



The Critical Vulnerability in Authentic Leadership as a Catalyst for Outstanding Prosocial Results

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Abstract

Having been in management for more than 15 years, we have identified empirical evidence of critical vulnerability in business leaders who implemented large-scale organizational change and ultimately achieved outstanding prosocial outcomes. This vulnerability may present as resistance or criticism from stakeholders—employees, partners, and shareholders—marked by distrust in leadership vision and active sabotage of decisions, which potentially leads to the termination of the leader's powers. However, as the stakeholders' mindset evolves, the vulnerability tends to subside, paving the way for company consolidation, substantial organizational achievements, self-actualization for stakeholders and recognition for the leader. Such shift allows us to hypothesize that: 1) unique behavioral patterns of authentic leaders during organizational change implementation expose them to the observed critical vulnerability but ultimately lead to substantial prosocial results; 2) the main reason for leader vulnerability is the gap in leadership mindset levels between the leader and stakeholders at the onset of organizational change. Relying on the described assumptions, we executed preliminary research on leader vulnerability, aiming to explore unique leader behavior patterns that cause critical vulnerability. The study involved 8 top managers who are currently leading organizational changes within their organizations. We used purposive sampling to ensure participants' significant leadership experience and their transformative impact. The research methodology relied on qualitative methods—in-depths interviews. Applying the Michigan Model of Leadership with its Competing Values Framework (CVF), we conducted a thematic analysis of the collected data. We determined that vulnerability typically manifests as a result of a strategic endeavor by leaders to ensure the evolution of stakeholder mindset for subsequent empowerment of them. The study advances knowledge about authentic leadership by emphasizing vulnerability's vital function in accomplishing remarkable prosocial organizational outcomes. More research will be required to create a framework for recognizing and assisting leaders who are critically vulnerable during organizational change implementation.

Keywords: authentic leadership, leadership mindset, leadership vulnerability, organizational change, Michigan Model of Leadership

“The change usually needs to be dramatic. Sometimes that means changing businesses that aren’t broken, discontinuing successful products that people like, acquiring companies that investors don’t yet understand, and putting yourself in a place that makes you feel uncomfortable or even vulnerable.” (Chambers, 2018)

1. Introduction

1.1. Preliminary Observations

Having been in management for more than 15 years, we came across empirical evidence of critical vulnerability in business leaders who carried out large-scale organizational change and ultimately achieved outstanding prosocial results. This provided the impetus for the present study. The fact of the vulnerability was substantiated by analyzing the professional lives of outstanding business leaders, including Tim Cook, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Apple, John T. Chambers, former executive chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Cisco Systems; Frederick W. Smith, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and executive chairman of FedEx (Federal Express) Corporation (Frock, 2006; Kane, 2014; Chambers, 2018).

Our idea was to find evidence of vulnerability in open and reliable sources about the activities of these leaders and, if this was found, to focus attention on their behavior that led to the leader's vulnerability and the company's outstanding results.

Tim Cook, as an authentic leader with inner strength, operated in his own manner, which drew criticism, especially when compared to Steve Jobs' style. “The next CEO didn’t have the quasi-religious authority that Jobs had radiated. His every decision would be examined by current and former employees and executives, investors, the media, and Apple’s consumers. He would also have to contend with the sky-high expectations that Jobs had conditioned the public to have for Apple” (Kane, 2014). In his early years as a leader, Tim Cook overcame his vulnerability through patience and resilience, implementing his own leadership thoughts and approaches rather than those expected of him. As a result, he achieved extraordinary results, creating a company in which innovation is put on the assembly line, not through his own efforts alone, but through the efforts of many of his company's employees, engaged in the innovation process by their leader.

John Chambers speaks of his value-based position, which will likely make him vulnerable among those who advocate aggressive selling: “My customers are the people whose insights lead to better decisions, whose priorities shape my products, and whose fortunes will determine mine. The most valuable currency with customers is trust and a track record. The best way to build that trust is to sell customers only what they need. If there’s a golden rule for selling, that would have to be it. Treat the money they’re spending on you as your own. Some of my peers in Silicon Valley have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward customers. The only thing that matters to them is the sales of their products, and customers are just the people who buy them. I think the best way to lose a customer is to load them up with what they don’t need. Sell only what you would buy in their position and help them get the results from their purchases, and you’ll win their loyalty. Treat their crisis like it’s your own, and they’ll do the same for you. I can’t tell you about the art of the sales pitch because I’ve never tried to convince a customer about anything they did not need” (Chambers, 2018). This leadership logic of Chambers was on full display on the eve of the dot-com crisis, when he continued to ramp up production for the sake of customer success despite the risks of overstocking. The company's outstanding performance was due in part to this client-oriented facet of John Chambers' leadership mindset.

The outstanding performance of these recognized business leaders and the periods of vulnerability they experienced followed by periods of extraordinary achievement by their

companies served as the basis for the hypothesis made in this study that leadership, when coupled with vulnerability, fundamentally increases the likelihood of achieving extraordinary results.

These preliminary studies revealed that vulnerability typically manifests as a result of a strategic endeavor by leaders to ensure the evolution of stakeholder mindset—employees, partners, and shareholders—as part of the organization's prosocial transformative agenda.

Initially, vulnerability may present as resistance or criticism from stakeholders, characterized by distrust in leadership vision and, at times, active sabotage of decisions. In extreme cases, it might even lead to the termination of the leader's powers. However, with the stakeholders' mindset evolution, the initial vulnerability tends to subside, paving the way for company consolidation, substantial organizational achievements, self-actualization for stakeholders and recognition for the leader. (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

1.2. Literature Review

The phenomenon under study is fundamentally distinguished from vulnerable leadership covered in business literature, which manifests itself in leaders' ability to ask for help, admit mistakes, accept developmental feedback from others, etc. The existing concept traditionally views leadership vulnerability through the lens of deliberate tactics used by leaders to improve interpersonal relationships and performance. The discourse primarily underscores the positive aspects of such vulnerability, positioning its power to foster trust, improve team cohesion, encourage open communication and engagement (Brown, 2012); to humanize leaders, thereby engendering a supportive and collaborative work environment (Northouse, 2018); to cultivate learning and continuous improvement through admitting mistakes and seeking help (Edmondson & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Omadeke, 2022). Such vulnerability is initiated, dosed, and controlled by the leader, and what is important is that it does not pose critical risks. This phenomenon is in the plane of the leader overcoming their ego.

In contrast, the present study investigates challenging, uncontrollable, and often painful vulnerability, which relates to the very essence of the leader mindset and is hypothesized to be an essential condition for achieving outstanding prosocial results. Such vulnerability is rarely a choice but rather an inherent part of carrying ambitious visions that challenge the status quo.

The following literature presents a complex environment that provokes leader vulnerability and tests their resilience and capacity to drive change.

First, authentic leadership theory suggests that the authenticity of a leader engaging genuinely with their roles can significantly influence organizational commitment and outcomes. However, authentic leaders “act on self-awareness by practicing their values and principles, sometimes at substantial risk to themselves” (George et al., 2007).

Next, the concept of transformational leadership highlights the high price to pay for those who challenge the status quo. Inspiring transformational leaders demonstrate a willingness to take personal risks, perseverance under stress, devotion to duty, and readiness to handle crises and manage conflicts. They help their followers transcend their own immediate self-interests by increasing their awareness of the larger issues. Balancing between transactional and transformational approaches to maintain control over the change, transformational leaders shift goals away from defensive pseudo-solutions, personal safety and security toward achievement, self-actualization, and the greater good (Bass & Riggio, 2005).

Third, scholarship argues that three equally important parts of the leadership system—leaders, followers, and contexts—face profound changes in relations with each other. “<Leaders are>

exposed to the point of being vulnerable—no matter their status or station—the gap between leaders and followers shrinks to near the vanishing point”. This shifting of power and influence widens the 'leadership gap'—the distance between “what followers want and what leaders are able to deliver” (Kellerman, 2012; Kellerman, 2016).

This review underscores the need for a deeper understanding of leader behavior patterns and ways to navigate vulnerability to accomplish remarkable prosocial outcomes.

1.3. Research Purpose

The primary purpose of this research was to pinpoint unique leader behavior patterns that cause critical vulnerability and to explore how vulnerability served as a catalyst for the achievement of outstanding prosocial results. This study aimed to start bridging the gap between the theoretical aspects of leadership risks, as conceptualized in authentic leadership and transformational leadership models, and the observed spontaneous, challenging, and uncontrollable vulnerability that leaders committed to remarkable prosocial results face during organizational change in real-world organizational settings.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

- 1) Identify Behavioral Patterns. It is to identify and describe the specific behaviors exhibited by leaders that lead to their critical vulnerability during periods of significant organizational change.
- 2) Analyze the Impact of Vulnerability on Substantial Prosocial Results, focusing on how vulnerability provides stakeholders' mindset evolution, company consolidation, and accomplishment of outstanding prosocial outcomes.
- 3) Examine the Leader Mindset to define the thoughts, emotions, and behavior of the leader during a period of vulnerability (Zhang et al., 2020).

By achieving these objectives, the research sought to provide a deeper understanding of how critical vulnerability, when properly managed, could become a powerful catalyst for organizational success, offering both theoretical contributions to the field of leadership studies and practical guidance for leaders facing organizational challenges.

1.4. Research Hypotheses

The study is based on the hypothesis that an important aspect of leadership that ensures outstanding results is the presence of an “authentic leadership paradigm”, consisting of several interrelated components: 1) leaders' value-based position and commitment to outstanding prosocial results (Burns, 1978; Spencer & Spencer, 1993); 2) unique patterns of leader behavior while implementing organizational change; 3) resistance of stakeholders rooted in the gap in the level of leadership mindset between the leader and the stakeholders at the start of transformative change (Kellerman, 2012); 4) leaders' critical vulnerability as a catalyst for company consolidation; 5) stakeholders' mindset evolution; 6) empowerment of stakeholders (Bass & Riggio, 2005); 7) outstanding prosocial outcomes.

1.4.1 Primary Hypothesis

Unique behavioral patterns of authentic leaders during organizational change implementation expose them to the observed vulnerability but ultimately lead to substantial prosocial results.

1.4.2 Secondary Hypothesis

The main reason for leader vulnerability is the gap in the level of leadership mindset between the leader and stakeholders at the start of organizational change.

1.4.3 Tertiary Hypothesis

The state of vulnerability of a leader carrying out a large-scale organizational change is a systemic phenomenon, a necessary condition of the progress toward an outstanding result as a catalyst for stakeholders' mindset evolution.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The research design for this study was structured as a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews to collect more detailed views and deeply understand the strategies, personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions of leaders during organizational changes. The goal was to offer a thorough examination of the behavioral patterns of leaders and the influence of the intricate phenomena of leader vulnerability on attaining exceptional prosocial outcomes.

2.1. Participants

This research involved a purposively selected, diverse group of participants consisting of two main categories:

- **Recognized Business Leaders:** Top managers who have demonstrated the ability to achieve substantial organizational results.
- **Emerging Leaders:** Up-and-coming leaders who have been engaged in significant transformational changes within their organizations.

The inclusion of different leadership levels provided a comprehensive view of the vulnerability dynamics from multiple perspectives within the organization.

2.2. Selection Principles

The selection of participants was guided by several key principles to ensure that the study results were robust and generalizable:

- **Relevance to the Research Questions:** The final study involved 8 people who were selected through a survey from 28 candidates. 20 candidates were excluded from further research due to the fact that their priorities were focused on their own prospects and did not have a prosocial orientation. The selected 8 respondents had the following characteristics: the presence of internal motivation for a large-scale prosocial result, the ability to make high-quality management decisions, obvious enthusiasm for their aspirations, a willingness to critically analyze the results of their activities, a desire to improve their competencies and deepen their understanding of leadership activities. This criterion ensured that the insights gained were relevant for the research objectives.
- **Diversity in Backgrounds:** To capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives, participants were selected from a variety of industries, cultural backgrounds, and organizational sizes. This diversity helped in understanding how different environmental and organizational contexts influenced the experience and outcomes of leadership vulnerability.

- **Voluntary Participation:** All participants were volunteers, ensuring that they were willing to share their experiences openly and honestly, which was crucial for the qualitative aspects of the study.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Participants were selected and involved in the study following strict ethical guidelines. This included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The data collection for this research employed in-depth interviews to collect qualitative data and further analyze leader behavior patterns and the impact of leader vulnerability on remarkable prosocial outcomes.

2.3.1. In-Depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both recognized and emerging leaders. These interviews focused on exploring their personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, behavior patterns, decisions made during vulnerable periods, and the aftermath of such decisions. The interviews consisted of two parts. The first part was aimed at obtaining information about the behavior patterns of the leader regardless of the phenomenon of vulnerability. The second part was an interpretation by the leaders themselves of the results of the first part, taking into account the assessment of the phenomenon of vulnerability in the context of their own experience. Each interview was tailored to the participant's specific context but followed a guideline to ensure consistency in the information collected. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for thorough analysis.

3. Research Results

First, it was hypothesized that unique behavioral patterns of authentic leaders during organizational change implementation expose them to the observed vulnerability but ultimately lead to substantial prosocial results. To analyze leader behavior, we implemented the Michigan Model of Leadership and its underlying Competing Values Framework (CVF), which provided a robust theoretical framework for exploring the dynamics of leadership behavior. The CVF “acknowledges a fundamental paradox of leadership” and posits that leadership effectiveness is derived from navigating opposing values such as robust results versus collaborative community and strategic structures versus creative change (DeRue et al., 2013; Sanger Leadership Center, 2024). We discovered that a high level of leadership mindset allowed an authentic leader to implement organizational change, relying on the complex synthesis of all elements of the model, that is, on unity that lies beyond the dialectical contradiction. Synthesis assumes that accomplishment of robust results is achieved only through the efforts of a collaborative community; long-term stability and business performance are achieved through a culture of continuous growth and innovation, shared leadership, and flexible structures. The leader's strategy is reminiscent of Rubik's Cube, which can only be solved if all faces are assembled simultaneously using a certain algorithm. Otherwise, focusing on one face destroys the colors of the neighboring ones.

Next, it was hypothesized that the main reason for leader vulnerability is the gap in the level of leadership mindset between the leader and stakeholders at the start of organizational change. The research showed that most stakeholders, unlike the leader, did not possess the synthesizing nature of decision-making. The consequence was a lack of ability to operate with competing elements of the leadership model at the synthesis level. Basically, they tried to operate with

separate competencies, which led, at best, to achieving limited results (Frock, 2006). Because of this, stakeholders were at the mercy of natural dialectical contradictions that manifested themselves in the organization at the level of goals, organizational structure, organizational culture, and functions. Shareholders preferred Robust results and Strategic structures, as this guaranteed high profits and stability; employees needed Collaborative community and Strategic structures, as this provided a comfortable team environment and reduced uncertainty; departments of Software development, Product marketing, and Research and Development required the development of Collaborative community and Creative change, since they needed a friendly flexible environment for intellectual creativity; ambitious “stars” of the Sales department preferred to focus on Robust results to achieve personal financial goals. Thus, the personal power of top management was opposed to the shared power of the team; stable efficiency was opposed to innovative growth; Marketing was opposed to Sales; Information Technology (IT) support was opposed to Software development, etc. This state of affairs made the company itself vulnerable.

Based on the above, we confirm the hypothesis that the main reason for leader vulnerability is the gap in the level of leadership mindset between the leader and stakeholders at the start of organizational change. The sophisticated strategy of an authentic leader built on a complex synthesis of all elements, values, and needs of the organization is difficult to understand, seems “theoretical,” takes time, and violates the interests of certain stakeholders. Stakeholders, consciously or unconsciously, identify their interests with one or two values of the leadership model, leaving the rest unattended, and therefore perceive the company’s transformation as a threat to their goals and comfort zone.

When asked “whether there was and how was there unjustified rejection of stakeholders towards the leader”, 100% of respondents reported that they had experienced a state similar to vulnerability when implementing their aspirations. At the same time, 100% of leaders did not associate their state with the pattern characteristic of leaders on the path to an extraordinary result. 50% of them associated their state with the processes of resistance to change, 12.5%—with the lack of their own experience, 37.5%—with unfavorable circumstances that developed around their initiatives, for example, with the difficult financial situation of the company. 100% of leaders indicated the presence of factors on the part of stakeholders that slowed down the movement towards an extraordinary result. They named the following manifestations of rejection from stakeholders: “unexpected rejection of my intentions,” “unreasonable denial of my merits,” “a flourishing culture of intrigue,” “unjustified criticism of my decisions,” “excessive caution of employees when planning improvements,” “incompetence, failure to provide or distortion of information by employees,” “the emergence of collusion with the aim of discrediting my authority,” “making groundless claims about the unfairness of the decisions I make.” All these forms of influence on the leaders eroded their authority, threw them off balance, and led to disappointment.

A fundamentally important conclusion follows from the above. It consists in the fact that, having become an object of rejection and faced with a state of vulnerability, the leader looked for the origins of what was happening in the patterns of the process of organizational change or justified this confrontation with personal circumstances. This obviously happened due to the lack of opportunity to see the pattern in the emergence of vulnerability among a significant number of other leaders. One of the goals of this study is to address this problem.

The answers received speak in favor of the presence of a deep, not superficial presence of vulnerability of the leader. In general, the respondents' answers confirm not only the presence of the phenomenon of vulnerability, but also the systematic nature of its occurrence.

When asked about the periods of vulnerability on the career timeline, 87.5% of leaders did not associate the onset of vulnerability with any one period of their career. Moreover, they noted the repeated nature and recurrence of vulnerability cycles caused by a significant increase in the scale of activity, a change in industry, or a change in job. Vulnerability increased in situations when the leader's previous merits lost their former significance and were unable to at least partially counterbalance the increase in the scale of their aspirations. During the interviews, leaders expressed the opinion that the intensity of vulnerability they felt largely depended on their hierarchical position and the corresponding level of authority. This indicates that the high hierarchical status of leaders and their authority enhance the influence of the leaders' plan and create additional resonance. In contrast, the respondents explained the intense level of vulnerability of a leader during their formation period, when the scale of activity does not have a resonant nature, by underestimating their still untapped potential. Thus, at the start of a leadership career, vulnerability is more hidden in nature, acquiring obvious features as the scale of the leader's activities increases and, accordingly, their influence on stakeholders.

One of the objectives of the study was to check whether the leaders under study had prosocial large-scale aspirations. This assumption was confirmed for all selected respondents. 100% of the leaders set goals that were prosocial and large-scale in nature. It turned out that such leaders, especially at the early stages of their careers, while working in large companies, often formally achieved a less prosocial and large-scale goal that corresponded to certain corporate trends. In fact, they actually achieved a more prosocial and large-scale goal that they set for themselves. One of the leaders told how he, having come to an interview, demonstrated his high competencies and immediately received preliminary approval of his candidacy. After that, he put forward more significant goals for his work, creating more complex obligations for him than those expected by the employer, which caused some confusion among shareholders. Interestingly, in this and some other cases, the leaders did not realize the increased scale of their aspirations. We conclude from this that such characteristics of an authentic leader as a value-based position, a high level of leadership mindset, and an orientation toward a large-scale result lower the threshold of sensitivity to the level of their goals. In other words, authentic leaders tend to perceive extraordinary large-scale goals as natural and ordinary, and this factor also contributes to their vulnerability.

The study shed light on the risks of leadership due to vulnerability. Leaders' responses confirmed the critical nature of vulnerability. In situations of the greatest vulnerability, 50% achieved the goals of their transformational activities, 25% of leaders changed their initial goals of their activities to smaller and less prosocial ones under pressure, 25% were forced to abandon further activities due to their unwillingness to give up their vision and reduce the level of goals.

Before participating in the study, 100% of leaders did not associate their rejection by stakeholders during the implementation of prosocial aspirations with the natural state of vulnerability of the leader during the implementation of a large-scale organizational transformation, but after understanding the model of the emergence of the phenomenon of vulnerability, 75% of leaders agreed with the presence of vulnerability of the leader as a systemic phenomenon.

4. Conclusion

It is the focus on an outstanding result, together with the awareness of ability to realize their aspirations, that predetermines the behavior of an authentic leader, one of the central places in which is the acceptance of vulnerability. It can be said that while implementing organizational change the leader does not choose their behavior. Discussing the leader without mentioning

their expressed aspirations and focus on an outstanding result distorts the idea of leadership and allows one not to notice the phenomenon of vulnerability.

An authentic leader cannot avoid the state of vulnerability, it arises spontaneously on their path, as a side effect of certain mindset and behavior. It is an inevitable result of the gap between the level of the leader's well-conscious dominant prosocial aspirations, the synthetic nature of their decisions on the one hand, and the level of leadership mindset of the majority of stakeholders at the start of organizational change on the other. Being in this situation the leader realizes that an empowered team is a key resource in building an outstanding organization. Therefore, the leader is constrained by their own need for an outstanding result, and the need to ensure such a level of stakeholders' leadership mindset so that they can fully participate in the transformation of the organization.

An authentic leader does not control the state of vulnerability. Faced with vulnerability, i.e. self-rejection, a leader is forced to endure this state because, they cannot give up their aspirations and approaches and, they cannot, as if by magic, obtain an enterprise ready to take up their initiatives at the start of organizational change. An authentic leader confronts the state of vulnerability with dignity and awareness in response to criticism of their approaches. A leader displays openness and self-control combined with consistency and perseverance, "pursuing truth over power," which at the first stage increases the state of vulnerability (Moore & Bazerman, 2022). The leader's perseverance is dictated by the completeness of their vision, which is beyond the contradictions of stakeholders. A leader demonstrates the power of their creative thinking through decisions and actions (Ashford, 2021).

Observing vulnerability in practice, we can talk about the leadership dilemma. Having been called to the company, the leader must achieve fundamental results. To do this, it is necessary to implement something that has not yet been consciously accepted and does not cause enthusiasm among the majority of stakeholders. The leader's dilemma is to accept vulnerability and significant risks for the sake of achieving an outstanding result or, on the contrary, an attempt to avoid vulnerability or control its degree while simultaneously reducing the scale of the future result. Trying to avoid vulnerability, a potential leader compromises, reduces the depth, novelty, breakthrough nature of their aspirations, lowering the level of the future result.

The leader first steps unconsciously into the vulnerability and then also unconsciously overcomes it. Despite the intensity of this state, for many authentic leaders the vulnerability is in the blind spot. First, driven by the achievement of a breakthrough result, the leader openly and value-consciously expresses their position to all stakeholders in order to ensure their maximum engagement. Misunderstanding causes resistance from stakeholders and, as a result, the leader's vulnerability. And then, overcoming vulnerability also occurs unconsciously and not for the sake of overcoming the unpleasant state of vulnerability as such. The leader acts, motivated by bridging the value gap and the mindset gap with stakeholders. As stated above, vulnerability tends to subside as the level of stakeholders' leadership mindset expands, paving the way for company consolidation, substantial organizational achievements, self-actualization for stakeholders and recognition for the leader.

The phenomenon of vulnerability of an authentic leader overcomes the extremes of views on a leader as a charismatic hero (Weber, 1968) on the one hand and a servant leader (Greenleaf, 2015) on the other. The first assumes that a leader with super competencies leads followers without fail, guaranteeing success. The second assumes that a leader serves others, thereby strengthening each individual and the company as a whole. On the one hand, vulnerable leaders retain unique features in the sense that they are driven by prosocial values, obsessed with achieving a remarkable prosocial result and, due to the level of their leadership mindset, are able to achieve it. But, unlike a charismatic leader, they are not an object of admiration, located

“above the fray”, and do not act as the sole guarantor of the company’s achievement of an outstanding result. The “heroism” of a leader includes openness and willingness to accept vulnerability and significant risks when faced with a lack of understanding from those around them. The phenomenon of vulnerability of a leader, in essence, confirms what we already understand from our life experience: a productive leader cannot achieve an outstanding result without paying a significant price. On the other hand, instead of dissolving into the team of a servant leader, an authentic leader, being in the thick of things, carries out strategic systematic work to expand and evolve the stakeholders’ mindset in order to begin fruitful interaction with them to transform the organization. The paradox is that an authentic leader confronts stakeholders not in prosself interests but in the interests of the stakeholders.

Finally, it was hypothesized that the state of vulnerability of a leader carrying out a large-scale organizational change is a systemic phenomenon, a necessary condition of the progress toward an outstanding result as a catalyst for stakeholders' mindset evolution. The discovery of a significant number of signs of vulnerability of leaders corresponding to the developed vulnerability model allows us to speak about the relevance of the conclusions made in this study about the systemic nature of the vulnerability phenomenon.

The “leadership potential difference” between the leader and stakeholders, on the one hand, creates a state of vulnerability for the leader and, on the other, ensures the necessary “tension” as the prerequisite for the transformation of the organization. As a result, the organization becomes a platform for the clash of the leader and stakeholder views, for the stakeholders' mindset evolution and gradual consolidation of the company (Frock, 2006). The period of painful vulnerability, having played its synthesizing role, turns into recognition of the leader and opens operational space for the organization to accomplish remarkable prosocial outcomes.

According to this research, each of the leaders who took part in it, being a person of extraordinary abilities, obsessed with prosocial intentions, sacrificed their peace of mind, plunged themselves into a period of trials and risked their position for the sake of a result in which they were interested no more than other stakeholders. Probably, such an intricate model of leader behavior corresponds to the concept of authentic leadership, leaves an indelible mark on the company and leads to an outstanding result.

Focusing on the phenomenon of leader vulnerability opens up new opportunities in organization management. The fact is that an authentic leader's vulnerability is visible, as are their outstanding results. The present study has taken the first step towards proving the existence of an unambiguous connection between a certain pattern of leader behavior, leader vulnerability, and the outstanding prosocial results.

Further research will make it possible to design a framework that will more accurately identify promising leaders facing critical vulnerability during organizational change implementation and develop a list of recommendations to create and sustain a supportive environment for them.

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