

APPENDIX GA36d

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name:	LEE Yin Wah, San	Student ID number:	1818880
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University of Wales Trinity Saint David

DBA Programme

Module: SBPD7002

Qualitative Research

For: Dr Stephanie Lee

Student: LEE Yin Wah, San

Student No. 1818880

November 10, 2019

An Evaluation of Current Research and a Research Proposal on Qualitative Research

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Acknowledgement

My sincere thanks to Dr. Stephanie Lee for her patience and insights in bringing qualitative research across remarkably well. I am also grateful to the authors of the evaluation paper who gave a splendid account on humility leadership with a thorough elucidation of the research.

University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

DBA Programme
Module: SBPD7002

Research Proposal
on
Qualitative
Research
(Assignment Part IIB)

LEE Yin Wah, San
Student ID: 1818880

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The slide features abstract green geometric shapes in the corners. The top-left corner has a solid green triangle pointing towards the center. The bottom-right corner has a complex, layered green shape composed of several overlapping triangles and polygons, also pointing towards the center. The text is centered in the white space between these shapes.

A study on the relationship between perceived authoritative leadership and employee innovation in a hierarchical public organization

2. Abstract

- ▶ Study explored the effect of authoritative leadership on employee innovation in a public organization
- ▶ Qualitative research probed into emotional and contextual aspects of participants (Conger, 1998)
- ▶ Negative comments of authoritative leadership was leader supremacy and follower obedience (Farh and Cheng, 2000)
- ▶ Despite damaging effects (Li and Sun, 2015), authoritative leadership is prevalent in Asia, Middle East, Latin America organizations (Schaubroeck et. al., 2017)
- ▶ Positive aspects (Cheng et al., 2004) of authoritative leader was securing employee trust (Tian and Sanchez's, 2017), better work performance (Cheng et al., 2003)
- ▶ Humility of servant and participative leadership restricted authoritarianism
- ▶ Democracy and employee participation discouraged authoritarianism (Aryee et. al., 2007)

Key words: authoritative leadership, Confucianism, employee innovation, employee communication, learning and sharing culture, focus group, interpretive epistemology

3. Research Framework – Planning and Design

Name of researcher:
Yin Wah Lee, San (Student ID: 1818880)

Date:
Oct 26, 2019

Purpose of the Research	Topic	Research Design	Research Methods	Ethical Considerations
Study relationship between perceived Leadership Style and perceived Employee Innovation Identify root cause of employee low response rate to company suggestion program Suggest feasible solution to inspire employee innovation in a hierarchical workplace	A study on the relationship between authoritative leadership and employee innovation in a hierarchical public organization <u>Key Stakeholders</u> Senior leadership team Employees <u>Literature Review</u> <u>Authoritative Leadership</u> (Schaubroeck et. al., 2017) (Tian and Sanchez, 2017) (Chen et. al., 2017) (Burton, 2016) (Li and Sun, 2015) (Wang et. al., 2013) (Locke and Latham, 2006) (Chan et al., 2013) <u>Participative Leadership</u> (Van Dierendonck et. al., 2013) (Krause, Gebert, Kearny, 2007) (Matteson & Irving, 2006) (Somech, 2006) <u>Servant Leadership</u> (Morris et. al., 2005) (Patterson, 2004) (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) (Russell & Stone, 2002)	Step 1: Purpose and Topic of Research Research Question and Objectives Step 2: Literature Review Step 3: Research Philosophy Interpretive Epistemology Research Approach Phenomenology Step 4: Research Methodology Qualitative Research Step 5: Data collection and Analysis Step 6: Critique Discussion Limitations of research Step 7: Conclusion	<u>Philosophy of Interpretive Epistemology</u> Qualitative Research Primary Data Secondary Data Purposive Sampling Literature Review Focus Groups - Internal (FG1 & 2) - External (FG3) Leadership Theories Triangulation Participant Observation Innovation	Researcher establish trust with participants of focus groups Ethics to obtain data without fabrication Confidentiality and Anonymity are crucial Data Collection, Validation, and Analysis <u>Qualitative approach</u> 3 focus groups of 22 participants: - 2 groups from staff at different levels and functions of the public company - 1 group from external executives of various industries Use <u>Vivo Coding</u> to analyze data for key statement, meaning, structural description Researcher gives a fair evaluation of empirical & observational data from 3 focus groups

4. Research Question

- ▶ How to inspire employee innovation under authoritative leadership in a highly governed environment?

Objectives/Purpose:

- ▶ To explore motivation for employee suggestion in a workplace with strict compliance
- ▶ To observe incentive or obstacle to employee innovation
- ▶ To investigate current channels for employee communication with senior management
- ▶ To verify if employees believe in management to listen and care about their input

5. Research Philosophy

Governed how empirical data was gathered and analyzed to form coherent thoughts and actions

4 components: ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994)

Answers to these 4 questions depicted the approach of this research on authoritative leadership

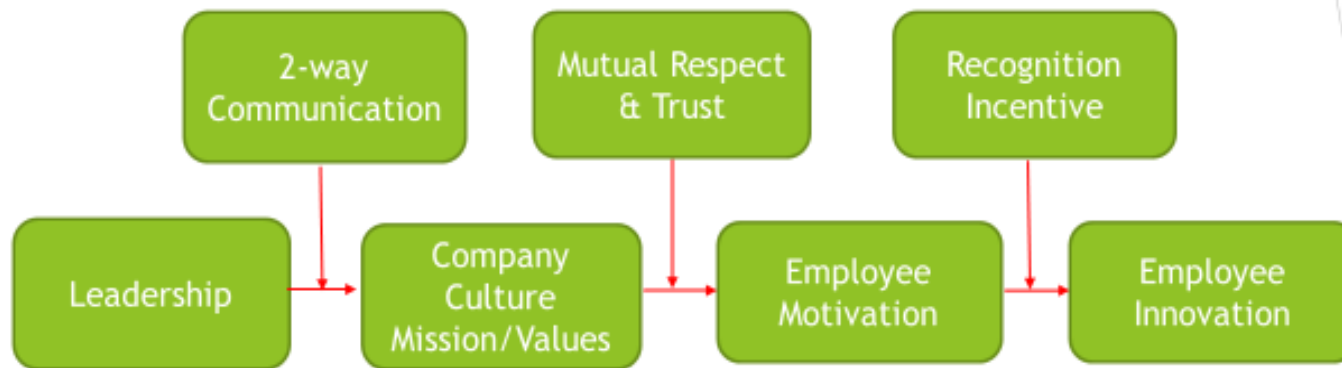
- ▶ Ontological question 'What is the reality?' - researcher developed themes from interview findings
- ▶ Epistemological question 'What is known about the reality?' - researcher obtained subjective evidence from interviewing participants in focus groups
- ▶ Axiological question 'How to turn belief into reality?' - researcher integrated own belief with values of participants to form a realistic picture on authoritative leadership
- ▶ Methodological question 'What is the process of research?' - researcher applied a qualitative design using inductive logic from ground up to sort out key messages in interview. The design called Grounded Theory generated an explanation (theory) of a phenomenon shaped by views of participants, not off-the-shelf from existing theory.

To be specific,

the study pursued a qualitative research overarched by a philosophy of Interpretive Epistemology based on reality to interpret behaviors of a phenomenon and explain response of participant (Creswell, 2009).

Used 3 focus groups at different levels and industries to generate qualitative data.

Proposed Theoretical Model



6. Literature Review

- ▶ Confucianism likely the origin of authoritarianism in the East (Van Norden, Bryan W., 2013)
- ▶ Promoted harmony through obedience with people, family, government (Chen, 2008), welcomed by leaders (Chen, 2010)
- ▶ Culture dominated thought to preside leadership approach. Authoritative leadership was common in China, Korea, and Japan under Confucian influence (Kim, 2013)
- ▶ Priority on social face, conflict avoidance, and conformist mentality retarded innovation of Chinese and organizations (Chen, 2009)
- ▶ For social harmony, Chinese reluctant to take risk (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011), which was essential to innovation (Adair, 2007)
- ▶ Nowadays subtle authoritative leaders carried a participative flair to meet demand on democracy and participation
- ▶ Contemporary leadership models highlighted humility in a bottom-up approach in servant, participative, and humility leadership (Morris et al., 2005)

7. Research Method

- ▶ Qualitative research to collect primary data from 3 focus groups: 2 from the public company with participants across functions and levels, 1 from external executives of various industries
- ▶ Literature review to collect secondary data on leadership and employee innovation

7.1 Sampling strategy and participant selection

Focus Group interview collected more information from small groups of participants in a short time span (Denscombe, 2007)

- ▶ Focus Group 1
12 middle management selected from Administration, Accounting, Training & Development, R&D, Business Development, Marketing, Public Relations
- ▶ Focus Group 2
5 senior management including heads of Internal Audit, Procurement, R&D, Legal, and Program Management
- ▶ Focus Group 3
5 executives from various outside industries to share their current practices

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participating employees (middle management) in Focus Group 1

Gender	Age	Academic	Industry	Function	Income Range
Female	>30	Bachelor Degree	Public Company Employees	Administrative	\$350K - \$700K <i>per annum</i>
Male		Master Degree		Company Secretariat	
Male		Master Degree		Training	
Male		PhD		R&D - Engineering	
Female		PhD		R&D - Engineering	
Male		PhD		R&D - Engineering	
Male		Master Degree		Accounting	
Female		Bachelor Degree		Accounting	
Male		Bachelor Degree		Marketing	
Female		Master Degree		Event Management	
Male		Bachelor Degree		New Business Development	
Male		Master Degree		Key Account Management	

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of participating employees (senior management) in Focus Group 2

Gender	Age	Academic	Industry	Function	Income Range
Male	>40	Master Degree	Public Company Employees	Internal Audit	>\$900K <i>per annum</i>
Male		Master Degree		Procurement	
Male		Master Degree		R&D - Engineering	
Male		Master Degree		In-house Legal	
Female		Master Degree		Program Management	

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of external participants from various industries in Focus Group 3

Gender	Age	Academic	Industry	Function	Income Range
					<i>per annum</i>
Male	>55	Master Degree	Information Technology	Finance	>\$900K
Male	<45	Master Degree	FMCG	Sales & Marketing	>\$750K
Male	<55	Master Degree	Academy	Lecturer	>\$900K
Male	<55	Master Degree	Financial Services	Account Management	>\$900K
Female	<55	Master Degree	Training & Development	Business owner / Trainer	<\$900K

7. Research Method...

7.2 Interview questions

- ▶ Each focus group had 12 questions for discussion during group sharing
- ▶ Researcher acted as a facilitator to lead the group to express their views freely without interruption. Let the answers to questions surfaced naturally.
- ▶ Researcher observed closely facial expression and body language of participants as additional clues **of mental reaction**
- ▶ Please refer to Appendix 1 for the interview questions of the 3 groups

7.3 Data Collection

- ▶ Primary data from 3 focus groups
- ▶ Secondary data from literature review
- ▶ 4 steps: planning, communication, data collection & analysis, conclusion
- ▶ Planning - researcher picked participants based on background and influence
- ▶ Communication - announced interview objective, arrangement, expectation
- ▶ Data collection & analysis - collected responses from participants on interview questions
- ▶ Conclusion - analysis of empirical data to document findings

7.4 Data Validation

- ▶ Data and notes were transcribed immediately after interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)
- ▶ Researcher validated with respondents on suspicions to avoid misinterpretation (Maxwell J. A., 2005)
- ▶ Used People Triangulation to provide a hierarchical data source from various corporate levels (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005)

7.5 Data Analysis

- ▶ Focus groups gave rich empirical data, both narrative and observational like facial expression, body language
- ▶ Identified emerging themes classified by questions, and the overall theme of the study
- ▶ Used coding to group similar data together into analyzable units and recurring patterns
- ▶ Researcher pursued Vivo Coding, which used words or phrase from participant saying as codes

8. Ethical Considerations

- ▶ Researcher wrote to participants on study objective, logistics, voluntary participation
- ▶ No deceit of data and procedures
- ▶ Maintain anonymity and location of participants
- ▶ Analysis without fabrication, false material, intended omission (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)
- ▶ Researcher might bias in focus group discussion and data interpretation

9. Preliminary Findings

- ▶ Empirical data from focus group interviews
- ▶ Literature review on authoritative leadership, employee innovation
- ▶ Authoritative leadership was common in organizations within Chinese context
- ▶ Some considered it delivering a working efficiency no other leadership can do
- ▶ Employee innovation required recognition, incentive, encouragement, coaching, and specific timeline
- ▶ Participation in work decision would enhance employee engagement, raise morale, and inspire innovation
- ▶ Employees needed to feel safe before making suggestions at work
- ▶ Public organization with clear hierarchy might retard innovation due to slow response to market, passive to new ideas, and cautious to new initiative

Table 4. Coding Tree - Preliminary Findings

Employee Innovation									
Leadership Style		Company Culture		Communication		Motivation		Incentive	
Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current
Visionary	Hierarchical	Positive	Reserved	2-way	Email	Feel Engaged	Self-Improving	Recognition	Not aware
Transformational	Autocratic	Supportive	Silo	In-person	Intranet	Mutual Trust & Respect	Team Support	Tangible Reward	Not sure
Participative	Visionary	Learning & Sharing	One-way	People-oriented	Newsletter		Self-fulfilment		
	Competitive		Bureaucratic		Town Hall	Sense of Belonging			
Allow Autonomy	Distant	Open	Cold	Regular	Team based	Sense of Achievement			
Empathy	Parental	Empathy	Transactional	Formal & Informal	One-way	High Morale			
	Not sure	Energetic	Operational		Social Media	Path for Future Growth and Development			
					No Clear Channel	Affiliation - Relationship with co-worker			

10. Discussion

- ▶ Findings identified authoritative leadership in the public organization within a Chinese context
- ▶ Focus group revealed negative aspects of authoritative leadership on employee communication and innovation

Answer to research question

- ▶ Employee with a free hand and active participation in work decision inspired innovation
- ▶ 2-way communications at team and company levels broke down barrier to elicit new ideas
- ▶ Trust in management was key to employee communications and new ideas

11. Research Limitations and Future Study

Limitation

- ▶ Study was confined to three small focus groups, two from the public organization and one from outside companies. Findings might not be universally applicable.
- ▶ Use of Chinese samples limited validity to other cultures (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008)
- ▶ One researcher to collect data (Patton, 2002), inviting personal bias in interpretation (Creswell, 2006)

Future study

- ▶ Other areas like employee engagement, team building, and morale could be affected by authoritative setting
- ▶ Explore authoritative approach in other industries, regions, and cultures
- ▶ Positive aspect of authoritative leadership was barely exploited

12. Conclusion

- ▶ Authoritative leadership was viewed as negative (Chen X.P. et al., 2014). But findings claimed its positive contribution to employee performance (Huang et al., 2015).
- ▶ Dual nature of authoritative leadership aroused attention with China's rising global influence
- ▶ Study answered the research question that employee given a free-hand (Chen, W., 2009) and active participation (Krause, et. al., 2007) in work decision would inspire innovation. 2-way communication was key to solicit their new ideas (Van Dierendonck, et. al., 2013).

12. Conclusion...

- ▶ Authoritative leaders faced a paradigm shift in the age of organizational democracy and broader participation of followers in the workplace
- ▶ Contemporary leadership models portrayed vigorous partnership and interaction with employees (Rossberger, R. J., & Krause, D. E., 2015)
- ▶ New authoritative leaders would connect servant and humility leadership to learn about teamwork, talent development and innovation
- ▶ Probably transformed into a kind of subtle authoritative leader with a participative flair



THANK YOU



Part IIA Evaluation of Current Research

1. Bibliography

Owens B.P. & Hekman D.R. (2012). Modeling how to grow: an inductive examination of humble leader behaviors, contingencies, and outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal* 2012, Vol. 55, No. 4, 787–818.

2. Impact factor

According to 2018 Journal Citation Reports, the *Journal of the Academy of Management* has a high rating in terms of paper citations.

- 2016 Impact factor 7.417 5-year impact factor 11.891
- #9 of 217 Journal in Management

3. Paper layout

The structure was not clearly visible to the average reader at first glance. The article did not start with a common format of Abstract, Introduction, and Literature Review. Instead there was a general description making it rather confusing for readers to follow through. The rest of the paper appeared normal with Methods, Data collection and analysis, Discussion, Future research, and Conclusion.

4. Abstract

Although abstract was not explicitly stated at the start, the authors gave a good account on the theoretical motivation behind the paper by stressing humility leadership was little known against its outcome on organizational effectiveness. Reviewer found the problem statement agreed with the title and seemed to be of research significance. The statement was ‘With increasing importance of leader humility in organizational effectiveness, what was the nature and behaviours of humility leaders?’. The authors showed a cause-and-effect relationship between these variables through a model from interview findings of 55 business leaders and many followers in different contexts. They found that humility leadership involved leaders modeling to followers the way to grow for organizational prosperity. The leadership model thus proposed would address various issues including leader-follower relationship, follower engagement, and blending of top-down and bottom-up communications.

5. Introduction

The introductory description gave a rationale for the study of humility leadership and included a review of previous research to offer a base for the interview questions. The authors managed to highlight the growing awareness of humility in contemporary leadership studies. They convinced readers that humility in perspective was indeed an extension of similar studies in last decade. For instance, servant leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) and participative leadership (Kim, 2002) propagated the virtue of humbleness

for leader effectiveness on followers. Humility leadership, which literarily meant ‘leading from the ground’ or ‘bottom-up leadership’, was significant at a time of rising leader arrogance and narcissism that caused bad decisions (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). In this age of complexity and volatility, it was challenging for any leader to manage all at the top (Senge, 1990) and thus shifted them towards a more bottom-up approach (Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005). However, the authors reiterated that there was a substantial gap in our mastery of humility leadership. They were right to point out leader humility was likely a sporadic personality trait that somehow mysteriously conveyed favorable aftermath. The image of humility leaders was still obscure in terms of behavior, personal and situational factors that affected work processes and outcomes. This lack of clarity discouraged theoretical and empirical inquiry and even potential application. Thus, reviewer supported the authors using a grounded inductive approach to seek the views and experience of followers with humble leaders (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), as well as talking to organizational leaders how humility deployed in organizations. Their aim was to build a conceptual framework on the viability of humbleness in the workplace. The authors were right to point out the study was just the beginning of a journey on humble leadership (Payne & Williams, 2005).

6. Literature review

Reviewer found the authors cited a broad review of literature on humility with reference to western and oriental philosophies. Humility as a virtue was the foundation of all major world religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. From a Buddhist perspective, humility was a result of enlightenment and nirvana (Wilson, 2009). Hospitality and humility were key values of Hinduism (Das, 2005). Philosophers suggested humility was prime to other virtues like forgiveness, courage, wisdom, and compassion (Grenberg, 2005). It was also a temperance virtue that captured a person’s proper self-perspective (Tangney, 2000) against excess (Park & Peterson, 2003), keeping people within Aristotelian ‘golden mean’ (Crisp, 2000), Buddhist ‘middle way’ (Marinoff, 2007), and Confucian ‘zhong yong’ - doctrine of the mean (Confucius, 2006). Contrary to narcissism, which was associated with abasing self-views (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), humility was a temperance virtue with a grounding influence on self-perceptions (Park & Peterson, 2003). In organization, humility was viewed as good, human, and elicited social harmony (Bright, Cameron, & Caza, 2006) and would foster exceptional work performance and altruistic behavior (Cameron & Caza, 2004). Leader humility highlighted a less self-interested leadership approach, which was argued to increase follower affiliation and trust of a leader (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010). Similarly, humility might elevate leader-follower relationship to encourage an unselfish use of power (Morris et al., 2005) and desirable decision making (Kim, 2002). Other studies advocated humility an innate virtue or personality trait one born with, rather than disciplines leaders could deploy. In fact, some qualities of a humility leader like self-awareness, openness to new ideas, and transcend oneself were hard

to duplicate (Morris et al., 2005), particularly their readiness to understand self-strength and weakness and positioning toward others more than self (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010). The authors concluded from literature findings that people had only a vague idea on humility leadership and its influence on followers as well as boundary conditions for such leadership.

Reviewer was curious on the authors aspiration on humility leadership in this age of volatility and ambiguity. Perhaps they envisaged a paradigm shift in leadership towards humbleness that might better handle the new challenges. Contemporary leadership models advocated a bottom-up approach with more participation from followers. These theories highlighted the virtue of humility at the core of the bottom-up leadership (Matteson & Irving, 2006). The surfacing of servant leadership and participative leadership was an attempt to answer the call with leader humility (Morris et al., 2005). However, the meaning of leader humility remained obscure (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002; Kim, 2002) because related literature was largely speculative without supporting qualitative or quantitative evidence.

Given the obscurity of humility and lack of supporting theory, reviewer concurred with the authors to pursue a grounded inductive approach for the study. Humility generally involved how leaders tend to view themselves (more objectively), others (more appreciatively), and new ideas (more openly) (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2012). The authors observed this general, virtue-based definition as a basic view of humility going into their study and examined how humble leadership overlapped with or differ from this virtue-based definition. This guideline shaped their field inquiry and interview approach in data collection. They asked participants about specific humble leader behaviors and their perceived outcomes in organizations. They interviewed leaders across levels in different contexts to sort out conditions where humble leader would be more effective. They suspected there were boundary situations in which humility leadership would be weak and ineffective. They also explored related bottom-up approach like servant leadership where leader humility was considered learning from and gratefully received feedback from followers, emphasized self-sacrifice to followers who would become more committed to organizational success (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). Besides, humility was supposed to deliver emotional management against negative emotions of envy and jealousy which deterred accurate self-appraisals (Morris et al., 2005). Authors made a sensible move to prioritize empirical tests of the perceived humility leadership as there was no antecedent.

7. Research Method

7.1 Qualitative research

The authors were apt to pursue a qualitative approach to study a subject like leadership which was highly complex with delicate contextual interpretations (Conger, 1998). Qualitative analysis focused on qualities

of entities and meanings not experimentally tested in terms of quantity found in quantitative analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Direct inquiry into personal experiences and observation of behavioral pattern would reveal inside emotion and perception of participants. During interview, the researcher followed a natural flow of the dialog and waited for answers to surface. This personal interaction secured a human touch essential in exploring sophisticated mental responses unique to qualitative research. The setting appealed to the authors whose interest was to explore not only leader behavior, but also mental model and personal theory of these behaviors. They chose a case study method with follow-up interviews in multiple contexts to reach theoretical inference within boundary conditions, which was a common qualitative study in leadership (Bryman, 2004).

7.2 Philosophy engagement

There was increasing concern about dissertations without elaborating the philosophy of research design. As this paper was without such elucidation, reviewer attempted to examine it from four philosophical perspectives - ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology

Ontology

Researchers in the past focused their studies on the nature of leadership. From the philosophical point of view, this could be interpreted as they were still trying to find answers to some basic ontological questions, like ‘What is the meaning of leadership?’, ‘How can leaders leverage leadership in different contexts?’. The authors raised similar questions in their study, such as ‘How would humility be manifested in the workplace?’, ‘Where does leader humility lead to?’, ‘What exactly do leaders do when they behaved humbly?’.

Epistemology

Reviewer was glad to find the authors pursued a philosophy of interpretivist epistemology to deal with their leadership study which was a socially constructed phenomenon. According to the subjective–objective continuum proposed by Morgan, G. and Smircich, L. (1980), it indicated researcher holding the view of leadership as insider, or emic perspective, would take a stance to the left of the continuum of being subjective, which favored personal observation of the reality of social phenomenon. This sounded logical as leaders were bound to observe other leader’s behaviors (Armstrong, Allinson, & Hayes, 2002).

Axiology

From an axiology perspective, findings of a study should be of significant values both to literature and practitioners. The contribution of new knowledge ought to be highly usable to the research community and the users, or else such studies should not be worth doing. To address a deeper understanding of bottom-up leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006), the authors conducted a qualitative research to uncover the behaviors,

mechanisms, contingencies, and outcomes of humble leadership. This was the first study of its kind on such bottom-up approach. It would inspire future research and business exploration.

Methodology

To address the research process, authors pursued a qualitative approach by using inductive logic from ground up to sort out key messages on humility leadership from interviews. This qualitative research design was called Grounded Theory in which researcher generated an explanation or theory of a phenomenon shaped by the views of interview participants, rather than off-the-bench from existing theory. Reviewer agreed that this was a proper way to tackle a relatively unexploited subject like humility leadership.

7.3 Data collection methods

Authors explained clearly the approach to collect empirical data from field interviews. Questionnaire and interview questions for leaders and followers were explained (Figure 1) and the reliability of field data was delineated. Reviewer found the sample population was adequate in terms of number, level, and context. As this was a qualitative study, there was no discussion on statistical techniques.

Authors were clever in the way they picked the target company in North America. They were convinced humbleness was likely to be found in leaders survived through adverse challenges with mistakes committed and feeling powerless in uncertainty (Exline & Geyer, 2004). It happened that the housing bubble in US burst in 2007 and mortgage banks were deeply impacted to fight for survival (Trejos, 2007). The industry was humbled by adverse challenges (DeSilver, 2008). Authors were quick to pick a large mortgage bank as a meaningful context to explore humility leadership. This gave them a rather ideal starting point. They lost no time to conduct 3 rounds of exhaustive interviews across levels and positions, which from research standard, was a relatively broad sample base. For instance, in the first round, they met 17 leaders from regional president to branch manager in 4 hierarchical levels from headquarter and 14 branch offices. Reviewer would rate it a balanced coverage on management to solicit different views of humility in workplace. To achieve that, authors prepared 12 interview questions to interact with participants (Figure 1) to elicit anecdotes of humble leader behavior and its consequences. They went even a step further to join management meetings to observe their leader-follower interactions. Reviewer was amazed to find the authors took the trouble to meet the consultant firm which provided in-house training to learn their interactions with employees and a 360 degrees feedback on humility. In the second round of interview, authors focused on power-centralized and power-decentralized organizations to see how a bottom-up, humility leadership performed. In the first group, they met 3 industrial and 7 military leaders; the second group, 5 high-tech and 8 hospital leaders. The third round embraced organizations with power distribution in between. They saw 7 leaders in financial and retail service companies. As religious organizations also

promoted humility within a hierarchical framework (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega, & Weitz, 2007), they also interviewed 8 leaders to explore boundary conditions of humility leadership. Reviewer was impressed by the thoroughness authors displayed in achieving a variegated sample.

The authors also demonstrated an efficient way to increase the number of interviews by using a snowball sampling technique. They first approached leaders from each organization and through snowballing secured further interviews until theoretical saturation was reached. In all interviews, they picked sample leaders from different levels (16 CEOs, presidents, high-level executives; 20 mid-level leaders; 19 frontline leaders) to observe differences in humble behaviors and their impact relative to leader visibility and influence.

7.4 Critique of methods used

Authors demonstrated a well-planned strategy for data collection. They initiated three rounds of interview to embrace a wide spectrum of participants across diverse organizational levels from various contexts in different trades. Such comprehensive move would secure more and better empirical data, which when coupled with field observation would be efficacious to depict a clearer picture of humility leadership. Reviewer observed the authors employed two data sampling techniques worth mentioning for future study. Theoretical Sampling used literature review to narrow down target organizations, while Snowball Sampling boosted interviews via intra-referral within an organization.

Reviewer was convinced this study on humility leadership exhaustive particularly for a journal article. For the most part, the paper was well written and organized to sustain clarity of reading. Authors kicked off the project with a literature review on humility to position the study in the right perspectives. That would dictate the correct research philosophy and methodology to move on. Overall, the research findings were interesting and contributed significantly to a barely covered field of humility leadership.

8. Discussion

The authors proposed a unique humble leadership framework among existing bottom-up leadership models such as servant, participative, and democratic leadership. It was a rare exposition on the mechanism and outcome of humility leadership. In this regard, the study made a unique contribution to literature (Uhl-Bien, 2006) and uncovered great potential for future research. It also addressed criticism of leadership theory being too decontextualized (Yukl, 2010) by casting boundary conditions, situational constraints, and contextual factors through a wide spectrum of organizational types and leadership levels. Reviewer reckoned two important findings that underpinned the significance of bottom-up leadership against traditional top-down approach. First, humble leader was ready to admit mistake and value follower strength.

Second, legitimization of personal development and uncertainty. Leaders admitting limitation and knowledge gap, while encouraging contribution of followers, would help an organization to stay afresh (Swift & West, 1998). Reviewer was also in consensus with the author's claim that bottom-up leadership was more appropriate in nowadays open and knowledge-driven social context (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2006).

Authors raised an interesting point on the transition from bottom-up to top-down leadership or vice versa. Top-down relationship was less complex, as leaders gave order for followers to carry out. It would be difficult to transit to the bottom-up, humble leadership style as it required to breakdown silos. Reviewer wondered the viability to promote humility leadership in bureaucratic organizations for unseen benefits. However, authors claimed that bottom-up leader behavior was useful in hierarchies even if they occurred less often. Overall, the new humility leadership model expanded the scope of such leader with boundary conditions of ineffectiveness such as extreme threat and time pressure, perceptions of leader competence and sincerity.

9. Limitations and Future Research

Reviewer was keen to explore further the limitations raised by the authors in their study of humility leadership. First, the research was conducted in North America organizations with hierarchical context, it would be doubtful if the finding was applicable to Asian cultures. Second, the influence of leadership level on leader humility. Reviewer wished to point out that oriental philosophy was dominated by humbleness and harmony well cast in Confucianism. The hefty hierarchical power structure dictated the levels of humility. Lastly, interaction of humility leadership with prevalent approaches such as transformational and democratic leadership. It would be interesting to find out how humility altered the psychological and subjective perspectives of authoritative leaders in Chinese contexts.

10. Conclusion

Reviewer was delighted to have read a fine journal article on humility leadership in a time of rapid globalization and cultural diversification. It has become increasingly difficult for any a leader to know everything in this age of uncertainty (Senge, 1990). The secret to success was not knowledge alone, but how well leaders knew themselves inside and how willing they mingled with followers in a team context (Burke, 2006). Reviewer couldn't agree with the authors more that to effectively lead organizations amidst burgeoning competition, leaders must be open to admit things they were ignorant and glad to accept gracefully the unique skills, knowledge, and contributions of those around them.

Part II B Research Proposal

1. Title

A study on the relationship between perceived authoritative leadership and employee innovation in a hierarchical public organization

2. Abstract

The study attempted to explore from a cultural perspective the effect of authoritative leadership on employee innovation in a hierarchical public organization. Democracy and participation in workplace were argued to discourage authoritarianism with a dictatorial notion (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007), yet its emergence was not uncommon among Asian cultures. Researcher pursued a qualitative approach to examine the emotional implications and contextual interpretations of such leadership (Conger, 1998).

Authoritative leaders deployed supremacy and demanded obedience from followers (Farh and Cheng, 2000). They drove the team for great results and make decisions for them (Zhang and Xie, 2017). Authoritative leadership was known for its damaging effects on employees (Li and Sun, 2015) and infelicitous in organization. However, there was prevalence of the leadership (Schaubroeck et al., 2017) in Asia, Middle East, and Latin America (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008), with claims of positive influence like securing employee trust (Tian and Sanchez's, 2017) and better performance (Cheng et al., 2003).

The existence of authoritative leadership within Chinese contexts (Cheng et al., 2004) was barely explored in a public company in Hong Kong. The researcher was keen to find out how authoritative leaders adapted to the new age and influenced employee innovation.

Key words: authoritative leadership, innovation, Confucianism, humility, servant, participative, interpretive epistemology, grounded theory, focus group

3. Research Framework – Planning and Design

Name of researcher:
Yin Wah Lee, San (Student ID: 1818880)

Date:
Oct 26, 2019

Purpose of the Research	Topic	Research Design	Research Methods	Ethical Considerations
Study relationship between perceived Leadership Style and perceived Employee Innovation Identify root cause of employee low response rate to company suggestion program Suggest feasible solution to inspire employee innovation in a hierarchical workplace	A study on the relationship between authoritative leadership and employee innovation in a hierarchical public organization <u>Key Stakeholders</u> Senior leadership team Employees	Step 1: Purpose and Topic of Research Research Question and Objectives Step 2: Literature Review Step 3: Research Philosophy Interpretive Epistemology Research Approach Phenomenology Step 4: Research Methodology Qualitative Research Step 5: Data collection and Analysis Step 6: Critique Discussion Limitations of research Step 7: Conclusion	Philosophy of Interpretive Epistemology Qualitative Research Primary Data Secondary Data Purposive Sampling Literature Review Focus Groups - Internal (FG1 & 2) - External (FG3) Triangulation Participant Observation Leadership Theories Innovation	Ethical Considerations Researcher establish trust with participants of focus groups Ethics to obtain data without fabrication Confidentiality and Anonymity are crucial Data Collection, Validation, and Analysis Qualitative approach 3 focus groups of 22 participants: - 2 groups from staff at different levels and functions of the public company - 1 group from external executives of various industries Use Vivo Coding to analyze data for key statement, meaning, structural description Researcher gives a fair evaluation of empirical & observational data from 3 focus groups
Philosophy Interpretive Epistemology	Literature Review <u>Authoritative Leadership</u> (Schaubroeck et. al., 2017) (Tian and Sanchez, 2017) (Chen et. al., 2017) (Burton, 2016) (Li and Sun, 2015) (Wang et. al., 2013) (Locke and Latham, 2006) (Chan et al., 2013)			
Approach Phenomenology Research Collect data from focus groups on participant experience Collect researcher observation of participants at focus groups Based on inquiry, reality, personal experience, emotion and perception of participants to interpret behaviors of a phenomenon.	<u>Participative Leadership</u> (Van Dierendonck et. al., 2013) (Krause, Gebert, Kearny, 2007) (Matteson & Irving, 2006) (Somech, 2006) <u>Servant Leadership</u> (Morris et. al., 2005) (Patterson, 2004) (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) (Russell & Stone, 2002)			

The framework depicted the entire research from start to finish. Starting on the left was purpose of the research overarched by an interpretive epistemology in a qualitative approach. Literature review provided secondary data to supplement primary data collected through 3 focus groups and analyzed using vivo coding. Due emphasis was given to ethical considerations in data collection and analysis.

4. Research question

The researcher came across a hierarchical public organization in high tech business that demanded considerable innovation. The workplace diffused a sense of bureaucracy with a touch of authoritative leadership typical of governmental setup. The research question was, 'How to inspire employee innovation under authoritative leadership in a public organization?'. The objectives were,

- To explore motivation for employee suggestion in a workplace with strict compliance
- To observe incentive or obstacle to employee innovation
- To investigate current channels for employee communication with senior management
- To verify if employees believe in management listening and caring their input

5. Research philosophy

Research philosophy governed the way empirical data was gathered and analyzed. It underpinned a research study to form a skeleton of coherent thought and action. The skeleton was formed by four components: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Researcher proceeded to answer these four philosophical questions for the study.

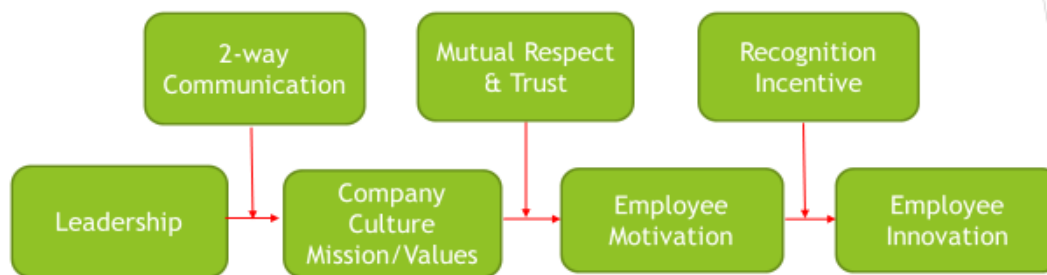
- Ontological question 'What is the reality?' - researcher developed themes from interview findings
- Epistemological question 'What is known about the reality?' - researcher obtained subjective evidence from interviewing participants in focus groups
- Axiological question 'How to turn belief into reality?' - researcher integrated own belief with values of participants to form a realistic picture on authoritative leadership
- Methodological question 'What is the process of research?' - researcher pursued a qualitative approach by using inductive logic from ground up to sort out key messages from interviews. This qualitative research design was called Grounded Theory in which researcher generated an explanation (theory) of a phenomenon shaped by the views of participants, rather than from existing theory.

The research employed a qualitative approach overarched by a philosophy of interpretive epistemology which was based on reality to interpret behaviors of a phenomenon and explain response of participants in interview. The format might be focus group, interview, questionnaire or case study to generate qualitative data. In this study, researcher used focus group in view of short timeline. Interpretive methodology tried to understand a phenomenon from individual's perspective, interaction among individuals and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2009). For a complex subject like leadership with

delicate contextual interpretations (Conger, 1998), qualitative research was chosen for quality of entities and meanings hard to test by quantity as in quantitative analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Direct inquiry into personal experiences and observation of behavioral pattern would reveal inside emotion and perception of participants. During interview, researcher followed a natural flow of the dialog and waited for answers to surface. This personal interaction secured a human touch essential in exploring sophisticated mental responses unique to qualitative study. According to the subjective–objective continuum proposed by Morgan, G. and Smircich, L. (1980), researcher holding the view of leadership as insider, or emic perspective, would take a stance to the left of the continuum of being subjective, which favored personal observation of the realistic social phenomenon.

The diagram illustrated the theoretical model proposed by the researcher.

Proposed Theoretical Model



6. Literature review

The researcher conducted a literature review on leadership and employee innovation trying to find a gap, if any, worth exploring in the public company.

6.1 Leadership trend

In the West, leadership theory evolved from authoritarian in old times to authoritative, transactional, transformational, and lately to humility, servant, and participative leadership. Authoritarian and

authoritative were often used interchangeably, but there was a difference between them. Authoritarian leader enforced strict obedience at the expense of personal freedom (Machiavelli, 1998). While authoritative leader was commanding, self-confident, and likely to be respected and obeyed. In short, authoritative leader earned respect, while authoritarian demanded respect. In Asia, Confucianism was argued to be the origin of authoritarianism (Goleman, D., 2000), which advanced to a more receptive authoritative approach in China, Korea, and Japan (Kim, 2013). Nowadays, rising influence of China re-directed focus on authoritative leadership (Schaubroeck et al., 2017) surfaced in local cultures especially in areas with Chinese context (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008; Fu et. al., 2008).

6.2 Confucianism

Confucianism was the ruling ideology in China for 2,500 years and forged Chinese character with resilience and compromise. It was an authoritative system demanding harmony, obedience and respect for leaders in a top-down hierarchy. Confucianism was claimed to be the origin of authoritarianism with minor influence from Legalism (Van Norden, Bryan W., 2013). Harmony stressed a peaceful relationship through obedience with people, family, and government (Chen, 2008) much welcomed by bureaucratic leaders (Chen, 2010). The pressure to sustain harmony transformed Chinese into a conformist mentality to avoid tense relationship (Wang & Zheng, 2005). The priority on social face and conflict avoidance retarded people's innovation (Chen, 2009). The desire to maintain social harmony refrained Chinese from risk-taking of innovative initiatives (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011; Adair, 2007). Such mental bonding largely reflected in Chinese organizations becoming a market follower rather than a leader (Troyer & Younggreen, 2009).

6.3 Authoritative leadership

Authoritative leadership worked in a pressurized hierarchy using absolute power and control over followers for high performance and strict obedience (Zhang and Xie, 2017). The outcome was likely an arrogant leader with supreme authority (Clarke, 2004). Authoritative leaders used to solve problems independently without considering other's opinions. They were good at painting a bright future with ways to reach them. The presence of such leaders in Chinese societies and Asian countries was associated with Confucian culture (Redding, 1990). People normally refused strong leadership permanently as it would do more harm than good (Vecchio, Robert, P. 1998). As authoritative leader used to set high working standard and punished for under-performance (Wang et al., 2013). Staff would become passive and resentful which was a threat to innovation (Li and Sun, 2015). Talent people were gone, leaving less competent ones working in passive mode with delay tactics (Burton, 2016). Despite its negative image (Li and Sun, 2015), authoritative leadership was crucial in time-critical manufacturing, military, emergency, and media sectors (Tian and Sanchez, 2017). Recent

studies even suggested its positive influence on subordinates (Schaubroeck et al., 2017). Some people did well under control coupled with incentives and punishment (Chen et al., 2017). Authoritative leaders used to set goals and make all decisions, leaving employees just to work (Locke and Latham, 2006) under clear instructions for better output (Schaubroeck et al., 2017).

6.4 Participative approach to leadership

In this age of volatility and complexity, it was challenging for leaders to manage uncertainties at will. There appeared a paradigm shift towards openness in the new setting. Current leadership models advocated participation and humility in the workplace to inspire employee innovation (Krause, Gebert & Kearney, 2007). The priority was on listening and empowering employees (Van Dierendonck et al., 2013) to get their peak performance. Sharing approach included Servant Leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) and Participative Leadership (Somech, 2006) that advocated leader humility (Morris et al., 2005) in a bottom-up approach with active participation from followers (Matteson & Irving, 2006). Servant leader placed follower's interests over self-interest (Patterson, 2004), and acted as servant to others (Russell & Stone, 2002). However, the meaning of leader humility remained obscure (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002), as existing literature was largely speculative without supporting qualitative or quantitative evidence. In organization, humility was viewed as good and human for social harmony (Bright, Cameron, & Caza, 2006), inspiring performance and altruism (Cameron & Caza, 2004). Leader humility was argued to increase follower affiliation and trust in leader (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010), enhanced leader-follower relationship in unselfish use of power (Morris et al., 2005) and better decision-making (Kim, 2002).

7. Research method

The study aimed to probe the link between authoritative leadership and employee innovation in a hierarchical public organization. For a hypothetical study of an abstract subject like leadership, researcher decided on a qualitative method to better capture personal perspective and experience of participants (Maxwell J. A., 2005) as well as their behavior (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Researcher remained open-minded to observe and interpret responses of participants in a social context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

7.1 Sampling strategy and participant selection

Researcher chose focus group interview to collect larger amount of data in a short time. It was easy to conduct and low-cost. The setting was interactive for free discussion. Ideally it involved 6-9 people to explore a topic (Denscombe, 2007). There were three focus groups for the study. The first two groups came from the public company involving middle management and senior management across

functions. The third group covered outside executives from various industries.

- Focus Group 1

12 middle management from Administration, Accounting, Training & Development, R&D, Business Development, Marketing, Public Relations

- Focus Group 2

5 senior management including heads of Internal Audit, Procurement, R&D

- Focus Group 3

5 executives randomly selected from various industries in banking, education, retail, and manufacturing

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participating employees (middle management) in Focus Group 1

Gender	Age	Academic	Industry	Function	Income Range
Female	>30	Bachelor Degree	Public Company Employees	Administrative	\$350K - \$700K <i>per annum</i>
Male		Master Degree		Company Secretariat	
Male		Master Degree		Training	
Male		PhD		R&D - Engineering	
Female		PhD		R&D - Engineering	
Male		PhD		R&D - Engineering	
Male		Master Degree		Accounting	
Female		Bachelor Degree		Accounting	
Male		Bachelor Degree		Marketing	
Female		Master Degree		Event Management	
Male		Bachelor Degree		New Business Development	
Male		Master Degree		Key Account Management	

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of participating employees (senior management) in Focus Group 2

Gender	Age	Academic	Industry	Function	Income Range
					<i>per annum</i>
Male	>40	Master Degree	Public Company Employees	Internal Audit	>\$900K
Male		Master Degree		Procurement	
Male		Master Degree		R&D - Engineering	
Male		Master Degree		In-house Legal	
Female		Master Degree		Program Management	

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of external participants from various industries in Focus Group 3

Gender	Age	Academic	Industry	Function	Income Range
					<i>per annum</i>
Male	>55	Master Degree	Information Technology	Finance	>\$900K
Male	<45	Master Degree	FMCG	Sales & Marketing	>\$750K
Male	<55	Master Degree	Academy	Lecturer	>\$900K
Male	<55	Master Degree	Financial Services	Account Management	>\$900K
Female	<55	Master Degree	Training & Development	Business owner / Trainer	<\$900K

7.2 Interview questions

Each focus group had 12 interview questions designed to solicit personal views on authoritative leadership and employee innovation. Please refer to Appendix 1 for details.

7.3 Data collection

Primary or empirical data came from participant interviews, while literature review provided secondary data from previous studies. Data collection from focus groups was free-flow and open-ended (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). There were four steps - planning, communication, data collection and analysis, conclusion. In planning, researcher picked participants according to their background and influence in the organization. In communication, they were briefed on interview objective, arrangement, and expectation. In data collection and analysis, researcher collected participant responses on interview questions for later study. The conclusion phase documented research findings.

7.4 Data validation

The theme of qualitative analysis was quality of entities, process, and meaning that were not experimentally verifiable in terms of quantity as in quantitative analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The value of direct inquiry into personal experience and observation of behavioral pattern was a revelation of participant's emotions and cognitive states. During interview, the researcher observed a

natural flow of the dialog and waited for answers to surface. Critics on qualitative analysis was its absence of empirical precision vital for scientific investigation. However, qualitative research did provide comparable precision as quantitative approach (Creswell, 1998) by using triangulation to reconfirm findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Moreover, field data and notes were transcribed immediately after interview to record precisely the preliminary picture. Researcher then validated with respondents on suspicions to avoid misinterpretation of input (Maxwell J. A., 2005).

7.5 Data analysis

Data analysis began right after focus groups interviews on written notes and transcription of recordings. Started with big ideas and made a list of them (Anderson, 1990), researcher proceeded to analyze narrative and observational input including facial expression and body language. Vivo coding was used to facilitate analysis of research findings. Vague comments required close probing for understanding, compared results by categories of different focus groups. Priority was given to emerging themes of the study that might lead to a potential theory.

7.6 Coding

Coding allowed researcher to group similar inputs into analyzable unit and recurring pattern. Relevant codes were collected into pattern code. Vivo coding was a common qualitative method which used words or phrase from participant saying as codes. This was the first cycle coding to summarize segments of data. Second cycle or pattern coding grouped summaries into category, cause, relationship, and theoretical construct. In this study, researcher applied vivo coding for data analysis of the three focus groups. (Appendix 1)

7.7 Triangulation and quality

Data Triangulation was achieved through designing interview questions in such a way to secure variegated responses on a broader spectrum. People Triangulation was effective to provide a hierarchical data source from various corporate levels (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005), including senior and mid-level management in the three focus groups. This offered a rich source of information on leader-follower behaviors (Yin, 2003). Triangulation was key to enhance accuracy of qualitative research by evaluating empirical and observational data from different angles (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

8. Ethical considerations

A research could not be deemed intact without ethical considerations. Researcher informed participants in writing on the purpose of the interview, stating their voluntary participation. It was

paramount to maintain anonymity and location of participants by using alphabets to protect their identities. The code of ethics reiterated a decent study should be free from fraudulent data and procedures. Subsequent analysis of findings was done without fabrication, false material, or intended omission (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As researcher was the only one to collect data, care must be taken to avoid personal bias in discussion and interpretation.

9. Preliminary findings

The study started with researcher sourcing secondary data from literature review on authoritative leadership, Confucianism, and employee motivation. Primary data came from three focus group interviews, 2 from the public company and 1 from outside industries. Findings revealed that authoritative leadership existed in organizations, either perceived or understated, despite a mixed feeling towards it. Surprisingly, three out of five senior management and about half middle management found it acceptable. One executive said 'Someone has to be responsible to get things moving. A powerful leader is the solution.' Another echoed, 'Authoritative leadership is receptive across cultures and industries in the world. It delivers a working efficiency no other leading approach can do.'

On employee innovation, three out of five senior management considered timeline and incentives were essential to stimulate innovation. An executive said, 'Encouragement and coaching were necessary to induce continual innovation'. Another thought that more employee participation in work decisions would raise their morale and innovation. 8 out of 12 middle management considered a more participative approach was beneficial to employee innovation. One voiced out this would be difficult to do in a hierarchical public organization. Another participant nodded to say his supervisor was authoritative and passive to new ideas, 'Do what I told you would be fine'. The study suggested that public organization might handicap innovation through slow response to market, passive to new ideas, and cautious to new initiatives.

Table 4. Coding Tree - Preliminary findings on leadership and innovation in the public company

Employee Innovation									
Leadership Style		Company Culture		Communication		Motivation		Incentive	
Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current	Preferred	Current
Visionary	Hierarchical	Positive	Reserved	2-way	Email	Feel Engaged	Self-Improving	Recognition	Not aware
Transformational	Autocratic	Supportive	Silo	In-person	Intranet	Mutual Trust & Respect	Team Support	Tangible Reward	Not sure
Participative	Visionary	Learning & Sharing	One-way	People-oriented	Newsletter		Self-fulfilment		
	Competitive		Bureaucratic		Town Hall	Sense of Belonging			
Allow Autonomy	Distant	Open	Cold	Regular	Team based				
Empathy	Parental	Empathy	Transactional	Formal & Informal	One-way	Sense of Achievement			
	Not sure	Energetic	Operational		Social Media	High Morale			
					No Clear Channel	Path for Future Growth and Development			
						Affiliation - Relationship with co-worker			

Please refer to Appendix 1 for detailed findings of the three focus groups.

10. Discussion

The study found authoritative leadership in the public organization within Chinese context. Responses of focus groups implied its negative influence on employee communication and innovation.

10.1 Answer to research question

The researcher reckoned interview responses largely addressed the research question. By giving employees a free hand with participation in work decision would inspire innovation. Besides, two-way communications at team and corporate levels would break down barriers and elicited new ideas. Trust in management was crucial to maintain ready communications. Authoritative leadership did exist in organizations within Chinese context. As two executives reiterated, ‘Authoritative leadership is receptive across cultures and industries in the world. It delivers a working efficiency no other leading approach can do.’

10.2 Personal reflections

Although authoritative leadership was a least preferred style by followers, yet it rose on the political front in this age of uncertainty and complexity. Business leaders likewise might find the virtues of authoritative style benefitting organizations. This approach was considered the best in making an effective leader. However, care must be taken to win employee acceptance by striking a balance with their quest for democracy and participation. The new subtle authoritative leader probably carried a participative or humble flair in order to succeed in this turbulent age.

11. Research limitations and future study

The study had several inherent limitations. First, findings on authoritative leadership was confined to three small focus groups from the public and outside organizations. The modest sample size might render the findings not universally applicable. Second, the study used a Chinese sample that limited its validity to other cultures (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). Lastly, as researcher was the only person to collect data (Patton, 2002), there might be personal bias in interpretation (Creswell, 2006).

The study was initially designed to explore the effect of authoritative leadership on employee innovation. During investigation, the researcher found other aspects worth further clarification. First, areas like team building and morale could be affected by the authoritative setting. Second, as this study was done in a high-tech, public organization in Hong Kong, future studies might cover other industries, regions, and cultures. Lastly, positive aspects of authoritative leadership remained barely covered leading to a great study potential.

12. Conclusion

Authoritative leadership was generally viewed as negative (Chen X.P. et al., 2014). However, recent findings advocated its positive influence on employee performance (Huang et al., 2015). This dual nature drew renewed focus after China's rising influence. Nowadays, authoritative leaders experienced pressure from followers asking for openness and participation. Thus, contemporary leadership models portrayed vigorous partnership and interaction with employees (Rossberger & Krause, 2015). These theories emphasized listening and empowering employees (Van Dierendonck et. al., 2013) to get their peak performance. Our findings in the public organization suggested a more participative and open workplace would enhance employee communication and innovation. New authoritative leaders were ready to adjust to a participative environment to learn about sharing, teamwork, and innovation in a fast-changing world. Perhaps it was an inevitable adaptation to a paradigm shift towards organizational democracy and participation. They would potentially transform into a kind of subtle authoritative leader with a participative or humble flair to stay successful.

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Appendix 1 - Focus Group Interviews

Focus Groups

The researcher arranged three focus group interviews for the study. The first two groups came from the public company involving middle management and senior management across functions. The third group covered outside executives from various industries.

- Focus Group 1

12 middle management selected from Administration, Accounting, Training & Development, R&D, Business Development, Marketing, Public Relations

- Focus Group 2

5 senior management including department heads of Internal Audit, Procurement, R&D

- Focus Group 3

5 executives randomly selected from various industries in banking, education, retail, and manufacturing to observe their current practice in related areas.

Interview questions

Focus Group 1 (middle management)

1. How would you describe your company culture and leadership style?
2. How would you describe company communication strategy? How effective was it?
3. How often did you communicate with your supervisor? In what form?
4. What is your preferred communication and leadership style of direct supervisor?
5. What is your preferred communication and leadership style of senior leadership team?
6. How did you enjoy the work culture in your team? Did you find it different from the company?
7. Did you aware of any corporate channel for employee suggestions? How did you learn about it?
8. What is the procedure for proposing a new idea to company? How is the process like?
9. Have you ever submitted a suggestion through such channel? What was the outcome?
10. What is the motivation and obstacle to suggest on company policy, work procedure, future plan?

11. How ready were you to encourage employee suggestion and innovation? Any existing channels?
12. Any other thought

Focus Group 2 (senior management)

1. How would you describe your company culture and leadership style?
2. How would you describe the company communication strategy? How effective was it?
3. How often did you communicate with your subordinates? In what form?
4. What is your preferred communication and leadership style with your subordinates?
5. What is your preferred communication and leadership style of the senior leadership team?
6. How did you enjoy the work culture in your team? Did you find it different from the company?
7. Is there an official channel for employee suggestions?
8. When did you receive an employee suggestion in your division? What did you do? Follow-up?
9. How significant did employee innovation impact output of your team or the company?
10. How ready were you to encourage employee suggestion and innovation? Any existing channels?
11. What is the employee motivation to suggest on company policy, work procedure, future plan?
12. Any other suggestions

Focus Group 3 (outside participants)

1. How would you describe your company culture and leadership style?
2. How would you describe the company communication strategy? How effective was it?
3. How often did you communicate with your subordinate and supervisor? In what form?
4. What is your preferred communication and leadership style with your subordinates?
5. What is your preferred communication leadership style of the senior leadership team?
6. How did you enjoy the work culture in your team? Did you find it different from the company?
7. Was there existing corporate communication channel for employee suggestions?
8. When did you receive employee suggestion on your department or company? Any follow-up?

9. How significant did employee innovation impact output of your team or the company?
10. How ready were you to encourage employee suggestion and innovation? Any existing channels?
11. What is the employee motivation to suggest on company policy, work procedure, future plan?
12. Any suggestions and sharing of best practice in fostering employee innovation?

Coding

For the ease of analysis, code was used to categorize similar data from respondents on a research question. Through coding, researcher condensed data to become meaningful message, to group similar input together into analyzable units and recurring patterns. Vivo coding was a common qualitative coding which used words or phrase from participant saying as codes. In this study, the researcher pursued vivo coding for data analysis of the three focus groups.

The following were the responses of the three focus groups:

Focus Group 1 (middle management)

Vivo code was used as sub-headings.

- Perceived authoritative leadership

“I am receptive to authoritative leadership. It is common in organizations with a Chinese context, particularly government organization with clear hierarchy. We are just like a big family.”

“Confucianism is hard-casted in the Chinese mind. It was a culture rather a discipline that followers look up to the leader who demands respect.”

“Authoritative leaders are common elsewhere, including Western cultures across different industries.”

“Some preferred to work in an authoritative environment for security and protection by the big brother”

“Too much control is no good. Employees work best in a participative and teamwork environment away from undue control”

“When my supervisor watching over my shoulders to make sure things are in place, I become nervous and stop to be creative.”

“Just give me a free hand to do my work with minimal control is ideal”

- Company culture

“I enjoy working in a free environment with the least supervision. That is the time when I become innovative at work.”

“I need work freedom in my role in public relations. Excessive intervention from supervisor would certainly kill my job interest”

“I feel nervous whenever my supervisor is on holiday. I am at a lost what to do next.”

“I am fine to finish the tasks assigned by my supervisor. New initiatives just make me nervous.”

“My supervisor seems enthusiastic about new ideas and asks me to investigate. However, there is not much feedback and follow-up action, my proposal just lays idle on his tray.”

“People here only concern about their own welfare. Not interested in what is going on with other teams.”

“I would say it’s kind of bureaucratic. Not much flexibility. Usually, things done according to rules and policy.”

“Pretty operational and transactional.”

“Since there are straight compliance and governance policies we need to observe, the general atmosphere is cold and reserved.”

“Decisions are top-down. Many levels of approval are required for actions.”

“Would enjoy an open work culture which promotes learning and sharing.”

“The most important element to engage my loyalty would be empathy and care from management.”

- Communication

“I have regular communications with my supervisor through weekly individual and team meetings. We discuss job progress and way to solve problem.”

“My supervisor is busy, often out of town on business trip. Our communication simply relies on email and WhatsApp. No personal touch and piecemeal.”

“Dialog with my supervisor is rare. She used to give orders with expectations on timeline. I am reluctant to catch up with her in case of a query to avoid being seen incapable.”

“My company holds regular town hall meetings to update all staff on company business changes and

new direction.”

“My supervisor seems enthusiastic about new ideas and asks me to investigate. However, there is not much feedback and follow-up action. My proposal just lays idle on his tray.”

- Motivation

“Last year, I made a few suggestions to enhance the efficiency of our workflow, as I wanted everyone in our team enjoy their work.”

“Feel good if I can contribute to the company.”

“I never make any suggestion as I don’t want my supervisor get upset and misunderstand that I am Against his order.”

“A genuine mutual trust between management and subordinates is key to encourage employees to share new ideas for a better workplace.”

“Senior management should be serious to put together incentive schemes to encourage staff suggestions.”

“I would be happy to voice out my suggestions if I feel engaged with the company. Unfortunately, from my observation, I think the management team don’t care at all.”

“As an employee, I am keen to give suggestions to enhance company policy, work process, and environment if there is a clear career path for me in the company.”

- Incentive

“Not aware of any official channel or program to promote employee suggestions.”

“Management said they are always open to suggestions. A suggestion not necessarily goes with an incentive. But I feel management doesn’t care at all.”

“A proper program with recognition and incentive would definitely help to inspire employee suggestion for improvement.”

Focus Group 2 (senior management)

Vivo code was used as sub-headings.

- Perceived authoritative leadership

“Senior management is more concerned with corporate performance and targets. We need to get things

done well and on time. Too much a loose hand doesn't work."

"We need to respond quick to a fast-changing market. Have to strike a balance between open discussion and a timely remedy"

"Someone has to be responsible to get things moving. The time factor is key to suppress uncertainty while seeking consensus. A powerful leader is the solution."

"It is fine for management to lay down organizational goals and policy. It is receptive across cultures and industries in the world that authoritative leadership delivers a working efficiency no other leading approach can do."

"An open and participative leadership is more favorable to encourage team collaboration. It is the trend."

"It's leader's responsibility to devise company goals, direction, road map, and business plan for the organization. Management team knows what's the best for the company."

"It would be ineffective to spend time collecting staff feedback for making every decision."

"Sensitive to disclose management thoughts and decisions on re-organization. It will make things difficult."

- Company culture

"You need to give team members a clear direction of where to go, state precisely your requirement, give them resources. They will then deliver the expected innovation."

"Discipline and support are essential to employee innovation. Timeline is sometimes useful to press ahead for new ideas to pop up"

"Creativity and innovation have to be nurtured. Give team member the right environment, best support, and least interruption."

"You can't force someone to be innovative. It is more a talent than training."

"As management, we need to make sure we have control of how things are going in the organization."

"We need to strike a balance between being seen as open-minded and a responsible leadership team."

"From my observation, most of the staff prefer supervisors to give them clear instruction on task to complete."

- Communication

“We encourage staff to raise new idea and suggestion through proper channels such as intranet, internal newsletter to enhance our operation and staff benefits.”

“We are a huge company with well-defined hierarchy. Daily communication is usually confined to the next level and cascades down. There is rarely company-wide communication.”

“We treasure a two-way communication and mingling with our staff through various means such as team meeting, newsletter, and Christmas party,”

“I think senior management team ought to keep a distance from employees. Otherwise, it would be difficult to manage the company.”

- Motivation

“From my observation, the general staff are pretty happy about their work here.”

“One of the key motivators to keep employees perform well would be an achievable career path which is communicated well to everybody.”

“From my experience, giving a sense of achievement for employees would encourage better performance.”

“Building a mutual trust and respect with staff would help management to push through change.”

“General speaking, a proper incentive scheme would motivate staff suggestions for improvement in work environment.”

- Incentive

“It makes sense to implement a company-wide incentive system to recognize staff contribution in sharing new ideas and suggestion to the company/”

“Incentive may not necessarily be financially based. A word of appreciation, certificate or coupon work well.

“I do agree to encourage employee suggestion by giving them monetary reward.”

Focus Group 3 (outside participants)

Vivo code was used as sub-headings.

- Perceived authoritative leadership

“Authoritative leadership is prevalent across cultures, industries, and organizations. It is common in bureaucratic organizations, family business, and government.”

“I am working in a local manufacturer. The head takes full responsibility and make almost all decisions. Things really move fast without much debate.”

“I was in the US over a decade and got used to an open and participative work culture. I found it difficult to survive in a bureaucratic workplace with close supervision”

“Strong leadership is necessary sometimes to get things done on time and to uphold team spirit”

“Harsh control over staff doesn’t work nowadays. Persuasion and friendliness work better”

“From my point of view, sometimes, it is troublesome to allow too much free-hand for employees. Especially during the times of change.”

“As part of senior management team, I think a top-down approach works best in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Don’t waste time. Everybody is busy.”

- Company culture

“My company asks more for observation of rules than work innovation. They have a set pattern of routines keep on running for ages without seeing major problems.”

“I don’t place too much emphasis on innovation of my team. We are not in the high-tech business. My demand is simply due completion of the assigned tasks on time and trouble free.”

“Our company is a large utility company with established hierarchy. Innovation might be a slow process on top of a steady supply of service to the public.”

“Company culture is influential on employee motivation and retention. If they don’t enjoy working, then not engaged. That impacts staff innovation.”

“We consider staff recognition an important tool to motivate them to work and innovate. Every year in the Christmas party, we recognized the best performers with cash award, trophy, and a certificate.”

- Communication

“Our hierarchical organization imposes limitations on internal communications mostly to team level and hardly beyond.”

“Communication in our company is usually one-way, top-down. The owner of this family business is the sole voice heard in the operation.”

“Communication is limited to outside office hour in social gathering. Everybody focuses on own assignment and milestone without the need to interchange.”

“Regular communications such as meetings and group discussion are good to keep track of the latest development on both sides.”

- Motivation

“I think a worry-free environment would help to promote employee innovation and suggestion.”

“Staff would be happy to give suggestion to the company if they have a sense of belonging and appreciation. Not necessarily tangible incentives.”

“Mutual trust between management and employees is a key motivation for their innovation.”

- Incentive

“Special incentive is great to stimulate innovation. We have cash prize and travel coupon for good staff suggestions. They are really excited about that.”

“We recognize employees on new ideas that work. Recognition include cash certificate or dinning coupon.”

“When a suggestion is chosen for implementation, we will name it after the staff to make them feel proud of their innovation.”

Appendix 2 - Consent Form

I am a student of the DBA program at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, the UK. I am conducting an academic research project on the relationship between perceived authoritative leadership and employee innovation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Given your experience and knowledge, the researcher highly values your contribution, and welcomes you to participate in the focus group interview. During the meeting, you may refuse to answer any question you feel uncomfortable.

In the interview, I will take notes to record major insights and intelligence. The result will be reported anonymously and used exclusively for the feasibility study of the said research.

Please sign below to indicate your consensus to the arrangement.

This to confirm that the below signed interviewee agrees to participate in this research project. The interviewee understands, agrees, and authorizes the researcher to use the data and information collected from the interview anonymously for academic study only.

Interviewee _____

Researcher _____

Signature _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Date _____