

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name:	KAM Chi Wing	Student ID number:	1818886
Programme:	DBA		
Module:	Qualitative Research		
Module code:	SBPD7002	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	100%
Lecturer:	Dr. Stephanie Lee	Internal Verifier:	
Assignment Title:	Evaluation of current research Research Proposal Presentation	Word count (or equivalent):	Part 1: 1662 Part 2: 3290 Powerpoint: 1597
Submission deadline:	October 26, 2019 (Presentation) November 12, 2019 (Evaluation and Research Proposal)	The return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	December 2, 2019
Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 50%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
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.		

Qualitative Research

Part I: critical review of this article on qualitative research

Part II: qualitative research proposal

by KAM Chi Wing

Student ID: 1818886

Contents

Part I: critical review of this article on qualitative research	5
1. Abstract and citation of the article	5
2. The philosophy and theoretical perspective being employed	5
3. Underpinnings of qualitative research principles	5
a) Strengths	5
b) Limitations of qualitative research techniques	6
4. Contexts appropriate for qualitative research techniques	6
5. The data collection method(s) used	7
a) Application of qualitative data collection	7
b) Analysis techniques employed to address the research question.	7
6. A critique of the methods used	8
a) Respondent's context	8
b) Selection of qualitative inquiry	8
c) Ethical issues in data collection	8
d) Data analysis	8
e) Data validation and evaluation	8
f) Data representation	9
g) Quality of literature review	9
Part II: qualitative research proposal	11
A. Abstract of this proposal	11
B. Research questions (include Aims and Objectives)	11
C. Research Philosophy and interpretive framework	12
D. Literature review	13
E. Description of context and participants	13
F. Explanation of data collection steps	15
G. Explanation of data analysis	15
H. Preliminary findings	17
I. A discussion that emerged from findings	20
J. Personal reflections	20
Part III: PPT	22

Appendix 1: Focus group questions.....	31
Appendix 2: Transcript from the focus groups	32

Part I: critical review of this article on qualitative research

The article selected is written by Julie Crews from the Journal of Business and Management and its impact factor is 3.12 and the title is “What is an Ethical Leader?: The Characteristics of Ethical Leadership from the Perceptions Held by Australian Senior Executives” .

1. Abstract and citation of the article

The selected paper is qualitative study which study the characteristics of ethical leadership. Ethical leaders are individuals who demonstrates integrity, courage, and trustworthiness. There are three themes in the findings: value alignment, relationship-centeredness and governance. Ethical leaders have strong alignment on what they espouse and the behaviours they demonstrated. Relationship-centered ethical leaders are fair and pursue altruism when engaging with others. In regards to governance, ethical leaders exercise discernment and comply to necessary accountability in their decision making.

2. The philosophy and theoretical perspective being employed

This paper did not state the research strategy and approach used, but observed from the description in the methodology section of the paper, the approach adopted is Grounded Theory. The researcher mentioned that this study did not have a predetermined theory or definition to be tested because the focus is to explore the phenomenon of ethical leadership.

The philosophy employed is social constructivism as the author mentioned the nature of this paper is constructivist and 1) the ontological beliefs, which means realities are developed from the experience of those who lived in it (Schwandt, 1994a) e.g. CEOs in Western Australia and Victoria in this case. 2) the epistemological beliefs, which means reality is co-constructed by the researcher and participants' sharing of experience during interview. 3) the axiological beliefs, which means the values are negotiated between interviewee and researcher. 4) the methodological beliefs, which means approach to inquiry is Inductive method. Emergent ideas are obtained through interview.

3. Underpinnings of qualitative research principles

a) Strengths

This paper used literature review to present an overview of ethical leadership and linked the discussion of the findings to the related literature. The researcher did not share

explicitly the underpinning principles or the assumptions of qualitative inquiry being adapted. She just mentioned that her research examines a social phenomenon from helicopter view based on respondent's natural setting (Creswell, 1994). The researcher believes the strength of qualitative method allows her to study the issues related to ethical leadership in more detail and depth (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989; Patton, 1990). Inductive inquiry enable researcher to develop categories emerge from respondents rather than predetermined by the researcher herself (Creswell, 1994, p. 48). This data collection method enables themes to emerge from the experience and interpretation of informants (Coll & Chapman, 2000).

b) Limitations of qualitative research techniques

One of the big limitations of qualitative research is there are very few similar qualitative studies for reference and comparison while more literature can be found in quantitative research. This makes the theory foundation for topic being studied very limited. The analysis and interpretation of the data can be very subjective, especially when the sample size is small and representation is not board enough. The findings also difficult to compare to similar research as the terminology used and coding applied can be very specific.

4. Contexts appropriate for qualitative research techniques

This paper studied seventy-eight senior Australian CEOs from diverse industry segments including both the private and public sectors from two states. Senior executives with national and international context are invited for the interview. CEOs Contact of private sector executives are obtained through the Chamber of Commerce, and the public sector executives are randomly selected from government websites as well. The researcher tried to ensure a fair balance of males and female executive are recruited for the interview. However, most the senior executives available are males, especially in private sector. According to the researcher, the public sector portfolio includes executives from independent statutory authorities and local government.

5. The data collection method(s) used

a) Application of qualitative data collection

In this paper, semi-structured face-to-face interviews with were employed as data collection method. During the interview, participants were asked to describe the characteristics and behaviours of an ethical leader in a professional context. Invitation letter was sent by facsimile to 199 shortlisted executives in two states (e.g. Western Australia and Victoria). On the letter, purpose of the research, timeframe of interview would be conducted were communicated. Finally, seventy-eight (78) senior executives i.e. CEOs from both private and public sectors were interviewed.

Although questions were set, participants were allowed to provide input for variation in order to minimize of standard responses. This arrangement of interview allows respondents to provide descriptive, spontaneous, and personal data. Written journals about the interview, observation of participants' non-verbal body language and professional environment descriptions of participants are kept. Organizational material, like annual reports, strategic plans were also included in the journal material to provide more comprehensive background context for the analysis.

b) Analysis techniques employed to address the research question.

The study used inductive research method for data content analysis. This creative analysis process (Patton, 1990) facilitates not so clear separation of data collection and analysis phase. It helps identifying, coding and categorizing the primary data. It also enables the development of patterns and themes and emerging ideas to address the research questions (Patton, 1990). Data collected were color-coded. categorized based on content analysis (Holsti, 1969) which means themes and concepts are developed from emerging data. NVivo program (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2003) is employed to store, categorize, compare and retrieve data. The researcher cross-referenced the journal notes and interviews recorded during data analysis phase to help clarify the meaning of data, especially unspoken language. From the description from researcher, open coding category was used to build towards a central phenomenon during the process.

6. A critique of the methods used

a) Respondent's context

The sampling of this research is not board enough, because only the respondents are from two states only and the researcher did not explain the rationale of selecting those two particular states, not the rest of Australia. Some demographics of the respondents were not shared in the research paper, e.g. years of experience. size of firm in terms of number of employees and financial capital.

b) Selection of qualitative inquiry

Crews explained qualitative research method was chosen because ethical leadership is a social phenomenon but more benefits of using qualitative approach can be listed.

c) Ethical issues in data collection

In data collection, ethical issues were not clearly stated. For example, the researcher did not mention if there is any consent form signed, whether the respondents had the option of abort the interview at any time they want. Researcher did keep the confidentiality of each respondent by assigning a pseudonym for each interview record. This approach also allows researcher to identify the data for coding and categorization purpose.

d) Data analysis

Data were collected from both private and public sector, however the researcher did not highlight the difference or compare the data collected from two sectors. As the theme was emerged by both the researcher and respondents, the background of the researcher was not disclosed detail enough for understanding of interpretation.

e) Data validation and evaluation

Not data validation or evaluation was mentioned. If Crews make reference to more modern research approach, she may explain the rationale of not including data validation in her paper.

f) Data representation

In the research paper, no data visual diagram or table was used to represent the relationship between codes and emerging concepts. Therefore, it is difficult for readers to follow how did the findings were organized to form the propositions.

g) Quality of literature review

- **Update-to-date of literatures selected**

Much of the literatures cited and references used were over 10 years, it is suggested to use more recent papers for reference. There are many good qualitative inquiry and research books and papers like the one written by Creswell and Poth (Creswell and Poth, 2016)., which the researcher can refers which helps provide update to date research language and methods.

- **Value of research**

The researcher highlighted existing literature focuses on philosophical perspective like what leaders ought to do (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Trevino, 2006b; Ciulla, 2005) The moral and ethical aspects of the leadership was studied by research. Crews quoted many researchers stating that there is a need to study the relation of ethical leadership (Brown and Mitchell, 2010), but the rationale is not fulling described and not compelling enough to private sector. Crews can consider provide more financial related impact to increase the importance of the research topic. She can also highlight more her paper contributes to both private and public sectors, or to particular segments of audience, and or to specific application in particular field.

- **Comprehensiveness of the literature review**

Crews did provide an overview on the history of the construct development of Ethical leadership. She also provided comparison of literatures from similar themes e.g. Spiritual Leadership (Fry, 2003;) and Authentic Leadership (Trevino et al., 2000; Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003: Brown and Trevino 2006b). but the coverage is quite brief and the comparison is not comprehensive enough. In fact, Crews can expand her literature review Servant Leadership, Relational Leadership, Responsible Leadership and Virtuous Leadership, Paternalistic leadership, and

Character-based leadership because those leadership theme also has the moral and ethical elements which she would like to examine.

For ethical leadership related literatures, Crews can expand her research to more recent academic papers. Watts talks about relationship of society desired values with Ethical leadership (Watts, 2008). Northouse stated that ethics is concerned about morals and desirable values for the society. It also cares about the motives with desired virtue (Northouse, 2016). Elements like trust, honesty, consideration for others and justice which are mentioned in Ethical leadership (Brown, Treviño. Harrison, 2005). Wright and Quick highlighted that good character is the key factor defining ethical leadership. To them considering the well-being of organization and greater good for the society are essential elements for ethical leadership (Wright and Quick, 2011)

Part II: qualitative research proposal

A. Abstract of this proposal

This proposal aims to explore the impact of character in leadership for a sustainable organization under the Asian context. The element “Character” has been undervalued for a long time even though corporate leaders admit it is one of the crucial qualities in leadership. Head of McKinsey & Co.’s global consulting pointed out that we did not pay enough attention to character of leaders while we talk about leadership. (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012). Too much focus is on what the leader can deliver rather than how things are done.

Research also pointed out that people have lost their faith to corporate leaders since the financial crisis in 2008 as the downfall and numerous scandals have resulted in unethical decisions. And the core of driving those decisions is character. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England warned that financial corporates need to rethink their values to gain back people's trust in their firms and financial systems (Seijts, et al., 2015) while values and character are closely associated. Therefore, the title of this research proposal is the “Impact of character in leadership for a sustainable organization under Asian context”.

B. Research questions (include Aims and Objectives)

The purpose and objectives of this grounded theory research study are:

- to explore the importance of character to leadership
- to develop the linkage of character in leadership to a sustainable organization
- to generate some ideas on how Asian companies (Mainly HK and China) sees character in leadership and to discover its impact on upholding a sustainable organization

Under the research question: The impact of character in leadership for a sustainable organization under the Asian context, this study also has several sub-questions to explore:

- What is character in leadership?
- Is character important in leadership?
- Does leadership influence a sustainable organization
- Is there any difference in the Asian context?

C. Research Philosophy and interpretive framework

The interpretive framework used in this study is mainly social constructivism, because the goal is trying to understand the world the researcher lives and work. The researcher is a corporate training consultant who lives in Hong Kong and provides leadership development consultancy to corporates in Asia. She recognizes her consultancy background will influence the focus group question setting, way of asking the question during a focus group, and shaping the interpretation. In actual practice after the focus group, the researcher interprets participants' constructions of meanings toward the focus group questions according to her account and understanding (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Under this framework, the associated philosophy assumptions practical implications are listed below:

- The ontological beliefs, that is the nature of realities is multiple and are constructed through researcher and interviewee's experience and interaction with other people in the workplace.
- The epistemological beliefs in which reality is known by the co-created by both researcher and research participants because the reality is co-shaped by the interaction among participants and how the researcher presents the questions.
- The axiological beliefs which the individual role of values about the research theme under discussion are negotiated among the participants and researcher.
- The methodological beliefs which the approach to inquiry is inductive with the literacy style of writing. Emergent ideas are collected through focus group and there is some consensus during the discussion. Ideas also gathered via observing behaviors in the workplace and analyzing texts in literature. The study of the topic is within a business context and uses an emerging design because the researcher work revises research questions according to her field experience and work on particular details before generalizations (Creswell and Poth, 2016)

The research strategy and approach used is Grounded Theory because a theory is developed grounded in data from the field in the view of participants.

D. Literature review

The literature review below shows gaps and bias in existing knowledge and thus provides a rationale for this qualitative study undergirded theory (). The research on “Character in Leadership” or “Character-centered Leadership” is very uncommon, but “Character” has been cited in many leadership styles e.g. Servant Leadership, Relational Leadership, Ethical Leadership, Responsible Leadership, and Virtuous Leadership, Paternalistic leadership, etc. Below is a summary of the current understanding of the character in leadership.

In the past, character is most quoted in a religious and philosophical context (Wright & Huang, 2008). In the recent decade, most scholars acknowledge that character has moral and social aspects (Wright & Goodstein, 2007) as a leader will put societal welfare before his benefits, commit to things greater than himself, and can make virtuous decisions. Wright and his team have defined character as qualities that drive leaders to seek societal good over personal interest. A leader with good character is an agent with high moral value who appeals to moral change. Character-based leadership concurs with values-based leadership as it promotes personal values (e.g. attitudes, opinions and beliefs), and fulfillment (e.g. pleasure life, harmony) (Thompson, 2009). They differ by focusing on a moral perspective that pursues the betterment of society (Wright and Quick, 2011).

In regards to sustainable organization, Porter and Kramer have introduced the concept of creating shared value (CSV) helps corporates to achieve long-term competitiveness (Porter and Kramer 2011; Awale and Rowlinson 2014). Spitzack and Chapman also highlighted that CSV is a differentiation strategy for corporates that creates business value (Spitzack and Chapman 2012).

E. Description of context and participants

The method of data collection of this study is a focus group with open-ended questions. To get a purposeful sampling, only the targeted context of participants was selected and invited to the focus group. The context of the participants are corporate leaders or working in business sectors in Hong Kong, China, and Macau. Two focus groups were conducted in Oct 2019 at the Hong Kong Management Association center at Tsim Sha Tsui of Hong Kong. Each focus group has six participants. Group one is mainly leaders with ample leadership experience who has at least twenty years of experience. Group two has participants who work as individual contributors. The purpose of having a group two participants for validating the findings via triangulation. The majority of the participants are Asian to understand the Asian perspectives, one participant is a

foreigner to compare the views from Asian leaders. The table below highlighted the demographics of the focus group participants (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

Table 1

Participant	Age	Sex	Years of working experience	Nationality	Education	Occupation
1	46-55	Male	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Professional
2	56-65	Male	30	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Professional
3	36-45	Male	22	Hong Kong	Master Degree	General working/office
4	46-55	Male	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	General working/office
5	46-55	Female	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Business owner
6	46-55	Female	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Civil Servants / employees of government-related organizations
7	26-35	Male	15	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Professional
8	36-45	Male	20	China	Master Degree	Professional
9	46-55	Male	25	Portuguese	Master Degree	Middle Management
10	46-56	Male	12	Hong Kong	Degree	Professional
11	46-57	Female	28	Hong Kong	Degree	Professional
12	26-35	Female	10	Hong Kong	Degree	Frontline

F. Explanation of data collection steps

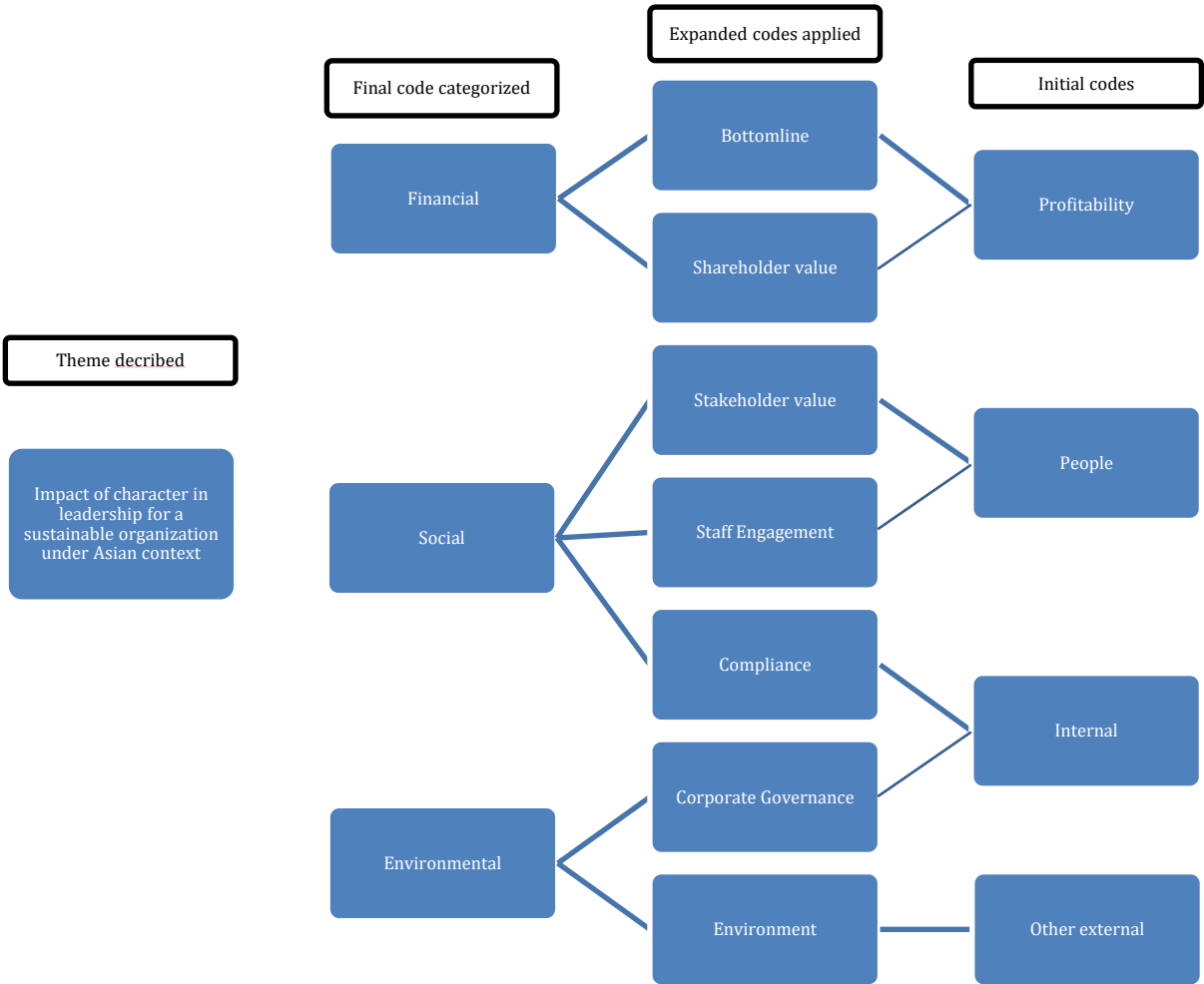
Regarding the data collection procedure, three data techniques, i.e. data collection, data analysis, and data validation are employed in this proposal. Data files were created and organized. The text was read and margin notes were made. Data are validated through triangulation as data are drawn from multiple data sources, i.e. two groups of participants, to provide corroborating evidence (Bazeley, 2013; Glesne, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014) Focus Group 2 data also helps to provide corroboration and insight in interpretation.

During the data collection process, i.e. focus group facilitation objective and purpose of the study were explained, ethical issues were addressed, written and or verbal consent was received from focus group participants. A signed consent form can be provided upon request. Data are stored in a password-protected file to ensure security and confidentiality. Chinese translation of the research questions is provided to participants with needs. Research questions and transcripts are in the appendix for reference (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

G. Explanation of data analysis

In order to analyze the data, initial codes were formed and data are grouped according to common themes based on the understanding of the researcher. Coding categories are listed in the figure. This proposal used open coding category building towards a central phenomenon which is the research question. Axial coding is engaged with casual context conditions. The selection of coding is used to develop relevant categories that help to form a "proposition". This means a "theory" was developed along with the coding process. Below is a visual diagram to represent the relationship between codes and emerging concepts (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

A visual diagram to represent the relationship between codes and emerging concepts



H. Preliminary findings

A preliminary analysis of findings that includes initial insights about the topic is below.

Understanding the terminology "Character"

In general, group one participants are not clear about the concept and definition of character, they confuse it with personality. Some said personality is intrinsic while character is demonstrated in extrinsic behaviors. The words they associate with character are history, intention, attitude, behavior and performance, the real face of a person, personal style, etc. Many of them believe that character varies from different people under different roles. It is hard to tell a person's character most of the time. Some participants pointed out that it can be observed in behaviors and styles. Participants tended to think it changes under different situations and when interacts with different people. It also changes with age and experience.

Group two participants also think that character is unique for each person. They pointed out that the characteristics of character are mutual and it's about how one person treats others. They relate characters with virtues like ethical, honesty, responsibility, courage, fairness, passion, caring, etc. Other words linked with character are intellectual, social and emotions. Contrast to group one, group two participants said personality is what people show to the outside world and what he/she wants other people to know. Character is who you are inside. It's about behavior and attitude. Personality is born while character is determined by the role a leader play in a company that dovetails to the company values. They also pointed out that character composes of elements like social common value, ethics, integrity and a higher level of trust compares to personality.

Relationship of character and leadership

According to group one participants, character is the soul of leadership because it gives direction and it drives the leader's actions. Different characters lead to different leadership styles. Character also affects a leader's willingness to do or not to do something. It has moral elements that a leader needs to uphold.

Group two participants supplemented that character can have a good or bad influence on leadership. One participant said it's about doing the right things instead of doing the things right. Leaders with good character have a moral aspect that they have goodwill to do good. Character-based leaders also balance the good for both the company and staff.

Impact and contribution of leadership character to a sustainable organization

Participant's concept about the sustainable organization is weak. Group one participants said they heard about it but do not know what it is. 83% of participants claimed it's about financials like profitability. One participant said it is about business direction and roadmap and one said it is about succession planning. Group two participants stated that sustainability is future-oriented. One participant said it is about influencing the society or educate the people to advocate in something good like caring and giving back to society.

The majority of the participants believe that leadership character has an impact on a sustainable organization, but the impact varies from 60% to 90%. One participant stated: "leadership has a significant impact on every single aspect of an organization. It could be positive or negative depending on a variety of internal (e.g. company culture and structure) and external (e.g. economic environment) conditions. Some said it depends on the leader's ego. It also determined by the size and business nature of the company. For ethical sensitives like pollution and gambling has a higher impact. Group two participants highlighted that leaders with good character would have a clear vision that greatly impacts a corporation's sustainability.

As participants have limited vocabulary to comment on the impact of leadership character on a sustainable organization. The researcher further probed for comments about the impact on bottom-line, shareholder value, stakeholder, compliance, corporate governance staff engagement, and environment.

- **Bottom line, Shareholder's Value, Stakeholder's Value**

Most of the group participants agreed that leadership character has an impact on the bottom line, shareholder value, stakeholder value, but the degree may vary. Stronger leadership will have a bigger influence. The impact on stakeholders has much more variation because different stakeholders have different interests due to their roles.

All participants of group two think character in leadership has an impact on the shareholder value. A participant with less corporate management experience thinks if the leader is not senior enough, the influence will be low.

- **Compliance and Corporate Governance**

Regarding compliance, participants said it depends on the corporate's compliance requirements, for example, the financial sector has stronger compliance requirements and corporates have more stringent internal control, then leadership character has less impact. One

participant in focus group two thinks leadership does not influence compliance as compliance is a guideline to follow. It is because leaders should comply with the law and regulations.

Similar to compliance, group one participants think corporate governance is about company value and policy, leaders have to follow without a second thought, thus leader's character will not make a big influence. The above viewpoints are concurred by group two participants as they think corporate governance is about straight guidelines, whoever executes the guideline line will not make a difference.

There is an interesting finding that although some participants believe the impact of leadership character to a sustainable organization varies, all participants from both groups will consider a person's character in recruitment, promotion, and people development. Some even said it's a major point for consideration. But it is a challenge to measure a staff's character and to determine desirable characters. Both groups tend to agree it is worthwhile to promote character in leadership. One or two participants in group one worried character may be overshadowed by the result.

- **Employee Engagement and Environment**

Group one participants commented that good characters e.g. caring has a positive impact on employee engagement. One commented that it depends on situations and leadership styles. For example, the transformational leadership style will have a positive impact on staff engagement. One voiced out that corporate culture, organizational structure, company value, business nature, business scale, and industry sector, are the factors needed to take into account before commenting on the influence of leadership character towards staff engagement. Group two participants said leaders with character that can connect with staff will increase the engagement. If the leader treating staff on unfair grounds, then staff engagement will be low.

Both groups mentioned briefly mentioned leadership character will have a positive influence on the environment, especially corporates with direct impact e.g. pollution.

The difference in the Asian context

Group one participants stated that Chinese leaders are more parental style or even dictator style because the leader's voice decides all things. Leaders are always right and it is politically correct to think leaders are correct. This gives high authority to Asian leaders. Many groups two participants think that there is not much difference between Asian and Western leaders as Asian leaders learned from the West. However, some participants pointed out that western corporates

see sustainability initiatives as an investment, while Asian leaders see those as expenses. One said Asian corporates are more cost concerned compares to the West. On the people side, Asian leaders concern about the relationship which means harmony and personal advantage.

Can Character be Learned

The majority of participants in both groups think character can be learned with experience or through life events. Some think character is born but can be developed, and be influenced by experience. A few concerned if learning via training may be costly.

I. A discussion that emerged from findings

There are several possible refinements to the topic that may emerge. The topic and research question are quite comprehensive. 3000 words are not enough to cover all aspects this proposal tries to study. The understanding of the definition of character is quite diverse and the comprehension of terminology in English and Chinese is very different e.g. personality and character. For example, focus group participants are confused about the definition of personality and character. After explaining the term in Chinese (品格), participants can tell the difference.

There is very limited research on the impact of leadership character on a sustainable organization and almost none in the Asian context. This provides the value of this study. To provide a more theoretical and academic foundation, more literature review on the impact of leadership character to a company's bottom line, shareholder values, stakeholder impact, compliance, corporate governance, employee engagement, etc. is needed. Due to time constraints, only a limited number of participants are invited to partake in the focus group interview. The input is valuable to understand the perceived importance of the impact of character in leadership from market practitioners.

Besides the research question, further research can be done on how to measure leadership character, how does it influence recruitment, promotion and succession planning, and how to promote leadership character incorporates.

J. Personal reflections

- **Data sampling (participant) selection**

During the data collection process, participants seem to have a limited concept about leadership character and sustainability although their average working experience is around 20 years and most of them are people managers. Therefore, it's better to select participants

with a leadership training background so that they will have a basic understanding of the related topics.

- **Setting and preparation before data collection**

How people define character in leadership is very diverse and it is affected by education, training, values, and culture. Research about this construct is not the focus of this study. Therefore, it's better to use the definition from other people's research and provide the information to research participants beforehand. This will help the focus of the study on the Asian context or other valuable gaps. Similarly, Asian leaders' concept and knowledge about the sustainable organization is weak. It is because a sustainable organization is a new concept raised in the recent decade, and it's not actively promoted till the United Nations published 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) (Guterres, 2019). Almost only executives in corporate social responsibility (CSR) or sustainability development or related departments heard about SDGs. Therefore, if I am going to do this research again, it's better to provide the background information about sustainability and sustainable organizations to target participants before data collection.

- **The disparity between findings and literature**

Participants general think that leadership character has little impact on compliance. However, in reality, if regulation and guidelines can block all loopholes, there will no Lehman Brothers case and other financial scandals. Many research, article, and commentary stated that the leader's decision plays an important contribution to the financial crisis. Therefore, how a leader makes a decision and executes the compliance guideline did make a difference. And a leader's decision is influenced by his/her character and values. The disparity between findings and literature likely due to lack of information, experience and or understanding of human nature. This issue can be addressed by providing basic academic findings, selecting participants with compliance-related experience, and sharing real case information while collecting data from the target audience.

This proposal provides a good opportunity to think through the topic and related areas which provide a useful learning experience future study.

Part III: PPT

SBPD7002 Qualitative research proposal Impact of character in leadership for a sustainable organization under Asian context



Kam Chi Wing_1818886

All rights reserved

Contents and Research Steps

- Abstract
- Research questions {include Aims and Objectives}
- Research Philosophy
- Literature review
- Description of context and participants
- Explanation of data collection steps
- Explanation of data analysis
- Preliminary findings
- Discussion that emerged from findings
- Personal reflections



All rights reserved

Abstract

- This proposal aims to explore the impact of character in leadership for a sustainable organization under the Asian context. The element “Character” has been undervalued for a long time even though corporate leaders admit it is one of the crucial qualities in leadership. Head of McKinsey & Co.’s global consulting pointed out that we did not pay enough attention to the character of leaders while we talk about leadership. (Sosik, Gentry, Chun, 2012).

All rights reserved

Research questions

■ The purpose and objectives of this grounded theory research study is:

- to explore the importance of character to leadership
- to develop the linkage of character in leadership to a sustainable organization
- to generate some ideas on how Asian companies (Mainly HK and China) sees character in leadership and to discover its impact on upholding a sustainable organization

All rights reserved

Research Philosophy

■ The interpretive framework used in this study is mainly social constructivism, because the goal is trying to understand the world the researcher lives and work.

- The ontological beliefs, that is the nature of realities are multiple and are constructed through researcher and interviewee's experience and interaction with other people in the workplace.
- The epistemological beliefs which reality is known by the co-created by both researcher and research participants because the reality is co-shaped by the interaction among participants and how the researcher presents the questions.

All rights reserved

Research Philosophy

- The axiological beliefs which the individual role of values about the research theme under discussion are negotiated among the participants and researcher.
- The methodological beliefs which the approach to inquiry is inductive with literacy style of writing. Emergent ideas are collected through focus group and there is some consensus during the discussion. Ideas also gathered via observing behaviors in the workplace and analyzing texts in literature. The study of the topic is within a business context and uses an emerging design because the researcher work revises research questions according to her field experience and work on particular details before generalizations.

All rights reserved

Research Philosophy

- Research strategy and approach used in Grounded Theory because a theory is developed grounded in data from the field in the view of participants.



All rights reserved

Literature review

- Most scholars acknowledge that character has moral and social aspects ([Wright & Goodstein, 2007](#)) like a leader will put societal welfare before his benefits, commit to things greater than himself, and can make virtuous decisions.
- Leader with good character is an agent with high moral value who appeals to moral change. ([Thompson, 2009](#)).
- They differ by focusing on moral perspective which pursues the betterment of society (Wright and Quick, 2011).

All rights reserved

Literature review

- In regards to sustainable organization, Porter and Kramer has introduced the concept of creating shared value (CSV) helps corporates to achieve long-term competitiveness (Porter and Kramer 2011; Awale and Rowlinson 2014). Spitzeck and Chapman also highlighted that CSV is a differentiation strategy for corporates that creates business value (Spitzeck and Chapman 2012).

All rights reserved

Description of context and participants

- The method of data collection of this study is a focus group with open-ended questions. To get a purposeful sampling, only the targeted context of participants was selected and invited to the focus group. The context of the participants are corporate leaders or working in business sectors in Hong Kong, China, and Macau. Two focus groups were conducted in Oct 2019 at Hong Kong Management Association center at Tsim Sha Tsui of Hong Kong. Each focus group has six participants.

All rights reserved

Description of context and participants

- Group one is mainly leaders with ample leadership experience who has at least twenty years of experience.
- Group two has participants who work as individual contributors.
- The purpose of having a group two participants for validating the findings via triangulation.

All rights reserved

Description of context and participants

Participant	Age	Sex	Years of working experience	Nationality	Education	Occupation
1	46-55	Male	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Professional
2	56-65	Male	30	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Professional
3	36-45	Male	22	Hong Kong	Master Degree	General working/office
4	46-55	Male	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	General working/office
5	46-55	Female	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Business owner
6	46-55	Female	25	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Civil Servants / employees of government related organizations
7	26-35	Male	15	Hong Kong	Master Degree	Professional
8	36-45	Male	20	China	Master Degree	Professional
9	46-55	Male	25	Portuguese	Master Degree	Middle Management
10	46-56	Male	12	Hong Kong	Degree	Professional
11	46-57	Female	28	Hong Kong	Degree	Professional
12	26-35	Female	10	Hong Kong	Degree	Frontline

All rights reserved

Explanation of data collection steps

- Three data techniques:
 - data collection
 - data analysis
 - data validation
- Data files were created and organized.
- Text was read and margin notes were made.
- Data are validated through triangulation from multiple data sources

All rights reserved

Explanation of data collection steps

- During the data collection process,
 - focus group facilitation objective and purpose of the study were explained
 - ethical issues were addressed
 - written and/or verbal consent was received from focus group participants
 - Data are stored in a password-protected file to ensure the security and confidentiality



All rights reserved

Explanation of data analysis

- Open coding
- Initial codes were formed
- Data are grouped according to common themes
- Coding categories are listed in the figure
- Axial coding is engaged with casual context conditions

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

- Understanding of the terminology “Character”
- Relationship of character and leadership
- Impact and contribution of leadership character to a sustainable organization
- Bottomline, Shareholder’s Value, Stakeholder’s Value
- Compliance and Corporate Governance
- Employee Engagement and Environment

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

- Understanding of the terminology “Character”
 - Group One participants are not clear about the concept and definition of character, they confuse it with personality.
 - Group Two participants also think that character is unique for each person. Contrast to group one, group two participants said personality is what people show to the outside world and what he/she wants other people to know.



All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

- Relationship of character and leadership
 - According to group one participants, character is the soul of leadership because it gives direction and it drives the leader’s actions. Different characters lead to different leadership styles. It has moral elements that a leader needs to uphold.
 - Group two participants supplemented that character can have a good or bad influence on leadership. Leaders with good character have a moral aspect that they have goodwill to do good. Character-based leaders also balance the good for both the company and staff.

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

■ Impact and contribution of leadership character to a sustainable organization

- Majority of the participants believe that leadership character has an impact on a sustainable organization, but the impact varies from 60% to 90%. It also determined by the size and business nature of the company. For ethical sensitives like pollution and gambling has a higher impact.
- Group two participants highlighted that leaders with good character would have a clear vision that greatly impacts a corporation's sustainability.

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

■ Bottomline, Shareholder's Value, Stakeholder's Value

- Most of group one participants agreed that leadership character has an impact on bottom line, shareholder's value, stakeholder value, but the degree may vary. Stronger leadership will have a bigger influence.
- The impact on stakeholders has much more variation because different stakeholders have different interests due to their roles.



All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

■ Compliance and Corporate Governance

- Regarding compliance, participants said it depends on the corporate's compliance requirements,
- Similar to compliance, group one participants think corporate governance is about company value and policy, leaders have to follow without a second thought, thus leader's character will not make a big influence.
- Above viewpoints are concurred by group two participants

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

■ Employee Engagement and Environment

- Group One participants commented that good characters e.g. caring has a positive impact on employee engagement. One commented that it depends on situations and leadership styles. Group Two participants said leaders with character who can connect with staff will increase the engagement.
- Both groups mentioned briefly mentioned leadership character will have a positive influence on the environment, especially corporates with direct impact e.g. pollution.

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

■ Difference in the Asian context

- Chinese leaders are more parental style or even dictator style because leader's voice decide all things
- High authority to Asian leaders
- Asian leaders learned from the West
- Western corporates see sustainability initiatives as an investment, while Asian leaders see those as expenses
- Asian leaders concern about the relationship which means harmony and personal advantage

All rights reserved

Preliminary findings

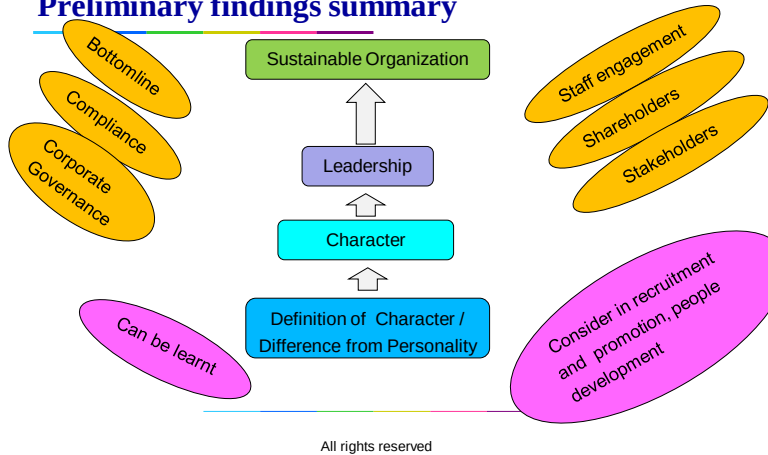
■ Can Character be Learned?

- Character can be learned with experience or through life events
- Character is born but can be developed, and be influenced by experience
- A few concerned if learning via training may be costly



All rights reserved

Preliminary findings summary



A discussion that emerged from findings

- The understanding of the definition of character is quite diverse and the comprehension of terminology in English and Chinese is very different e.g. personality and character.
- More literature review on the impact of leadership character to a company's bottom line, shareholder values, stakeholder impact, compliance, corporate governance, employee engagement, etc. is needed.
- Further research can be done on how to measure leadership character, how does it influence recruitment, promotion and succession planning, and how to promote leadership character in corporates.

All rights reserved

Personal reflections

- Data sampling (participant) selection
- Setting and preparation before data collection
- Disparity between findings and literature



All rights reserved

Appendix 1: Focus group questions

1. What is character?
2. What is character in leadership?
3. What is the difference between personality and character?
4. What is a sustainable organization?
5. What is the impact and contribution of leadership character to a sustainable organization?
6. Follow up-to Q 5: Any difference in the Asian context?
7. What is the impact of character in leadership to a company's bottom line, shareholder values, stakeholder impact, compliance, corporate governance, employee engagement, etc?
8. Follow up-to Q 7: Any difference in the Asian context?
9. Can character be learned? yes
10. Will you consider a staff's character in recruitment, promotion, and people development?
yes
11. Is it worth to promote character in leadership? Ethical, intellectual, social, emotions
12. What words will you associate with character?
13. Is there is anything you would like to add?

Appendix 2: Transcript from the focus groups

- Q. 1 What is character?
 - From focus group one (FG1)

Input	Number of responses
It is a personality	2
It is about a person's style	1
It is about a person's role	3
It is abstract	1
It is hidden and hard to tell	1
It is shown in behavior	4
It will change with age	3
It will change with experience	4
People show difference character in different situations	3
When interacting with different people will show different character	3

- From focus group two (FG2)

Input	Number of responses
It is mutual. It's how you treat others	2
It is about honesty	1
It is about responsibility	1
It is about courage	1
It is about fairness	1
It is unique for each person	1
It is about a person's passion	1
It is about diversity and a person's preference which means each person is different	2
It is about caring	1

- Q. 2 What is character in leadership?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - Character is the soul of leadership because it drives an actor's action.
 - It will impact leadership style
 - It gives direction to management style
 - Different characters have or lead to different leadership
 - It allows you to manage
 - It is one of the factors which affect company success or fail
 - It will affect a leader's willingness to do or not do something
 - A leader has many skills
 - A leader has many roles
 - It's about what a leader ought to do
 - A company's culture will determine character in leadership e.g. parental leadership vs openness in leadership style
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - Character can have a good or bad influence on leadership
 - Character is an attitude which influences your staff to work
 - Character can inspire other people and release their potential,
 - Character is about doing the right things instead of doing the things right/leading
 - Character can balance the goods for the company and staff
- Q. 3 What is the difference between personality and character?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - Personality is intrinsic vs character is an extrinsic behavior
 - Personality is material which most likely will not be affected by growth, cognitive or experience where character will be affected by time and situation
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - Personality is people show to the outside world and what he/she wants other people to know. Character is what are you inside, your behavior and attitude
 - Character is what the role you play in a company which need to fit into the value of the company,
 - Personality is born
 - Personality is more personal
 - Character has a social common value, ethics, integrity and higher level of trust
- Q. 4 What is a sustainable organization?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - Heard about it before but do not know what is it
 - It is about people success plan, roadmap in business, business direction, profitability
 - 5 participants mentioned that it is about financial
 - It is about the environment
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - It is about whether the company has tomorrow
 - It will influence society or educate the people something good
 - It is about progressive improvement on that organization

- It is about the care and gives back to society
- Q. 5 What is the impact and contribution of leadership character to a sustainable organization?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - All participants believe that there is an impact, one said the impact is 60%. One is 90%, some said it's about SME
 - Some said it's about the ego of Leaders
 - Leadership vision will impact the sustainability/ resources/ executive/ decision
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - Leadership with good character are role model to staff/
 - It is about the goodwill and to do good
 - It is about a clear vision
 - It will influence the employers to understand and to contribute to the future of the organization.
- Q. 6 Follow up to Q 5: Any difference in the Asian context?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - Leadership is important in Asian but do not have a system to monitor/
 - China-style leadership is one voice that decides all. E.g. parental style, therefore leadership character is more important
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - No. It is because Asian leaders learned leadership from Western
 - Asian leaders concern more about relationship
 - The western company sees sustainable activity as an investment, Asian leaders see it as a cost of expenses. Asian is more profit-driven compare to Western
- Q. 7a What is the impact of character in leadership to a company's Bottomline?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - I would say leadership (it makes no difference to me as personality or character) has a significant impact on almost every single element of an organization. It could be positive or negative pending on a variety of conditions both internally and externally. A) Internal - Company structure and culture, leadership style, infrastructure, and situation, etc. B) External - Economic environment.
 - The decision on future business/shareholder values depends on the industry, like if their business has an environment or ethical issue e.g. air pollution or gambling
 - Leaders can act as a role model
 - It has an impact but it is not the only factor has an impact on the profitability
 - If the leader is selfish and no principle then it will increase the bottom line
 - A strong leader will influence the shareholders' confidence of the company, which has an impact on the company value and the bottom line in the longer term
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - Five out of six participants expressed that the bottom line will be impacted
- Q. 7b What is the impact of character in leadership on a company's shareholder value?

- Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - If it is focused on and direct to company benefit, then it has an impact
 - Not much.
 - Most of the time, shareholders mainly care about the profitability of a company. There may be an impact but it is rather indirect.
 - One said no impact because stakeholders and owners of the company will not be influenced by staff
 - Strong leader vs weak will impact the shareholders' confidence of the company, which will impact the company value and the bottom line in the long term
- Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - All participants think character in leadership has an impact on the shareholder value
- Q. 7c What is the impact of character in leadership to a company's stakeholder?
 - Focus group 1 participant stated that:
 - Sure, some like, some do not
 - The impact is uncertain because different stakeholders will have different interests in their roles and sometimes, they are contradicting with each other
 - Leader's Character will have an impact on staff
 - Depends on different types of stakeholders
 - Stakeholders have conflicts and leaders can help smooth it out
 - Focus group 2 participants stated that:
 - All participants believe there is an impact
- Q. 7d What is the impact of character in leadership to a company's compliance?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - One participant said the compliance manager will warn the leaders if there is no compliance issue, therefore, the impact is not much
 - There is impact and characters should align with the law, regulation, moral and norm, or at least don't against them
 - It depends on the corporates, different corporates have different compliance requirements, for example, bank and security firm has different compliance requirements. If the company has stringent internal control and the industry has a strong compliance requirement, leadership character will have less impact
 - Every company has to comply with regulations, no matter what leader character
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - One participant think compliance is to follow the guideline, thus leadership character does not have the influence on a company's compliance
- Q. 7e What is the impact of character in leadership to a company's corporate governance?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - Similar to point 7d) but this time is about company value and policy
 - Yes, it will, but many leaders may only consider profitability other than social responsibilities

- Corporate governance should be set by leader and shareholders, thus the leader's character does not have influence
 - This is not a choice for the leader
- Focus group 2 participants:
 - Corporate governance is about the straight guideline, whoever executes the guideline line will make a difference.
- Q. 7f What is the impact of character in leadership to a company's staff engagement?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - Nothing is perfect. Different leadership style works well in a different situation (Situational leadership).
 - It would be irrelevant to comment without certain crucial information such as corporate culture, organizational structure, company value, business nature & scale, and industry sector, etc.
 - Transformational leadership style will have a positive impact on staff engagement
 - It depends as equity theory applies
 - If the lead character is caring then it will have a positive influence on staff engagement
 - Good character will positively impact the employee engagement
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - All connected staff may feel the engagement.
 - If staff do not care then has no impact on staff engagement
 - If the leader cheat on staff then staff engagement will be low
- Q. 8 Follow up Q7. And the difference in the Asian context?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - Transformational leadership style will make a difference
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - Trump/ character will change with experience. Short-sighted, result-oriented/flexible to do the thing/they will empower their leadership to achieve what they want, what leader said is correct
- Q. 9 Can character be learned?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - Yes. It can be learned. It can be modified as per experience and can be transferred to others,
 - Yes, but it takes a long time. Just like character will change as we get older and older.
 - One said No
 - Character is difficult to change, it will only change after a big event
 - Yes, but need to find the right staff
 - Individual training may not be possible, it's costly
 - Yes, people will learn from the lesson
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - Yes

- Q. 10 Will you consider a staff's character in recruitment, promotion, and people development?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - Yes
 - Yes, especially in promotion and people development but sometimes it is hard to judge whether the staff has the desired character during the recruitment
 - Yes, it helps to find the right staff.
 - But individual training may not be possible, it's costly.
 - Yes, I will consider staff character in recruitment, promotion because I think a staff character will affect a company's development
 - I will definitely consider and it is a major factor for the consideration
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - Yes

- Q. 11 Is it worth to promote character in leadership
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - Definitely, coz those impacts mentioned above.
 - Not sure. It depends on the purpose
 - The market regulates itself
 - As the management of a company, I am more result-orientated, character is less important compared with the result
 - Yes, but do not know-how
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - Yes

- Q. 12 What words will you associate with character?
 - Focus group 1 participants:
 - History
 - Intention
 - Attitude
 - Behaviour and performance
 - The real face of a person
 - Character is born and can develop, and be influenced by experience
 - It is behavioral,
 - It's about personal style
 - Focus group 2 participants:
 - Ethical
 - Intellectual
 - Social
 - Emotions

- Q. 13 Is there is anything you would like to add?

Reference

- Brown, M. E., Trevino, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117–134.
- Brown, M., & Mitchell, M. (2010). Ethical and unethical leadership: Exploring new avenues for future research. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 20(4), 583–616.
- Brown, M., & Trevino, L. K. (2006a). Socialized charismatic leadership, values congruence, and deviance in work groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(4), 954–962.
- Brown, M., & Trevino, L. K. (2006b). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 595–615.
- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 97(2), 117-134.
- Ciulla, J. (2001). Carving leaders from the warped wood of humanity. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 18(4), 313–319.
- Ciulla, J. (2005). The state of leadership ethics and the work that lies before us. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 14(4), 323–335.
- Coll, R. K., & Chapman, R. (2000). Qualitative or quantitative? Choices of methodology for cooperative education researchers. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, 35(1), 25–33.
- Crossan, M., Mazutis, D., & Seijts, G. 2013. In search of virtue: The role of virtues, values and character strengths in ethical decision making. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 113: 567– 581.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Crews, J. (2015). What is an Ethical Leader?: The Characteristics of Ethical Leadership from the Perceptions Held by Australian Senior Executives. *Journal of Business & Management*, 21(1).
- Fry, L. W. (2003). Towards a theory of spiritual leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 693–727.
- Guterres, A. 2019, The Sustainable Development Goals Report, United Nations <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

- Hitchcock, G., & Hughes, D. (1989). *Research and the teacher*. London: Routledge.
- Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2005). 'Can you see the real me?' A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 343–372.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing.
- Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Authentic leadership: A positive developmental approach. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler.
- Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Quick, J. C., & Wright, T. A. (2011). Character-based leadership, context, and consequences. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(5), 984-988.
- QSR International Pty Ltd. (2003). NVivo qualitative data analysis software.
- Sendjaya, S., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2008). Defining and measuring servant leadership behaviour in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(2), 402-424.
- Seijts, G., Gandz, J., Crossan, M., & Reno, M. (2015). Character matters: Character dimensions' impact on leader performance and outcomes. *Organizational Dynamics*, 44(1), 65-74.
- Sosik, J. J., Gentry, W. A., & Chun, J. U. (2012). The value of virtue in the upper echelons: A multisource examination of executive character strengths and performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(3), 367-382.
- Trevino, L. K., Brown, M., & Hartman, L. P. (2003). A qualitative investigation of perceived executive ethical leadership: Perceptions from inside and outside the executive suite. *Human Relations*, 56(1), 5–37.
- Trevino, L. K., Hartman, L. P., & Brown, M. (2000). Moral person and moral manager: How executives develop a reputation for ethical leadership. *Californian Management Review*, 42(4), 128–142.

Watts, T. (2008). *Business Leaders' Values and Beliefs Regarding Decision Making Ethics*. Lulu.com.