Confucian Values and Public Service Motivation:
The Mediating Role of Paradoxical Leadership

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Abstract
Although research of leadership and public service motivation (PSM) has been conducted in diverse cultural contexts, it remains understudied in Confucian Asia. The current study aims to examine how Confucian values influence PSM in the context of Vietnam and also attempts to investigate the mediating role of paradoxical leadership in this relationship. Integrating the culturally-endorsed implicit leadership theory (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) with the knowledge on the social process of PSM (Perry, 2000; Vandenabeele, 2007), this study proposes to examine whether Confucian values are positively related to paradoxical leadership and such leadership is also positively related to PSM. This prediction was tested using a sample of 206 public managers-public employee dyads, drawn from different government departments in Vietnam. The analytical data procedures were outlined by PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2013). Results provide support for the mediation model that Confucian values were found to be positively related to paradoxical leadership, which, in turns, exerted a positive impact on PSM. The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of the relationships between Confucian values, paradoxical leadership, and PSM in the public sector of Vietnam. The findings are potentially extended to the public management systems in other countries that share some similar Confucian values like Vietnamese do in Asia. In terms of the practical implications, the public managers should communicate the positive characteristics of Confucian values and practice the use of paradoxical leadership behaviors in order to increase PSM among public employees.

Keywords: Confucian Values, Paradoxical Leadership, Public Service Motivation

Introduction

East Asian leadership is entirely paradoxical because of the complexity of the regional culture and politics. So, general proposals on leadership models for this region have still missed the point since there is no investigation on the hidden cultural force. Regarding this point, several scholars indicate that the Chinese implicit leadership theories embrace the influence of Confucianism on shaping transformational and paradoxical approaches to leadership in the region (Lee, 2001; Wah, 2010). In Confucian societies, some studies are also undertaken to explore the transformation of PSM into this context, which is considered to be a different version of PSM theory developed in the United States (see Gao, 2015; Kim et al., 2012; Yung, 2014). Although significant research lines on of Confucian value- based leadership and PSM in East Asia have emerged, the mechanism of how Confucian values, paradoxical leadership and PSM interact in public institutions is still a mystery. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of Confucian values, that still prevail in the social value system in the region, on certain forms of paradoxical leadership, subsequently influencing on the level of PSM, in the context of Vietnam. This research is necessary because it enriches the significant work that emphasizes the distinctive leadership needed to be embedded in a certain cultural attitude, that represents the influential leadership to organizations (Geert Hofstede, 1980; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). Concurrently, PSM is an important outcome in public sector, definitely defenseless to leadership pressures, especially in the complex public environment (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012), and is dependent on collective ideals originating from the society's cultural values (Andersen, Jørgensen, Kjeldsen, Pedersen, & Vrangbæk, 2013). In this report, we endeavor to prove that the Confucian-based principles are a core value of institutional values in East Asia, that lead to the paradoxical conduct of public managers. As such, the public managers, who adopt paradoxical leadership will eventually attempt to bridge and bring into alignment the prosocial ideals of employees in public service within the culture of their organizations.

By conducting this research, we try to establish a theoretical model for the relationship between leadership and PSM, which provides insight into value-based leadership and motivation, suggestively adaptive to the cultural and political context. In particular, this study provides an empirical evidence for developing the culturally-endorsed implicit leadership theory in the context of Vietnam in order to understand Confucian values as an underlying reason for paradoxical leadership in East Asia which may be different from the Western leadership approach. Moreover, the research findings extend the background theories by proving that Confucian values stem from the social culture can be promoted as public service values that trigger the employees to serve the public good. As a result, we will provide a novel contribution to the existence of Confucian politics on modern leadership practices of the governments in East Asia, which would potentially fill a critical gap to the literature of East Asian management.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

This study integrates the culturally-endorsed implicit leadership theory (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) with the knowledge on the social process of PSM (Perry, 2000; Vandenabeele, 2007). House et al. (2004) assume that each

organizational or societal culture is connected with a particular mindset or belief about leadership. Eventually, the culture of society and organization influences the type of leadership, which is expected to be acceptable and effective for individuals within that culture. Additionally, Perry (2000) and Vandenabeele (2007) propose the basic values, which public employees operate within their environment, have been learned from a socio-historical context by a socialization process. These social values will be promoted by public managers as "carriers of institutions" to provide meaning to their employees' actions. As such, the employees hold the service values that stem from institutional standards; and under the impact of their leaders, they are motivated to act. Thus, based on such theoretical backgrounds, the well-grounded connections between Confucian values, managers' leadership and followers' PSM are constructed. Following this, we develop hypotheses for the mediating roles of paradoxical leadership in the relationship between Confucian values and PSM.

The hypothesized model of this study (see figure 1 below) includes Confucian values (as a predictor) that guide government managers in using paradoxical leadership (as a mediator), which, in turn, affects PSM (as an outcome).
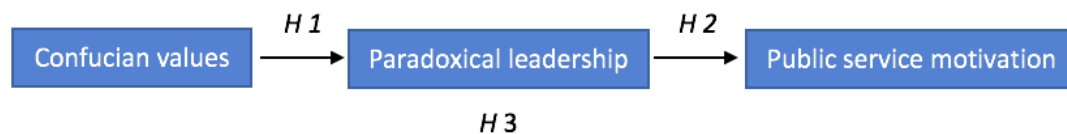

Figure 1: The hypothesized model for the mediating role of paradoxical leadership in the relationship between Confucian values and PSM.

Confucian values and paradoxical leadership

Confucian values refer to an ethical system, developed by a Chinese philosopher-Confucius, whose philosophy has exerted a strong impact in the history of Chinese and East Asian civilization (Chen & Hsieh, 2017) . Harmony is the fundamental concept of Confucian values, focusing on building human relationship to maintain the stability of the society (Wei & Li, 2013). The Confucian values are explored in several studies, and implies a leadership model of East Asia. To practice these values, leaders have to concentrate on several characteristics, such as harmony, humanness, propriety, reciprocity, and self-cultivation (Lang, Irby, & Brown, 2012). Recently, several scholars have discussed that due to the coexistence of seemingly contradictory philosophical views, the application of diverse leadership styles in Confucian contexts is highly complex and paradoxical (McElhatton & Jackson, 2012; Schenck & Waddey, 2017) .

Paradoxical leadership refers to a "both-and" approach of leaders in influencing their followers by balancing the two aspects of empowering and controlling simultaneously (Pearce, Wassenaar, Berson, & Tuval-Mashiach, 2019; Zhang & Han, 2019). The dimensions of paradoxical leadership comprise: *(1) control and empowerment; (2) self-centeredness and other-centeredness; (3) power distance and closeness; (4) treating subordinates uniformly and allowing individualization and (5) requirements and flexibility* (Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). Chen (2002) also asserts that the Confucian philosophy strives to avoid polarizing inconsistencies, and this force holds the seed of the opposition, but forms an integral whole together. We argue that the

impact of Confucian values on paradoxical leadership can be explained by the "both-and" approach of leaders in influencing their followers by empowering and controlling simultaneously. Our arguments will be provided as follows:

Significantly, harmony *(he in Chinese)* is at the core of Confucian doctrine, and this concept helps explain the paradoxical model of leadership (McElhatton & Jackson, 2012). Harmony presumes a coexistence of different things and implies a specific positive relationship between them (Han, 2013a; Li, 2008). People, reflecting the Confucian harmonious mindset, have holistic thinking (Wong, 2012), so they are prone to creating a stable environment and minimizing conflict in all public interactions (Kirkbride, Tang, & Westwood, 1991). Such a process positively enhances leader-follower balancing exchanges (Lin, Ho, & Lin, 2013). Eventually, leaders, while cultivating their virtues to impact others, they establish an impetus for followers' identity and dignity (Low, 2010; Low & Ang, 2012; Oc, Bashshur, Daniels, Greguras, & Diefendorff, 2015).

In addition, propriety *(li in Chinese)* dictates that individuals must follow a proper way or a proper ritual in social interactions (Yum, 1988; Yun, 2012). Following this, leaders concurrently maintain their dominance, while sharing recognition with followers. When leaders behave nicely to followers with care and compassion, these followers will reciprocate to them in the manner of real appreciation and in the sense of loyalty (Chan & Mak, 2012). Thus, Confucian-influenced leaders, who practice propriety and benevolence, interpret various paradoxical practices by utilizing both governing and accepting individual distinctiveness.

Furthermore, following reciprocity *(shu in Chinese)* as a "Golden rule", "one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself." (Horsfield, 2017). This rule causes leaders to treat followers paradoxically to create mutual trust and loyalty. According to Gutmann and Thompson (1998) and Mullis (2008), reciprocity implies the perception of democracy, allowing some space for bargaining as well as for comprehensive moral views, as long as these are constrained by the rule itself. In Confucian societies, personal autonomy involves moral freedom that only partly promote acceptance and independence to retain social stability (Chan, 2002). Under this mindset, leaders have developed an empowerment for their followers, but only within the scope of their authority. Thanks to Confucian dynamics, leaders can enhance both leadership and followership concurrently (Dhakhwa & Enriquez, 2008).

Last but not least, Confucian leaders habitually deal with interpersonal relationships within the Doctrine of the *Mean*. *"Mean"* is defined as "equilibrium," (W.-t. Chan, 2008). Concerning this principle, leaders frequently settle for the neutral viewpoint or solutions in pursuit of the group equilibrium. By these claims, if leaders are qualified with setting the vision for the organization and inspiring followers to action, followers are also established with the work required to make the vision a reality (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, & Huang, 2018).

Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize as follows:
Hypothesis 1: "Confucian values are positively related to paradoxical leadership."

Paradoxical leadership and PSM

Perry and Wise (1990) defined PSM as ''an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations''. The PSM dimensions include: *attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice* (Perry & Wise, 1990, p368). It is also asserted that leaders enhance their employees' PSM effectively due to emphasizing the dual nature of leadership in which they influence and inspire simultaneously (Perry and Hondeghem 2008). In a similar vein, we propose that paradoxical leadership exerts a positive control on enhancing the PSM of employees in public institutions. Our arguments are provided below, indicating the significant relationship between the dimensions of paradoxical leadership, developed by Zhang et al (2015) and the dimensions PSM, explored by Perry&Wise (1990), with four approaches as follows.

Firstly, paradoxical leaders combine self-centeredness and other-centeredness, which involves preserving a strong sense of self, while displaying modesty to others (Waldman & Bowen, 2016; Zhang & Han, 2019; Zhang et al., 2015). Following this, leaders help to establish their role as an actor of influence whereas they can acknowledge employees' strengths to stimulate the employees' work motivation. Consequently, such leaders inspire followers to rise above their own self-interests for the sake of the common goals (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994), but they also create the pride for employees being involved in policy making and encourage them to be committed to the public good (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006).

Secondly, paradoxical leaders embrace two poles of control and autonomy dually, thereby creating a bounded environment to maintain the structural bureaucracy, while encouraging the proactivity and autonomy of their employees during uncertain times (Zhang et al., 2015). In this regard, "control" facet can motivate employees with a high level of responsibility to follow organizational standardization and the guidance of leaders ; and "autonomy" facet is necessary to give the right of decision making to the lower unit, which eventually can enhance and proactivity and job performance (Fuller Jr, Hester, & Cox, 2010). As such, when a leader become both a controller and a motivator to followers, they are responsibility for serving the public good, actively participate in making public policies and public services (Kim, 2006a).

Thirdly, paradoxical leaders are concerned in finding a balance between distance and closeness to make sure both their headship role and interpersonal connections are respected (Zhang et al., 2015). In leadership in a distance, followers do not directly approach leaders' thoughts and manners, but they are motivated by the image of leaders who are buoyant, captivating, and charismatic (Yagil, 1998). By this way, leaders are influential with charm or charisma that can inspire organizational commitment in followers (Shastri, Mishra, & Sinha, 2010). Simultaneously, the closeness aspect in leadership can build relationships or communication channels to enhance the followers' organizational commitment (Keskes, 2014), subsequently resulting to produce trust, create acceptance (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Cooper, 2018). This close social interaction can inspire followers sense of social justice and civic duty and self-sacrifice to the public service missions (Horton & Hondeghem, 2006).

Fourthly, paradoxical leaders treat followers uniformly, while allowing individualization. Because of this, they cultivate an environment where, all team members can participate freely but still give room for distinctive performance and competition (Zhang et al., 2015). While PSM is regarded as self-efficacy and self-determination (Andrews, 2016), leaders tend to be employing the rule of "individualization" to trigger followers to perform the best of their competence and flexibility. As a result, paradoxical actions of leaders will foster employees' motivation to serve the public because they are more engaged in public work for accomplishing their bigger life purpose of practicing public service values.

Based on the above discussions, we propose the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 2: "Paradoxical leadership is positively related to public service motivation"

The mediation of paradoxical leadership

Frederickson (2002) discusses that Confucian values have shaped the conduct code of public officials, irrespective of positions (leaders or followers), especially these ethics have affected the desire of public employees to dedicate themselves to national development and professional engagement (Yung, 2014). Following this, we justify that paradoxical leadership explains the process by which Confucian values (e.g., *reciprocity, harmony, humanness, and propriety*) shape employees' PSM in the public sector, toward the public service values they both share in public institutions.

Primarily, paradoxical leaders practice the principle of Confucian reciprocity, interpreting the meaning of the democratic aspect of public service values. Thus, this reciprocal implementation boosts the attraction to policymaking of public employees as an important dimension of PSM. For example, reciprocity can increase the probability of an individual's political participation, such as taking part in the decisions on a policy issue that affects economic, political and social domains (El-Attar, 2007). Additionally, Confucian leaders are role models, they adopt harmony into searching to perfect themselves, and still helping their subordinates' growth with a modest and respectful approach (Wah, 2010). As discussed by Perry and Wise (1990), the commitment to the public interest is a dichotomy of PSM, which is both a unique quality of serving in public authorities (state-centered) and PSM characteristics (people-centered). By this harmonious method, paradoxical leaders inspire their public employees to have more commitment to the public interest, because their reaction not only involves individual benefit and power, but their social responsibility is also the most important part for involving community instruction and human cultivation (Neville, 1986). Moreover, public leaders' paradoxical behavior communicates Confucian values with the practice of humanness. This practice rationalizes the idea of benevolence *(ren)* of public service values in treating their public employees by using "kind-hearted power" (Kernaghan, 2003). Because of this, the stability between power and thoughtful care of public leaders transfers the values of compassion to public employees, when they show the idea of "patriotism of benevolence"; and this idea becomes the central motive for civil servants (public employees), as noted by Frederickson (2002) and Frederickson & Hart (1985). Last but not least, paradoxical leaders foster their employees to achieve higher levels of PSM (self-sacrifice facet), because, in this way, they enhance the humanity aspect of public service values (Van der Wal and Yang, 2015). One of Confucius's thoughts on

bureaucracy is that: *"A gentleman is always considerate towards others, entirely unselfish. She seeks nothing from others; therefore, she has no complaints to make. She does what is right without taking into account personal benefit"* (cited in Fernandez, 2004, p. 23). When leaders behave properly, by creating seminal work in their candid position, employees will receive a sense of uprightness. Eventually, self-sacrifice in PSM will occur as employees are willing to substitute service to others for tangible personal rewards (Perry, 1996).

From the above arguments, we hypothesize as follows:
Hypothesis 3: Paradoxical leadership mediates the relationship between Confucian values and PSM.

Measure

Samples

The data collection was from 206 leader-follower dyads, of total 412 participants to do surveys completely. These participants are public managers (leaders) and public employees (followers) from the governmental departments in Vietnam, who agreed to participate in the project. We collected data between September and December 2018, when they were attending an annual training program in the Ho Chi Minh Cadre Academy of Public Administration. The HR director and trainers in the academy helped to collect data, asking the participants to join a research project, titled *"Leadership and Public Service Motivation"*. The questionnaires were delivered and then returned to the HR office in envelopes.

Prior to our data collection, we translated the questionnaires from English to Vietnamese using a back-translation procedure(Brislin, 1970). Data were collected in two periods of time. At time 1, questionnaires were distributed to the public managers (leaders) and civil servants (subordinates). Both of them were required to provide their own demographics responded to the first wave of the survey were required to rate their Confucian values. Finally, at time 2, two weeks later, the public employees were asked to rate the paradoxical leadership of their immediate public managers and to self-rate their public service motivation.

Of 800 participants invited, 571 participants accepted to do the study survey (representing an overall response rate of 72%). However, 58 questionnaires were removed because they incorrectly answered at least one of the three validity questions (e.g., "Please check 'strongly agree' for this item."). Additionally, another number of 11 questionnaires were removed because they failed to respond to all the items in at least one of the scales. Finally, we remained 502 useful completed questionnaires, but we obtained 412 samples that were matched 206 pairs of public managers and employees *(N=206)* based on the two sources of data from both public managers and public employees. Of the 206 participants, 46% were female. They all had worked for their organization in the positions of manager from 5 years to 12 years on average *(M= 6.80, SD =1.80)*. Of 206 public employees, female accounts for *42 %.* They all had worked under their present public managers for an average of over 5 years *(M =6.60, SD =1.80)*.

Scales

All scales in this studies were designed in Likert-scales, reliable with Cronbach ' s alpha ranged over *.07* (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011; Drost, 2011). In the analysis, z-score, or standard score, was used for standardizing scores on the same scales by dividing a score's deviation by the standard deviation in the data set. The result is a standard score. It measures the number of standard deviations that a given data point is from the mean (Crawford & Howell, 1998). Three variables were measured as follows:

Confucian Values

Both public managers and employees rated their Confucian values using the 24-item scale developed by Monkhouse, Barnes, and Hanh Pham (2013). An example item is: *"I am concerned with not bringing shame to myself"*. The Cronbach' s alpha for this scale was ranged from *0.76 to 0.91.*

Paradoxical leadership

The public employees rated public managers' paradoxical leadership by completing the survey with the 22-item version scale developed by Zhang et al. (2015). An example item is: *" My supervisor uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly but also treats them as individuals"*. The Cronbach ' s alpha for the scale was range from .80 to .88.

Public Service Motivation

The public employees rated their PSM by using by 12-item short scale (Coursey, Perry, Brudney, & Littlepage, 2008). The original measurement was 40 items developed by (Perry, 1996). An example item is: *"I seldom think about the welfare of people I don't know personally"*. The Cronbach ' s alpha for the scale was ranged from .71 to .84.

Testing

PROCESS macro, developed by Hayes (2013) was used to examine the hypotheses. This is a computational tool designed for path analysis-based mediation and moderation analysis and their combination, for example "conditional process model" (Hayes, 2012). In this study, we employed the simple mediation analysis in PROCESS macro via SPSS, which generates the index of mediation and the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (CI). According to Hayes, if the index of moderated mediation is significant, it indicates that the conditional indirect effects at different levels, e.g., at one Standard Deviation (SD) above, below, and at the mean of the moderator variable are significantly different from one another. This provides evidence that the moderated mediation effects are significant. Furthermore, for simple indirect effects, PROCESS also analyzes the data with a total of 1,000 bootstrap samples selected (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006), and a 95% CI for these estimations. If the 95% CI for the average estimates of these 1,000 indirect effects does not include zero, it indicates that the indirect effect is statistically significant at the .05 level (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Results

Variable correlations

The relationship between the study variables were examined by utilizing a Pearson product correlational analysis. Pearson's correlation coefficient is the test statistics that measures the statistical relationship, between two continuous variables. It gives information about the magnitude of the correlation, as well as the direction of the relationship (Weaver & Koopman, 2014). Results in Table 1 showed that, the correlations of Confucian values, paradoxical leadership and PSM was statically significant. The results indicated that all factors were linked to each other substantially, and significantly related to each other, *N=206, p<.001*. In particular, scores regarding the correlation of Confucian values and paradoxical leadership was significant and correlated strongly at the *0.01 level (2-tailed), with r=.478*. In addition, Confucian values-PSM correlation resulted in the significance at the *level 0.05(2-tailed), with r=.177*. Finally, the paradoxical leadership-PSM correlation scores at *0.01 level(2-tailed)*, were significant and strongly associated with high rate *(r=.375)*

Correlations

		Confucian Value	Paradoxical leadership	Public service motivation	
Confucian Value	Pearson Correlation	1	.478**	.177*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.011	
	N	206	206	206	
Paradoxical leadership	Pearson Correlation	.478**	1	.375**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	
	N	206	206	206	
Public service motivation	Pearson Correlation	.177*	.375**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000		
	N	206	206	206	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: Result from Pearson test of Correlations between the variables in the study

Examining the mediation model

The result of mediation test is presented in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that Confucian values is positively related to paradoxical leadership. Consistent with our hypothesis, the results in Table 2 show that Confucian values had significantly positive relationships with paradoxical leadership, *b=.4861, t=7.7693, p < .0001, 95% CI[.3627.6094]* that did not include zero, so the effect was considered significant. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that paradoxical leadership is positively related to public service motivation. Seen from table 2, paradoxical leadership had a significantly positive relationship with PSM, *b=.3600, t=5.0758, p < .0001, 95% CI[.2202.4999]*. There was not a zero overlapping in between the confidence interval, so the effect was significant. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that managers' paradoxical leadership mediates the relationship between Confucian values and PSM. As can be seen in Table 2, the direct effect of Confucian values on PSM was not significant, *b= -.0022, t=-.0310, p > .05, CI[-.1445,.1400],* because the CI included zero. However, there was a significant indirect effect of Confucian values on PSM through paradoxical leadership. As shown in table 2, the indirect effect was demonstrated by the bootstrapped 95% CI of the indirect effect, *b=.1750, SE = .0422, 95% CI [.1013,.2652],* which did not overlap a zero. The total regression model was significant *(F(1,204)= 60.3618, p<.0001, R2=.2283),* pointing to a statistically significant to this conditional process models. Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported.

	R-sq	MSE	F(1,204)	Sig	B	SE	t	p	95% [LLCI,
y	.2283	.9462	60.3618	.0000					
e: PL r: CV					.4861	.0626	7.7693	.0000	[.3627,(
e: PSM	.3749	.9711	16.5967	.0000					
r: PL					.3600	.0709	5.0758	.0000	[.2202,4
or: CV					.0721	-.0310	.9753	.0000	[-.1445,.
DIRECT EFFECT MODEL									
e: PSM	.0315	1.0890	6.6253	.0108					
fect of CV on PSM					.1728	.0671	2.5740	.0108	[.0404,3
ffect of CV on PSM					-.0022	.0721	-.1445	.9753	[-.1445,;
effect of CV on PSM					.1750	.0422			[.1013,2

CV=Confucian values; PL=Paradoxical leadership; PSM=Public service motivation; LLCI, lower level class interval; ULC level class interval.

Table 2: Process result for the mediation of Paradox between the relationship of Confucian Values and Public

Discussion

The detailed analysis reveals three important findings in this study, including the impact of Confucian values on the managers' paradoxical leadership (supported in hypothesis 1), the impact of managers' paradoxical leadership on the employees'PSM (supported in hypothesis 2); and the mediating role of paradoxical leadership in the relationship between Confucian values and PSM (supported in hypothesis 3). These findings have several important implications for theory and practice in leadership and PSM in Confucian-influenced societies.

Theoretical implication

The findings extend the theoretical background by proving that Confucian values, as a societal values, are learned by organizational leaders. Those leaders conveyed the value meaning into their organizational leadership and service motives. It is revealed that in the cultures like Vietnam, Confucian values exist in the mindset of all public workers (both managers and employees), based on the socio-historical context through the socialization process (Perry, 2000). Thus, these values are promoted by public leaders to provide meaning to their follower's motivation values that characterize their PSM (Vandenabeele, 2014). Especially, under the paradoxical impact of public leaders, the public servants are motivated to act within the dimensions of PSM, such as attraction to policy making, commitment to public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice.

This study offers an innovative contribution to the literature by confirming that Confucian values are considered to be an antecedent of the managers' paradoxical leadership, which employs the tools of both controlling and empowering to escalate public employees' PSM. In previous studies, the impact of Confucianism on leadership has only been explored in theoretical publications (see Faure & Fang, 2008; Ornatowski, 1996; Patrick & Liong, 2012; Sheh Seow, 2010). This study is the first to provide empirical support for the mechanism in which paradoxical leadership mediates between Confucian value and PSM. Drawing on the cultural theory about leadership (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; R. J. House et al., 2004), the study results can extend existing research that suggests the need to examining more motivational context variables (e.g., cultural values, social institution) in relation with organizational leadership. Empirically, we provided support to the theory, which realizes leadership behavior as the most dominant predictor of the PSM dimensions (e.g.,Camilleri, 2007; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008)

Furthermore, this study contributes to the research of PSM in East Asia regarding two issues that previous scholars have called for responses. The first issue is that leaders can enhance their employees' PSM to qualify public management, which is in line with the research of (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). The second issue addresses an Asian context (like Vietnam) to examine how the Western structure-PSM has functioned in a non-western context. This examination is also consistent with earlier research in East Asia (e.g., Kim, 2006b, 2009a; Van der Wal, 2015). For example, the structure of PSM in Korea was explored by (Kim, 2009b), to be influenced by Confucian values, including collectivist culture, and the high prestige of public service. The author verified the structure of PSM, observed in the United States by Perry, can be generalized to the Korean context and other societies with the same

Confucian culture (Kim, 2009). So, we continue to validate this western PSM structure to be implemented in the Vietnamese context.

Practical implication

The current study initially supports the idea that public organizations should promote paradoxical practice in the workplace (Tripathi & Dixon, 2008). The key lesson for policymakers includes the connections between Confucian values, paradoxical leadership and the increasing levels of PSM. Through promoting paradoxical leadership, organizations will support leaders to leisurely influence their followers, leading to higher rates of PSM. Accordingly, applying paradoxical leadership is also associated with numerous organizational outcomes such as proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity (Zhang et al., 2015) creativity under workload pressure (Shao, Nijstad, & Täuber, 2019) and escalation of commitment (Sleesman, 2019).

For policy making, we verify PSM as a new outcome of paradoxical leadership in public institutions. As such, policy makers may integrate a paradoxical leadership measurement into their choice of executive positions. They can use the framework for evaluate the positive effects on the PSM of their employees. Importantly, the impact of paradoxical leadership on PSM also depends on Confucian values, so, another essential indicator for organizations may convey these Confucian values into their organizations' core motive values. The reason is because the presence of Confucianism exists in various areas of social life in Confucian Asia or Confucian human resources worldwide (Han, 2013b).

Our suggestion can be inspiring for schools, the workforce and the related governments to learn about Confucian paradoxical leadership. Since the traditional and modern leadership is explicitly conveyed from Confucian principles, this applied knowledge has become highly relevant to today's leaders. In particular, the practice of paradoxical leadership provides people and organizations, including families, communities, nations and the world with much serenity, wisdom, and transformation(Low & Ang, 2013).Hence, some of these teachings will inspire leaders to change from within and transform their leadership from a single-pole to a two-pole balance, "both-and" instead of "either/or" approach. As a result, leaders become more innovative and successful by resolving both sides' disputes, leading to organizational stability.

Conclusions

The current study has limitations. Firstly, the measures used in this study are self-reported measures, which are perceptional, and this may cause a common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future studies can avoid this potential problem by applying data collection from other resources to decrease the level of social desirability, which might have an important effect on paradoxical leadership and PSM. Secondly, the study could only investigate within cross-sectional data (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 2013; Sedgwick, 2014), the result did not help in concluding the results on cause and effect (Gangl, 2010). The typical reason is because the surveys were provided at a particular time when the organizations only present a snapshot of their perceptions of the conceptual relationships (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 1998). Therefore, future research can develop a long-term project to gain the

observation of changes more accurately and profoundly on the relationship of the identical variables (Confucian values, paradoxical leadership and PSM). Thirdly, this study was limited in analyzing data at the individual level; however, these psychological variables can be perceived in groups or at different levels of departments in public organizations. So, further research can adopt cluster analyses with multi-level data to see the whole picture in which "individuals nested within groups" and a broader range of the context(Diez, 2002).

In summary, the present study offers an insight into how Confucian values impact on public managers' paradoxical leadership, which, in turns, affects employee's PSM. The results of this study showed the indirect effect of Confucian values on employees' PSM through the function of paradoxical leadership. Significantly, we have provided empirical evidence that public managers with stronger Confucian values can have stronger implementation of paradoxical leadership practice, and eventually the outcome of employees' PSM increases. This process potentially modifies Western managerial theories on how to fit and analyze in East Asian cultures; thereby assisting to understand, and practice effective leadership on how to foster PSM in Confucian-influenced societies.

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