


The Relationship Between Market Culture, Clan Culture, Benevolent Leadership, Work Engagement, and Job Performance: Leader's Dark Triad as a Moderator

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Abstract

Benevolent leadership is one of the leadership styles which provides a positive influence on employees. However, the current leadership literature has yet to investigate how benevolent leadership leads to job performance, the processes involved, the relationship between organizational culture and benevolent leadership, and the role of dark side of leaders in affecting this relationship. Using the leader-culture fit framework within an Eastern context, the current study first investigates the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance through work engagement. The study then compares two contrasting organizational culture (i.e., market culture and clan culture) on benevolent leadership. Finally, the study investigates how leaders' dark triad affects the relationship between organizational culture and benevolent leadership. 374 full-time white-collar employees (Males = 54.01%; Mean age: 32.7 years) from various private organizations within the service industry participated in this study. The results showed that work engagement mediated benevolent leadership and job performance. Market culture showed a negative relationship with benevolent leadership while clan

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culture showed a positive relationship with benevolent leadership. Benevolent leadership mediated clan culture (but not market culture) and work engagement. Under a high market culture with a high dark triad leader, benevolent leadership is at its lowest level. Under a high clan culture with a low dark triad leader, benevolent leadership is at its highest level. The findings suggest the importance of benevolent leadership within a clan culture (rather than market culture), in aligning with the leader-culture fit framework in increasing employees' work engagement and job performance.

Keywords

Market culture, clan culture, benevolent leadership, dark triad, work engagement, job performance

Introduction

An uprising leadership style especially in Asia (Chan & Mak, 2014), benevolent leadership is a type of leadership style that cares for employees' well-being which extends to employees' family members (Farh & Cheng, 2000). In turn, employees are grateful and reciprocate leaders' kindness with good performance. The benevolent leadership style has found to have desirable, motivating effects on several work outcomes such as increasing employees' task performance, organizational commitment (Tan et al., 2016), organizational citizenship behaviors (Chan & Mak, 2012), and psychological well-being (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016).

Leadership style is influenced by organizational culture (Duncan, 2018). Therefore, leader-culture fit (Burns et al., 2013) is important for an organization to function effectively for the promotion of positive organizational outcomes. The 'leader-culture fit' framework (Burns et al., 2013) highlights the importance of the alignment between leader and culture in the development of a specific leadership style; when the relationship between culture and leadership is consistent with its values and beliefs (e.g. clan culture and benevolent leadership), this creates a facilitative relationship between them (Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011) and also a supplementary fit (Cable & Edwards, 2004) which increases organizational effectiveness (Burns et al., 2013).

However, although there has been extensive literature on leadership styles (e.g. Lee & Ding, 2020), there is still limited empirical evidence on the influence of organizational culture on leadership which remains generally at a theoretical level. Such a gap needs to be addressed to align leaders' behaviours with the boundaries and constraints set by the organizational culture; this would help to promote greater organizational effectiveness (Schein, 2016). More importantly, we want to address the adverse behaviours that can impede organizational outcomes (Spain et al., 2013). Dark triad is an example of such wherein individuals with these traits are self-entitled, manipulative, and lack empathy (Spain et al., 2013). Since dark triad is counter-intuitive to the positive and motivating elements that benevolent leadership exhibits

due to their contrasting values, by having a better understanding of how dark triad influences leaders' behaviors, organizations would have a better understanding of how different individuals may adopt benevolent leadership successfully.

While the relationship between work engagement and job performance has been rather well investigated in literature over the years (e.g., Breevaart, et al., 2015; Demerouti et al., 2010; Tisu et al., 2020), at the point this paper was written, few studies have looked at the role of work engagement in mediating the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance. Given the strong relationship between work engagement and job performance in literature (e.g., Karatepe, 2013; Lai, et al., 2020; Sekhar et al., 2017), it would be interesting to see how work engagement would affect job performance under a nurturing leadership style.

Using the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), the study first investigates work engagement in mediating benevolent leadership and job performance. Thereafter, undertaking the leader-culture fit framework, this study aims to compare two pertinent and relevant organizational cultures (i.e., market culture and clan culture) in the Asian context on benevolent leadership, employee work engagement, job performance, and the processes involved in these relationships. We argue that the alignment between organizational culture and benevolent leadership resonates similar beliefs and values which allows benevolent leadership to transmit positive affects to employees.

We also study how leaders' dark triad affects the relationship between organizational culture and benevolent leadership. Market and clan culture are specifically chosen because literature has shown that market culture is outward-looking, customer-oriented, and contributes to the nation's economic growth (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) while clan culture, on the other hand, is inward-looking, employee-oriented, and contributes to relationship cohesiveness within the organization in ensuring a conducive working environment for employees (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Both these organizational cultures are prominent in Malaysia and are in contrast with each other. For example, market culture emerged due to the government's effort to drive competitiveness among different sectors as an effort towards developing into a nation with a high-income economy (Performance Management and Delivery Unit Malaysia, 2011) while clan culture is part of the national culture which sees the country's three major races living together harmoniously (Naqshbandi et al., 2015).

We contribute to literature by examining the role of work engagement in mediating the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance, compare two seemingly opposing organizational cultures to further understand its leader-culture fit with benevolent leadership, investigate how benevolent leadership may facilitate employee work outcomes and the processes involved, and finally look to how organizational culture and leader characteristics (i.e. dark triad) can help to increase or reduce the practice of benevolent leadership. The proposed model of the study is shown in Figure 1.

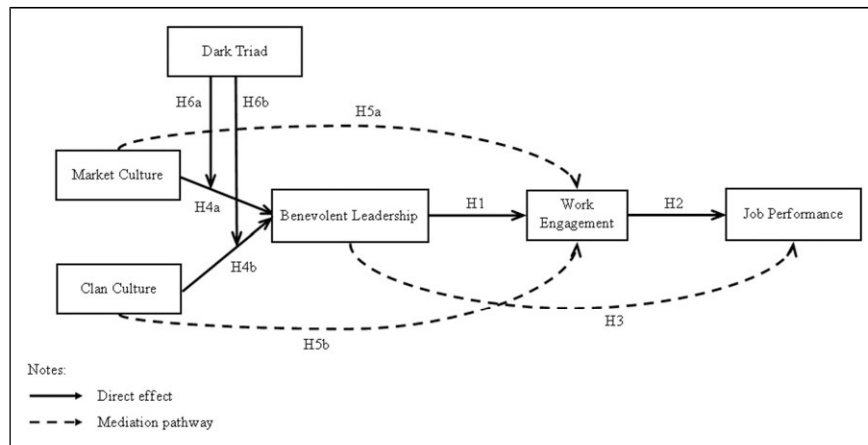


Figure 1. Proposed model.

Review of the Literature and Hypotheses Development

Benevolent Leadership and Work Engagement

Benevolent leadership is defined as a type of leadership style that demonstrates personalized care to employees that extends beyond the employees to their families as well (Farh et al., 2008). Benevolent leaders therefore exhibit behaviours such as coaching, concern over employees' growth and development, as well as caring for employees when employees are facing personal issues and problems (Xu et al., 2018). Work engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). An engaged employee is therefore one that is persistent and energetic, oftentimes enthusiastic, involved, and immersed in their work (Schaufeli, 2012).

Literature on the relationship between benevolent leadership styles and work engagement have consistently found that benevolent leadership promotes work engagement (see Chan & Mak, 2012; Chen et al., 2014). There are several explanations to this relationship. Firstly, as benevolent leaders are caring, helpful, and supportive which allows for employees to "correct their mistakes and think in a positive way" (Xu et al., 2018), these leaders are more likely to fulfil the needs of their employees, and therefore keep their employees involved and immersed in their work (Xu et al., 2018). Secondly, benevolent leaders, due to their caring and supportive nature, generate positive feelings among employees that can motivate and drive employees into action (Park et al., 2017).

The affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) also provides further support for the relationship between benevolent leadership and work engagement. This theory posits that the expression of care and concern towards employees by benevolent leaders will promote positive emotions among employees at work. As a result, this

increases employees' work engagement as they feel more motivated and energized (Chen et al., 2014). With benevolent leadership, leaders demonstrate kindness by acting as a guardian that showers care and concern to their employees and accepting the failures and shortcomings of employees (Farh et al., 2008). Leaders also demonstrate generosity by helping employees with their personal problems at home and at work (Cheng et al., 2002), displaying sensitivity to employees by providing mentoring and words of encouragement when they see their employees struggling (Xu et al., 2018). These can promote employee work engagement in two ways. Firstly, support and encouragement provided by leaders generate positive feelings in employees as it helps employees alleviate some of their stress and anxiety (Lee et al., 2019). Secondly, by being able to manage their personal problems better due to the support and guidance provided by leaders, employees can focus more energy on completing work related tasks (Cenkci & Özçelik, 2015). Hence,

Hypothesis 1: Benevolent leadership is positively related to work engagement.

Work Engagement and Job Performance

Work engagement is defined as a state of mind at work that is characterized by an intense involvement with work, displaying energy, attention, and focus on the task at hand (Khusanova et al., 2021). Job performance is defined as the expected behavior that an individual engages in to achieve organizational objectives (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012). Literature has shown that work engagement has a positive role in promoting employees' job performance through elements such as "high levels of energy", "feelings of enthusiasm", and "being fully immersed in one's work" (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). As such, when employees have high work engagement, they become involved cognitively, emotionally, and physically leading to higher work performance (Song et al., 2018).

To perform a task, a certain level of attention, focus, and energy is required. Work engagement contributes to this through high levels of vigor that helps engaged employees persevere in face of difficulties (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). The intrinsic motivation that work engagement provides steers employees into action (Shimazu et al., 2015) while positive emotions such as enthusiasm and challenge drives performance (Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2009). Further support for the relationship between work engagement and job performance is also seen in a meta-analysis on the relationship between work engagement and job performance conducted by Christian et al. (2011). The authors highlighted that engaged employees would have a higher sense of involvement and belongingness which promotes participation in organizational activities. These findings indicate that work engagement plays an important role in employees' job performance. Hence,

Hypothesis 2: Work engagement is positively related to job performance.

Work Engagement as a Mediator between Benevolent Leadership and Job Performance

Various studies have shown the importance of benevolent leadership in promoting employee performance (ref. [Alatf & Anjum, 2018](#); [Baig et al., 2021](#); [Chan, 2017](#)). These relationships can be explained from their processes; for instance, as benevolent leaders express more care and concern towards employees in the workplace, this causes employees to have a more positive perception of their relationship with their leaders. In turn, employees would be more likely to invest additional effort in their work ([Chan & Mak, 2012](#)).

The relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance can also be viewed from a motivational perspective where the behaviors of leaders can drive employees into action. As mentioned previously, benevolent leadership has shown to positively relate to job performance (e.g., [Chan, 2017](#); [Wang et al., 2013](#)) and work engagement has also been shown to positively relate to job performance ([Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010](#)). On the other hand, studies have also found work engagement to have a mediator role (e.g., [Sulea et al., 2012](#); [Yalabik et al., 2013](#)).

In the context of multicultural Malaysia and its multi-ethnicity workforce, interpersonal relationships in the workplace are also highly valued ([Tan et al., 2016](#)). Literature has shown that the concept of *guanxi* is highly upheld in Asian settings where a good relationship between two parties, hereby, leader and employee, can produce a harmonious relationship and set a smooth working process and environment between them ([Tan et al., 2016](#); [Wang & Hong, 2009](#)). Such a concept is not only transparent in countries that emphasize Confucius teaching, but also in other Eastern countries such as India ([Vinitha et al., 2018](#)), and Malaysia ([Ayupp & Kong, 2010](#)). A similar concept of that of *guanxi* in China also exists in Malaysia wherein the largest ethnic group in Malaysia are influenced by the concept of *budi* which encompasses values such as kindness, consideration, care, generosity, and respect towards others ([Richardson et al., 2016](#)). Drawing on these similarities, the care and concern demonstrated by leaders in Malaysian organizations would motivate employees to be more engaged, thereby enhancing the job performance among Malaysian employees.

As leaders are often the ones that directly provide support to employees since they are in direct contact, interaction, and communication with employees on a day-to-day basis, we expect work engagement to mediate the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance as the support, care, and concern provided by benevolent leaders to their employees would enhance the positive affect of employees. This positive affect will energize and motivate employees to engage in actions that will promote job performance as a form of respect and gratitude to their leaders. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: Work engagement mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance.

Organizational Culture and Benevolent Leadership

Organizational culture is defined as “the core values, assumptions, interpretations, and approaches that characterize an organization” (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 35). It encompasses the norms of an organization concerning how things are done and includes how individuals interact with one another, their patterns of reasoning and problem solving, as well as having common, shared goals which lead to each organization having its own culture (Duncan, 2018).

Market culture is a type of organizational culture that is characterized by competitive goal achievement (Cameron & Freeman, 1991). In focusing on shifting to becoming a high-income nation, Malaysia has adopted various programs which include the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) to drive competitive advantages especially in the business markets by investing in talent upskilling and reskilling among employees in organizations (Performance Management and Delivery Unit Malaysia, 2011). A competitive culture is also created due to stiff market competition globally (Wong, 2017).

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Within the ‘leader-culture fit’ framework (Burns et al., 2013), “fit is achieved when individual characteristics are congruent with situational characteristics” (Erdogen et al., 2012). Hence, the study proposes that market culture and benevolent leadership will have a weak fit due to differences in values and characteristics. In other words, market culture will negatively associate with benevolent leadership as the aspects of market culture and benevolent leadership show contrasting characteristics. Firstly, organizations with a strong market culture tend to focus more on organizational profits and gaining a larger market share, which makes the industry become one that is competitive (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Secondly, leadership in this type of organization tends to be less nurturing, as leaders may focus more on achieving the organization’s objectives and expected sales targets (Montano et al., 2017).

Another organizational culture that resonates with the *guanxi* aspects of Asian culture is clan culture. Malaysia is a holistic society that takes pride in ensuring harmony and promotion of collective well-being (Reese & Johari, 2010) which is synonymous with the values of benevolent leadership that treats employees like family members, expressing care and concern for them. As the influence of national culture is usually manifested in one’s daily practices at work and therefore influences organizational culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), we propose that clan culture will be positively associated with benevolent leadership.

The clan culture focuses on developing and ensuring positive relationships among members and cohesiveness through encouragement and a sense of loyalty (Choi et al., 2008; Lund, 2003). We argue that based on the leader-culture fit framework, clan culture and benevolent leadership is aligned with their values and beliefs, which then creates a strong leader-culture fit. As such, this helps to increase leader effectiveness (Burns et al., 2013). The clan culture that is supportive and cooperative, characterized by warmth, trust, and an uplifting environment in the workplace (Berson et al., 2008) is congruent with behaviors characterized by benevolent leadership such as expression of

concern and compassion towards employees and caring for their well-being which extends beyond the workplace setting (Wang & Cheng, 2009). Hence it is hypothesized that,

Hypothesis 4a: Market culture is negatively related to benevolent leadership.

Hypothesis 4b: Clan culture is positively related to benevolent leadership.

Benevolent Leadership as a mediator between Organizational Culture and Work Engagement

Organizational culture sets the overall values and expected behaviors for organizations which influences how leaders behave and what their leadership styles are (Cameron & Quinn, 2011); and indirectly, employees' work engagement and job performance (Lee et al., 2017). Literature has shown the relationship between organizational culture and work engagement, as well as leadership and work engagement (e.g., Huhtala et al., 2015; Reis et al., 2016). We argue that benevolent leadership mediates organizational culture and work engagement due to the aspects of organizational culture such as values, expected behaviors, and codes of conduct that influence how leadership styles may be adopted which may influence work engagement.

We expect benevolent leadership to mediate organizational culture and employee work engagement following that benevolent leaders, through their expression of kindness, care and concern to their employees as well as provision of words of encouragement and coaching would generate positive affects in the employees. These would drive employees into action due to respect and gratitude to their leaders, explaining the relationship between organizational culture and work engagement. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5a: Benevolent leadership mediates the relationship between market culture and work engagement.

Hypothesis 5b: Benevolent leadership mediates the relationship between clan culture and work engagement.

Dark Triad as a moderator between Organizational Culture and Benevolent Leadership

Dark triad is a multidimensional construct that consists of traits such as machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Machiavellianism is characterized by deceit and a lack of moral regard in order to maintain one's positional power; psychopathy is distinguished by impulsive and high risk-taking behaviors as well as a lack of remorse; while narcissism is marked by an inflated self-image, a lack of empathy, and a sense of self-entitlement (O'Boyle et al., 2012; Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). These traits are generally negative in nature and are typically viewed as deleterious interpersonally (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013).

In line with the leader-culture fit, an individual's characteristics (i.e., dark triad) also plays a role in how a leader may practice benevolent leadership (Jonason et al., 2012). This means that if a leader possesses dark traits, it will influence their ability to develop and practice the values that comprise benevolent leadership as these values are in contrast with each other. In a meta-analysis on dark triad, cultures that are high in "duty and loyalty to the organization and members", high in cohesion and tightly bonded, and emphasizes reciprocity were found to be less inclined to dark triad as relationships in these cultures are built on trusting each other to fulfil their obligations (O'Boyle et al., 2012). These characteristics resemble clan culture, and how there is a misfit between dark triad which is self-serving and lacks empathy (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013) versus a clan culture that is kind and considerate to others, valuing positive, trusting interpersonal relationships (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

A fit would occur when the culture of an organization is similar or supportive of the needs, values, and goals of the employee (Kristof, 1996). Market culture would thus be aligned with the dark triad due to their similarity in values. For example, individuals with a higher dark triad are more likely to disregard the feelings of others in order to achieve and pursue their goals which are characteristic of the market culture that is results-oriented and emphasizes profits and practices competitive goal achievement (Cohen, 2016; Wu & Lebreton, 2011). Besides, due to their sense of self-importance, employees with a higher dark triad are also more likely to disregard interpersonal relationships and engage in behaviors that exploit others in order to achieve their own objectives (Cohen, 2016), further providing support for the fit between market culture and dark triad.

Putting these findings together from a leader-culture fit perspective, we argue that market culture is negatively related to benevolent leadership, and the presence of dark triad will further reduce benevolent leadership to its lowest level. This is because a dark triad and market culture are both a misalignment to benevolent leadership. On the other hand, clan culture is positively related to benevolent leadership, and the presence of dark triad will also reduce benevolent leadership. Though the values and behaviors of clan culture and benevolent leadership are aligned, the presence of an individual characteristic that is not aligned in values and behaviors (i.e., dark triad) will affect the leader-culture fit, consequently reducing benevolent leadership. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 6a: Dark triad moderates the relationship between market culture and benevolent leadership.

Hypothesis 6b: Dark triad moderates the relationship between clan culture and benevolent leadership.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional correlational research design using survey research. All the participants in the study answered the same survey questions using a self-administered questionnaire that collected quantitative data.

Participants and Procedure

Using purposive sampling, 374 participants from various private organizations were recruited for this study. The participants consisted of employees working in various service industries (e.g., professional services in information technology, education, and consulting) in Malaysia (Males: 54.01%; Mean age: 32.7). The participants have worked in their respective organizations for an average of 9.48 years. Prior to the initiation of data collection, ethical approval clearance for the study was first obtained from the university's research ethics board. Potential participants were approached through various social media groups which are mainly for working adults. The study's information was then displayed in those social media and a link is available for those who were interested to participate in it. Participants who clicked on the link were first shown the participant information sheet explaining further about the study followed by a set of questionnaires which consisted of various instruments measuring the variable of interest. To reduce common method variance (CMV), no other identifiable personal information was gathered. Participants were also assured of their anonymity and confidentiality in participating in this study. In addition, they were informed to answer as honestly as possible as there are no right or wrong answers. The scale endpoints and formats were also different to reduce CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Measurements

Market Culture and Clan Culture. Market culture and clan culture were measured using the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument subscale of market culture and clan culture (OCAI, Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The relevant 12-items out of 24-items were used, whereby 6-items measured market culture and another 6-items measured clan culture. An example of an item depicting market culture was "The organization is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented" while an example for clan culture include "The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves". Each statement was rated between 0 to 100 where the four different descriptions of organizational culture items should total up to 100. Participants will assign a score that they deem appropriate for the statement that they have read. A higher score indicates a higher relevance to the participant's organizational experience, while a lower score indicates a lower relevance to the participant's organizational experience. In the present study, the market culture scale has a reliability of $\alpha = .79$ while the clan culture scale has an alpha reliability of .81.

Dark Triad. Dark triad was measured using Jonason and Webster's (2010) 12-items scale. A sample item from the scale is "I tend to manipulate others to get my way". All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as *strongly disagree* to 7 as *strongly agree*. In the present study, this scale has an alpha reliability of .94.

Benevolent Leadership. The 11-items Paternalistic Leadership Scale by Cheng et al. (2002) was used to measure benevolent leadership. A sample item from this scale includes “My leader will help me when I am in an emergency”. The items on the scale were rated on a 6-point Likert scale of 1 as *strongly disagree* to 6 as *strongly agree*. In the present study, this scale has an alpha reliability of .93.

Work Engagement. The nine items Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was used to measure work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2004). This scale measures work engagement across three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. A sample item from the scale is, “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”, “I am enthusiastic about my job”, and “I am immersed in my work” for the subscales of vigor, dedication, and absorption respectively. These items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as *never* and 6 as *always*. In the present study, this scale has an alpha reliability of .91.

Job Performance. The nine items Job Performance Measurement scale was used to measure job performance (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999). A sample item from this scale is “I perform well in the overall job by carrying out tasks as expected”. The items on this scale were rated on a 4-point Likert of 1 as *strongly disagree* to 4 as *strongly agree*. In the present study, this scale has an alpha reliability of .79.

Results

The data were analyzed using SPSS statistical computer software version 26.0. As the study employed a cross-sectional design, the Harman’s single factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) was conducted to examine if CMV was potentially an issue in this study. The resulting analysis returned an explained variance value of only 20.27% versus the generally adopted 50% that is considered as a potential threat of method variance as suggested by Eichhorn (2014). Therefore, it is concluded that CMV is not a detrimental issue in this study. Table 1 presents the intercorrelations of all the variables in the study. Regression analyses were used to analyze the results which are depicted in Table 2. Figure 2 presents the study’s final model, which summarizes the findings.

Table 1. Intercorrelations for All Variables in Study.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Market culture	-					
2. Clan culture	-.52**	-				
3. Dark triad	.23**	-.28**	-			
4. Benevolent leadership	-.25**	.29**	-.28	-		
5. Work engagement	-.14**	.19**	-.14**	.28**	-	
6. Job performance	-.00	.08	-.01	.23**	.42**	-

**p < .01.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Work Engagement, Culture, Dark Triad, and Benevolent Leadership Predicting Job Performance.

Step and Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1:					
Work engagement	.2900***	.030	.43***	.18***	-
Step 2:					
Work Engagement					
Benevolent leadership	.2600***	.030	.39***	.20***	.02***
Step 3:					
Work Engagement					
Benevolent Leadership	.2700***	.030	.40***		
Market Culture	.1000***	.030	.15***		
Clan culture	.0020	.001	.10	.21***	.01
Step 4:					
Work Engagement					
Benevolent Leadership					
Market Culture	.2600***	.030	.39***		
Clan Culture	.1200***	.030	.18***		
Dark triad x market Culture	.0010	.001	.07		
Dark triad x clan culture	-.0005	.001	-.03		
Dark triad x market Culture	.0010	.001	.05		
Dark triad x clan culture	-.0020***	.001	-.13***	.23***	.02***

*** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that benevolent leadership would be positively related to work engagement. There was a statistically significant positive relationship found between benevolent leadership and work engagement, $R = .28$, $R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 382) = 31.90$, $p < .001$. As benevolent leadership increases, work engagement also increases. Hence, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that work engagement would be positively related to job performance. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between work engagement and job performance, $R = .42$, $R^2 = .18$, $F(1, 382) = 83.20$, $p < .001$. As work engagement increases, job performance also increases. Hence, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that work engagement would mediate the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance. The relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance was found to be significantly mediated by work engagement, $B = .07$, 95% CI [.04, .11]. Hence, hypothesis 3 was supported.

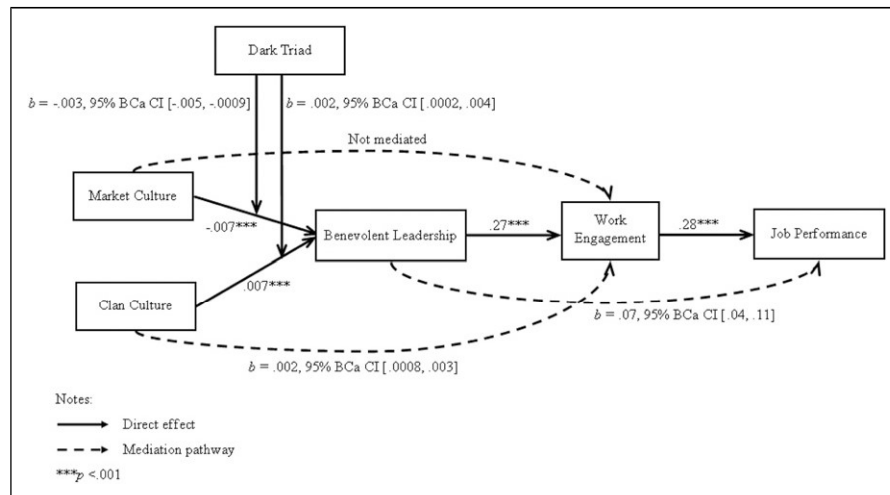


Figure 2. Final model.

For Hypothesis 4a, we predicted that market culture would be negatively related to benevolent leadership. The results were consistent with our hypothesis, suggesting a statistically significant negative relationship between market culture and benevolent leadership $R = .25$, $R^2 = .06$, $F(1, 372) = 24.11$, $p < .001$. When there is high market culture, there is lower benevolent leadership. Hence, Hypothesis 4a was supported. Hypothesis 4b looked at whether clan culture would be positively related to benevolent leadership. The results suggest a statistically significant positive relationship between clan culture and benevolent leadership, $R = .29$, $R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 372) = 33.15$, $p < .001$. When clan culture is high, there is higher benevolent leadership. Therefore, Hypothesis 4b was supported.

For Hypotheses 5a and 5b, we predicted that benevolent leadership would mediate the relationship between market culture and work engagement as well as clan culture and work engagement. However, benevolent leadership was not found to be a significant mediator between market culture and work engagement. Benevolent leadership was found to mediate the relationship between clan culture and work engagement, $B = .002$, 95% CI [.0008, .003]. This indicates that benevolent leadership influences the relationship between clan culture and work engagement. Hypothesis 5a was not supported, but Hypothesis 5b was supported.

Hypothesis 6a predicted that dark triad would moderate the relationship between market culture and benevolent leadership. The inclusion of dark triad with market culture was found to have a negative effect on benevolent leadership, $B = -.003$, 95% CI [-.005, -.0009]. Hence, Hypothesis 6a was supported. Specifically, when there are medium to high levels of dark triad, a weak market culture significantly contributes to higher benevolent leadership. However, at low levels of dark triad, there was no

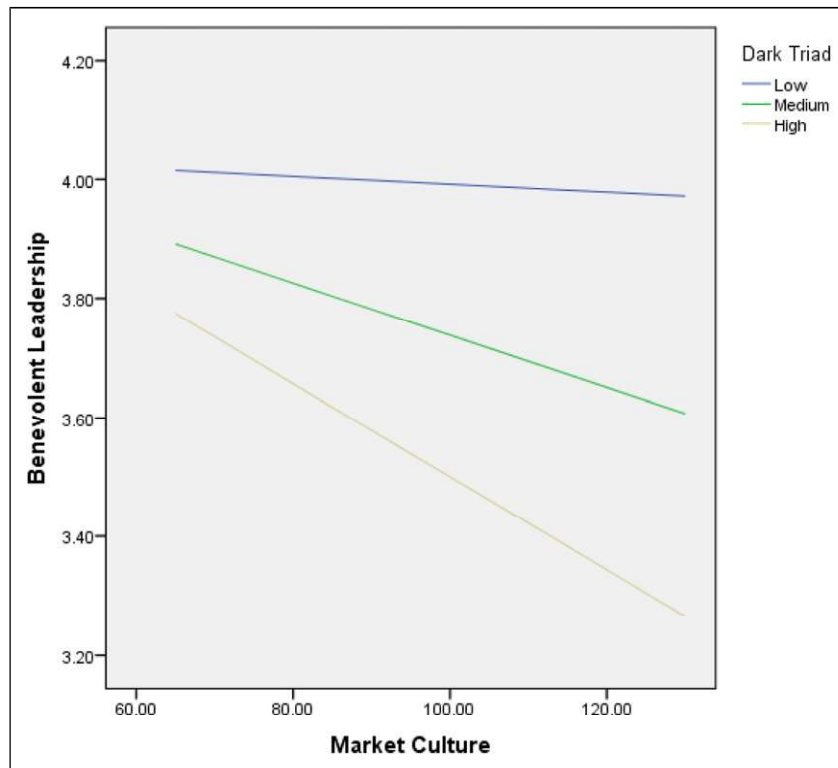


Figure 3. Dark triad as a moderator of market culture and benevolent leadership.

significant difference between the level of market culture and benevolent leadership (See [Figure 3](#)). For Hypothesis 6b, we predicted that dark triad would moderate the relationship between clan culture and benevolent leadership. When dark triad was included as a moderator, we found a significant negative effect on the relationships between clan culture and benevolent leadership, $B = .002$, 95% CI [.0002, .004]. Hypothesis 6b was also supported. Specifically, the analyses found that at all levels of dark triad (low, medium, and high), higher clan culture contributes to higher benevolent leadership (See [Figure 4](#)).

Discussion

The current study seeks to contribute to literature by investigating the relationship between benevolent leadership in promoting job performance through work engagement, examines the leader-culture fit between two contrasting organizational culture on benevolent leadership and the processes involved, and examines how individual characteristics of leaders such as dark triad can affect the relationship between

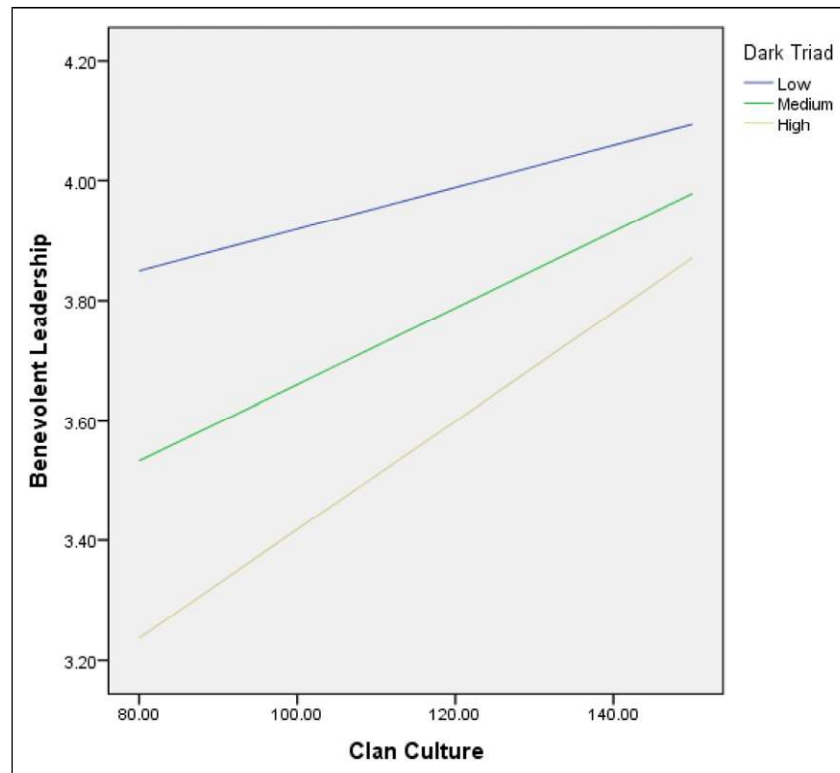


Figure 4. Dark triad as a moderator of clan culture and benevolent leadership.

organizational culture and benevolent leadership style. It was found that work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance. Benevolent leadership mediates clan culture (but not market culture) and work engagement. Dark triad was found to be a moderator: in high market culture, high dark triad displayed the lowest level of benevolent leadership; while in high clan culture, low dark triad displayed the highest level of benevolent leadership.

Benevolent leadership was found to be positively related to work engagement, and work engagement was found to be positively related to job performance. Consequently, it was also found that work engagement mediated the relationship between benevolent leadership and job performance. Consistent with previous studies and the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), this is because leaders that display kindness and concern to employees would create a more positive work environment, and therefore employees would feel more engaged at work due to the positive feelings that employees experience (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). This motivates the employees to increase their job performance as a form of gratitude to their leaders (Sulea et al., 2012).

In line with the leader-culture fit, market culture was found to be negatively related to benevolent leadership. An organization culture that is focused on competitive goal achievement would be less concerned about the well-being of employees as they are more focused on achieving the organization's objectives and goals. By focusing on profits and gaining a larger market share, leaders are likely to focus more on results instead of nurturing or caring for the well-being of employees (Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Lund, 2003). Hence, for organizations that practice a market culture, benevolent leadership does not represent a good fit for it. The converse is also true, whereby it was found that clan culture was significantly positively related to benevolent leadership. An organization with a culture that practices kindness and consideration towards its employees would encourage the leader to adopt similar values as well (Lee & Choi, 2019). Therefore, benevolent leadership style is a good fit for organizations with clan culture.

Benevolent leadership was found to mediate the relationship between clan culture (but not market culture) and work engagement. In a market culture that is very achievement and goal-oriented, expressing concern towards employees and yet expecting them to still achieve the organization's set targets and goals without much leeway could be viewed as a non-authentic attempt at being concerned (Oh et al., 2018). However, in a clan culture that highly values a nurturing and supportive environment, these actions are valued therefore promoting work engagement. This finding is also supported by the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) wherein care and concern expressed by the leaders towards their employees will generate positive feelings in employees, therefore promoting positive emotions that leads to work engagement providing support for the role of mentorship by leaders in a clan culture.

Leaders' dark triad is a significant moderator of the relationship between benevolent leadership and both market as well as clan culture. Consistent with literature (O'Boyle et al., 2012), dark triad influences the strength of the relationship between market culture and benevolent leadership wherein when there are high amounts of dark triad, there will be the lowest level of benevolent leadership. This is because leaders that are high on dark triad may project more demands and expectations that are of their own self-interest instead of for the collective good of the employees, especially in a competitive result-oriented organization, which will lead to a reduction in benevolent leadership as norms of reciprocity as a form of gratitude in benevolent leadership are more easily violated (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Unsurprisingly, the converse is also true, whereby dark triad was found to moderate the relationship between clan culture and benevolent leadership. When dark triad was low in a clan culture, benevolent leadership was most likely to be displayed as leaders are genuinely kind and empathetic, and sincerely care for the well-being of their employees. Consistent with the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), this helps employees to feel more tightly bonded with their superiors, and therefore more likely to reciprocate the kind gestures demonstrated to them. Together, these findings suggest that dark triad is an injurious disposition to have in the context of

benevolent leadership, regardless of whether the organizational culture is market or clan oriented.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

One of the strengths of this study is that it is one of the few studies that look at the leader-culture fit from the situational perspective, investigating how the culture of an organization would impact leadership behaviors and not vice versa. Many other studies were only on organizational climates (Lee & Idris, 2017) or individual and job-related fit (e.g. Goh & Lee, 2016). This is important given the power of culture in influencing and directing one's behaviors, therefore shaping the behaviors of leaders (Schein, 2016). By understanding how culture can influence leadership, we are further able to practice the specific leadership style that is aligned with the organizational culture to effectively and efficiently promote organizational outcomes (Burns et al., 2013).

Furthermore, this study contributes to literature by integrating the role of individual characteristics in leadership and organizational culture to provide a more comprehensive model looking at the leader-culture fit and individual characteristics whereby research in this area is still generally sparse and often inconsistent therefore warranting more research (Judge et al., 2002). Through the inclusion of dark triad, we are able to better understand the conditions and extent that benevolent leadership can be effective and conducive in an organization in promoting work engagement and job performance.

Additionally, the study also reinforces the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) in the explanation of reciprocal behaviors in benevolent leadership and further elucidates the relationship between clan culture and benevolent leadership that may be indirect, especially in the Asian context. In the Asian culture, the nature of relationships is often based on reciprocity and positive feelings, as exemplified through the concepts of *guanxi* and *budi* in its culture (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Hence, in terms of leader-culture fit, the more advantageous organizational culture to promote benevolent leadership would be clan culture, as the nature of this organizational culture is consistent and aligned with the values and behaviors that a benevolent leader would practice and subscribe to, but our findings show that this relationship can be influenced by the leader's dark triad.

One limitation of this study is that as culture and leadership are organizational level variables, hence, a multilevel approach is warranted so that the effect of macro-level variables on micro-level variables can be considered (Pettigrew, 2006). However, organizational culture and leadership behaviors can also be of an individual's perception as fit can be measured from different perspectives (Burns et al., 2013); thus, in this study, we take on the perspective of the "employee's perceived fit of leader's behaviors" (Burns et al., 2013) where leadership is measured based on employees' ratings of the leader.

In investigating the mediational process, it is more superior to use the longitudinal design instead of the cross-sectional design that we have used in this study (Selig & Preacher, 2009). This is because, with the use of a longitudinal design, the processes

that occur and the course of behavioral change can be detected (Deschenes, 1990), therefore establishing a causation link between the variables in this study which our cross-sectional design is not able to conclude. For example, in our study, if a longitudinal design was used, it could be examined if benevolent leadership could increase work engagement in a market culture over time.

In this paper, we specifically looked only at the individual characteristics of the dark triad to investigate its impact on organizational culture and benevolent leadership. Future studies might want to look at other individual characteristics (e.g., good characteristics) that may influence the relationship between organizational culture and benevolent leadership especially for market culture to further understand the leader-culture fit for this organizational culture, and which individual characteristics are ideal for that culture and leadership style.

Additionally, future studies might want to consider adopting the longitudinal design and multilevel perspective in the conceptualization of their study to understand organizational culture and benevolent leadership better as leader-culture fit can be represented by different levels— for example, a work-group culture level and also an organizational culture level (Burns et al., 2013). It would also be interesting to consider the multidimensional perspective of the leader-culture fit by investigating both the leaders' and employees' perspectives, to have a better understanding of the unique contributions of each.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study are important for consideration especially for organizations as identifying the organizational culture that may facilitate benevolent leadership and finding ways to address the individual characteristics that are detrimental in the development, adoption, and practice of benevolent leadership among leaders can facilitate work outcomes (Burns et al., 2013; Pyc et al., 2016). Since benevolent leadership has shown to be an effective type of leadership particularly among Asian leaders and employees in increasing employee work engagement and job performance, it would be beneficial for Asian organizations to nurture their leaders to use benevolent leadership in fostering employee work engagement and job performance (Cenkci & Özçelik, 2015) as these employees are affected and motivated by the positive affect that benevolent leadership can bring about (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008).

Organizations can also take note of more positive and motivating leadership styles such as benevolent leadership, and use this to address the stumbling blocks that may prevent leaders from displaying leadership styles that promote work outcomes (Pyc et al., 2016). This leadership style is also particularly important in recent Covid-19 pandemic where employees have to adapt fast to the working conditions where most employees work from home (Dubey & Tripathi, 2020). As such, personal needs and mistakes that happen at work may require higher consideration and understanding from the leaders.

It is also important for organizations to train their leaders in employing a leadership style that is aligned and fitting with their organizational culture as a misfit may impede work outcomes (Burns et al., 2013). For organizations that practice the market culture, it is important to monitor the suitability and alignment of the leadership style of the leader to ensure leader-culture fit, given the negative relationship between market culture and benevolent leadership style. As demonstrated in this study, too much benevolence being practiced by the leader in this situation would be detrimental to work engagement and job performance.

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