

Article

Relationships between Leadership Styles and Prosocial Motivation Depend on Cultural Values: A Case Study in Sri Lanka

Donald G. Gardner ^{1,*} and Vathsala Wickramasinghe ²¹ Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO 80918, USA² Department of Management of Technology, Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa, Moratuwa 10400, Sri Lanka; vathsala@uom.lk

* Correspondence: dgardner@uccs.edu

Abstract: Organizations are increasingly concerned about their social and environmental responsibilities and are interested in developing strategies to improve their performance and accountability in these areas. One such strategy focuses on leadership styles, by which leaders are selected or trained to address the needs of people and entities outside themselves (i.e., stakeholders), and subsequently inspire their followers to do the same. Implicit in this strategy is an assumption that a new type of leadership is required to achieve social and environmental responsibility goals. In this study, we offer a different perspective by proposing that leaders may only need to be encouraged or trained to emphasize some aspects of their existing leadership styles, while minimizing the use of others. We focus our study in Asia, where a paternal leadership style is prevalent, and often expected by followers. This leadership style consists of behaviors that may be organized into three dimensions: authoritarian, benevolent, and moral. We propose that the benevolent and moral dimensions reflect leadership styles that promote followers' social motivation and examine their interaction with the self-transcendent values of their followers in predicting followers' prosocial motivation to help others through their work. We found that only the benevolent dimension was significant and appeared to compensate for low self-transcendent values in followers. Implications for using leadership to promote social responsibility are discussed.

Keywords: leadership; paternal leadership style; personal values; self-transcendent values; prosocial motivation; corporate social responsibility



Citation: Gardner, D.G.; Wickramasinghe, V. Relationships between Leadership Styles and Prosocial Motivation Depend on Cultural Values: A Case Study in Sri Lanka. *Merits* **2023**, *3*, 445–458. <https://doi.org/10.3390/merits3030026>

Academic Editors: James Stuart Pounder and Wendy M. Purcell

Received: 6 May 2023

Revised: 15 June 2023

Accepted: 3 July 2023

Published: 6 July 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Organizations are increasingly concerned about their social and environmental responsibilities and are interested in developing programs and implementing actions to improve their performance and accountability in these areas. Collectively, these initiatives are often called corporate social responsibility (CSR), which can be defined as “context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders’ expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance” [1] (p. 855). Noteworthy in this definition is that private-sector organizations seek to maximize profits, but also seek to improve the social and environmental contexts in which they operate. The three objectives embodied in CSR need not be incompatible, because effectively developed CSR programs can simultaneously enhance profits while “doing good” (e.g., [2,3]). For example, Kim, Milliman, and Lucas [4] found that employees’ perceptions towards organizations’ CSR initiatives influence their affective organizational commitment, which has positive downstream relationships with key performance indicators like intention to stay with the organization. Other research provides evidence for the potential of leadership styles to promote pro-environmental behaviors in employees [5,6]. We build on this latter

research by examining the relationships between leadership styles and employees' prosocial motivation while considering the effects that cultural values play in these relationships. In the discussion below, we propose that self-transcendent personal values, directly and in combination with certain paternalistic leadership dimensions (benevolent and moral), have positive relationships with employees' motivation to use their work as a means to help others within and outside their organizations (i.e., prosocial motivation). Our goal in this study is to examine a culturally sensitive model of leadership and prosocial motivation that considers both the prevailing leadership styles and the values of the region being examined.

2. The Micro-Foundations of Socially Responsible Motivation

A major challenge for organizations, practitioners, and researchers is to discover what programs and actions are most likely to lead to successful CSR outcomes. The definition of CSR above refers to policies and actions by organizations, and the vast majority of empirical studies of CSR have been at the macro-organizational or institutional level [7]. This presents an obstacle to the creation of successful CSR programs, because those programs originate and are implemented by people, working individually or in teams (the micro and meso levels). Although CSR takes place at the organizational level of analysis, individual actors are those who actually strategize, make decisions, and execute CSR initiatives. There is a need to direct CSR research attention to micro-level mechanisms that help translate higher level variables into employees' behaviors and actions that may benefit the organization and society. Oftentimes, CSR engagement depends on employees' discretionary efforts and behaviors, but these unobserved drivers remain relatively unresearched [8]. Revealing what underpins one's involvement in CSR initiatives can inform research and practice by identifying what does and does not work as motivators to "do good" at work.

Concomitant with the need to study CSR effectiveness at the individual level is the need to understand the organizational factors that contribute to CSR engagement. For example, Carmeli et al. [8] found that an organization's "ethic of care" related to employees' affective reactions to the organizations' sustainability initiatives through the intervening variable of organizational identification, which in turn related to employees' involvement in sustainability initiatives. As another example, Testa, Boiral, and Heras-Saizarbitoria [9] found that managers' CSR values were related to their internalization of an organization's formal standard for CSR management practices (SA8000), their organizational citizenship behaviors, and employees' involvement, and subsequent CSR effectiveness. In this study, we examine leadership styles as an antecedent of employees' prosocial motivation, directly and in combination with employees' self-transcendent values. We chose to examine leadership styles because most employees (including managers) have a leader to whom they report and are usually affected by their leaders in both positive and negative ways (e.g., [10,11]). In the discussion below, we propose that self-transcendent personal values, directly and in combination with certain paternalistic leadership styles (benevolent and moral), have positive relationships with employees' motivation to use their work as a means to help others within and outside their organizations (i.e., prosocial motivation).

CSR research at the individual, or micro-foundation, level has increased in the years since the Aguinis and Glavas [7] review, especially research focused on individual employees. However, much of this research has concentrated on whether employees are attracted to organizations with strong CSR reputations (e.g., [12]), or whether perceptions of organizational CSR efforts have relationships with employee outcomes like organizational commitment, job satisfaction, engagement, organizational pride, perceived organizational support, perceived work-life quality, organizational trust, diminished turnover intentions, work meaningfulness, staff motivation, extra- and in-role job performance, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism (see [13], for a review).

While such research adds value and speaks to the potential economic value of CSR programs, it does not address the more fundamental question of how those programs might motivate employees to actively participate in CSR initiatives, or what Gond et al. [13] call

the “drivers” of CSR engagement. CSR drivers refer “to factors that operate as predictors of, motives for, or forces that trigger CSR engagement, either reactively (why people believe they must engage in CSR, often unwillingly) or proactively (why people choose to engage in CSR, mostly willingly)” [13] (p. 228). Neglecting such drivers in CSR research can lead to confusion about the theoretical mechanisms that explain which forces trigger CSR engagement (e.g., the opportunity to act consistently with one’s values) and mechanisms that explain how people react to CSR (e.g., enhanced organizational identification after CSR engagement). Gond et al. [13] propose three categories of CSR engagement: (1) instrumental drivers, which serve as means to ends, like acquiring rewards, (2) relational drivers, which enhance social relationships, and (3) moral drivers, which address higher-order needs like leading a meaningful life.

In this study, we examine moral drivers, specifically the personal values that guide employees’ life choices. There is some research that suggests that personal values are important drivers (mediators and moderators) that motivate employees to use their work as a vehicle to help others. For example, prior research has detailed the importance of fit between employees’ values with organizational values, while other research has focused on the role played by specific social values, like idealism and hope (cf. [13]). In this study, we propose that employees’ personal values, specifically self-transcendent values, provide the motivation to behave in ways that improve the physical environment and the lives of other people in their social networks, their communities, and the world in general. Further, we propose that within the work context, the behaviors of their managers-as-leaders can either facilitate or detract from employee’s prosocial motivation.

3. Personal Values

Values are described as broad, stable life goals that are important to people, and which motivate many of their behaviors, thoughts, and emotions [14]. Values serve as standards by which individuals judge the worthiness of their behaviors, as well as the behaviors of others (such as their leaders). Values are cognitive representations of basic motivational goals and apply across situations and over time. Some research indicates that when follower values are consistent with a leader’s concerns for stakeholders’ welfare, those followers are more likely to develop beliefs that their employers should engage in socially responsible actions [15]. Zelenski and Desrochers’ [11] review of research showed that self-transcendence can influence individuals in their pro-environmental behaviors, which are rooted in prosocial motivation. In this study, we propose that the degree to which followers’ personal values match the values implied by their leaders’ behaviors will similarly result in higher levels of prosocial motivation, depending on the degree to which those employees subscribe to self-transcendent values.

We focus on personal values (as opposed to cultural or organizational values) and base our study on Schwartz’s refined theory of basic individual values [16]. Schwartz’s model includes 19 basic individual values [16] and has advantages over using the more widely known Hofstede categories (cf. [17]). In addition, we focus on five of those values that reflect a meso-value of *self-transcendence*. Self-transcendence is, at its core, about transcending (or rising above) the self and relating to that which is greater than the self. Matthews, Kelemen, and Bolino [18] found follower traits, like self-transcendence, can influence the effectiveness of leader behaviors. We focus on the self-transcendence of followers because we propose that these values best capture what motivates and guides socially responsible behaviors. We specifically study the following values: (1) benevolence—dependability: being a reliable member of one’s ingroup; (2) benevolence—caring: devotion to the welfare of ingroup members; (3) universalism—concern: commitment to equality, justice, and protection for all people; (4) universalism—nature: preservation of the natural environment; and (5) universalism—tolerance: acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself.

Because values serve as life goals, people are motivated to act in ways that will enable them to attain those goals [16]. In addition, because people are motivated to maintain

cognitive consistency [19], they are similarly motivated to behave in ways that enable them to achieve a cognitive sense of balance—consistent with their values. As a result, we further propose that self-transcendence at work would be related to a strong desire to help or benefit other people through one's work, what has been termed *prosocial motivation* [20]. Such motivation finds its origins in the desire to achieve one's goals as well as to maintain a sense of cognitive consistency. Research suggests that individuals with higher prosocial motivation are more likely to experience the “doing good–feeling good” effect [21–23], because such individuals act consistently with their authentic interests and values when helping others; providing help is psychologically satisfying to them. Extensive research on prosocial motivation highlights it as an important employee outcome in organizations, as it predicts positive affect, intent to help, and actually helping others at work [24,25]. People (employees) high in prosocial motivation are much more likely to behave in socially responsible ways than people low in prosocial motivation. A recent meta-analysis by Liao et al. [23] showed several beneficial outcomes of prosocial motivation at the workplace, such as employee well-being, job performance, and career success.

4. Leadership Styles and Prosocial Motivation

It is well-established that leaders have effects on their employees (“followers”), and that different constellations of leader behaviors (leadership styles) differentially affect positive (e.g., job satisfaction) and negative (e.g., workplace deviance) employee outcomes [26,27]. There is also substantial empirical evidence that leadership plays a major role in the success of CSR programs [7]. At the micro-foundation level, commitment from supervisors to CSR is an important predictor of CSR engagement. For example, Ramus and Steger [28] found that employees who received encouragement from their supervisors were more likely to develop and implement ideas that positively enhance the natural environment. Li et al. [27] found that an authoritarian leadership style thwarts followers' proactivity, which would diminish their motivation to bring forth new ideas about implementing corporate strategies like CSR. Relevant to the current study are those leadership styles that motivate employees to comply with CSR directives or, better still, enhance employees' motivation to “do right” irrespective of the organizations' overall orientation towards CSR. A number of studies at the micro level provide some insight into the leadership styles that might best promote prosocial motivation in employees. Groves and LaRocca [15] found that leaders who rated stakeholder values highly (e.g., employee well-being and the welfare of the local community) were more likely to use transformational leadership styles which, when employees perceived value congruence with their leaders, led to more organizational citizenship behaviors and stronger beliefs in the importance of CSR to the organization's success. When employees perceived that they shared socially responsible values with their supervisors, they were more likely to engage in socially responsible behaviors and subscribe to values that underpin CSR. Afsar, Cheema, and Javed [29] found support for a model in which the positive relationship between employees' perceptions of an organizations' commitment to CSR and employees' pro-environmental behaviors (e.g., participating in environmentally friendly programs) was strengthened when employees also perceived their supervisors as using an environmentally specific servant leadership style (“My manager emphasizes the importance of contributing to the environmental improvement”).

According to social learning theory, individuals can copy and learn the attitudes and behaviors of others by observing and imitating their values and behaviors [30]. In their interactions with their leaders, employees generate prosocial motivation by observing and imitating the ideas and behaviors of their leaders. That is, employees appear to model the attitudes and behaviors of their leaders. Testa, Boiral, and Heras-Saizarbitoria [9] found that managers who valued ethics and social responsibility as a means to corporate success manifested organization citizenship behaviors, which in turn related positively to employee involvement and the organization's CSR success. Further, Cheng, Liu, Zhou, Che, and Han [31] found that empowering leadership has the capacity to promote subordinates'

pro-environmental behavior. Again, employees appeared to model the socially responsible behaviors of their leaders. Carmeli et al. [8] developed and tested a comprehensive model to explain why leaders would have positive effects on employees' prosocial motivation and behaviors (sustainability in this study). Employees who perceived that their organization cared about them (benevolence), a message delivered in part through organizational leaders, identified more strongly with the organization and were more motivated to engage in prosocial behaviors. Employees appeared to model the caring values of the organization. To summarize, there is empirical evidence that supports at least three pathways by which leaders enhance the prosocial motivation of their employees: (1) employees perceive that they share socially responsible values with leaders and feel free to act on their prosocial values, (2) the leader manifests or openly supports socially responsible behaviors, which enables followers to identify with their leaders and motivates them to display similar behaviors, and (3) leaders display behaviors that imply the valuing of pro-sociality, which employees emulate.

5. Leadership and Culture

Much of the CSR leadership research to date, at the micro level, has examined the relationships between leadership styles that were developed in Western cultures (e.g., transformational) and has related them to indexes that suggest that the actor (leader or follower) is behaving responsibly. An extensive amount of leadership research has demonstrated that national culture has a significant impact on how leadership is practiced and perceived, but that cultural influence is largely ignored in terms of recommendations for good practice [32]. In terms of CSR leadership, for example, Pearce, Wassenaar, and Manz [33] concluded that shared leadership is a characteristic that is common to several well-studied leadership styles, and which reflects CSR leadership to some degree. While we do not disagree with Pearce et al.'s [33] position on shared leadership, we do question the extent to which it is practicable in cultures that are much different from those in the West. In particular, and using Hofstede's widely used classification of cultural differences as an example, we wonder if shared leadership would be effective in cultures high in power distance. People in societies exhibiting a high degree of power distance, common in Asian and African countries, accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a position, and which needs no further justification. Leaders are expected to provide direction and advice to followers and are not expected to share their responsibilities with those lower in the hierarchy. In contrast, societies with low power distance, common in Western cultures, strive to equalize the distribution of power [34]. Shared leadership might be expected to work much better in low-power-distance countries than high. Training leaders to share decision-making responsibilities with employees in high-power-distance cultures might not achieve the desired result of having more socially responsible employees.

Still, other research has found that a "humane orientation" explains a predisposition to engage in CSR-supportive leader behavior. Humane orientation is the degree to which a society embraces self-transcendent values and encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others [35]. Countries with strong self-transcendent cultures consider the interests of others, affirm belonging and affiliation, and embrace norms and responsibilities for protecting the well-being of others. The effects of different leadership styles might be different in countries with a high humane orientation, in contrast to countries with a low humane orientation.

Compounding the problem of culture and CSR is that the need for leaders may be more important in developing economies, where profit-maximization (benefitting shareholders) may have priority over corporate social responsibility (benefitting all stakeholders). It has been noted that Asian firms often lag behind their Western counterparts in many aspects of CSR, though that may be due to cultural, economic development, and political/legal factors rather than an actual difference in meaningful CSR activities [36]. While many Asian companies in the region do not understand CSR as it is known in the West, philanthropy and community development are widely known and understood in Asia. CSR is not really

new to this region, and such activities may be known by a variety of other names [36]. That said, most developing countries in Asia have cultures quite different than those in Western developed countries; they tend to be higher in collectivism and power distance than countries in Europe and North America. We believe these cultural differences have major implications for the types of leadership styles that will be most effective in those countries.

We conducted our study in Sri Lanka, a country that is high in power distance (80th percentile according to Hofstede Insights [34]; by comparison, Germany is at the 35th percentile and the U.S. is at the 40th). Sri Lanka is also relatively high in collectivism (65th percentile, compared to Germany at the 33rd and the U. S. at the 9th percentile). Sri Lanka is a country whose people are also high (on average) in self-transcendence [37]. In addition, Sri Lanka is also rated below average in both corporate social and environmental responsibility, at least as judged by Western standards [36]. We believe these characteristics of Sri Lanka have relevance for leadership styles that are most likely to produce the highest levels of prosocial motivation in employees. Instead of applying a leadership theory developed in Western cultures to a non-Western culture (an etic approach), we examine one that has been inferred from observing leader behaviors in Asian cultures (an emic approach). Our main hypothesis is that employees who are high in self-transcendence and who perceive their leaders as treating them in ways that also reflect high self-transcendence will also possess a strong motivation to be benevolent towards others (i.e., prosocial motivation). We elaborate on this in the next section on paternal leadership.

6. Paternal Leadership

Leadership researchers in Asia, using a grounded (emic) approach, have identified a common array of behaviors used by managers that has been called paternalistic leadership [38,39]. Paternalistic leadership is rooted in the traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucianism [40–42] and is commonly found in collectivistic and high-power-distance cultures in Asia, like Sri Lanka [43]. Takeuchi, Wang, and Farh [44] argue for the potential for Asian conceptualizations of leadership building on the paternalistic leadership style. This philosophy highlights the importance of a hierarchical system and results in a leadership style that combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity, couched in a personalized atmosphere [41]. The role of the follower is to reciprocate this concern through an appreciation of the leader's care and support and unquestioning obedience to the leader.

Paternalistic leadership incorporates three correlated but independent dimensions: authoritarian, benevolent, and moral. Ratings of leaders on the three dimensions are higher in Asian cultures than in most Western cultures, though scores on the three dimensions vary across Asian countries [45]. The authoritarian dimension reflects the hierarchical dynamics between leaders' control, power, and authority, and subordinates' obedience, compliance, and respect [38]. Leaders are expected to maintain control and authority by setting rules, assigning follower responsibilities, and administering discipline and rewards. The benevolent dimension reflects leaders' investment in their followers by providing individualized concern for subordinates, especially if those subordinates are experiencing personal problems [41]. Leaders high in benevolence are effective in increasing subordinates' positive efforts for the organization [38]. Although a few studies found negative influences of benevolent leadership on followers [46], much more previous research supports a positive effect [47]. The moral dimension requires the leader to act as a role model, behaving in ways that demonstrate high moral standards, leading followers to believe in the altruism of the leader. Leaders high on the benevolent and moral dimensions likely possess self-transcendent or "humane" value orientations that reflect concerns for the welfare of individual and entities besides themselves [48]. These different value orientations of leaders have downstream effects on the beliefs and motivations of the people that they lead [15].

Thus far, we have discussed the following: (1) successful CSR programs require leaders and employees who are engaged and motivated to implement the programs; (2) employees with self-transcendent values are more prosocially motivated than employees with other predominant value systems; (3) leaders can enhance employees' prosocial motivation through value convergence, leader identification, and social learning psychological processes; (4) effective leadership is determined to some extent by national culture, with paternalistic styles being prevalent in Asian cultures; and (5) Sri Lanka, where this study was conducted, has a self-transcendent, collectivistic, high-power-distance culture where paternalistic leadership is common, expected, and to an extent, accepted. People high in self-transcendence place value on addressing the needs of other people, and in preserving nature, and are motivated to help others. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1. *Self-transcendence relates positively to prosocial motivation.*

Because Sri Lanka's self-transcendent culture supports the benevolence and moral aspects of the paternal leadership styles of its leaders, and because of the role modeling of and social identity with leaders, we further hypothesize:

H2. *There is a positive relationship between perceived leader benevolence and followers' prosocial motivation.*

H3. *There is a positive relationship between perceived leader morality and followers' prosocial motivation.*

Because self-transcendent values are manifested in benevolence and moral leader behaviors, followers with similarly high self-transcendent values should perceive value convergence, which enhances their freedom to act on their values:

H4. *The positive relationship between benevolent leadership and prosocial motivation is stronger for high self-transcendent followers than for low self-transcendent followers.*

H5. *The positive relationship between moral leadership and prosocial motivation is stronger for high self-transcendent followers than for low self-transcendent followers.*

7. Method

7.1. Sample and Procedure

Our data were collected in Sri Lanka, an island nation in South Asia with around 20 million people. Sri Lanka has become a desirable country in which to conduct business because of its highly literate workforce and because English is widely spoken. Participants were managers in both manufacturing and service sector firms in Sri Lanka. A list of companies was obtained from the Sri Lankan Chamber of Commerce. Hard copies of the questionnaires were mailed to managers in these companies, with a request for their voluntary participation. Participants completed the questionnaires by reading the directions and then marking responses to each item in the questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to contact the second author if they had any questions about their participation in the study. Within three months of distribution, 362 managers responded (out of approximately 1000 distributed). The sample averaged 30.94 years in age, 6.85 years of organizational tenure, was 61% male, and the median education level was a bachelor's degree. In total, 14.6% of participants worked in organizations with less than 50 employees, 20.5% had 50–99 employees, and 62.7% had 100 or more employees (the remaining 2.2% were missing data).

7.2. Measures

The questionnaire was written in English, with an equivalent translation in the native language, which was provided upon request by participants (i.e., both English and Sinhala). English is the official language of Sri Lanka and is widely spoken.

Paternalistic leadership was measured with the 10-item scale developed by Cheng et al. [45], who validated the measure in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Cheng et al. demonstrated the measure’s tri-dimensional validity as well as weak and strong measurement invariance. Only the items for the benevolent and moral dimensions were used in this study. Sample items are “often shows his/her concern about me” (benevolent) and “sets an example to me in all aspects” (moral). Participants (who were managers) rated the paternalistic leadership style of their manager/leader (the person to whom they reported).

Personal values were assessed with the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-RR) [16]. This instrument asks respondents to rate the degree to which they are like 57 hypothetical people, each of whom has a different value. Sample items are “It’s very important to him to help the people dear to him” (benevolence—caring) and “Protecting society’s weak and vulnerable members is important to him” (universalism—concern). Only the five self-transcendence values were used in this study: benevolence—dependability, benevolence—caring, universalism—concern for others, universalism—concern for nature, and universalism—tolerance. The PVQ has been used in hundreds of studies of personal values in social psychology. Empirical evidence of its construct validity may be found in [16,49].

Prosocial motivation was measured with Grant’s [20] four-item scale, which was adapted from self-regulation scales developed by Ryan and Connell [50]. Participants were asked why they performed their current jobs. A sample item is “Because I care about benefiting others through my work”. Most of the research that utilized this measure may be found in [51].

8. Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), sample reliability estimates (coefficient alpha), and intercorrelations of the study variables. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to evaluate the dimensionality of the previously validated scales used in the study. The fit of the measurement model to the item covariances was good ($X^2 = 298.14$; 146 df; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.04), and all factor loadings were statistically significant.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of study variables.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leader Benevolence	3.48	0.71	(0.83)							
2. Leader Moral	3.53	0.76	0.71 **	(0.88)						
3. Follower Benevolence—Dependability	4.61	0.84	−0.03	−0.01	(0.53)					
4. Follower Benevolence—Caring	4.91	0.81	0.06	0.08	0.61 **	(0.73)				
5. Follower Universalism—Concern	4.39	0.93	−0.08	−0.03	0.55 **	0.56 **	(0.59)			
6. Follower Universalism—Nature	4.58	0.90	−0.01	−0.03	0.44 **	0.49 **	0.51 **	(0.60)		
7. Follower Universalism—Tolerance	4.46	0.85	−0.04	−0.01	0.53 **	0.55 **	0.49 **	0.49 **	(0.63)	
8. Follower Prosocial Motivation	4.68	1.23	0.01	0.02	0.17 **	0.14 *	0.21 **	0.22 **	0.16 *	(0.92)

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two tailed). Note: Sample coefficient alphas appear on diagonal.

We proceeded to test our hypotheses with structural equation modeling using the latent variables and manifest indicators (listed in Table 1) by utilizing the Mplus 8.2 software [52,53]. All variables were mean-centered before analysis. The results are presented in Table 2. Consistent with the correlations in Table 1, the five self-transcendent value measures were all significantly and directly related to prosocial motivation, supporting H1. H2 and H3 stated that there would be positive relationships between the benevolent and moral leadership dimensions (respectively) and prosocial motivation. Neither hypothesis

was supported as there were no statistically significant relationships between either benevolence or moral leadership and prosocial motivation. Of most interest in Table 2 are the interactions of the benevolent and moral leadership styles and follower self-transcendent values. The interactions of leader benevolence and all three follower universalism values were statistically significant. When plotted, all three interactions reflected the same direction of relationships between leader benevolence and prosocial motivation.

Table 2. Results from tests of hypotheses for prosocial motivation.

Variables in Equation	B	Variables in Equation	B
Leader Benevolence	0.04	Leader Moral	0.04
Follower Benevolence—Dependability	0.24 **	Follower Benevolence—Dependability	0.24 **
Leader Benevolence × Follower Benevolence—Dependability	−0.09	Leader Moral X Benevolence—Dependability	−0.08
Leader Benevolence	0.04	Leader Moral	0.02
Follower Benevolence—Caring	0.21 **	Follower Benevolence—Caring	0.21 **
Leader Benevolence × Follower Benevolence—Caring	−0.21	Leader Moral X Benevolence—Caring	−0.03
Leader Benevolence	0.07	Leader Moral	0.04
Follower Universalism—Concern	0.27 **	Follower Universalism—Concern	0.26 **
Leader Benevolence × Universalism—Concern	−0.21 *	Leader Moral X Universalism—Concern	−0.03
Leader Benevolence	0.05	Leader Moral	0.04
Follower Universalism—Nature	0.29 **	Follower Universalism—Nature	0.29 **
Leader Benevolence × Universalism—Nature	−0.23 *	Moral X Universalism—Nature	−0.01
Leader Benevolence	0.09	Leader Moral	0.04
Follower Universalism—Tolerance	0.21 **	Follower Universalism—Tolerance	0.21 **
Leader Benevolence × Universalism—Tolerance	−0.33 **	Leader Moral X Universalism—Tolerance	−0.02

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed).

Figure 1 illustrates the nature of this interaction for low (−2 SD) and high (+2 SD) values of leader benevolence and follower tolerance. When follower universalism—tolerance is high, there is a non-significant negative relationship between leader benevolence and prosocial motivation. When follower universalism—tolerance is low, the relationship between leader benevolence and follower universalism—tolerance is positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). These relationships are opposite to what is proposed in H4. Tests for H5 revealed that none of the interactions between leader moral behaviors and follower values were statistically significant.

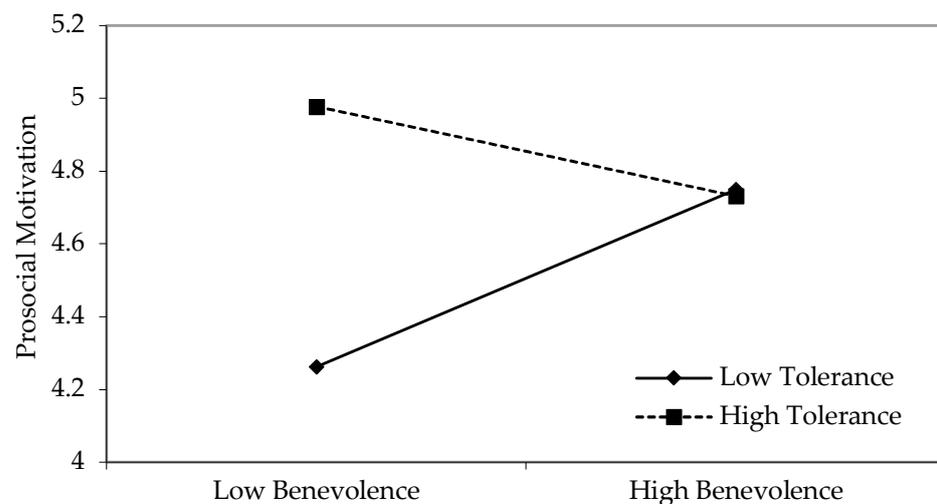


Figure 1. Illustration of interaction of leader benevolence and follower universalism—tolerance.

9. Discussion

There is a gap in our understanding of conditions that promote the achievement of social and environmental responsibility goals. We addressed the underlying mechanisms

linking leadership styles and followers' personal values with followers' prosocial motivation for CSR initiatives in a moderating relationship. We shed light on three important research questions. For the first, how do responsible leaders influence employee attitudes and behaviors, we found evidence that leaders high on the benevolent, but not moral, dimensions had differential relationships with follower prosocial motivation. We can only speculate about the cause of this divergence, but it may be that the values that underlie the moral behaviors displayed by leaders need to be specified when measuring perceptions of moral leader behaviors. For example, moral behaviors reflecting honesty or strong work ethic may not relate to prosocial motivation, while moral behaviors reflecting care for others might be a better predictor. For the second question, how do leaders shape the way in which employees work and collaborate with internal stakeholders, we found that followers low in universalism responded favorably to leader benevolence and manifested higher levels of benevolence (i.e., prosocial motivation) themselves. Followers who are high in universalism reacted somewhat negatively to high leader benevolence, showing less prosocial motivation. This pattern of results is consistent with Cable and Edward's [54] discussion of complementary and supplementary fit. Complementary fit refers to occasions when the weaknesses or needs of the individual are offset by the strength of the environment; in our case, leader benevolence offset the low universalism of some followers, resulting in higher prosocial motivation. On the other hand, supplementary fit occurs when a person and a leader possess similar or matching characteristics, especially matching values. In our study, high levels of benevolent leader behaviors had negative or zero effects on followers high in universalism. It may be the case that those followers felt lower motivation to help coworkers because the leader was providing such help. The third research question, does the influence of paternalistic leadership on employee outcomes differ as a result of cultural factors, we cannot address directly with our data. Nevertheless, it may be that in countries where both self-transcendent values and paternalistic leader behaviors are prevalent, high levels of different leadership behaviors (e.g., transformational) may not be needed. People in those countries are already motivated to engage in prosocial behaviors. Still, within those countries, not all members will adhere to the prevailing transcendent cultural values. For those people, within the work context, it may be effective for leaders to emphasize the benevolence dimension of the paternalistic leadership style.

Our study adds to the existing knowledge about the ways in which followers' cultural values influence the effects of different leadership styles. Matthews et al. [18] reviewed much of this research and concluded that moral-oriented leader behaviors (which included servant, ethical, humble, and ethical) have mixed relationships with employee outcomes, and that "These conflicting findings of how individual traits can act as strengtheners for some moral oriented leader behaviors but also act as weakeners for others (e.g., proactivity personality, power-distance orientation) highlights the nuanced nature of different moral-oriented leader behaviors . . . However, moral-oriented leader behaviors were the least studied leader behaviors in our review . . . so further research is needed in this area to elucidate this finding" (p. 7). Our study included a direct measure of moral leader behaviors, an outcome (prosocial motivation) that has not been previously studied in this context, as well as a comprehensive measure of follower values (the PVQ) that has been rarely used in research in the organizational sciences. Similarly, Matthews et al. found mixed results for relational-oriented leader behaviors, and our results for the benevolent leader dimension contribute to that knowledge base.

Our study also adds to the growing knowledge base about paternalistic leadership. Hiller et al. [55] reviewed this research and found that "the benevolence dimension demonstrates consistently positive relationships with leader effectiveness and follower performance, attitudes, and behaviors" (p. 165). Our results support this conclusion by showing that employee values moderate the relationship of benevolence with prosocial motivation, a relationship that has not been previously studied. Hiller et al. also concluded that the moral dimension generally produced positive results, but our results suggest that its relationships with favorable outcomes may be more nuanced than just main effects.

An area that is of particular importance in preventing unethical behavior and promoting socially responsible behavior is training and education. Noted management scholars and educators [56–59] have questioned the assumptions underlying traditional management education, which, in their view, not only contributed to a moral vacuum and promoted a dysfunctional picture of the “ruthlessly hard driving, strictly top-down, command-and-control focused, shareholder-value obsessed, win-at-any cost business leader” [57] (p. 85), but also failed to prepare students for coping with the ethical dilemmas and leadership challenges facing managers in contemporary corporations. Although many of the personality traits, attitudes, and values associated with responsible managerial behavior are likely to be relatively fixed and thus hard to change or develop, training and development activities can play an important role in ensuring that managers, especially those that are new to leadership roles, act responsibly. Once an individual has joined an organization, participated in induction and training and development programs, received individual coaching by a supervisor, and experienced other socialization practices, it is essential that the newcomer learns the values, expected behaviors, and social knowledge necessary to become an effective and responsible member of the organization. Future studies can contribute to best practice in this area by shedding light on how companies can systematically design and utilize human resource management practices and leadership development programs to promote responsible managerial behavior [60].

This study also indirectly addresses issues associated with Western-based MNCs that routinely assign home-country nationals to manage subsidiaries in non-Western countries whose cultures differ from the home country [61]. While this may have utility in terms of global uniform policies and practices, it may also result in the exportation of leadership styles (e.g., transactional) that result in the lower rather than greater motivation of employees to engage in prosocial behaviors.

10. Limitations

Our findings support a culturally sensitive view of leadership styles and prosocial motivation of employees. However, our results must be tempered by the fact that we used a single source for data (managers in Sri Lanka) and collected data at one time. In addition, some of the subscales for the PVQ manifested low reliability estimates, which might mask what would otherwise be additional statistically significant relationships. Our results should therefore be considered as tentative until future research replicates our findings with stronger designs and more heterogeneous samples. Future research might also expand on our study by exploring other values and using alternative (but valid) measures of our study variables, matching leadership styles and cultural values with theoretically relevant employee outcomes.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, D.G.G. and V.W.; methodology, D.G.G. and V.W.; investigation, V.W.; resources, V.W.; data curation, D.G.G.; writing—original draft preparation, D.G.G.; writing—review and editing, D.G.G. and V.W.; project administration, V.W.; funding acquisition, V.W. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because personally identifiable information was not collected. Participants were allowed to quit the survey at any time without submitting it. Responses were anonymous, and as a result, we are unable to trace back any surveys to their respondents.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. The following statement was stated at the beginning of each survey: “Your decision to participate or to not participate in this study is entirely yours to make. Your decision will not affect your relationship with your employer, with [the researcher], or the University of [researcher’s university]. There are no questions that are sensitive in nature or that will put you at risk”.

Data Availability Statement: Data will be made available upon request for research purposes only.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Aguinis, H. Organizational responsibility: Doing good and doing well. In *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*; Zedeck, S., Ed.; American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, USA, 2011; Volume 3, pp. 855–879.
2. Balabanis, G.; Phillips, H.C.; Lyall, J. Corporate social responsibility and economic performance in the top British companies: Are they linked? *Eur. Bus. Rev.* **1998**, *98*, 25–44. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Blomgren, A. Does corporate social responsibility influence profit margins? A case study of executive perceptions. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2011**, *18*, 263–274. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Kim, J.; Milliman, J.F.; Lucas, A.F. Effects of CSR on affective organizational commitment via organizational justice and organization-based self-esteem. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.* **2021**, *92*, 102691. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Peng, J.; Chen, X.; Zou, Y.; Nie, Q. Environmentally specific transformational leadership and team pro-environmental behaviors: The roles of pro-environmental goal clarity, pro-environmental harmonious passion, and power distance. *Hum. Relat.* **2021**, *74*, 1864–1888. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Zhang, S.; Sun, W.; Ji, H.; Jia, J. The antecedents and outcomes of transformational leadership: Leader’s self-transcendent value, follower’s environmental commitment and behavior. *Leadersh. Organ. Dev. J.* **2021**, *42*, 1037–1052. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Aguinis, H.; Glavas, A. What we know and don’t know about corporate social responsibility: A review and research agenda. *J. Manag.* **2012**, *38*, 932–968. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Carmeli, A.; Brammer, S.; Gomes, E.; Tarba, S.Y. An organizational ethic of care and employee involvement in sustainability-related behaviors: A social identity perspective. *J. Organ. Behav.* **2017**, *38*, 1380–1395. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Testa, F.; Boiral, O.; Heras-Saizarbitoria, I. Improving CSR performance by hard and soft means: The role of organizational citizenship behaviours and the internalization of CSR standards. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2018**, *25*, 853–865. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Kuoppala, J.; Lamminpää, A.; Liira, J.; Vainio, H. Leadership, job well-being, and health effects—A systematic review and a meta-analysis. *J. Occup. Environ. Med.* **2008**, *50*, 904–915. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Zelenski, J.M.; Desrochers, J.E. Can positive and self-transcendent emotions promote pro-environmental behavior? *Curr. Opin. Psychol.* **2021**, *42*, 31–35. [[CrossRef](#)]
12. Del Mar Alonso-Almeida, M.; Llach, J. Socially responsible companies: Are they the best workplace for millennials? A cross-national analysis. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2018**, *26*, 238–247. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Gond, J.-P.; El Akremi, A.; Swaen, V.; Babu, N. The psychological micro-foundations of corporate social responsibility: A person-centric systematic review. *J. Organ. Behav.* **2017**, *38*, 225–246. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Parks-Leduc, L.; Feldman, G.; Bardi, A. Personality traits and personal values: A meta-analysis. *Personal. Soc. Psychol. Rev.* **2015**, *19*, 3–29. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
15. Groves, K.S.; LaRocca, M.A. Responsible leadership outcomes via stakeholder CSR values: Testing a values-centered model of transformational leadership. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2011**, *98*, 37–55. [[CrossRef](#)]
16. Schwartz, S.H.; Cieciuch, J.; Vecchione, M.; Konty, M. Refining the theory of basic individual values. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* **2012**, *103*, 663–688. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Dal Maso, L.; Liberatore, G.; Mazzi, F. Value relevance of stakeholder engagement: The influence of national culture. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2017**, *24*, 44–56. [[CrossRef](#)]
18. Matthews, S.H.; Kelemen, T.K.; Bolino, M.C. How follower traits and cultural values influence the effects of leadership. *Leadersh. Q.* **2021**, *32*, 101497. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Festinger, L. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*; Stanford University Press: Palo Alto, CA, USA, 1968.
20. Grant, A.M. Does intrinsic motivation fuel the prosocial fire? Motivational synergy in predicting persistence, performance, and productivity. *J. Appl. Psychol.* **2008**, *93*, 48–58. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Bolino, M.C.; Harvey, J.; Bachrach, D.G. A self-regulation approach to understanding citizenship behavior in organizations. *Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process.* **2012**, *119*, 126–139. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Kushlev, K.; Radosic, N.; Diener, E. Subjective well-being and prosociality around the globe: Happy people give more of their time and money to others. *Soc. Psychol. Personal. Sci.* **2022**, *13*, 849–861. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Liao, H.; Su, R.; Ptashnik, T.; Nielsen, J. Feeling good, doing good, and getting ahead: A meta-analytic investigation of the outcomes of prosocial motivation at work. *Psychol. Bull.* **2022**, *148*, 158–198. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. Batson, C.D. Prosocial Motivation: A Lewinian Approach. *Motiv. Sci.* **2022**, *8*, 1–10. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Lin, K.J.; Savani, K.; Iliea, R. Doing good, feeling good? The roles of helping motivation and citizenship pressure. *J. Appl. Psychol.* **2019**, *104*, 1020–1035. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
26. Yukl, G.A. *Leadership in Organizations*; Pearson: Boston, MA, USA, 2013.
27. Li, R.; Chen, Z.; Zhang, H.; Luo, J. How do authoritarian leadership and abusive supervision jointly thwart follower proactivity? A social control perspective. *J. Manag.* **2021**, *47*, 930–956. [[CrossRef](#)]

28. Ramus, C.A.; Steger, U. The roles of supervisory support behaviors and environmental policy in employee “ecoinitiatives” at leading edge European companies. *Acad. Manag. J.* **2000**, *43*, 605–626. [CrossRef]
29. Afsar, B.; Cheema, S.; Javed, F. Activating employee’s pro-environmental behaviors: The role of CSR, organizational identification, and environmentally specific servant leadership. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2018**, *25*, 904–911. [CrossRef]
30. Bandura, A. *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*; Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA, 1986.
31. Cheng, Z.; Liu, W.; Zhou, K.; Che, Y.; Han, Y. Promoting employees’ pro-environmental behaviour through empowering leadership: The roles of psychological ownership, empowerment role identity, and environmental self-identity. *Bus. Ethics Environ. Responsib.* **2021**, *30*, 604–618. [CrossRef]
32. Atwater, L.; Yu, J.; Tawse, A.; Fields, L.H.; McFarren, J.A.; Nae, E.Y. Relevance of culture in studies of leadership: Ignored or dismissed? *Asia Pac. J. Manag.* **2021**, *38*, 687–708. [CrossRef]
33. Pearce, C.L.; Wassenaar, C.L.; Manz, C.C. Is shared leadership the key to responsible leadership? *Acad. Manag. Perspect.* **2014**, *28*, 275–288. [CrossRef]
34. Hofstede Insights. 2023. Available online: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/> (accessed on 1 May 2023).
35. Witt, M.A.; Stahl, G.K. Foundations of responsible leadership: Asian versus Western executive responsibility orientations toward key stakeholders. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2016**, *136*, 623–638. [CrossRef]
36. Baughn, C.C.; Bodie, N.L.; McIntosh, J.C. Corporate social and environmental responsibility in Asian countries and other geographical regions. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2007**, *14*, 189–205. [CrossRef]
37. Gardner, D.G.; Wickramasinghe, V.; Pierce, J.L. Values congruence, organization-based self-esteem, and employee responses: Evidence from Sri Lanka. *Int. J. Cross-Cult. Manag.* **2018**, *18*, 349–372. [CrossRef]
38. Cheng, B.S.; Chou, L.F.; Wu, T.Y.; Huang, M.P.; Farh, J.L. Paternalistic leadership and subordinate responses: Establishing a leadership model in Chinese organizations. *Asian J. Soc. Psychol.* **2004**, *7*, 89–117. [CrossRef]
39. Pellegrini, E.K.; Scandura, T.A. Paternalistic leadership: A review and agenda for future research. *J. Manag.* **2008**, *34*, 566–593. [CrossRef]
40. Bedi, A. A meta-analytic review of paternalistic leadership. *Appl. Psychol. Int. Rev.* **2020**, *69*, 960–1008. [CrossRef]
41. Farh, J.L.; Cheng, B.S. A cultural analysis of paternalistic leadership in Chinese organizations. In *Management and Organization in the Chinese Context*; Li, J.T., Tsui, A.S., Weldon, E., Eds.; Macmillan: London, UK, 2000; pp. 84–127.
42. Huang, T.Y.; Lin, C.-P. Is Paternalistic Leadership a Double-Edged Sword for Team Performance? The Mediation of Team Identification and Emotional Exhaustion. *J. Leadersh. Organ. Stud.* **2021**, *28*, 207–220. [CrossRef]
43. Gunasekara, A.; Dahanayake, P.; Attanayake, C.; Bertone, S. Paternalistic leadership as a double-edged sword: Analysis of the Sri Lankan President’s response to the COVID-19 crisis. *Leadership* **2022**, *18*, 498–519. [CrossRef]
44. Takeuchi, R.; Wang, A.C.; Farh, J.L. Asian conceptualizations of leadership: Progresses and challenges. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.* **2020**, *7*, 233–256. [CrossRef]
45. Cheng, B.; Boer, D.; Chou, L.-F.; Tsai, C.-Y. Paternalistic leadership in four East Asian societies: Generalizability and cultural differences of the triad model. *J. Cross-Cult. Psychol.* **2014**, *45*, 82–90. [CrossRef]
46. Shaw, K.-H.; Liao, H.-Y. Does benevolent leadership promote follower unethical pro-organizational behavior? A social identity perspective. *J. Leadersh. Organ. Stud.* **2021**, *28*, 31–44. [CrossRef]
47. Gumusluoglu, L.; Karakitapoglu-Aygun, Z.; Scandura, T.A. A multilevel examination of benevolent leadership and innovative behavior in R&D contexts: A social identity approach. *J. Leadersh. Organ. Stud.* **2017**, *24*, 479–493.
48. Walker, M.; Mercado, H. Environmentally responsible value orientations: Perspectives from public assembly facility managers. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2016**, *23*, 271–282. [CrossRef]
49. Vecchione, M.; Casconi, T.; Barbaranelli, C. Assessing the circular structure of the Portrait Values Questionnaire: A confirmatory factor analysis approach. *Eur. J. Psychol. Assess.* **2009**, *25*, 231–238. [CrossRef]
50. Ryan, R.M.; Connell, J.P. Perceived locus of causality and internalization: Examining reasons for acting in two domains. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* **1989**, *57*, 749–761. [CrossRef]
51. Grant, A.M.; Shandell, M.S. Social motivation at work: The organizational psychology of effort for, against, and with others. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **2022**, *73*, 301–326. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
52. Muthén, L.K.; Muthén, B.O. *Mplus User’s Guide*, 8th ed.; Muthén & Muthén: Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2017.
53. Stride, C.B.; Gardner, S.; Catley, N.; Thomas, F. *Mplus Code for Mediation, Moderation, and Moderated Mediation Models 2015*. Available online: <http://www.offbeat.group.shef.ac.uk/FIO/mplusmedmod.htm> (accessed on 4 November 2021).
54. Cable, D.M.; Edwards, J.L. Complementary and supplementary fit: A theoretical and empirical integration. *J. Appl. Psychol.* **2004**, *89*, 822–834. [CrossRef]
55. Hiller, N.J.; Sin, H.-P.; Ponnappalli, A.R.; Ozgen, S. Benevolence and authority as WEIRDly unfamiliar: A multi-language meta-analysis of paternalistic leadership behaviors from 152 studies. *Leadersh. Q.* **2019**, *30*, 165–184. [CrossRef]
56. Ralston, D.A.; Egri, C.P.; Reynaud, E.; Wallace, A. A twenty-first century assessment of values across the global workforce. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2011**, *104*, 1–31. [CrossRef]
57. Ghoshal, S. Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Acad. Manag. Learn. Educ.* **2005**, *4*, 75–91. [CrossRef]
58. Khurana, R. *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as A Profession*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 2007.

59. Mintzberg, H. *Managers Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development*; Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco, CA, USA, 2004.
60. Stahl, G.K.; De Luque, M.S. Antecedents of responsible leader behavior: A research synthesis, conceptual framework, and agenda for future research. *Acad. Manag. Perspect.* **2014**, *28*, 235–254. [[CrossRef](#)]
61. Berger, R.; Choi, C.J.; Kim, J.B. Responsible leadership for multinational enterprises in bottom of pyramid countries: The knowledge of local managers. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2011**, *101*, 553–561. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.