.	Being ignorant about the truth or in most ways being incompetent, obstinate behavioural pattern, providing wrong information, being intolerant, arrogant and dictatorial, even punishing or eliminating those who do not follow or obey them. “They threaten, abusing or misusing their powers to cover up or camouflage their incompetence” (several interviewees’ inputs).
<b>A case of a non-leader in a leadership position (aka Wolf in a sheep’s clothing).</b> “(S)he does more of apple-polishing and pleasing the higher-ups.”	Having wrong perceptions about the real situations – especially at the frontline, viewing things in their own narrow perspective(s) and consequently; create confusion leading to chaotic situations; have poor levels of achievement.
<b>Incapable of team leading.</b> “(S)he bullies and threatens”.	Disruptive to teamwork, such a leader divides and rules; instead (s)he does much politicking.
<b>Incapable of leading, managing and implementing/ progressing change.</b>	Change is not done in a good way; “it is haphazardly done with little transparency” (several interviewees’ inputs) and lack of regard to the employees’ confidence and security. Change is made with no or little people touch; organizational stability and growth are also affected. Instead there is much organizational disruption and destruction, and employees’ morale suffers too.
<b>Usually with little or no subordinates’ support</b>	Possessing self-interest; persuading followers to support him or her by forming clique(s) of his or her own kind;
<b>Having often sudden and shocking policies (procedures or happenings) implemented</b>	Putting people in a totally unprepared situation, with their schedule and work drastically affected.
<b>Groupthink of the Tsunami leaders</b>	Firmly supporting each other, these leaders practice groupthink; this leads them to making unrealistic, faulty decisions, and they are indeed cut off from the ground/ people’s thinking and needs.

### Non-Leaders or Incompetents in the Leadership Boat

Becoming a great leader does not happen instantly. Much effort, knowledge and experiences are the key in the leadership process. Unfortunately, there are “instant noodle ‘leaders’”; and there are many circumstances in which persons are appointed as leaders in an organization with no basic experience, expertise or any knowledge of what leadership is all about (“They have connections or good technical know-who”; several interviewees’ inputs). Insensitive to basic human feelings or even lacking in empathy and/or sympathy, these non-leaders and ineffective politicians may simply bulldoze their way through to ‘lead’ teams and/ or implement

changes. Cummings and Worsley (2001) speak of the need for the leaders' empathy and support to overcome resistance to change and in learning how people are experiencing the change; leaders indeed need to identify and understand people who are having trouble accepting the changes, the nature of their resistance, and possible ways to overcome it, but these need a great deal of empathy and support. Leading change demands a certain willingness to suspend judgment and to see the situation from another's perspective or angle.

On the contrary, these Tsunami leaders demand fast changes to satisfy their higher-ups or to prove or justify their position or existence - and at times, mere cosmetic changes or appearances are adopted so as to please their bosses; they are most interested in their own image and good name. Yes, they even want fast changes but without planning and/or respecting their employees' needs or supplying the necessary direction, budget and resources. Worse, often, they chop and change, even to the point that they may not even know what they themselves want. Wastrels and not prudent, they spent monies on "nice-to- have" trainings and new work systems or flow, calling consultants when actually their own people can do the job themselves.

These non-leaders or unconstructive leaders really care more for their own comfort or expediency, convenience; needs or selfish interests - and at that, more than anything else. "Conniving ...threatening and generating fear", "they would normally want to secure free (paid) overseas trips for themselves, they come first." "They want to shiok diri sendiri (in Malay and the English equivalent is: They seek to satisfy or enjoy themselves)." "Basically, they are interested in what they want; 'my needs come first; I look after my own interests'" (several interviewees' inputs). Often surprising or even shocking their employees, these non-leaders also normally fail to apply the human side to change; they have rush jobs done without thinking of the long-term consequences or human resource management implications. Very sad though, pushing through changes, these non-leaders or unconstructive leaders indeed hurt their people's feelings and not to mention, demotivate or demoralize them.

A vision is a statement that describes the relative aspiration or the future direction for the organization. In other words, a vision statement should be able to attract attention but do not pose any wrong interpretation. In order for the vision in accordance with the goals of the organization, leaders must draw up and interpret the goals for individuals and each work units, unfortunately, many leaders fail to do so. An organization can expect Tsunami leadership if the leader has pretentious vision. Vision involves the creation of a picture of the future or a desired future state with which peers, subordinates, and stakeholders can identify in which direction the organization is headed and can generate excitement or motivation for achievement.

Interviewees believed that Tsunami leadership is directing or leading the organization to crisis, if not trouble. During crisis, then the ultimate question is about the capability of a leader especially in navigating vision in directing the organization. Participants also reviewed that leader without clear objective usually have poor achievements. Even leaders who failed to direct the organization's vision, is likened to running an organization with auto pilot, meaning the existence of a leader does not affect the processes of the organization at all. A term used to describe an organization that runs its own or without controllers. In other words, without any leadership, this organization is still running though with no clear direction.

Moreover, subordinates certainly did not expect to have a leader who does not know what direction is to be achieved. And to aggravate the situation, the leader does not have any clues or firmness to make decisions. Followers require a leader who firmly lead the organization and one who is more concerned with the whole interests of all stakeholders rather than that of him(her)self or his or her own interest group.

Interviewees were also asked on the topic of non-leader who becomes leader. A non leader, occupying a leadership position, can occur because of made and natural causes, or structurally and naturally. Firstly, caused by natural factors where communities who do not instil leadership values since early age. Education does not lead students to become leaders for themselves or grow without having skills to lead themselves. Those who do not have the opportunity to build leadership but have a chance to lead, according to the respondents, they needed time to learn. Though there is a risk of failing in the process to become an effective leader, successful leaders are often made, trained, or made to define their intuition, vision as well as mission to their followers to get the work accomplished.

Secondly, non-leader in leadership position is due to structural reasons which leadership occurs because the existing authorities do not want the birth of new leaders because it could threaten the status quo.

Intentionally through sets of rules, existing authorities deliberately do tackle with the aim of securing and stabilizing personal or group interests.

The impact of the above two scenarios are potentially creating disasters or crisis for the organization simply because non leaders in positions of leadership may not be able to understand the basic concepts of leadership that have been validated and confirmed over time. The main notions to deal with are that leaders should be visionary, transformational, inspirational, motivational, coaching, role model, ethical, and managerial skills.

### **Abusive Leaders / Leaders without Values / Unethical Leaders**

Recent contributions to the leadership literature suggest that some leaders perform behaviors that can be characterized as tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994), bullying (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999), undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), or abusive (Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994). Personality is basic to ethical approach to conduct. It allows leader to adhere to a code of ethics, values and principles even when others are unable or unwilling to abide by such standards. Greed, peer pressure, opportunism eventually leads to a breakdown. One of the leadership personalities that must be avoided is abusive leaders. The ability of a leader to abuse and bullying his subordinates in accomplishing a task is one trait of inability of a leader to be a leader. Abusive leader can seriously affect employees' morale and opinion of the organization as a whole. The abusive leader in an organization is defined as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which leaders engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). Abusive leader has significant negative ramifications for a wide range of relevant organizational outcomes (Tepper, 2007).

One of the most troubling outcomes associated with abusive leadership is its positive relation with subordinates' organizational deviance, or deviant behaviours intended to harm the organization. Previous studies have shown that in reaction to abusive supervision, employees will engage in deviant behaviours such as theft, fraud, or working slower than usual (Tepper et al., 2009). With respect to abusive leadership, research by Monat, Averill, and Lazarus (1972) suggests that a hostile situation is even more stressful if one does not know when exactly it will occur (i.e., role ambiguity). Temporal uncertainty is yet another avenue by which abusive leaders affect the stress levels of those they lead. Temporal uncertainty refers to an individual's inability to know when a given event or action is likely to occur.

A growing body of empirical research suggests that abused subordinates report greater job and life dissatisfaction, intentions quit their jobs, role conflict, and psychological distress, compared with their non-abused counterparts (Duffy et al., 2002; Ashforth, 1997; Keashly et al., 1994), and that subordinates' perceptions of unfairness explain their responses to abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000). Hence, abusive supervision represents a source of injustice that has serious implications for organizations and employees (Bies & Tripp, 1998). But as mentioned, the greater effect of abusive leader does not just affect the person at whom it is directed but it can affect an entire organization. Leaders conventionally conceptualized as an important factor that cultivates employees' creativity (George, 2007). The abusive leader may flow down the organization levels to undermine team member creativity. In summary, employees who perceive their supervisors to be abusive experience low levels of job and life satisfaction, lower levels of affective commitment, increased work-family conflict, and psychological distress (Tepper, 2000).

Moreover, when leaders embrace and practice good values such as benevolence, integrity and humility, the followers would be blessed and influenced by good example settings. The whole organization would be working and moving towards ethical practices. Contrariwise, when leaders or managers are without values or that they practice little or no values, they indulge in things such as office politics, discrimination and staff harassment, the followers would be influenced by bad example settings and they would form cliques to protect each other of their own kinds. The whole organization would be moving towards unethical practices. (Ang and Low, 2013).

### **Subordinates Don't Give Much Support**

Leadership is the process of influencing (Maxwell, 1993; Low, 2013a) the activities of a group that is organized towards the achievement of goals (Stogdill, 1948). In other words, leadership is the ability and skills of a person who has served as head of unit to influence others, especially his subordinates, to think and act in such a way through positive behaviour to make a real contribution to the achievement of organizational goals.

But when an organization has a condition where the leader does not have support from his subordinates, then the organization can expect a Tsunami leadership type. Leaders who fail to achieve group or organizational goals risk losing follower endorsement (Giessner and Knippenberg, 2008).

One of the leadership roles is inspiring work. This role can be carried out by way of giving praise and support. Praise can be given in the form of rewards and incentives. Again, failing in supporting and inspiring subordinates may devastate the organization survivability. Respondents mentioned that Tsunami leadership can happen where subordinates are no longer putting their efforts to support the leader. They hesitate to follow the directions of the leader because the leaders are only concerned with their own personal goals without appeal to achieve the common goals. Basically they also do not trust their leader. Sweet-mouthed, these leaders at every layer essentially prefers to imaging and selling empty dreams instead of doing something to enhance themselves into a true leadership. So no wonder then, subordinates have indicated their strong protests or dislikes.

Subordinates do not support the leadership because they cannot be good examples or role models for them. When a leader upholds a set of values, say, for example, a set of Confucian values and leads with these values in mind and action, one is indeed leading from within (Low and Ang, 2013). Note a value is one's convictions or key beliefs – what one holds dearly. A value supplies one with the sense of what is right and what is wrong, even subconsciously values guide a person, supplying him (her) with the basis for his (her) day-to-day actions (Abdullah, 1996). Kidder (2005) has added that these values, for what they stand for also supply leaders the moral courage; it makes them to be committed to the moral beliefs or principles espoused and be aware of the perils involved in supporting those principles as well as the willingness to endure the risks.

In the Islamic perspective, the Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “Allah loves that if one does a job he perfects it.” In another words, a leader must perform his duty for the interest of the people according to the guiding principle of Allah (Low, et al, 2012). Human performance improvement can thus be defined as a willingly learning person who equips him (her) self with the necessary useful values; (s)he learns and continuously learns to update or upgrade him (her) self to be able, efficient and productive. Staying motivated, (s)he learns and grows to realize his (her) potential.

### **Short-Term Thinking Leaders**

Being able to cajole, persuade, reassure, influence and sway their people, strategic leaders are wise, effectively convincing, motivating, even inspiring and winning. (Low and Teo, 2014). On the other hand, Tsunami leaders are not strategic, Low, 2013a; Low, 2010a; Maxwell, 1993). They are short term thinkers, not being able to identify problems accurately. As defined earlier, a leader is a source of inspiration to his followers (Ratnam, 1964; Low, 2013a). That is the key reason for the success or failure of achieving the objectives; it is dependent on good leaders. What if the leader him(her)self has lost the inspiration to continue to find ways and directions for the organization? Thus, a leader must be motivated or inspired while having a very strong power of influence to convince his followers to move together in achieving their goals (Post, 1986). Followers will often lose motivation or morale when the purpose is fading away from their views. This will result in interference to initiative and performance in general. So this is where a large part of the leaders continue to influence, persuade, and induce their enthusiasm (Kotter, 1999; Low, 2013). In any case, short-term thinking leader is not persuasive, not encouraging and/ or not being able to engender the followers' loyalty. The genuine compassion of the leader for the followers and unflinching trust of the followers in the leaders' vision give the vital edge and make the leader soars. Short-term thinking leader has no definite purpose and does not know where to bring his followers. Leaders who do not have a clear vision and direction will be likely unsuccessful, non-winning or non-achieving.

### **Toxic Leaders**

The essence of toxic leaders are ego-centricism, showing off, personal interests, weak character, hatred to co-workers or subordinates, and immorality in office politics (Collins, 2007). On the other hand, a leader who have conviction in their faith, who pursue the path of truth and do value based judgment, are likely to guide the people to follow the righteous path of followers dignity and justice in attaining objective. Office politics exist in every organization without regard for business nature, pragmatic industrial practices or values. The tricky part about politics in organization is that the leaders are supposed to be on the same team with followers (Coopey, 1995). Good leaders will do what they can to align interests on matters more important than individual political agendas, however toxic leaders involve much in office politics to gain protect personal interests, mercenary or

“even shameless self-promoters” (one interviewee’s inputs) with a high sense of power, ego, financial security, and aggression or high competitive spirit; and it is quite impossible that followers can avoid unnecessary political battles. Toxic leader enjoys creating drama whenever possible with no work or actions fleshed out. The impact is weakening relationships underpinned by a soft foundation of poor relationships and a high sense of distrust. The more time spent in tricky office politics around leader become successful and the more enemies leader will create (Bennis, 1989). The combination of doing the wrong thing, while being aware of surroundings is the worst approach to managing office politics.

Managing change means managing negative thinking and action into collective courage, confidence, and acceptance (Huy, 1999). Leaders need to define the future together as a team building exercise to know and put their perspective to work towards collective change (Witherspoon, 2000; Low, 2013). Leaders need to inspire people towards action through positive messages without any political gimmick to gain support, otherwise the organization can expect tumultuous situation from *Tsunami* leaders.

### **Sudden and Shocking Policies or Procedures Effected**

In many cases, we see many leaders who impose their views on the people rather than actually listening to or seeing what is really needed at the time (Maier & Hoffman, 1960). A leader was assessed how he behaves and acts in his leadership (Duck & Fielding, 2003). One of the most important qualities is the ability of a leader to make decisions and policies, the effectiveness of a policy and its impact(s). Policies made by leaders often affect many people for a period of time. In implementing a wrong policy, it will lead to disaster or even destruction of organization.

Like Tsunami, it happens suddenly and with little or no warnings. At most times, the policies or procedures are ill-prepared or poorly planned and thought through. Yet they are implemented and in a rush. Often a rush job, these then bring about many surprises and/or unpleasantness or damage to the people and they are caught with their pants down. Many a times, the people are either poorly informed or not informed at all. They just have to take instructions and they are indeed not empowered to make any decisions. In such rush situations, with little information available and with short notices, a lack of ownership prevails, and this may even jeopardize the implementation, let alone acceptance, of such changes. This also reinforces the above pointer on subordinates not giving much support to the leaders.

To avoid shocking policies, organizations and businesses – *amidst much paperwork* – need to implement change control policies to minimize the inadvertent creation of flawed operations or procedures (Carnall, 2007, *italics authors*). The policy will need to be updated periodically to reflect the current needs of the organization. Change control policies cover much ground especially in top management levels simply because the impact will be throughout organizations. For example, a thorough change control policies should address issues of managing human resource vital asset for the organization. A procedure for updating the policy and propagating the new revisions also needs to be covered in the policy. The policy should also have a schedule for periodic reviews built into (Honadle, 1981).

### **Groupthink**

Environmental factors do play a role in leadership. Politics, support from the government agencies and stakeholders, donors, international partners and media persons, all these influence the characteristics of a leader. If the environmental factors are negative, administrative behavioural and leadership style could be sour.

The term, groupthink, coined by social psychologist Irving Janis (1972: 9) occurs when a group makes bad or faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of “mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment”. Groups affected by groupthink simply ignore alternatives and are inclined to take irrational actions that dehumanize other groups. A group is especially vulnerable to groupthink when its members are similar in background, when the group is insulated from outside opinions, and when there are no clear rules for decision making.

In the case of Tsunami leadership, the leaders or to be properly labelled “non-leaders” share the same culture and affirm or reinforce each other’s thinking or arguments. Suffering from groupthink and thinking short-term, they often fail to look beyond their noses. Worse, they think within the box and what is truly not

good for their people is that they think unrealistically and often not to the people's needs or benefits. They are not connected to the ground or the employees, the frontline, the people on the job.

### Impact

Like Tsunami, the effects of Tsunami leaders are devastating and upsetting. They are one of the worst disasters that can hit an organization. The damages or impairments range from demoralized and/or demotivated employees or followers, distrust towards the organization, a divided organization, millions of dollars in financial losses, high turnovers and long lasting psychological problems for the employees, and the impact continues to cause much harm or costs for long period of time.

Tsunami leaders often persist in organizations that have not built strong organizational values to withstand problems or disasters. This means that when a simple resolvable problem hits the organizations, to protect the leaders, they are easily washed away, camouflaged or white-washed and quickly swept under the carpet. Issues become problems and the problems grow to crisis proportions. Problems still unresolved could then trigger trails of destructions. Similar to the nursery rhyme – for want of a shoe, a horse is lost; for want of a horse, a soldier was lost and for want of a soldier, the army was lost and for want of an army, a battle is lost! And for want of a battle, a kingdom is lost!” Unfortunately, one of the dominant effects of Tsunami leader is the cost of human capital and resource in the organization. The force of Tsunami leader may terminate staff career in the organization without any reasons; “there is also lack of transparency” (several interviewees’ inputs). Tsunami leader creates unhealthy work environment spreading risk or career destruction to everyone within the organizational boat.

Below is a sample scenario that portrays the impact of a Tsunami leader when he made decision in an Indonesian case;

*Indonesian Aerospace (IAe) was one of the indigenous aerospace companies in Asia with core competence in aircraft design, development and manufacturing of civilian and military regional commuter aircraft. Founded in 1976, which the government collected all the potential that exists with all the facilities to be high-tech companies in Asia. In August 1995 was a very historic event for Indonesia because it was able to fly the plane that were all made in the country, known as the N250 aircraft or Gatotkaca. N250 is the only turboprop aircraft in the world that uses technology ‘Fly by Wire’. Unfortunately, in 1998 the economic crisis hit Indonesia. International Monetary Fund insisted the termination of the N250 project if Indonesia wanted to get fresh funding from the Fund to support its economic from collapse according to IMF, though as matter of fact many Asian countries that did not follow advise from IMF. Indonesian president at that time then took the decision by agreeing to close down this strategic industry. The impact of the president’s decision was fatal, as many as 16 thousand professional workforces for years in building Indonesian aerospace industry should be fired and they are now scattered throughout the world. The decision was Tsunami to the development of technology in Indonesia which had swept over a short period of time affected a huge investment made gone and even the whole organization collapsed.*

From the preceding case, it is noticeable on how Tsunami leader demanded fast changes to satisfy their higher-ups, prove or justify their very existence - and at times, mere cosmetic changes or appearances are accepted so as to please their bosses (IMF); they are most interested in their own image and good name. Yes, they even want fast changes but without planning and/or respecting their employees’ needs or supplying the necessary direction, budget, materials and resources. The typical Tsunami leader is likely to be highly selfish, securing themselves first and foremost; this is interestingly derived from the Indonesian proverb “*suka mencari selamat sendiri*” (Indonesian). Worse, at most times, they change, even to the point that he may not even know what he himself wants. As discussed above, the leader who imposes his view by agreeing with the IMF proposal rather than actually listening to, investigating or deeply seeing what is really needed at the time. Furthermore, the core of toxic leaders is ego-centricism and weak character. Supposedly in the case above, the leader who has conviction in their faith, who pursues the path of truth and do value-based judgment, is likely to guide the people to follow the righteous path of followers’ dignity and justice in attaining the objective.

In summary, the differences between a leader and Tsunami leader can be tabulated as follows:

**Table 3 Highlights the Key Differences between a Leader and a Tsunami Leader**

<b>Leader</b>	<b>Tsunami Leader</b>
Is a leader and a competent one (Pusch, 2009)	Is a non-leader and an incompetent person (Low and Ang, 2013; Devereaux, 2015).
Enables change (Osborne, 2015; Low, 2013a; Kotter, 1999; Denton, 1996) with innovation (Osborne, 2015). Leads change in a people-oriented way, highlighting the benefits of change, reducing the fears of change while building the support for change (Kotter, 1999; Denton, 1996). (S)he inspires top performance (Price and Price, 2013). There is much participation and ownership of the employees in the organizational change process. (Effective leaders too also give the attractiveness of the vision of the future. Zimmerman, 2013; 1993).	Is impatient, <i>Tsunami</i> leader is not capable of leading and managing change. They instil fear and employees do not see the support rendered. There is little participation and ownership of the employees in the organizational change process; they see little beauty in the change process, let alone, the attractiveness of the vision of the future. (Not given much direction, the people are indeed not oriented, unprepared, and not ready or geared towards the change.)
Continuously change him (her)self without changing values and virtues (Low and Ang, 2013). (S)he stresses on learning to improve (Osborne, 2015).	Has no ability to continuously change him(her)self but always change the values and virtues (Low et al., 2012)
Sets the example, and does as what (s)he preaches (Low and Ang, 2013; Low, 2013a; Maxwell, 1993).	Not proactive (Covey, 1990: 70). Is not the role model and does not set the example. Followers are asked to do what (s)he says to do, not what (s)he does.
Has the people's vital trust of him (her) (Horsager, 2012). Note that	Does not have the people's trust of him (her). "Trust influences a leader's impact and the company's bottom line or results more than any other single thing." (Low and Teo, 2014: 92; Horsager, 2012). This being the case, without the people's vital trust, the Tsunami leader puts his organization in trouble or jeopardize the organization's bottom line.
Builds the confidence of the people/ followers (Osborne, 2015).	Threatens and makes people lose their confidence. Generates fear at the workplace.
Has ability to develop, share, and convey a vision (Osborne, 2015; Maxwell, 1993; Bass, 1990)	Has no clear vision and managing by trial and errors (Low and Muniapan, 2011).
Builds team leadership; energizes the team. (Osborne, 2015; Price and Price, 2013; Low, 2013a)	Does not build team leadership, and can even demotivate and/ or even demoralize team members (Price and Price, 2013).
Incorporates continuous innovation with proper planning (Osborne, 2015; Martensen & Dahlgaard, 1999)	Apply shock policies due to organization politics (Low and Muniapan, 2011a).
Has confidence in technology (Benhabib & Spiegel, 2005)	Is resistant against technology (Low, 2013).
Has a global mind-set (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002) or better still global <i>mind growth</i> (Low, 2012a). Mindset is fixed while mind growth has a flexibility and growth nuance; with the organization being biological or organic (Morgan, 2006, 1997).	Has a local or parochial, if not, being less creative or having a limited mind-set (Low, 2013).
Has employees/ followers who are more satisfied and committed to organization (Podsakoff et al., 1996)	Has turnover that is high, dissatisfaction is increased with rumors all over organization (Low and Muniapan, 2011)
Recognizes ethics, values, and spirituality (Low, 2013)	Does not recognize ethics, values, and spirituality; ethics, values, and spirituality are only a jargon (Low, 2010).

Has a lifelong learning and relationship, system thinking (Pielstick, 1998; Anshari et al., 2013 )	Has a short term relationship and thinking (Low, 2001; Jung et al., 2003; Anshari & Almunawar, 2013)
Is adaptive to the changing circumstances in order to maintain control (Valle, 1999)	Is rigid, maintaining the status quo no matter what situation is (Eisenbach et al., 1999).
Is a servant-leader (Center for Servant Leadership, 2015; Greenleaf, 1977)	Is more self-centered (Covey, 1992).

### Benefits and Limitations of the Study

The study certainly offers potentially a basis to study a new branch of leadership. There are, however, limitations from the study. Firstly, the research was conducted in Southeast Asian countries vis Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore that bounds with pre-determined cultures and behaviours that render these findings dissimilar from other culturally diverse countries, and it is imperative to test the model for bigger population and dissimilar settings of participants' behaviour. Secondly, the study concerns with the individual behaviours that affect organizational performance, but the complexities of an individual behaviours may require different situational approaches rather than looking from the Tsunami leadership perspective.

All of us in some ways indeed know or have some notions destructive or ineffective leadership. Indeed, the offshoot and benefits from the study is that it enables scholars to identify some qualities or traits of Tsunami leadership. The study offer academics and researchers a platform to advance the study of such a phenomenon and concept of leadership.

### Concluding Remarks

As a leader, it is vital to paraphrase, Parry (2001), to ask oneself, "How is this leadership phenomenon manifested in the situation (culture or society) to achieve the desired outcomes?"

This study aims to contribute to our understanding of a new branch of leadership labelled as Tsunami leadership which underscore the leader's ineffectiveness, functioning like a non-leader and the magnitude of the effect of such type of leadership that comes from the failure to anticipate changes caused by either personal issues or environmental settings. It concludes that such a leader does not possess innate ability to embrace change in the business landscape. The Tsunami leadership notion changes the assertive and constructive communication patterns between individuals and teams. It alters the design of the organization by fostering negative traits of leadership. What emerges from the literature survey and interviews are special kinds of leadership such as the non-leadership type that appears to be critical for the survivability of any organization in either normal or change circumstances. The effects of Tsunami leaders are devastating and upsetting. These "organizational hit-men" are one of the worst disasters that can befall an organization. The damages range from demoralized and/or demotivated employees and followers, and their diminishing trust, if not mistrust towards the organization, the senior managers, a divided or disunited organization, millions of dollars in financial losses, high turnovers and long lasting psychological problems for the employees, and the impact lingers on to cause much pains, irreparable losses for the organization.

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