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The Relationships Between Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility: Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: The issues of leadership and corporate social responsibility have been thoroughly investigated and widely discussed in the literature but these two concepts have been seldom studied together. The aim of the paper is to identify the key research problems and approaches related to the relationships between leadership and CSR manifested in quality publications. The systematic literature survey methodology is applied to identify and analyse key publications in the field. The research sample includes the quality papers retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection database. The paper discusses main research problems and issues related to the study of relationships between leadership and CSR, research approaches, methods and study contexts. Finally, the paper provides recommendations for further studies related to relationships between the concepts of leadership and corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: leadership, corporate social responsibility, CSR.

1. Introduction

As observed by Karaszewski and Lis (2014a, p. 1056; 2014b, p. 54), the issues of leadership and corporate social responsibility have been thoroughly investigated and widely discussed in the literature but these two concepts have been seldom studied together. This observation is supported by bibliometric data retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection database. The topic search (as of 14 May 2017) identifies 9,253 publications for the phrase ‘corporate social responsibility’, 9,320 items for ‘CSR’ and 74,410 publications related to ‘leadership’. Simultaneously, there are only 361 publications including both ‘corporate social responsibility’ and ‘leadership’ phrases, and 194 items for the topic search of phrases ‘CSR’ and ‘leadership’. Moreover, there is a lack of the systematic literature review of publications analysing the relationships between the concepts of leadership and corporate social responsibility.

Therefore, filling the discovered knowledge gap is the motivation to examine links between leadership and corporate social responsibility. The main aim of the paper is to identify the key research problems and approaches related to the relationships between leadership and CSR manifested in quality publications. The research process is focused on the following study questions: (1) What are the key publications combining the study of leadership and CSR concepts? (2) What are the main research problems and issues related to the study of relationships between leadership and CSR? (3) What are the main research approaches and methods applied to study relationships between leadership and CSR? (4) What are the most often analysed contexts (i.e. countries and territories, industries, concepts etc.) of studies on relationships between leadership and CSR? (5) What are the recommendations for further studies related to relationships between the concepts of leadership and corporate social responsibility? The paper follows the classical IMRD model and includes the following sections: introduction, methodology, research and discussion. The findings presented in the paper should be considered as components of a wider research project related to other publications by the authors (cf. Lis and Cegliński, 2017; Lis, Czerniachowicz and Wieczorek-Szymańska, 2017).

2. Methodology

The systematic literature survey methodology (cf. Czakon, 2011) was applied to identify and analyse key publications in the field. The work of Lis (2017) was a benchmark for designing research and structuring the paper. The Web of Science Core Collection database was used as a source of data for analysis. In order to retrieve relevant data two following sets of phrases were queried in the titles of publications: (1) ‘corporate social responsibility’ and ‘leadership’; (2) ‘CSR’ and ‘leadership’. In total 38 publications were identified (25 and 13 items for each query, respectively). After the analysis of abstracts, 1 item was excluded from the sample as it used the phrase ‘leadership’ in a different context i.e. brand leadership strategy (Lindgreen, Xu, Maon and Wilcock 2012). All remaining 37 publications were included in the research sample (cf. Table 1).

Table 1. Research sample for the systematic literature survey on relationships between ‘leadership’ and ‘corporate social responsibility’

No.	Author(s)	Publication year	Title
1.	Waldman, Siegel and Javidan	2006	Components of CEO Transformational Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility
2.	Waldman et al.	2006	Cultural and Leadership Predictors of Corporate Social Responsibility Values of Top Management: A GLOBE Study of 15 Countries
3.	Marshall	2007	The Gendering of Leadership in Corporate Social Responsibility
4.	London	2008	Leadership and Advocacy: Dual Roles for Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship
5.	Lakshman	2009	Corporate Social Responsibility through Knowledge Leadership in India: ITC Ltd and YC Deveshwar
6.	Torres-Baumgarten and Yucetepe	2009	Multinational Firms’ Leadership Role in Corporate Social Responsibility in Latin America
7.	Angus-Leppan, Metcalf and Benn	2010	Leadership Styles and CSR Practice: An Examination of Sensemaking, Institutional Drivers and CSR Leadership

Table 1.
continued

No.	Author(s)	Publica- tion year	Title
8.	Benn, Todd and Pendleton	2010	Public Relations Leadership in Corporate Social Responsibility
9.	Dashwood and Pupilampu	2010	Corporate Social Responsibility and Canadian Mining Companies in the Developing World: The Role of Organizational Leadership and Learning
10.	Lehmann, Toh, Christensen and Ma	2010	Responsible Leadership? Development of CSR at Danfoss, Denmark
11.	Gond, Igalens, Swaen and ElAkremi	2011	The Human Resources Contribution to Responsible Leadership: An Exploration of the CSR-HR Interface
12.	Groves and LaRocca	2011	An Empirical Study of Leader Ethical Values, Transformational and Transactional Leadership, and Follower Attitudes Toward Corporate Social Responsibility
13.	Groves and LaRocca	2011	Responsible Leadership Outcomes Via Stakeholder CSR Values: Testing a Values-Centred Model of Transformational Leadership
14.	Mostovicz and Kakabadse	2011	Between Trust and CSR: The Role of Leadership
15.	Ashley	2012	Corporate Social Responsibility: From Business Leadership to Multi-actors' Policy Coherence
16.	Dhanesh	2012	Better Stay Single? Public Relations and CSR Leadership in India
17.	Groves and LaRocca	2012	Does Transformational Leadership Facilitate Follower Beliefs in Corporate Social Responsibility? A Field Study of Leader Personal Values and Follower Outcomes
18.	Guillet, Yaman and Kucukusta	2012	How is Corporate Social Responsibility Perceived by Managers with Different Leadership Styles? The Case of Hotel Managers in Kong Kong
19.	Du, Swaen, Lindgreen and Sen	2013	The Roles of Leadership Styles in Corporate Social Responsibility
20.	Vlachos, Panagopoulos and Rapp	2013	Feeling Good by Doing Good: Employee CSR-Induced Attributions, Job Satisfaction, and the Role of Charismatic Leadership

Table 1.
continued

No.	Author(s)	Publication year	Title
21.	Rademacher and Remus	2014	Correlating Leadership Style, Communication Strategy and Management Fashion: An Approach to Describing the Drivers and Settings of CSR Institutionalization
22.	Suliman and Thomas	2014	Leadership and CSR in Developing Countries: The Case of the UAE
23.	Zhu, Sun and Leung	2014	Corporate Social Responsibility, Firm Reputation and Firm Performance: The Role of Ethical Leadership
24.	Choi, Ullah and Kwak	2015	Ethical Leadership and Followers' Attitudes Toward Corporate Social Responsibility: The Role of Perceived Ethical Work Climate
25.	Du Preez and van Zyl	2015	Toward the Development of a Corporate Social Responsibility Leadership Questionnaire: An Adaptation of the LBI-2
26.	Pearce and Stahl	2015	Introduction to the Special Issue: The Leadership Imperative for Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility
27.	Szczepańska-Woszczyna	2015	Responsible Leadership Contribution to Human Resource Management – A Case Study of CSR-HR Interface
28.	Tian, Liu and Fan	2015	The Effects of External Stakeholder Pressure and Ethical Leadership on Corporate Social Responsibility in China
29.	Wu, Kwan, Yim, Chiu and He	2015	CEO Ethical Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Moderated Mediation Model
30.	Verissimo and Lacerda	2015	Does Integrity Matter for CSR Practice in Organizations? The Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership
31.	Akdogan, Arslan and Demirtas	2016	A Strategic Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility on Meaningful Work and Organizational Identification, via Perceptions of Ethical Leadership
32.	Hansen, Dunford, Alge and Jackson,	2016	Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethical Leadership, and Trust Propensity: A Multi-Experience Model of Perceived Ethical Climate

Table 1.
continued

No.	Author(s)	Publication year	Title
33.	Kirchmayer, Remisova and Lasakova	2016	Ethical Leadership in the Context of CSR
34.	Maak, Pless and Voegtlin	2016	Business Statesman or Shareholder Advocate? CEO Responsible Leadership Styles and the Micro-Foundations of Political CSR
35.	Alonso-Almeida, Perramon and Bagur-Femenias	2017	Leadership Styles and Corporate Social Responsibility Management: Analysis from a Gender Perspective
36.	Gao and He	2017	Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Pivotal Role of Ethical Leadership and Organizational Justice
37.	Wiengarten, Lo and Lam	2017	How Does Sustainability Leadership Affect Firm Performance? The Choices Associated with Appointing a Chief Officer of Corporate Social Responsibility

Source: Own study based on data retrieved from Web of Science Core Collection.

The sampling process covered all the publications archived in the Web of Science Core Collection database issued between 1945 and 2017. However, all the 37 papers which met the search criteria and were included into the sample are very recent as they were published between 2006 and 2017. The most often, the problem of relationships between leadership and CSR was discussed in 2015 (7 publications) and the most seldom in 2007 and 2008 (only 1 publication per year). So, in recent years, an increasing interest in the issue mutual relationships these two constructs has been observed in the literature.

The qualitative analysis of the selected papers was the main research method. In the first step, the papers were analysed and categorized according to their affinities in regard to main research problems and issues, research approaches and methods, and the most often analysed contexts (i.e. countries and territories, and concepts). The bottom-up approach was used to develop affinity diagrams i.e. similar papers were grouped together and then the headers for each category were assigned. In the second step, conclusions and recommendations were drawn by two authors while the third author played the role of a ‘devil’s advocate’ and questioned them in order to test and prove their value.

3. Research

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of the paper the content analysis of identified publication was conducted. First of all, the main research problems and issues related to the study of relationships between leadership and CSR were pointed out. As an outcome of the review of analysed publications some broader categories were defined and each paper was assigned to a particular category (cf. Table 2).

Table 2. Main research problems and issues related to the study of relationships between leadership and CSR

Research issue	N	Publications
outcomes of CSR	9	Torres-Baumgarten and Yucetepe (2009) Angus-Leppan, Metcalf and Benn (2010) Dashwood and Pupilampu (2010) Groves and LaRocca (2012) Du, Swaen, Lindgreen and Sen (2013) Suliman and Thomas (2014) Zhu, Sun and Leung (2014) Gao and He (2017) Wiengarten, Lo and Lam (2017)
CEOs and decision making	6	Waldman, Siegel and Javidan (2006) Waldman et al. (2006) Ashley (2012) Wu, Kwan, Yim, Chiu and He (2015) Maak, Pless and Voegtlin (2016) Kirchmayer, Remisowa and Lasakova (2016)
responsible leadership	5	Lehmann, Toh, Christensen and Ma (2010) Gond, Igalens, Swaen and ElAkremi (2011) Groves and LaRocca (2011b) Szczepańska-Woszczyna (2015) Maak, Pless and Voegtlin (2016)
attitudes towards CSR	5	London (2008) Groves and LaRocca (2011a) Guillet, Yaman and Kucukusta (2012) Rademacher and Remus (2014) Alonso-Almeida, Perramon and Bagur-Femenias (2017)
ethical culture and ethical climate	4	Choi, Ullah and Kwak (2015) Wu, Kwan, Yim, Chiu and He (2015) Hansen, Dunford, Alge and Jackson (2016) Kirchmayer, Remisowa and Lasakova (2016)

Table 2.
continued

Research issue	N	Publications
employee issues	3	Gond, Igalens, Swaen and ElAkremi (2011) Vlachos, Panagopoulos and Rapp (2013) Akdogan, Arslan and Demirtas (2016)
public relations	2	Benn, Todd and Pendleton (2010) Dhanesh (2012)
gender	2	Marshall (2007) Alonso-Almeida, Perramon and Bagur-Femenias (2017)
trust	2	Mostovicz and Kakabadse (2011) Hansen, Dunford, Alge and Jackson (2016)
organisational integrity	2	Ashley (2012) Verissimo and Lacerda (2015)
political CSR	1	Maak, Pless and Voegtlin (2016)
gaps in the literature	1	Lakshman (2009)
external stakeholders	1	Tian, Liu and Fan (2015)
competency model	1	Du Preez and van Zyl (2015)
sustainability	1	Pearce and Stahl (2015)

Source: Own study based on data retrieved from Web of Science Core Collection.

Note: In some cases publications were classified into a few categories at the same time.

In total 15 categories were established in order to map the field of research on relationships between leadership and CSR. However, 6 most numerous categories include in total 32 publications i.e. 86% of the sample. The top 6 classes are labelled as: CSR outcomes, CEOs and decision making, responsible leadership, attitudes towards CSR, ethical culture and ethical climate, and employee issues. The aforementioned categories will be studied more thoroughly in the next section of the paper.

4. Discussion

The most often discussed issues related to the ‘outcomes of CSR’ in the context of leadership style (9 publications). Within this category, the authors of publications tried to find out about moderating effects of ethical leadership on CSR (Zhu, Sun and Leung, 2014), interactions

between leadership style and institutional CSR practice (Du, Swaen, Lindgreen and Sen, 2013), and leadership performance outcomes for CSR (Groves and LaRocca, 2012). They analysed reasons for commitment in policy and practice of CSR (Dashwood and Puplampu, 2010), and relations between explicit/implicit CSR and leadership style (Angus-Leppan, Metcalf and Benn, 2010). Their studies included the review of CSR actions (Suliman and Thomas, 2014), and organisational citizenship behaviours (Torres-Baumgarten and Yucetepe, 2009; Gao and He, 2017). Finally, they investigated how certain characteristics of a chief officer responsible for CSR impact on firm's financial performance (Wiengarten, Lo and Lam, 2017). The second most popular category in the field of relationship between CSR and leadership related to CEOs and decision making. The main problems analysed within this topic were: CEO's role in commitment to CSR (Waldman, Siegel and Javidan, 2006), leadership variables associated with corporate social responsibility values that managers apply to their decision-making (Waldman et al. 2006), and CEO leadership (Maak, Pless and Voegtlin, 2016). Authors discussed relationships between CEO's ethical leadership and CSR (Wu, Kwan, Yim, Chiu and He, 2015), the impact of ethics in CSR on the quality of decision-making processes in organisations (Kirchmayer, Remisova and Lasakova, 2016), and multilevel governance (Ashley, 2012). In 5 publications authors focused on 'responsible leadership'. They analysed connections of responsible leadership and human resources management (Szczepeńska-Woszczyna, 2015), its outcomes for CSR (Lehmann, Toh, Christensen and Ma, 2010; Groves and LaRocca, 2011b) and the contribution of human resources in that style of leading (Gond, Igalens, Swaen and ElAkremi, 2011). Some authors pointed out the need for refining the concept by distinguishing between instrumental and integrative responsible leadership styles (Maak et al., 2016). Another important research topics related to 'ethical culture and ethical climate' in organisations that apply CSR (4 publications). Scholars were mainly interested in such issues as: ethical climate perception and its influence on followers attitudes to CSR (Choi, Ullah and Kwak, 2015; Hansen, Dunford, Alge and Jackson, 2016), relationships between CEO's ethical leadership and CSR (Wu et al., 2015), the impact of business ethics on the quality of leadership and decision-making process (Kirchmayer et al., 2016). In reference to ethics and ethical climate some other authors also analysed the issue of trust (Mostovicz and Kakabadse, 2011; Hansen et al., 2016). The next

category labelled as the ‘attitudes toward CSR’ was examined not only in context of ethical culture but also through the prism of transformational, transactional, gender, bureaucratic, professional and advocacy leadership (London, 2008; Groves and LaRocca, 2011a; Guillet, Yaman and Kucukusta, 2012; Rademacher and Remus, 2014; Alonso-Almeida, Perramon and Bagur-Femenias, 2017). 3 papers referred to the category ‘employees’ issue’, as they put human resources in the centre of interest. Research problems discussed within this area focused on impact of CSR initiatives on employees and contribution of employees to responsible leadership (Gond et al., 2011; Vlachos, Panagopoulos and Rapp 2013; Akdogan, Arslan and Demirtas, 2016).

Trying to find an answer for the question “What are the main research approaches and methods applied to study relationships between leadership and CSR?” the analysis of some chosen aspects of methodology applied in research was conducted. First of all, it is worth noticing that most of publications based on empirical approaches and there were only 3 theoretical papers in the sample. In 21 cases authors used both qualitative and quantitative approach, and in 13 cases scholars applied only qualitative research. Usually data were collected through: surveys (20 publications), secondary data analysis (7 publications) and interviews (4). Five publications presented case studies. Research was conducted within different types (both for-profit and non-profit) and size (large, medium, small and micro enterprises) of organisations. Also different sectors were covered (for example: aerospace, consulting, education services, government service, hotel service, tourism firms, banking service but also mining companies). Summing up, most of publications were practical what was proved by the type of research done for the purpose of projects. Moreover, relationships between CSR and leadership were analysed within various types of organisations.

Analysing the context of research projects under the study, it could be observed that the great amount of them were placed in Asia, mostly in China but also in India, South Korea, and United Arab Emirates. The second most popular place of research was Europe (Portugal, Poland, Slovakia, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Turkey, France, Denmark, Spain). In eight cases, the problems were examined in North America (both U.S. and Canada). Some other articles focused on CSR and leadership in Australia, South Africa and Latin America. It could be summarized that the discussed field of study is perceived as interesting and important in the whole world.

While investigating the approaches of leadership discussed in publications it can be observed that the most popular ones are transformational and ethical leadership. Nevertheless, some authors discuss also transactional style, visionary/charismatic, knowledge, professional, bureaucratic, advocacy and so called mixed leadership. In two cases the issue of gender and its influence on leadership styles is presented.

5. Conclusions

As a result of the systematic literature review recommendations for further studies related to relationships between the concepts of leadership and corporate social responsibility can be identified. First of all, there is a need to clarify how CSR is conceptualized across countries, as one can observe some differentiation in this field. Secondly, a necessity for a review of definitions of leadership styles arises. As it was observed authors of analysed publications present both common definitions of leadership styles as well as their own ideas. So, that there is a space for theoretical discourse on similarities and differences in definitions used in the field of CSR and leadership.

Moreover, referring to the most commonly used transformational and ethical leadership approaches discussed in publications, there is little interest in human resource management and organisational culture. Only three publications deal with employee issues (Gond et al., 2011; Vlachos et al., 2013; Akdogan et al., 2016), and four publications emphasize ethical culture and ethical climate (Choi et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2016; Kirchmayer et al., 2016). At the same time it must be remembered that human capital management and formation of positive organisational culture are important in the context of the CSR concept. Leadership style influences employee engagement in CSR activity by referring to morality and ethical values. That is why there is a need for research that aims at investigating relationships between outcomes of CSR and different leadership styles that influence human resources management practices as well as organisational culture.

Another suggestion refers to the context of conducted research. Although the projects under the study have been conducted in different countries it could be said that most of them took place in China and the U.S. For this reason it is recommended to extend research on CSR and leadership to other countries. A recommended idea is to replicate

an international project similar to the one presented by Waldman et al. (2006) which aims at identifying cultural differences in leadership styles and their impact on CSR outcomes.

Finally, it should be noticed that, although in many publications authors analyse the impact of CSR on firm's performance, too little attention is paid to relations between leadership styles in CSR and financial performance of organisations.

Summing up, the authors of the paper are aware that not all publications in field of CSR and leadership were analysed in this article and that is why given recommendations should be treated only as a voice in a broader discussion.

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