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Chinese Philosophy Ethical, Paternalistic and Aesthetic Leadership in Global Business World

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Abstract

Leadership intent to be ethical in order to be effective and successful over the long time period. The leaders must demonstrate the highest moral standards and ethical conduct in their everyday talk, actions, decisions, behaviors, life so that others in their organizations can follow suit. World scientists, philosophers, psychologists, religious leaders, and thinkers from ancient times have emphasized the importance of ethics for leaders, if they are to attain effective governance. Although importance of word "ethics" has been a subject of discussion for centuries, recent decades have observed the debate expanding across scientific disciplines and the business community in the global world.

Keywords: Leadership; Philosophy; Ethics; Chinese community; Morality; Harmony

Introduction

It is not surprising to us that leadership has interested human beings for centuries, as reflected in the works of Confucius, Plato, or Machiavelli, and that leadership has always been a contested terrain [1]. From a historical viewpoint, Spence and Chin [2] suggested that the 20th century was the century of China, and we believe that they referred to the significant political, social, cultural, and even economic transformations which China has had since the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. As a typical style of leadership in the Chinese community, paternalistic leadership has already attracted a great deal of attention [3-5], and could be strongly explained in high power distance and collectivist cultures [6-8]. Current studies on paternalistic leadership tended to focus at the individual level of the organization. For example, it had been proved that paternalistic leadership significantly influenced subordinate effectiveness, including loyalty to supervisor [9], organizational commitment [5], job satisfaction [10], organizational citizenship behavior [9], and job performance [5]. Organizational aesthetics, as an emerging perspective to study organizations, has drawn increasing attention from scholars over the past decade [11]. Building a fresh paradigm on this foundation, aesthetic leadership focuses on the processes of influence rather than the attributes of leaders [12]. The predominant approaches in the 'follower-inclusive' perspective of leadership (e.g. charismatic, transformational, and servant leadership), within the 'technical-scientific' approach [13], tend to rely on rational and objective methods to discover and predict outcomes associated with different aspects of leadership [14]. Aesthetic leadership, in contrast, provides an approach to investigate how leadership behaviours and outcomes are produced and emerge, in an attempt to describe the subjective 'felt meanings' of leaders and followers, which are absent from the leadership literature [12]. Ladkin [15] suggests three categories of practice that contribute to what she terms 'leading beautifully' (mastery, purpose, and coherence), outlining the roles of aesthetics in leadership.

Philosophy and Ethnical Leadership

One probable reason for the increased interest in ethics is the ethical transgressions that have been revealed in the recent corporate scandals [16-19]. The world has seen that there are unethical and even toxic leaders, who exploit the loopholes in management systems and seek to fulfill their personal desires at the expense of their organizations and its employees [20,21]. Trevino and Brown [19] argue that unethical

behavior has existed ever since the existence of humans and that people are not generally less ethical today. "But the environment has become quite complex and is rapidly changing, providing all sorts of ethical challenges and opportunities to express greed" (p. 77). The growing complexity of the businesses, escalating amount and speed of information flow, and greater pressure for performance have increased the probability of conscious – and sometimes unconscious – ethical slipups in decisions, actions, and behaviors of leaders. Carroll [22] notes that "global business ethics will demand cutting-edge thinking and practice as companies strive to expand their products, services, sales, and operations throughout the world" (p. 114). Questions on managerial and leadership ethics are being raised more than ever before [23], and the debate on ethical leadership has been revived in the recent years. Despite the surge in the volume of the discourse on ethics, the discussion of ethics in organizational studies is mainly about executive leadership and most studies on the subject "have tended to conceptualize ethical leadership in very broad and simple terms" [19]. Veiga et al. [23] expresses the concern that ethics of leadership has not been sufficiently discussed in main stream research agendas. Empirical research on ethical leadership is scarce [19,24,25]. Scholars have mostly discussed ethical leadership in theoretical and conceptual terms, but there are hardly any studies providing empirical evidence about ethical leadership. Brown et al. [24] carried out field investigations to test and validate the "construct" of "ethical leadership" within organizations (see: and its impact on employee outcomes [26]. Scholars have attempted to draw parallels as well as lines of distinctions across various positive forms of leadership [26-29]. A key distinction of ethical leadership is its emphasis on internalized moral perspective, moral person, moral manager, and idealized influence [26,28]. Authentic leadership is more concerned with self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing [26,27]. Servant leadership draws on the leader's self-awareness, authentic behavior, positive modeling, conceptual skills, empowering, behaving ethically, creating

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value for the community, helping subordinates to grow and succeed, putting subordinates' needs first, and emotional healing [27,30]. Spiritual leadership is built around concern for others, integrity, role modeling, altruism, and hope/faith [31]. Finally, transformational leadership comprises idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration [32]. Other dimensions of transformational leadership include leader's self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, and moral person [26].

Paternalistic Leadership

Paternalistic leadership, proposed by Farh and Cheng [4] on the basis of studies from Redding [33], Cheng [34], and Westwood [3], is widespread in Chinese society. Paternalistic leadership could be defined as a style of leadership characterized by high discipline and authoritarianism, fatherly benevolence and high moral standards [4]. In Confucianism, the family had been the fundamental system of the ethnic Chinese community for more than 3,000 years [35] and exerted a critical influence on the psychological and behavioral inclination of the Chinese people. The process of inferring this style of leadership from families to organizations was called as Pan-Familism [36]. Therefore, the three components should be studied separately [7,37]. According to Yammarino and Dansereau [38], the nature of leadership is multi-level. Leadership at different levels will lead to a different explanatory power. Thus Cheng et al. [5] pointed that most of the studies about paternalistic leadership tended to focus on the perspective of the vertical dyad interaction of "leader subordinate" relationship, so that the possible effect at different levels was being ignored. At this point, the phenomenon of a leadership style for all members, which we called "average leadership style" [39], emerged. In contrast to studies on the dyadic paternalistic leadership behavior, the study of average paternalistic leadership was lagging behind [5]. Under this logic, team identification referred to the perception of an individual identifying with the team or being a member of the team [40]. Or, an individual was in a state of self-defining as a member of the team [41]. The act of team members in self-defining themselves with the team largely depended on the way of leaders to shape the team. Lord and Brown [42] suggested that the team leaders played a vital role in the formation of the team identification. The result of this leadership style could be the exhibition of compliance and dependence to the legitimate authority of the superior by members in their subordinate role [10]. Wu [43] indicated that the higher the intensity of authoritarian leadership, the lower the level of trust of members to their superior, which eventually hampered organizational commitment. Organizational identification was generally recognized as significant that positively correlated with organizational commitment [44]. Benevolent leadership was characterized by the behavior of the leader's individualized care, understanding and forgiving to members of the organization [10]. As defined by the responsibilities and obligations of roles in the team, benevolent leadership tended to nurture a sense of gratitude and repayment among subordinates to the leader, which in turn made the subordinates feel obliged to repay the leader. Pellegrini et al. [45] suggested that benevolent leadership tended to buttress team commitment of the members proactively. As suggested in the studies of Bergami and Bagozzi [44], benevolent leadership was more likely to nurture a sense of gratitude among members of the team, which in turn contributed to team identification among the members. According to social learning theory, the exhibition of behavioral patterns by a leader conforming to an ethics code tended to attract the attention of subordinates [24], and further earned the respect and identification of subordinates, which made them learn from the leader [37].

Aesthetic Leadership

Aesthetic leadership literature Organizational research started to encourage an aesthetic approach as an alternative way to develop theories in the 1990s [11]. Aesthetics involves meanings and knowledge that people construct based on emotions and feelings about their sensory experiences [12]. In contrast with 'the technical-scientific' approach that illustrates ideas and knowledge through 'intentional meanings', 'the moral-aesthetic' approach expresses socio-cultural understandings through 'implication meanings' in a tacit and ambiguous way [13]. Considering aesthetics as part of individual conceptualization and knowledge, Hansen et al. [12] defined aesthetic leadership as an approach focused on 'sensory knowledge and felt meaning associated with leadership phenomena'. We accept that aesthetic leadership differs from the main stream leadership paradigms that emphasize the logical, rational, purposive, and linear nature of leadership [12]. We further agree that aesthetic leadership theory has substantial potential to develop through research focused on social influence, emotional involvement, and interaction among leaders and followers. Employing an in-depth case study, Ladkin [15] developed three dimensions of aesthetics in leadership – mastery, coherence, and purpose. These three dimensions can be illuminated as 'a mastery in understanding one's context and domain and mastery of the self,' coherence (also denoted as 'authenticity') in terms of the actions of the leader congruent with the overall espoused messages and purpose, and purpose in terms of 'attending to the goal towards which one is leading' [15]. Her work offers insight into the potential for the study of aesthetic behaviour in leadership. Ladkin heavily emphasized beauty as an aesthetic category, excluding multiple other categories of sensory experiences and felt meanings that together constitute aesthetic knowledge. Any emotions evoked by an event, object, or interaction can be understood aesthetically, and may be aesthetically pleasing, beautiful, ugly, sublime, comic, or grotesque [46]. Chinese culture perceives itself as unique, complex, and profound, with an aesthetically oriented pragmatic world view as its ontological foundation [47]. Confucian ethics highlight the moral importance of thought and its implications for action and hence the consequences of action, while virtue, as the pursuit of harmony, serves 'as a foundation for all of ethics' [48]. In Chinese culture, the rationality of individuals is realized in the practice of virtues, such as ren (humaneness), yi(appropriateness), li (ritual), zhong (conscientiousness), and shu(mutuality) [49], with all actions being interpreted from a normative perspective. Ren offers a foundation for human action, namely one's sense of personal significance and concern for others. Yi involves understanding of the context and self-mastery, based on the interaction between the individual and the situation [47]. Li, as a social grammar [50], works like a habit to influence human behaviour, presupposing both a community and people in relationships. Such a person is creative, exemplary, and influential, a person whom others look up to, admire, and take as a model' [50]. Based on ren, Confucian ethics require zhongand shuas principles in actions towards others. Zhongrefers to a person's commitment and sincerity inthe pursuit of ren [51]. Hall and Ames also assert that 'shuis always personal in that it entails zhong: doing one's best as one'sauthentic self' [47]. In all the relationships that Confucian morality revolves around, the primary emphasis is on undertaking responsibilities to others with a sincere and conscientious heart. As Ames and Rosemont [52] suggest, Chinese are concerned about how ren, yi, li, zhong,and shu relate to each other, to nature, and to the human world, expressing aesthetic correlation asharmony [53]. The notion of harmony, as a core concept of Confucianism [54], is a significant component of beauty in the vocabulary of Chinese aesthetics, because beauty itself

results from the harmonious proportion of parts to each other [55]. Harmony, the major constituent of aesthetics, relies on self-cultivation [54,56,57]. Such beauty lies in the balance between one's emotions and cultural norms, and also with respect for the reality of the situation, the background, and the context for virtuous performance [58]. Therefore, apart from mastery, purpose, and authenticity as discussed before, the Chinese category of beauty involves appropriateness as the key, 'with the relations among and between objects, events, and qualities', instead of focusing on 'ontology or epistemology' [52]; the former represents value rational pragmatism, the latter instrumental pragmatism [59-62].

Conclusion

Leaders can also take strong actions to establish ethical practices within organizations in global world . Apart from developing the formal documents on ethical conduct, all leaders need to demonstrate high ethical leadership in their daily behaviors, decisions, and actions as well. By sending out strong messages about global ethics and establishing clear reward and sanction systems to hold the employees accountable for their actions, all leaders can do a lot to create an ethical global organizational context. Ethical global leadership today can help build teams, groups, organizations, and societies that care for ethical and moral conduct. Limitations and future directions of this study should be noted in new science. The big difference between the traditional Chinese ethical culture of Confucianism and the Western ethical culture of Christianity has divided many opinions in global world. In the nearest future, we should keep on testing the validity of available scales of pure ethical climate, as well as developing an pure ethical climate scale under global Chinese culture. Third, the big problem was the redefinition of authoritarian global leadership. In this case study, the findings indicated that authoritarian global leadership nurtured the climate that prompted personal interest, and suppressed the development of the climate of quest for common interest. As mentioned, global authoritarian leadership was a typical style of leadership in traditional Chinese culture. The shang-yan leadership, is called under the "control of operation," may have a positive effect on the attitude and behavior of subordinates, which provides an another way of global and local thinking. In the nearest future, we could study authoritarian leadership in further detail to clarify the effect of the "control of people" and the "control of operation" on different categories of global ethical climate. The fourth problem was on the possibility of national cross-level analysis. This study mainly focused on the team level, so in the future, we could try two paths of cross-level analysis. Or to say, the global analysis of ethical climate was conducted at the individual and team levels to determine the moderating effect of team ethical climate on the relationship between dyadic paternalistic leadership and the ethical climate perception of individuals, as well as the global ethical climate perception and team identification in the individual level.

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