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CULTURE, LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Nurianna Thoha[1]* and Sharon Bella Setiawan[2]

International Business Management Program, Management Department, BINUS Business School Undergraduate Program, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480
nurianna@binus.edu
(+6221) 720 2222 | 720 3333. Fax (+621) 720 5555, +6281388309224

Abstract

The current condition of the furniture industry in Indonesia is slowing down due to some issues, such as low global demand and low competitiveness of this industry in Indonesia. Some companies decided to move their manufacture to Vietnam because of the problems associated with logistical costs, minimum wages and workers' productivity. Meanwhile, the workers' productivity is affected by their relationship with their direct leaders. The objectives of this research are to examine the influence of Chinese and Javanese culture on leadership behavior in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara and to investigate the impact of that leadership behavior on the organizational performance in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java. This research was conducted using a qualitative method. The data was collected by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews in four Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara. The interviews were transcripted and then coded and analyzed by using thematic-data analysis. The research revealed that the leadership behavior of the leaders in those companies were influenced by Chinese and Javanese cultures. These eventually influenced the organizational performance. In conclusion, there are relationships between culture, leadership behavior, and organizational performance in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java.

INTRODUCTION

Furniture has become a part of human life since the demise of nomadic society (Persistence Market Research, 2017). The demand for furniture in these past few years are caused by several key drivers that affect furniture demand. According to The Times of Africa (2017), these include population and economic growth and the rapidly growing real estate and property market (Technavio, 2016).

In the past decade, compared to furniture production, the world furniture trade has grown continuously, amounting to about 1% of manufacturing world trade. Several countries have become major furniture producers globally, including China (41% world furniture production), the United States (12%), Germany (5%), Italy (4%), India (4%), Poland (3%), United Kingdom (2%), Japan (2%), Canada (2%) and South Korea (2%) (Govoni, 2016). Meanwhile, furniture production in the Asia Pacific region is structurally increasing, from US$ 87 billion in 2005 to US$ 272 billion in 2014; therefore it has significantly changed the world furniture sector in the last decade (Govoni, 2016).

Indonesia's furniture industry is in third position in Southeast Asia after Vietnam and Malaysia. The national furniture industry has great potential to grow as it is supported by abundant raw material sources and skilled craftsmen, as well as competitive labor wages that make Indonesia a very attractive market for a manufacturing base for furniture companies (Global Business Guide Indonesia, 2013).

Based on the value of Indonesian exported furniture, 75% of annual sales are coming from wooden furniture, meaning the wooden furniture is still the main sector in Indonesia and 80% of the wood used in the furniture industry originated from Java Island (Hinrich Foundation, 2016).

Central Java province is the main center for the wood furniture industry, especially in Jepara where the most preferred materials for domestic and foreign markets are teak, mahogany, and reclamation (Global Business Guide Indonesia, 2013). Besides that, wood furniture in Central Java is also produced in Klaten, Sukoharjo, Semarang, Solo and Cirebon (Cekindo, n.d.). An important thing to note is most Indonesian private companies are owned by Chinese-Indonesians (Efferin & Hopper, 2007), including the furniture companies in Jepara. Therefore, this research was conducted in four Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara.

Most of organizations' success depends on the productivity of its workforce, therefore workers productivity is an important aspect for the business (Rouse, 2014). According to West (2014), there are five main factors influencing the workers' productivity, including their attitude, the leaders' behavior, their productivity in sickness and in health, the technology and tools used in the company, downsizing and outsourcing morale. The latest finding showed that, among others, the productivity of the workers is affected by their relationship with their direct leader. Brown (n.d.) stated that, "a poor supervisor is definitely the number one factor that causes low productivity," and "…good supervisor will motivate, inspire, encourage and reward good performance".

Meanwhile, Schein (2014) stated that culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. When organizations or groups start there is always a leader who has a preferred way of doing things, and those preferences by definition are going to be imposed on the group members. The leader's values and preferences are the first ways that a group or organization does things and if that works it becomes eventually the culture of that group. So, in a very real sense, the founders and the leaders create the culture.

Based on the facts mentioned above, it can be inferred that there is a connection between the culture, national and local cultures, and leadership. It means that in Chinese-Indonesian companies, Chinese culture is one of the

factors that influence the behavior of the leaders within the organization. Furthermore, since the leaders are living in Jepara, they might also be influenced by the Javanese culture. Besides that, there is a relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational performance.

Based on above explanations, the questions that arise in this research are:

1. How does Chinese culture influence leadership behavior in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java?
2. Does Javanese culture influence leadership behavior in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java?
3. How does that leadership behavior have an impact on organizational performance in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java?

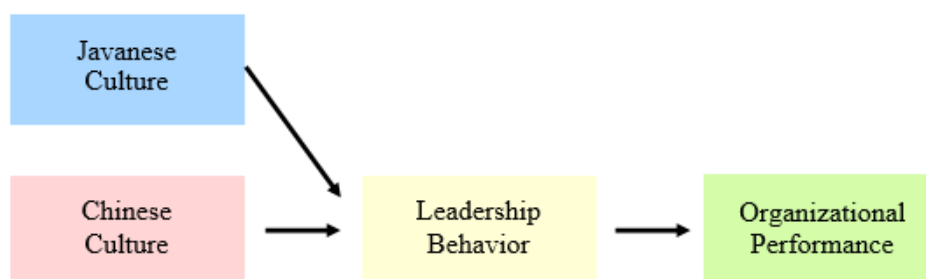The conceptual framework of this research can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The objectives of this research are to examine the influence of Chinese and Javanese culture on leadership behavior in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara and to investigate the impact of that leadership behavior on the organizational performance in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture
Definition of culture
The word 'culture' is derived from a French term, which in turn comes from the Latin 'colere' which means to tend to earth and grow, or to be done and maintained (Zimmermann, 2017). This research addresses the topic that refer primarily to Chinese and Indonesian cultures.

According to Livermore (2009), there are five basic levels of culture: national culture, regional culture, organizational culture, team culture, and individual culture. National characteristics are generated by national differences that refer to the influence of a nation's culture. The national culture can be seen as the values shared by most of the inhabitants of the country. People are often unaware of these values and they evolve throughout someone's childhood.

Chinese Culture
Classification of culture-based leadership styles in China

Busch, McMahon, Unger, May, and Wang. (2013) classified four Chinese-specific leadership styles based on the basic dimensions of 'Employee Orientation' and 'Mission Orientation'. They are Confucian leadership, Paternalistic leadership, Daoist leadership, and Legalistic leadership.

According to Romar (2002), in Confucianism the management is required to set a moral example, perform moral business practices and processes, look at the long run, and think about others' situation.

Confucian values have resulted in a Chinese patrimonial business style (Redding, 1993). Power comes from ownership; owners and employees view the company as a family property and the management applied is like managing a family. Owners embed the values of personal trust, awareness of money and caution on behalf of the family. Critical positions tend to be given to family or members of a trusted lineage. Leadership is autocratic but paternalistic. Employers are responsible for the well-being of employees, job allocations, managing resources, helping inefficiently, providing security for seniors and demonstrating understanding. In return the employee must show unquestioned obedience and persistence (Efferin & Hopper, 2007).

Paternalistic leadership is a Chinese native leadership style rooted in Chinese patriarchal tradition (Busch et al., 2013). There are three dimensions of a typology of a paternalistic leadership according to Farh, Liang, Chou, and Cheng (2008), including moral leadership, authoritarianism, and benevolence. This typology is based on authority and control, reputation-building, and strict discipline.

Daoism characteristics come from the concept of a unified universe and the fundamentals of harmony. The main purpose of the leaders is to serve others without expecting a reward in return. To be a good leader in order to influence others, it is believed that they have to be humble, modest, and keep a low profile, so that their leadership style should be soft and gentle, but also powerful and persistent (Busch et al., 2013).

Legalistic leadership mainly focuses on the use of force and power, and uniformity of thought. Its purpose is controlling the politics of the population and the country; the control is achieved by a thorough set of laws, supported by kind rewards and severe penalties (Busch et al., 2013).

Indonesian Culture

In Bahasa Indonesia, the word 'culture' is translated as '*budaya*'. The word *budaya* itself comes from Sanskrit, *buddhayah*, which is the plural form of *buddhi*, meaning moral or mind. *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* defines culture as the result of the activity and the creation of the human mind (intellectual mind) such as belief, art, and customs (KBBI, n,d,).

Javanese Culture

The Javanese are the largest ethnic group in Indonesia and the third largest Muslim ethnic group in the world, following the Arabs and Bengalis (Encyclopedia of World Cultures, 1996). Javanese people in general highly uphold the balance, harmony and conformity of life both to human beings as well as with the natural environment. In their daily life, Javanese people strongly adhere to the norms of politeness, modesty and simplicity. Therefore, the Javanese language dialogue has several levels of language according to the person you are dealing with (Andra, 2017).

Some Javanese cultural values are related to leadership, including life value-based cultures, hierarchical levels in Java, relationships and followerships in Java (Irawanto, 2011). Geertz (1961) stated that the Javanese ideology is the ideal of a peaceful life. The key concepts of this culture are *alus-kasar* and *lair-batin* (Geertz, 1960). *Alus* means refined, pure, ethereal, which describes a calm person, while *kasar* means, impolite, uncouth, disrespectful, and describes a cruel person. Javanese must show *lair* to be respected by others, which deals with the outward nature of human behavior, including their clothing and actions. Besides, the Javanese must show *batin*, which is related to the inner nature of human behavior, like how they behave.

Leadership

To understand the organization, a reasonable place to start is its leadership (Busch et al., 2013). According to Northouse (2007), leadership is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal".

Leaders who undertake this process by applying their leadership knowledge and skills are called 'process leadership' (Jago, 1982). However, an individual has an ownership that can influence his own actions, which is called 'trait leadership' (Jago, 1982) because it is believed that the leaders are born not made. While leadership can be learned, skills and knowledge processed by leaders can be influenced by their attributes, including beliefs, values, ethics, and characters. Knowledge and skills contribute directly to the leadership process, while other attributes give the leader certain characteristics that make it unique (Sharma & Jain, 2013).

Culture and Leadership

After the study by Hofstede (1994) about cultural influences within organizations, several cultural studies have attempted to link leadership with culture. This shows that culture is one of the main issues for a leader and the success in leading an organization depends on how to manage the cultural aspects (Vailati, 2014).

Schein (2004) argued that culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. This metaphor is to explain that these two concepts are interrelated and co-exist with each other. Therefore, it becomes necessary, in order to reach an effective leadership and to be an active leader, for a leader to listen carefully to the followers' thoughts and needs (learning leader). On the other hand, Barata (2016) proposed that the followers need examples and guidance from the leader as inspirational and behavioral standards so they could identify the aspect of their tasks that need improvement. Therefore, starting from the emergent culture of a company, a leader can choose the leadership characteristics that fit better with a particular corporate situation (Schein, 2004).

Furthermore, there are two different forces that dictate how to behave within an organization: culture and climate. Each organization has its own distinguishing culture, which is "a combination of the founders, past leadership, current leadership, crises, events, history, and size" (Newstrom & Davis, 1993).By building and preserving strong organizational culture, the employees - as stakeholders of the organization - could have a sense of identity and determination in conducting their daily activities (Barata, 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The inductive approach was used in this research, because this research intends to confirm knowledge and to gain cognition from cultural relations and leadership behaviors, as well as the relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational performance. The inductive approach begins with a special observation for generalization and a comprehensive theory (Trochim, 2006).

Sampling Method and Unit of Analysis

Non-probability sampling design was used in this research, where the components in the population do not have probability attached to their choice as the selected sample subject, meaning that the findings from the sample research cannot be reliably disseminated to the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The technique chosen is purposive sampling techniques, where sampling is limited to certain types of people who can provide the desired information. The type of purposive sampling used is judgment sampling, because the number or category of people who have the information is limited. The target population of this research are employers and employees who work in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara.

The data was collected from the leaders and the employees of the companies in order to get more comprehensive results. The leaders' point of view was used to explore the culture they believe in, the behavior to lead the company, and how they see the performance of the company. The employees' point of view was used to investigate whether the behavior implemented by their leaders affected their working performance or not. Therefore, two sets of interview question lists were utilized; one set for interviewing the employers and the other set for interviewing the employees.

Eighteen respondents were interviewed, including four company leaders and fourteen employees of the four companies. Respondents were both male and female. They had been working in the companies for various years. Ten of them had been working in the company for more than ten years while the others for four and five years.

Data Collection Method and Analysis

The data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted with the directors and managers and with the employees of the companies. The interview results were transcribed and then coded using thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis is a technique for determining, examining, and reporting patterns inside data. It sorts out and designates the data set in detail (Boyatzis, 1998).

There are three stages in qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction means selecting, coding, and categorizing the data process. Data display means how the data is presented. Data display helps to draw conclusions based on patterns in a reduced data set (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Figure 2 shows that based on the coding mapping of the interview transcripts, two categories were confirmed: 'Chinese Leadership' and 'Javanese Leadership'.
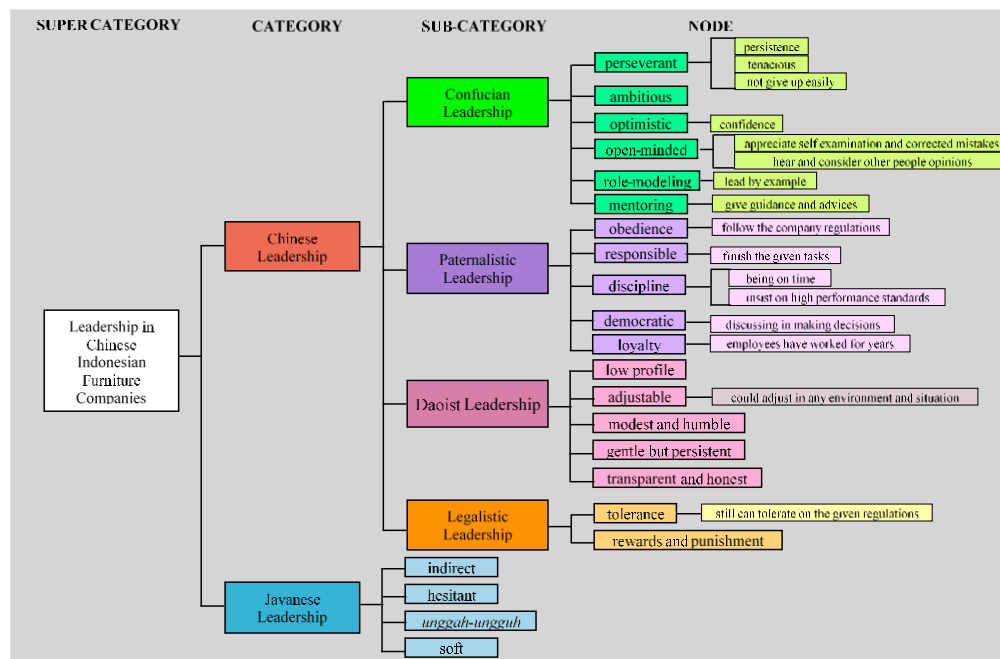

Figure 2. Coding Mapping of the Interview Results

Chinese Leadership

Figure 2 shows that the companies applied Chinese leadership from the four sub-categories: Confucian Leadership, Paternalistic Leadership, Daoist Leadership, and Legalistic Leadership. These are in line a Busch et al (2013) statement regarding those four Chinese leadership styles.

Confucian Leadership

The nodes generated from the statements of the respondents regarding the Confucian leadership in Figure 2 are somewhat aligned with the theories mentioned in the literature. In Confucian leadership, people have to lead others as a sage leader, meaning that the main goal of this leadership style is to shape the followers' character by mentoring, reinforcing, and role modeling.

The respondents of the interview, including the leaders and employees mentioned that the leaders are the role model for the employees and mentor them. Confucianism suggests the leaders show moral leadership and the organization to make a positive contribution to the community (Doh & Rongione, 2004).

Figure 2 also shows that based on the nodes that were developed from the respondents' statements, the leaders are persistent, tenacious, and do not give up easily; they are also ambitious, optimistic by showing they are confident. They are open minded as they appreciate self-examination and corrected mistakes by their employees and they hear and consider their employees' opinions.

Paternalistic Leadership

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One of the typologies of paternalistic leadership proposed by Farh et al. (2008) is authoritarianism. This typology is based on control and authority including leaders who expect obedience, insist on making final decisions on important issues, keep key information close, and keep tight control.

As can be seen in Figure 2, this statement is not fully in line with the interview results, because all the leaders who became respondents expected obedience from their employees, but they did not insist on making the final decisions. They tended to discuss with related employees before making the decision. In terms of the key information of the company, the leaders will only share to the related divisions, so they do not only keep it to themselves. It can be said that the leaders are not fully influenced by paternalistic leadership.

Another paternalistic leadership typology is strict discipline that includes demanding high-performance standards, no tolerance for low performance, not compromising the core values of the company and applying strict discipline. Regarding this typology, as can be seen from the nodes generated in Figure 2, leaders are really strict in applying discipline, they insist on high performance standards of their employees, but they are still realistic. They do still tolerate low performance and understand the situations.

Daoist Leadership

The characteristic of Daoism is the thought of a cohesive universe and the fundamentals of harmony. The purpose of the leader is to serve the followers without expecting something in return, so it is important for them to be humble, modest, and keep low profile. The leadership style should be gentle but persistent (Busch et al., 2013).

These characteristics correspond with the nodes generated from the respondents' statements in Figure 2, that their leaders keep low profile, are humble, modest and there is no gap between them. They are also adjustable and flexible in any situation or environment.

The way the leaders lead them is almost similar to each other even though they did not say it directly. It can be concluded that all leaders are gentle and soft; it can be shown that they still tolerate the employees and do not easily get emotional in front of them. The leaders also would like to give the employees second chances, but the leaders are also persistent and passionate in doing their work.

Legalistic Leadership

Lastly, in legalistic leadership it is believed that legalists were interested in power, and using force (Busch et al., 2013). Contrary with the nodes that were developed from the respondents' statements in Figure 2, the leaders do not lead them like this. They still tolerate their employees breaking the rules, and try to understand their employees' conditions and opinions; it is not easy for them to directly dismiss the employees.

Britannica (2014) also mentioned that the legalists recommended governments with a rigid legal system of determining punishment and rewards for specific behavior; in line with this statement all companies have applicable rules regarding reward and punishment, but most of the time they are flexible about it. So, the leaders are not fully influenced by this style of leadership.

Javanese Leadership

All leaders of the companies were born and raised on Java island, specifically in Jepara; it cannot be denied that there is Javanese culture embedded in them. As can be seen in Figure 2, this is also mentioned by the employees that their leaders are indirect and hesitant. It is not easy for the leaders to confront without warning. Even though they are the leaders of the company, they are not arrogant and they always greet everyone in the office without looking at their positions. All of them are well mannered (*unggah-ungguh*). These findings are in accordance with the Javanese characters, and they follow strict etiquette and confront indirectly (Hays, 2015).

Organizational Performance

All four companies have been established for decades. The companies' performance has improved since they started. In some years they experienced a decline, but they could overcome it and survive. As mentioned earlier that most of the employees have been working in the companies for years, they also mentioned that the success of the company and what makes them stay in those companies is due to the role of the leader.

These statements are in line with Bawany's (2017) statement that leadership could affect the organizational performance, especially employees' productivity. The respondents' statements show that the way their leader leads the company could motivate them to work better; therefore the performance of the company itself becomes better. Moreover, based on the statements of the respondents, the leaders in these companies also show that they apply transformational leadership style, where the leaders focused on growing the motivation and the engagement of the employees, and it emphasizes leading by example (Lumen, n.d.). The respondents' statements are in line with Martens' (2010) statement that transformational leaders positively influences the team performance, group effectiveness, group productivity, and group learning/growth to improve the team performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to examine the influence of Chinese and Javanese culture on leadership behavior in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java and to investigate the impact on that leadership behavior to the organizational performance in Chinese-Indonesian furniture companies in Jepara, Central Java.

It was found that the Chinese-Indonesian leaders are influenced by Chinese and Javanese culture. They were born in a family of Chinese descent; it cannot be denied that there are Chinese culture embedded in them, even though they do not feel it directly. All the leaders were born and raised in Jepara, Central Java, and their surroundings also contributed to shape their characters as individuals. Therefore, they also have Javanese culture embedded in them.

In comparison with other companies, these four companies owned by Chinese-Indonesian showed a significant growth and the performance of the company keeps increasing. As mentioned by the respondents, the leaders are hardworking, disciplined, and have better management compared to other race leaders. They believe that this what makes the company survive and grow significantly until now.

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