

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Approaches to Research and Academic Communication

Title for Part I:
The role and importance of
Character in Leadership

Title for Part II:
Critical study on “The
value of virtue in the upper
echelons: A multisource
examination of executive
character strengths and
performance” (Sosik,
Gentry, Chun, 2012)

by KAM Chi Wing

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Part I: The role and importance of Character in Leadership

1. The subject

The subject of this assignment tries to study is the importance of Character in Leadership. This assignment would also want to explore how to define and measure Character in Leadership and promote it in a corporate context. The domain which I would like to present this argument is the business context in Asia. The research question is the role and importance of Character in Leadership.

2. Rationale to study

As a market practitioner for over 20 years and a people development consultant, it is observed that “Character” is being undervalued although corporate leaders agree it is an important element in leadership. As mentioned by the head of McKinsey & Co.’s global consulting: “When we think about leadership, we focus too much on what leaders do . . . and we don’t spend enough time on who leaders are — the character of leaders” (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012). Corporates tend to promote leaders who can deliver business results but place less concern on how the result was achieved. Research by Seijts also indicated that little attention was paid on leadership character in people development programs (Seijts et al., 2015). Therefore, it is common to see leaders who deliver rosy business numbers with low staff engagement scores. It is also common that potential leaders in the promotion pipeline are different from the ideal leader in the employee’s mind. Contemporary corporate environment rewards managers with driver behaviors as they can deliver lucrative results. However, there are noises that staff well-being are overlooked, business plans are short-term focused. Damage only comes to the surface when those managers completed their term of service which at least 2 years later. With this backdrop, the objectives of this study are to examine and highlight the critical role of character in leadership in business context.

3. Why important?

As concluded by many scholars and commentators, the 2008 financial crisis was largely created by a sequence of unethical decisions. People then lost their trust in the financial system and global institute leaders as the crisis. Seijts pointed out that the compass directing business decisions is character (Seijts, et al., 2015). Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, mention that “. . . to restore trust in banks and in the broader financial system, global financial institutions need

to rediscover their values . . . ’’ (Seijts, et al., 2015). While values and character are closely related, character has a pivotal influence in business decisions which helps avoid financial crisis and regain social trust in the financial system.

In fact, there is research proving the linkage of leadership character to the organisation’s bottom line. Kiel's drawn conclusion in his seven-years study of 9,000 employees and 84 executives from 100 Fortune 500 organizations that character-driven leaders deliver 5 times more returns than "self-focused" leaders. In his book, *Return on Character* suggested that stewardship and corporate social responsibility strategy will have a significant impact on business results (Kiel, 2015). According to Fred Kiel’s over forty years of corporate experience, "principle-minded" leaders tend to have little concern for the common good, underestimated the importance of inspiring and energizing the workforce, as they are too concentrated on their business, this also affects their insight in creating value. They are more focus on how to do things “doing” instead of who they are “being”. Kiel’s study proved that character strength delivers higher stakeholder value and has a positive relationship to the organisation’s bottom line. Character-driven leadership also has higher levels of employee engagement, clear organizational vision, focused strategies, a better performing team, and a stronger culture of ownership (Kiel, 2015).

Van Dierendonck pointed out that characters in servant leadership help self-actualization, promote job attitudes, performance, a stronger focus on organizational sustainability (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Cohen and Morse’s research also indicates that moral character has a significant impact on work outcomes and important implications for organizational behaviour (Cohen and Morse, 2014). Cohen and Morse’s research indicates that moral character is consequential and has a significant impact on work outcomes. It also has important implications for research and practice in organizational behaviour (Cohen and Morse, 2014).

4. Which industry you would like to apply

This study hopes to get the corporate world’s attention to the importance of Character in Leadership, explore the value of developing characters for better corporate results, especially for corporates in Asia. The findings can be applied in all industries in the business context.

5. A literature review on what been studied in the past 10 years on character in leadership

There is limited research on “Character in Leadership” or “Character-centered Leadership”, but “Character” has been mentioned in several leadership styles e.g. Servant Leadership, Relational Leadership, Ethical Leadership, Responsible Leadership, and Virtuous Leadership, Paternalistic leadership, etc. Below is a brief summary of the current understanding of character in leadership and related concepts, and plausible theories.

5.1 Character-based leadership

Traditionally, character is most cited in religion and philosophical context (Wright and Huang, 2008). The most mentioned character elements by Aristotelian and Christian are faith, hope, charity, and love. Modern research mentioned more about justice and the social contract (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Most scholars agree that character has moral and social perspectives (Wright & Goodstein, 2007) with the following dimensions:

- a) Moral discipline - which the leader put societal good ahead of his personal needs
- b) Moral attachment - means the leader has a commitment to people of things greater than himself
- c) Moral autonomy - empowers leaders with discretion and judgement to make ethical decisions

Based on the above dimensions, Wright and his team have defined character as inter-penetrable and habitual qualities that motivate individuals to pursue societal and personal good. Character-based leader is the agent with strong moral value for moral change as he has self-control (moral discipline) to act morally (moral autonomy) based on a moral compass to achieve common goods (moral attachment).

5.2 Values-based leadership approach

Many of the corporates nowadays are running by a value-based leadership approach. Character-based leadership agrees with values-based leadership approach in respecting personal values (e.g. attitudes, opinions and beliefs), and fulfillment (e.g. pleasure life, harmony) (Thompson, 2009). They differ by focusing on moral dimensions that contribute to the betterment of society (Wright and Quick, 2011). Quick and Wright highlighted in their paper Context and Consequences of Character-based Leadership that “character” is about the “being” instead of the “doing” of a

leader. It is the locus of leadership and it can be described as the inner character strengths which compose of integrity, kindness, gratitude, and sense of purpose (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, Quick and Wright, 2011).

5.3 Servant leadership

The term “Character” always being mentioned in many Servant Leadership journals. Robert K. Greenleaf, the originator of servant leadership has written a lot of linkage between “character” and servant leadership. He highlighted that servant leaders have a strong “character” trace to serve others before self. They are inspired to lead by serving. They concerned the well-being of staff and benefit to the society (Greenleaf, 2002). Spears further elaborated that servant leadership has a strong ethical base, engage others in making decisions, promote caring and quality corporate life while facilitating the growth of employees. In Spear’s character and servant leadership, he introduced 10 characteristics that are critical to the development of servant leadership. They are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 2010). But Spear did not define those characteristics explicitly as “characters”.

Parris and Peachey have done a systematic literature review (SLR) of servant leadership and concluded that there is no consensus on the definition of characters in it. According to their research, servant leadership is a feasible theory that concerns the well-being of followers while it helps corporates improves results. Similar to Sosik, Quick and Wright, (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012, Quick and Wright, 2011) Parris and Peachey also pointed out that many leadership approaches defined by what the leader does, servant leaders are defined by their character and by their dedication to serving others (Parris and Peachey, 2013).

Another scholar, Van Dierendonck define the characters in Servant Leadership includes humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, trust, fairness, growing others and stewardship (Van Dierendonck, 2011). To Kiel and his team, they defined "character" as "an individual's unique combination of internalized beliefs and moral habits that motivate and shape how an individual relates to others". They highlighted that “character” is demonstrated by behaviour, especially through our interaction with others. Kiel further defined leadership character in four behaviour dimensions: integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion. He further interpreted integrity as speaking out the truth, step up for the right thing and cultivate trust; responsibility means owing one’s decision and fault, forgiveness means favour encouragement instead of

blaming, compassion as showing empathy to foster empowerment. Integrity and responsibility are categorized as the head, while forgiveness and compassion are categorized as the heart. They pointed out that there are favourable and unfavourable characters. Leaders with favourable character are relatively accurate in their self-awareness while self-focused leaders normally overrated their moral standing (Kiel, 2015).

5.4 Spiritual leadership

Character often mentioned in spiritual leadership. Sweeny and Fry have done research on developing character through spiritual leadership. According to Fry, the spiritual leader inspires self and others to love and serve. This kind of leadership has a positive impact on employee satisfaction, productivity and organization performance. Character in Spiritual leadership is defined as consistent moral and ethical actions for upholding values and beliefs and to serve the greater good of the community. This definition suggested that character has behaviour, psychological and social components. However, there are limited empirical research and application tools in character development (Sweeney and Fry, 2012).

5.5 Ethical Leadership

Character has close ties with Ethical Leadership. According to Watts, ethical leadership is driven by ethical beliefs and society's desired values and for the benefit of others (Watts, 2008). Ethics is concerned with desirable values and morals for society. It also concerned with virtuousness motive (Northouse, 2016). Characters like trust, honesty, consideration, and fairness are mentioned in this kind of leadership (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005)

Wright and Quick also studied the role of character in ethical leadership. They believe that good character is the defining factor of ethical leadership for the well-being organization and greater societal good. In their research, they have provided a theoretical perspective on leader strengths of character (Wright and Quick, 2011).

There is also a study on what ethical leadership means to Asian leaders. In PRC, interpersonal relationship is emphasized. Chinese people prefer indirect communication to maintain harmony and a good image in front of their staff. Teamwork, In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Power Distance are the common behaviors of PRC leaders. (Resick et al., 2011). Compared to the PRC and Taiwan, Hong Kong leaders shown less evidence in In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Power Distance, and demonstrate more behaviours in

assertiveness while still concerning harmony. Face saving, and avoiding confrontation is also common in Hong Kong leaders (Resick et al., 2011). However, there is no noticeable discussion on the understanding of character in ethical leadership among Asian leaders.

5.6 Authentic Leadership

There is also a trace of character in Authentic Leadership. Authentic leadership builds a leader's influence based on ethical foundations and to engage followers through authentic relationships. More detail characteristics of authentic leadership also include:

- High self-awareness which enables leaders to reflect on their strength, weakness, values, and beliefs.
- Transparency in sharing thoughts and beliefs, and well manage inappropriate emotions.
- Balanced processing in which leaders are opened to different or even opposite viewpoints.
- An internalized moral perspective in which leaders are able to make an ethical decision in the midst of the outside pressures.

Characters of authentic leaders are positive, open-minded, honest to self and others. They are able to build trust with subordinates and able to enhance individual and team performance. Although an increasing number of people talk about this concept, the evolution of this construct is still in the initial stage. There is criticism that there is no original data available, lacking empirical study, measurement tools and theoretical ground of this construct (Alvesson and Mats; Einola and Katja, 2019).

5.7 Responsible and Virtuous Leadership

Character also being mentioned in responsible and virtuous leadership by Cameron. He pointed out that this kind of leadership is seldom mentioned but it contributes to successful change management (Cameron, 2011).

5.8 Paternalistic leadership

For more Asian context, Cheng et al has studied the leadership in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. He shared that the dominant leadership in Asia is paternalistic leadership which consists of authoritarian, benevolent, and moral character. However, not much elaboration or more information on this topic in the Asian context can be found (Cheng et al., 2014).

5.9 Moral elements in character

As the moral elements have been mentioned in the above leaderships, this assignment also reviewed relevant information in the literature. In Cohen and Morse's "Moral Character: What it is and what it does", indicated that the concept of moral character can be described as a person's propensity to think, feel, and behave in an ethical or unethical manner, or a subset of one's difference towards morality. Their essay provided a tripartite model to understand the moral character and its relationship to ethical and unethical behaviours at work. The three dimensions of the model suggested are motivational, ability, and identity. The motivational element refers to the consideration of the needs and interests of others, and how one's own actions impact others. In simple words, it is the desire to do good and consideration of others. The ability element refers to refraining one's behaviour that has short-term gain but long-term lost to others. Or simply put, the capacity to do good and self-regulation. The identity element is a moral identity that refers to the wish to be viewed as a moral person and valuing morality. In simple terms, a person's central moral identity as a good person. Their findings indicated that moral character can influence unethical behaviour, situation selection and creation (Cohen and Morse, 2014).

Some scholars commented that morality is not about suppressing personal self-interest, but balancing it with the interests of other people (Frimer, Schaefer, & Oakes, 2014; Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee, and Riches, 2011). According to them, morality is embedded in social relationships and leaders need to govern it effectively (Rai and Fiske, 2011).

5.10 How to define the meaning of character in leadership?

Josephson Institute of Ethics introduced "Six Pillars of Character.": trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship (Spears, 2010). Audi stated that character consists of both habitual components, character strengths and motivational factors (Audi, 2012). Crossan et al stated that character is a moral compass for making the right decision (Crossan et al., 2013). Crossan and many researches have adopted Peterson and Seligman (2004)'s classification and description of character strengths. It can be categorized into six universal virtues — wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Quick and Wright suggested that each leader has a moral component that can be identified as character (Quick and Wright, 2011). According to Seijts, character composes of virtues, personality traits, and values (Seijts, et al., 2015). He and his team break down 10 traits of characters e.g. courage, transcendence, and drive, judgment, collaboration, humanity, humility, integrity, temperance,

justice, and accountability. Each trait can further elaborate with a set of specific actions e.g. patience, calm, composure, self-control and prudence (Seijts, et al., 2015).

5.11 How to measure character

Many scholars refer to Peterson and Seligman's Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) in classifying and measuring character. It is categorized into six core profiles: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice; temperance, and transcendence (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Quick and several other scholars identified 24 character strengths (Quick, Cooper, Gavin, and Quick, 2008) (Wright and Quick, 2011). Sosik stated that character strengths can be measured by related traits of universal virtues (Sosik and Cameron, 2010). Seijts introduced 11 dimensions, namely 1. Drive, 2. Accountability, 3. Collaboration, 4. Humanity, 5. Humility, 6. Temperance, 7. Justice, 8. Courage, 9. Transcendence, 10. Integrity, 11. Judgement. All dimensions work together and separately to affect action. For example, excess in courage may bring out recklessness unless it is balanced by temperance and judgement. A well-developed leader demonstrates all character dimensions in appropriate situations (Seijts, et al., 2015). Kiel said a leader's character can be measured by observing how they treat workplace colleague especially when there is no possible gain to themselves (Kiel, 2015).

5.12 Can leadership character be taught?

There are researches stating that character traits can be learned (Spears, 2010). Crossan et al., suggest refocus business education on character development besides skills and competencies (Crossan et al., 2013). Sadler Smith mentioned that people need an environment to observe and practice virtuous behaviour which further develops into character (Sadler Smith, 2012). Although there is an argument that not every person is equality teachable, Crossan and his team believe that leadership character can be taught, even in a business context (Crossan et al., 2013). According to Hannah & Avolio's spiritual leadership, a leader's self-schema or self-identity and heritable temperament, highly influence the formation of character (Hannah and Avolio, 2010).

Quick and Wright suggested that character can be developed (Quick and Wright, 2011). Kiel believes that character can be developed over the leader's career as what construct character is a habitual issue. With sufficient effort, good character habits can be developed, enhanced, and bad characters can be changed (Kiel, 2015). Everyone can learn leadership through coaching, mentoring and engagement (Kiel, 2015).

6. The paradigm shift of chosen subject and related new knowledge

The role of Character has been ignored in the mainstream of leadership discussion for a long period of time. “Character matters” is more a statement on paper than a real conviction. It is seldom mentioned or applied in recruiting, selecting, promoting or developing leaders (Seijts, et al., 2015). It only discussed in gossip talks and when materials are needed to form grounds of firing. Character also seldom highlighted as a core element in leadership, it’s only presented as one of the components in several leadership styles, e.g. servant leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, etc. In the trend of leadership styles development, Spears observed that there is a shift from hierarchical and dominating leadership with more relationship-focused servant leadership in recent years (Spears, 2010). Character-based leadership only being introduced by Quick and Wright in 2011 (Quick and Wright, 2011) but the discussion was not ardent.

The role of character in leadership regains attention when a series of corporate scandals caused by greed and materialism that happened in the last 10 years. There is evidence that leaders who are overconfidence, aloof, greedy, lack accountability and learning ability played a major role in the world economic crisis, e.g. Wells Fargo, Leman Brothers scandals. Those financial crises and scandals since 2008 bring more studies about character in the business context, e.g. how to define, measure character and bring that into an organization. Scholars believe the character of senior leaders has a significant impact on business decisions (Seijt et al, 2015). Seijts and his team interviewed 300 senior business and public sector leaders from Canada, USA, UK, and HK. His study confirmed that leadership would make a difference to the 2008-2008 financial crisis (Seijts, et al., 2015). Some scholars also voiced out that the decline of ethical leadership has resurfaced the importance of character in leadership (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts and Gandz, 2013).

7. The Gap

7.1 The importance of character is undervalued

Research reveals that character has been undervalued by organizations. Leadership is based on good character. According to Seijt’s findings, character is not being valued as a critical success factor in many corporates. Management has missed the opportunities to bring it to the forefront (Seijts, et al., 2015). With reference to 500 respondents of the survey, Seijts has concluded that leadership character, commitment, competencies in risk management are the three pillars for company success and failure. Deficiency in any of the pillars will lead to problems in performance. He also pointed out that character is difficult to define, his research tries to develop

some behavioural standards and plain language which can be accepted by market professionals. Character affects one's decision, how we react to the world, response to life incidents, what we value. We need leaders with character who take ownership, commit to stretching targets, collaborate well with others (Seijts, et al., 2015).

7.2 Character is not personality traits

When people mentioned about character, they mixed the construct of character with personality. This is an important gap that we have not been clearly understood or misunderstood. Quick and Wright highlighted that character is not the same as personality or values (Quick, Wright, 2011). Hannah and Avolio also pointed out that character may be structured and operate like personality, but two of them are different. Personality is trait-based. Trait refers to a psychological construct that encases a person's thought, emotion, and behavioural patterns (Funder and Fast, 2010).

Character has a more dynamic, layered, complex structure. Character is developed throughout a leader's career life as the leader learns from different roles (Hannah, Avolio, and May 2011). Aspects of character vary across the leader's identity, social roles, and context. Based on Hannah and Avolio's model of moral potency (Hannah and Avolio, 2010), Quick and Wright suggested that the loci of Character-based leadership consist of moral efficacy, moral ownership, and moral courage. Together with personality and occupation, it affects the leader's choice of ethics and behavior (Quick and Wright, 2011).

Some researcher has done some comparison between personality and character. Alzola's study concluded that personality traits lie between habitual character strengths (or weaknesses) and motivational values. It does not necessarily possess any universally admired qualities or indicates any pursuit of societal good. While certain personality traits are innate, character is developed over one's lifetime, and individuals can enhance the development of character through deliberate practice and reflection on experience (Alzola, 2012). Gavin, Quick, Cooper, and Quick suggested that personality is what we demonstrate externally while character is what lies inside of us (Gavin, Quick, Cooper, and Quick, 2003). To Hannah and Avolio, character is an integral part of the leader's self-system and the moral component in leadership which is different from personality. (Hannah and Avolio, 2011).

7.3 Limited empirical studies and application discussion on the subject

As Sosik, Gentry, Chun, and Seijts mentioned there is limited or lack empirical studies on character in leadership. Mainly because the subject is undervalued, the meaning of character is difficult to define and align, it also perceived as hard to measure, some thinks character is born rather than learn (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012; Seijts, et al., 2015).

Seijts has pointed out that there is a gap between the perceived importance and the actual application of character in the corporate world. First, the definition of the word “character” is very ambiguous, there is also no valid tools to assess and no systematic approach to develop character in leaders today. The language used in an organization about character is not aligned. Although leaders agreed that “character matters” but it is seldom used in hiring, talent selection and leader development Seijts, G., Gandz, J., Crossan, M., & Reno, M. (2015). It only comes into the radar when there is any scandal comes up. In Seiji’s research, they have suggested plain-language definition of character for the operational use of organizational leadership, provided evidence on the impact of character to the performance of leader and business results and described the linkage of leadership character to organizational development. However, this kind of research is numbered and lots of empirical studies needed to be done. The above research gap is important to know as they provide direction for future research, especially on empirical aspects.

Part II: Critical study on “The value of virtue in the upper echelons: A multisource examination of executive character strengths and performance” (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012)

1. Information on the selected paper

The Title of the selected paper is the value of virtue in the upper echelons: A multisource examination of executive character strengths and performance. This paper was written in 2012 by John J.Sosik, William A.Gentry and Jae Uk Chun (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012).

2. Abstract and summary of the selected article

Previous researches on top-level (i.e. upper echelon) executives were mainly focused on character flaws and its association with unfavorable performance and outcome. Research on the relationship between character strength and top-level executives is lacking. This paper aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship of four character strengths e.g.: integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence with the top-level performance for both profit and non-profit making organizations in the US. The author collects multi-level data sources from 191 top-level's direct reports and bosses to provide empirical evidence that there is a positive association between direct reports' rating on the four character strengths and bosses' rating on the performance. Among the character strengths being studied, integrity was found to have the most influence on the performance of top-executive.



The value of virtue in the upper echelons: A multisource examination of executive character strengths and performance[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Previous research on upper echelon (i.e., top-level) executives has focused on how character flaws or lapses in ethical judgment lead to detrimental outcomes. Research is lacking that specifically examines whether character strengths that are reflected in the behaviors of top-level executives are related to positive outcomes. Therefore, this study examined behavioral manifestations of the character strengths of integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence as influences on executive performance in the context of top-level executive leadership of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. Using matched-report data from 191 top-level, U.S. executives' direct reports and bosses and board members, this study found positive relationships between direct reports' ratings of executive integrity, bravery, and social intelligence and bosses' and board members' ratings of executive performance. These character strengths each accounted for variance in executive performance above and beyond direct reports' ratings of executives' developing and empowering behaviors and other control variables. Among the character strengths examined, integrity was found to have the most contribution in explaining variance in executive performance via relative weight analysis. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

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3. The rationale to choose this topic and paper

The major reason for choosing this topic is because it meets my research interest as shared in part I of this assignment. This paper examines the Character strengths (Integrity, Bravery, Perspective, Social intelligence) for Executive performance which matches my interest in coming research. The industry I would like to apply for this subject is in a business context with Asia exposure.

4. The flow of Direction of the Concept/Spectrum

There was not much research on Character-based leadership, but similar concept i.e. character influence in leadership and performance has been mentioned in a few leadership approaches e.g. Ethical Leadership, Servant Leadership, Relational Leadership, Virtuous Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, etc. Character is often mentioned as integrity and the discussion about its linkage to leadership has been brought up more since 2009. The definition varies among scholars and it is easily confused with personality and competence (Leavy, 2016). the measurement is a challenge. Only a handful of papers on the measurement can be found so far. The table below tries to illustrate the trend of study about character in leaderships.

The spectrum of the related concept	The paper title, author and year
Character in leadership	• A psychobiological model of temperament and character (Cloninger, Svrakic, Przybeck1998) • The role of integrity in individual and effective corporate leadership (Duggar, 2009) • The character to lead: A closer look at character in leadership (Grahek, Thompson, Toliver, 2010) • Introduction to special issue on defining and measuring character in leadership (Thompson, Riggio, 2010) • Right to Lead: Learning Leadership through Character and Courage (Maxwell, 2013) • Moral character: What it is and what it does (Cohen, Morse, 2014) • Effective leadership today–character not just competence (Leavy, 2016)
Ethical leadership	• Ethical leadership (Ofori, 2009) • Virtue-based measurement of ethical leadership (Riggio, Zhu, Reina, Maroosis, 2010) • "What ethical leadership means to me: Asian, American, and European perspectives." (Resick, Christian, Gillian, Martin et. al.,2011) • Impact of ethical leadership on employee job performance (Bello, 2012) • The role of virtues, values and character strengths in ethical decision making (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, 2013) • Ethics, the heart of leadership (Ciulla, 2014)
Servant leadership	• Distinguishing between transformational and servant leadership (Parolini, Patterson, Winston, 2009) • Transformational vs. transactional leadership theories: Evidence in literature (Odumeru and Ogbonna, 2013). • How might servant leadership work? (Ebener, O'Connell, 2010) • Servant leadership: A review and synthesis (Van Dierendonck, 2011) • Servant leadership behaviour scale: A hierarchical model and test of construct validity (Sendjaya, Cooper, 2011)
Relational leadership	• Relational leadership. Human relations (Cunliffe, Eriksen, 2011) • Relational leadership: A biblical model for influence and service (Wright, 2012)
Virtuous leadership	• Responsible leadership as virtuous leadership (Cameron, 2011)
Spiritual leadership	• Spiritual leadership: Moving people on to God's agenda (Blackaby, 2011) • Spiritual leadership (Sanders, 2017)
Authentic leadership	• Authentic leadership and behavioral integrity as drivers of follower commitment and performance (Leroy, Palanski, Simons, 2012) • Authentic leadership critically reviewed. Authentic leadership: Clashes, convergences and coalescences (Alvesson, Sveningsson, 2013)

5. The gap highlighted by this article

The similarity of the above research papers discussion is mainly on a theoretical basis while the paper this assignment chose to study is trying to get empirical evidence. Although top-level executive agrees that character strengths have positive values, there is a lack of adequate theory and empirical evidence demonstrates the links of character to executive performance (Peterson and Seligman, 2004), Peterson and Parks had reviewed that published studies on character strengths in organizational context, they concluded that most studies focused on the relationship between characters strengths like gratitude, hope, zest, curiosity, love and the outcome in work satisfaction, but not performance (Peterson and Park, 2006). There were researches on concepts similar to the four character strengths which this study examine but the samples used are lower-level managers, not top executives.

6. Contribution of this article

As mentioned by Sosik, Gentry, and Chun, the purpose of this study is to add empirical knowledge in predicting the performance of top-level executives by examining their behavioral manifestations of characters (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012). To understand the subject (Ontology): character strengths and performance, the authors reviewed lots of related research, collected data from multisource, and reported different perspectives as themes develop in the findings. The collection of data and new perspectives developed will be shared in the latter part of this paper.

Authors are also trying to identify character strength which mainly drives the variance in performance (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012). This focus on four character strengths: integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence, in particular, because the association has been identified to top executive performance in other theoretical research (e.g., Kilmann et al., 2010). However, such theoretical relationships did not have empirical grounding, this paper aims to fill this gap. Character strength is hard to define and measure. To address this issue, this paper adopted the instrument developed in Peterson and Seligman's Values in Action (VIA) model (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) as measurement tool. VIA model provides a classification of character strengthen and is grounded in prior psychological theory developed from a comprehensive review of psychology, sociology, theology, and philosophy research. Detail measures and correlations of those character strengths can be found in Peterson and Seligman's study (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

Integrity is widely accepted as an important ingredient in leadership, Bass and pointed out that high-level integrity is particularly important in dealing with conflict of interest among multiple stakeholders. In a business environment, top executives often need bravery character to make unpopular decisions (Bass, 2008). Leaders with perspectives are able to understand the characteristics and constituencies in different organizations and develop vision. Social intelligence enables top executives to navigate in complex environments and social relationships. It also enables leaders to build consensus and develop networks (Zaccaro, 1996). .

7. Theory (Epistemology) of this paper is grounded and the new perspectives

This study aims to examine the character strengths of C-suite executives (not previously examined empirically) with direct reports ratings, and the relationships to performance as recognized by bosses or board members. It built the theoretical framework based on Geletkanycz, Hambrick and Mason's Upper echelons theory of character strength (Geletkanycz and Hambrick, 1997, Hambrick and Mason, 1984) and Peterson and Seligman's Values in Action (VIA) model about virtues (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Upper echelons theory stated that corporate performance and executive performance are influenced directly by top management's personal characteristics and behaviors, and indirectly by their decision which grounded on the external environment and internal corporate culture (Geletkanycz and Hambrick, 1997, Hambrick and Mason, 1984).

This paper adopted Peterson and Seligman's definition of character strength which can be categorized into four dimensions: Integrity, Bravery, Perspective, and Social Intelligent. Integrity means acting with authenticity and honesty by speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense: taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions. Bravery means acting with valor by not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain: speaking up for what is right even when there is opposition; acting upon conviction when even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it. Perspective means accumulating wisdom and acting and advising wisely based on experience; being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people. Social Intelligence means acting with emotional and personal intelligence to adapt appropriately to situations; being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.

Table 1. Focal character strengths and their behavioral manifestations for executives.

Character Strength	Definition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)	Executive Dimensions® behavioral measure	Executive Dimensions® example item
Integrity	Acting with authenticity and honesty by speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.	Credibility	"Acts in accordance with his or her stated values."
Bravery	Acting with valor by <i>not</i> shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain: speaking up for what is right even when there is opposition; acting upon conviction when even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.	Courage	"Takes the lead on unpopular though necessary actions."
Perspective	Accumulating wisdom and acting and advising wisely based on experience; being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.	Business perspective	"Understands the strengths and weaknesses of major competitors."
Social intelligence	Acting with emotional and personal intelligence to adapt appropriately to situations; being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	Interpersonal savvy	"Understands own impact on situations and people."

Note. Executive Dimensions (2009) is registered and copyrighted by the Center for Creative Leadership.

Based on the above information, four hypotheses were developed and no mediator was used:

- Hypothesis 1: Ratings of an executive's integrity will be positively related to his or her performance.
- Hypothesis 2: Ratings of an executive's bravery will be positively related to his or her performance.
- Hypothesis 3: Ratings of an executive's perspective will be positively related to his or her performance.
- Hypothesis 4: Ratings of an executive's social intelligence will be positively related to his or her performance.

The new perspectives this paper tries to contribute are to provide empirical evidence on the linkage between the four chosen character strengths and the top executive performance, to prove the selected character strengths are more important than traditional competencies, and to find out which of the four character strengths is more influential. With the above mentioned four hypotheses, two research questions were developed:

- **Research question 1:** Which one of the four-character strengths examined in this study (integrity, bravery, perspective, or social intelligence) is relatively more important than the others in accounting for executive performance?
- **Research question 2:** Are the four-character strengths examined in this study (integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence) relatively more important than traditional executive competencies (sound judgment, strategic planning, results orientation, and global awareness) in accounting for executive performance?

8. Methodology

8.1 Sampling

The target group this paper study is top-level executives, thus C-level participants (e.g., CEO, CFO, COO, CIO, or president) of a leadership development program. The sampling meets the criteria of upper echelon. The sample size is 191 which is relatively small although it composes of executives from a wide range of industries and organizations. However, the data is still considered significant due to the seniority level of the target group. The gender composition is mainly white males which represent the executive ranks in 2008 (Bass, 2008) but not the situations in the last decade as more females were promoted to the top-level. The executives in the study were self-nominated to join the leadership program, they represent self-motivated, learning-oriented and high performing types of leaders. They may also possess the characteristics of more ambitious (Kaplan et al., 1991), narcissism or arrogance (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Future research can set up a control group to examine the association between character strengths and performance outcomes of executives with a diverse mix in gender, race, motivation level, drive for achievement and learning orientation or non-participants of the leadership program. Another issue is the direct reports who rate the target executive are selected by the executive themselves. Although the ratings from direct are anonymous, there is still a tendency that those raters will provide favourable or inflated ratings. To address this limitation, a different rating source can be used.

8.2 Scale

For performance rating, 5 points scale was used to measure the construct which is easy to do numerical statistics analysis but respondents may tend to rate 3, the mid-point instead of indicating their preference (e.g. 4 or 5, 2 or 1). Different anchors are attached to the scale (1 = *Among the worst* to 5 = *Among the best*); (1 = *Not at all Likely* to 5 = *Extremely Likely*); (1

= *Not at all* to 5 = *To a Very Great Extent*); (1 = *Deficient* to 5 = *Exceptional*) as per the instructions of the instrument which makes it difficult to compare (Kerlinger & Lee, 1999).

For character strength, direct reports of target executives were asked to rate their boss on 92 items in the VIA model to measure the core leadership competencies. Again, 5-point scale is applied with 1 = *Deficient* to 5 = *Exceptional*. To ensure the 92 items and perspective scale in the VIA model matches the four character strengths that this paper examines, two experts with publication on character and leadership domain were brought in to validate the adequacy of the instrument. The instrument and model used in this paper are published in 2004 which is over 15 years, an instrument with more up to date research will be more desirable. There may be overlappings on the constructs measured on Executive Dimensions® and the VIA survey (Park & Peterson, 2006), which implies the character strengths being studies may be just relabelled from previous constructs being studied.

Due to the culture and language difference, Asians may have a different understanding of the definition of the character strengths and the description of the 92 items. If similar research to be done in Asia, the wordings of the questions may need to adjust, or provide some case examples to help respondents to understand the context.

8.3 Common method bias

According to past research, self-rating may be unreliable, biased, and inconsistent with ratings from others (Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy, & Sturm, 2010). When subordinates are asked to rate their managers, they tend to focus on ethics and character. When superiors are invited to rate their staff managers, they tend to concentrate on technical competence (Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan, 1994). To cope with the above possible bias, this paper uses the target executive's direct report instead of self to rate character strengths. Subordinates will give the rating based on the behavioral manifestations of their boss. To study the correlation of target executives' character strength and performance, this paper engaged C-level leader's bosses and board members as the source of ratings (Fleenor, McCauley, and Brutus, 1996).

To measure the target executive's performance, a reviewed multisource instrument (Vassar, 2010) Executive Dimensions® is used (Nilsen and Hallam, 2000). This assessment has proven reliability above 0.8 and validity which measures leadership behaviors and managerial competencies affecting the effectiveness of top-level leaders. The instrument provides structured

leadership behaviour domains based on academic literature like Borman and Brush's (1993) taxonomy of leadership performance and Yukl's (1989) taxonomy of behaviors contribute to managerial success.

Target executive's bosses or board members are invited to answer 5 questions of the Executive Dimensions® via the internet before the start of the leadership program. In the same period of time, 2 direct reports of the target executives are invited to give a rating on their character dimensions.

The p-value of the four hypotheses was all below 0.01 which is less than 0.05, indicating that the scales are good. The reliability of the measuring instrument, Executive Dimensions® is above 0.80 which implies the data outcome has high reliability. To assess the validity of the constructs, a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (EFA and CFA) were conducted. The correlation among the variables was examined and the correlations were high. For future studies, more character strengths can be studied as there are 24 possible character strengths in Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification and this study only selected 4 to study (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

8.4 Ethical considerations

As stated in the paper, respondents were informed that this is a pure research exercise, the result of questions would not be used as feedback to the target-executives during the leadership development program. However, there is no detail in the procedure to protect the confidentiality e.g. how e-mail or contact name is handled, etc. Although the author did mention the response from the direct report is anonymous, the two direct reports respondents are selected by target executives. It is easy to deduce the response from the respective respondents. Direct reports and managers or board members of the target executives are requested to fill in the questionnaire before the executive joining the third-party leadership program. However, no indication of consent letter was sent or whether respondents were given the option of withdrawal from the survey is unknown. There no information on how to help respondents avoid falling into the trap of deception e.g. tendency of providing a favorable answer to please their boss if the respondents are the direct reports or provide answers which the authors want.

Besides, no response rate is provided or the method used to increase the response rate is unknown. No briefing session to provide clear instruction or to gain support from potential respondents is

reported. To increase the significance of this research, a bigger sample size and response rate are preferred. The data were gathered via the Internet from the target-executives' direct reports, bosses or board members before the target-executives attended their respective leadership development program. However, no information about data security is communicated.

Besides, this paper use relative weight analysis (Johnson, 2000) to examine the degree of contribution of character strengths to executives' performance. This is a comparatively new approach to examine the relative importance of character strengths to top executive performance. All predictors were addressed with demographic controls. For example, this study controlled a variety of personal (e.g. age, gender, race, and educational level) and situational (e.g. industry sector, year of service in the organization) characteristics that have an influence on executive performance, to examine the association between character strength and performance.

9. Conclusion

Through the literature review of this topic, I have learned a lot about the definition of character, the impact of character to performance, and the relationship of character with different leadership approaches. It also allows me to learn the process of conducting empirical research and presenting the findings. All these will provide a solid foundation for me to prepare the coming dissertation. The literature reviewed can also be included in my dissertation because the topic I would like to examine is: The role and importance of Character in Leadership in the Asian context.

If I am going to research the “impact of character to top-level executive performance” like the paper studied in Part II of this assignment, I shall study more character strengths besides the four strengths examined in the paper e.g. Accountability, Collaboration, Humanity, Humility, Justice, etc. as the result will be more comprehensive. I shall also adopt a more recent assessment tool because the Values in Action (VIA) model (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) adopted by the author is over 16 years. Besides, the character description used in the model may not easily be understood by Asians. There is likely to be a deviation in the interpretation of the terms used in the model. Despite certain common value, some description of character strength may not fit into Asian context, some adjustment is needed to be done. This will make the findings more valuable to Asian society, especially when Asia will contribute to 50 percent of total global GDP by 2040 (McKinsey & Company, 2019). If character is proven to have a significant impact on business and individual outcome, helping the company to select the character fit and developing the

character of leaders will surely help the company performance. It is also valuable in our society this will help organisations to avoid an unnecessary financial crisis and business risk. This is particularly important for stakeholders like board members, top-level leaders, shareholders, investors and related stakeholders as character in leadership has been undervalued so long while it keeps playing a prominent role in business decisions (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012). Empirical research papers can help bring this issue to the attention radar of the above stakeholders and provide insight into developing character strength in corporate leadership.

For future research, I would like to focus more on the empirical evidence of character to business bottom-line because it is the key to get an organisation's genuine attention to the subject. Currently, there is not enough evidence on this construct. I shall also expand the study to individual performance i.e. impact of character to executive individual performance because this will create motivation for executives to take heart on the subject. The study on the influence of leadership character can further broaden into staff engagement, career development opportunities, linkage to remuneration, etc. The research target can also expand to middle or junior leaders or even individual contributors. The research topic can be the comparison of influence by character strengths among different levels of leaders and or with individual contributors.

Another plausible future research trench of this topic can be like drawing alignment on the definition of character strengths. Currently, there is no alignment in the language used about character strength which creates difficulties in the discussion. As mentioned by Crossan and his team, when people mentioned about character, they mean it differently and inconsistently. Many senior leaders admitted that they have limited vocabulary to articulate the construct, many lack the understanding and its importance (Crossan, Seijts, Gandz, 2015). The interpretation of the topic is different in Asia which increases the challenge. For future research, drawing alignment on the definition of character strengths from both mainstream leadership conceptual discussion and empirical research is a big contribution to the related trench of research (Sosik and Cameron, 2010). It can also help to identify the difference between character and personality which many people get confused about as mentioned in part I of this assignment. The findings of such research can further develop systematic tools for assessment. According to Crossan and his team, there are very limited valid and reliable tools available and practitioners need those tools to move from discussing character development to put it in real practice (Crossan, Seijts, Gandz, 2015).

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Appendix: Presentation Slides

P.1

Leadership Character

Selina KAM Chi Wing
1818886

P.2

Rationale to study

- ▶ To explore the importance of Leadership Character
- ▶ To learn about the definition
- ▶ To understand how scholar measure it
- ▶ To know if it can be taught

Rationale to study

► In the past

the head of McKinsey & Co.'s global consulting practice, said: "When we think about leadership we focus too much on **what leaders do** . . . and we don't spend enough time on **who leaders are** – the character of leaders."

► Why important

Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, said that ". . . to **restore trust in banks** and in the **broader financial system**, **global financial institutions need to rediscover their values** . . . Employees need a sense of broader purpose, grounded in strong connections to their clients and their communities."

3

Gap

- There is very **limited empirical research** on the subject
- Not enough evidence on its link to **business results**
- **No alignment** in the language used
- **Few reliable and valid tools available** for the **systematic assessment** of character.

4

Abstract of the article studied

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The value of virtue in the upper echelons: A multisource examination of executive character strengths and performance 

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ABSTRACT

Previous research on upper echelon (i.e., top-level) executives has focused on how character flaws or lapses in ethical judgment lead to detrimental outcomes. Research is lacking that specifically examines whether character strengths that are reflected in the behaviors of top-level executives are related to positive outcomes. Therefore, this study examined behavioral manifestations of the character strengths of integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence as influences on executive performance in the context of top-level executive leadership of for-profit and not-for profit organizations. Using matched-report data from 191 top-level, U.S. executives' direct reports and bosses and board members, this study found positive relationships between direct reports' ratings of executive integrity, bravery, and social intelligence and bosses' and board members' ratings of executive performance. These character strengths each accounted for variance in executive performance above and beyond direct reports' ratings of executives' developing and empowering behaviors and other control variables. Among the character strengths examined, integrity was found to have the most contribution in explaining variance in executive performance via relative weight analysis. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

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Abstract of the article

Previous researches on top-level (i.e. upper echelon) executives were mainly focused on character flaws and its association with unfavorable performance and outcome. Research on the relationship between character strength and top-level executives is lacking. This paper aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship of four character strengths e.g.: integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence with the top-level performance for both profit and non-profit making organizations in the US. The author collects multi-level data sources from 191 top-level's direct reports and bosses to provide empirical evidence that there is a positive association between direct reports' rating on the four character strengths and bosses' rating on the performance. Among the character strengths being studied, integrity was found to have the most influence on the performance of top-executive.

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Which industry you would like to apply

Commercial corporations with presence in Asia

The gap mentioned in the paper

Focused on **character flaws** of top executives as seen in widely-publicized cases such as Ken Lay of Enron, Bernie Ebbers of WorldCom, and Bernie Madoff. Theoretical models of ethics, morality, and integrity in the leadership literature suggest reasons why character flaws cause lapses of ethical judgment and career derailment for executives (e.g., [Fry, 2003](#), [May et al., 2003](#), [Pearce et al., 2010](#)).

Although **these theoretical approaches** and empirical findings highlight the dark side of character flaws, they **do not fully account for how positive aspects** of an executive's character may influence the ability to perform well in the upper echelons of organizations. These models also fail to recognize that character strengths are reflected in a person's behavior (e.g., [Kaplan et al., 1991](#), [Klann, 2007](#), [Riggio et al., 2010](#), [Sosik, 2006](#)).

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Contribution

While character strengths have been linked to outcomes valued by top-level executives such as happiness, satisfaction, and decreased stress ([Peterson & Seligman, 2004](#)), **no empirical work has demonstrated links to executive performance**. The purpose of this study is to **add knowledge to what we know about predicting the performance of top-level executives by examining behavioral manifestations of executive character** (i.e., integrity, bravery, perspective, social intelligence) that may be associated with executive performance.

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Flow of Direction/Concept/Spectrum

- ▶ Character in leadership
- ▶ Ethical leadership
- ▶ Servant leadership
- ▶ Relational leadership
- ▶ Virtuous leadership
- ▶ Spiritual leadership
- ▶ Authentic leadership

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Theory

- ▶ Upper echelons theory (Geletkanycz and Hambrick, 1997, Hambrick and Mason, 1984) and Peterson and Seligman's (2004) Values in Action (VIA) model of character strengths and virtues provide the general theoretical framework for our study.
- ▶ According to upper echelons theory, top executives influence managerial and organizational performance directly through their **personal characteristics** and **behaviors** and indirectly through the strategic choices they make, while being **influenced** by the **external environment**, **culture**, and **internal organizational culture** and **structure**.

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Theory

This paper built the theoretical framework based on [Geletkanycz](#), [Hambrick and Mason's](#) Upper echelons theory of character strength ([Geletkanycz and Hambrick, 1997](#), [Hambrick and Mason, 1984](#)) and Peterson and Seligman's Values in Action (VIA) model about virtues ([Peterson and Seligman, 2004](#)). Upper echelons theory stated that corporate performance and executive performance are influenced directly by top management's personal characteristics and behaviors, and indirectly by their decision which grounded on the external environment and internal corporate culture ([Geletkanycz and Hambrick, 1997](#), [Hambrick and Mason, 1984](#)).

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Theory

Table 1. Focal character strengths and their behavioral manifestations for executives.

Character Strength	Definition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)	Executive Dimensions® behavioral measure	Executive Dimensions® example item
Integrity	Acting with authenticity and honesty by speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.	Credibility	"Acts in accordance with his or her stated values."
Bravery	Acting with valor by <i>not</i> shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even when there is opposition; acting upon conviction when even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.	Courage	"Takes the lead on unpopular though necessary actions."
Perspective	Accumulating wisdom and acting and advising wisely based on experience; being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.	Business perspective	"Understands the strengths and weaknesses of major competitors."
Social intelligence	Acting with emotional and personal intelligence to adapt appropriately to situations; being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	Interpersonal savvy	"Understands own impact on situations and people."

Note. Executive Dimensions (2009) is registered and copyrighted by the Center for Creative Leadership.

Focus of study

- This study examines the role of behavioral manifestations of the aforementioned character strengths of **C-suite executive-level managers** (not previously examined empirically) **rated by their direct reports**, and their relationships to **executive performance** as **perceived by their bosses or board members**

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Focus of study

- **Hypothesis 1** : Ratings of an executive's integrity will be positively related to his or her performance.
- **Hypothesis 2**: Ratings of an executive's bravery will be positively related to his or her performance.
- **Hypothesis 3**: Ratings of an executive's perspective will be positively related to his or her performance.
- **Hypothesis 4**
- Ratings of an executive's social intelligence will be positively related to his or her performance.

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Focus of study

- **Research question 1:** Which one of the four character strengths examined in this study (integrity, bravery, perspective, or social intelligence) is **relatively more important** than the others in accounting for executive performance?
- **Research question 2:** Are the four character strengths examined in this study (integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence) **relatively more important than traditional executive competencies** (sound judgment, strategic planning, results orientation, and global awareness) in accounting for executive performance?

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Methodology

- Scale, how to measure? 5-point scale (1 = *Among the worst* to 5 = *Among the best*) e.g. **Character strengths** 5-point scale with (1 = *Deficient* to 5 = *Exceptional*) on 92 items that measure core competencies in different leadership behaviors
- Sampling, random: attending a **third-party vendor's week-long leadership development program**, their board members or direct bosses and direct reports to complete Executive Dimensions® ([CCL, 2009](#), [Nilsen and Hallam, 2000](#)) before the program started. reviewed **multisource instrument** ([D'Costa, 2010](#), [Vassar, 2010](#)) that measures **leadership behaviors** and **managerial competencies** considered **important to effectiveness** at the executive level.

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Methodology

- ▶ Sample Size, any criteria for sample size? Sample size enough? **191** participants, 2 director reports + 1 board members
- ▶ Proper procedure to protect confidentiality? **Yes**. Respondents were instructed that **results for these questions were for research purposes only**, and they would not be given as information for feedback to the target-executives during their respective leadership development program.
- ▶ How or what method do they use to increase the response rate? **Participants are requested to fill in the questionnaire before** joining the 3rd party leadership programme

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Methodology

- ▶ Probability >0.7? if not pass, is it a good scale?
 - ▶ For integrity, ICC(1) was .25 ($F = 2.60, p < .01$) and ICC(2) was .62.
 - ▶ For bravery, ICC(1) was .33 ($F = 3.35, p < .01$) and ICC(2) was .70.
 - ▶ For perspective, ICC(1) was .23 ($F = 2.39, p < .01$) and ICC(2) was .58.
 - ▶ For social intelligence, ICC(1) was .32 ($F = 3.27, p < .01$) and ICC(2) was .69.
- ▶ Reliability: Executive Dimensions® above .80 and criterion-related validity evidence -> good reliability

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Methodology

The p-value of the four hypotheses was all below 0.01 which is less than 0.05, indicating that the scales are good. The reliability of the measuring instrument, Executive Dimensions® is above 0.80 which implies the data outcome has high reliability. To assess the validity of the constructs, a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (EFA and CFA) were conducted. The correlation among the variables was examined and the correlations were high. For future studies, more character strengths can be studied as there are 24 possible character strengths in [Peterson and Seligman's \(2004\)](#) classification and this study only selected 4 to study.

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Methodology

- ▶ Control Variable: Gender, Race, education, organization tenure, Age, organization type
- ▶ Common method bias : self-rating may be unreliable, biased, and inconsistent with ratings from others ([Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy, & Sturm, 2010](#)). When subordinates are asked to rate their managers, they tend to focus on ethics and character. When superiors are invited to rate their staff managers, they tend to concentrate on technical competence ([Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994](#)). To cope with the above possible bias, this paper uses the target executive's direct report instead of self to rate character strengths. Subordinates will give the rating based on the behavioral manifestations of their boss. To study the correlation of target executives' character strength and performance, this paper engaged C-level leader's bosses and board members as the source of ratings ([Fleenor, McCauley, & Brutus, 1996](#)).

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Ethical considerations

- ▶ respondents were informed that this is a pure research exercise, the result of questions would not be used as feedback to the target-executives during the leadership development program.
- ▶ no detail in the procedure to protect the confidentiality e.g. how e-mail or contact name is handled, etc. Although the author did mention the response from the direct report is anonymous, the two direct reports respondents are selected by target executives. It is easy to deduce the response from the respective respondents.
- ▶ no indication of consent letter was sent or whether respondents were given the option of withdrawal from the survey is unknown.
- ▶ no information on how to help respondents avoid falling into the trap of deception e.g. tendency of providing a favorable answer to please their boss if the respondents are the direct reports or provide answers which the authors want.
- ▶ No briefing session to provide clear instruction or to gain support from potential respondents is reported.
- ▶ no information about data security is communicated.

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If I am going to do this research

- ▶ I shall study more character strengths besides the four strengths examined in the paper e.g. Accountability, Collaboration, Humanity, Humility, Justice, etc. as the result will be more comprehensive.
- ▶ I shall also adopt a more recent assessment tool because the Values in Action (VIA) model ([Peterson & Seligman, 2004](#)) adopted by the author is over 16 years. Besides, the character description used in the model may not easily be understood by Asian. There is likely be deviation in the interpretation of the terms used in the model. Despite certain common value, some description of character strength may not fit into Asian context, some adjustment is needed to be done. This will make the findings more valuable to Asian society, especially when Asia will contribute to 50 percent of total global GDP by 2040 (McKinsey & Company, 2019). If character is proven to have significant impact on business and individual outcome, helping company to select the character fit and developing the character of leaders will surely help the company performance. It is also valuable our society this will help organisations to avoid unnecessary financial crisis and business risk. This is particular important for stakeholders like board members, top-level leaders, shareholders, investors and related stakeholders as character in leadership has been undervalued so long while it keeps playing a prominent role in business decisions (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012

Future research trench of this topic

- ▶ Drawing alignment on the definition of character strengths. Currently, there is no alignment in the language used about character strength which creates difficulties in discussion. As mentioned by Crossan and his team, when people mentioned about character, they mean it differently and inconsistently. Many senior leaders admitted that they have limited vocabulary to articulate the construct, many lacks the understanding and its importance (Crossan, Seijts, Gandz, 2015). The interpretation on the topic is different in Asia which increases the challenge.
- ▶ For future research, drawing alignment on the definition of character strengths from both mainstream leadership conceptual discussion and empirical research is a big contribution to related trench of research (Sosik and Cameron, 2010). It can also help to identity the difference between character and personality which many people get confuse about as mentioned in part I of this assignment. The findings of such research can further develop in to systematic tools for assessment. According to Crossan and his team, there is very limited valid and reliable tools available and practitioners need those tools to move from discussing about character development to put it in real practice (Crossan, Seijts, Gandz, 2015).

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Thank You!

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