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Being a woman leader: Informal personal networks and leadership identity construction in A Confucian culture

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ABSTRACT--- *Nowadays, the perception on leadership has been different from traditional ones that used to align to agentic characteristics. However, for the top of mind, people normally think about masculine characteristics when referring to leadership concept. It could be so disadvantageous for women leaders that they can be trapped in the line between two perspectives: one for their nature characteristics, one for their changes to be suitable for stereotypical definitions of leadership characteristics. However, with both, they still face to "labyrinth" metaphor during their leadership journeys. The solution of using informal personal networks to construct women's leadership identity has called much attention of scholars working in women leadership and leadership identity construction with the aim to find effective ways to enhance women's advancement. The new perception on leadership identity as value creation and the reciprocal relationship between informal personal networks and leadership identity construction have been contended as emerging solutions for women leadership.*

Keywords--- *women leadership, leadership identity construction, informal networks, value*

I. INTRODUCTION

In many years, obstacles for women's career development always claim for gender stereotypes in almost societies (Glick et al., 1995, Heilman, 2001, Rudman and Glick, 2001, Heilman, 2012, Mihalčová et al., 2015), which has created an image of lower competency, more aligned to family responsibilities than that of men. In addition, those challenges do not only appear in the top positions (Powell and Butterfield, 1994, Maume Jr, 1999, Cotter et al., 2001, Ryan and Haslam, 2005), but also occur during women's leadership journeys (Williams, 1992, Bruckmüller et al., 2014, Eagly et al., 2007, Carli and Eagly, 2016).

Fortunately, thanks to the situation of changing business contexts (Teece, 1992, Dalakoura, 2010), fashionable leadership conceptualization (Conger, 1993, Cacioppe, 1998), and requirements of diversity in top management boards (Morrison, 1992, Eagly and Chin, 2010, Kalaitzi et al., 2017), women have enjoyed more benefits in their development. Accordingly, many scholars argue that some barriers do not come from societal norms, but it's women who cannot take use of new opportunities. Some women refuse to get promoted due to their internalized impediments (Nguyen, 2013, Singh and SDurgaPrasad, 2014, Cubillo and Brown, 2003, Rudman and Heppen, 2003), such as lack of intrinsic motivation owing to prosperous family, romantic husbands who can take care of women's whole life. As a result, some women trap in the situation of lacking efforts for development and claiming for external reasons. Hence, in a modern world, constructing women leadership development depends much on

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their own intrinsic motivation. The process to develop their identities, confirm their contributions, and gain others' acceptance requires much time and effort, and it has no starting or ending points, rather than a continuous process (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Indeed, it's an interaction process between leaders and followers in a long-term period with a relationship development.

As discussed in many studies, while women usually address known challenges in formal structure, such as hierarchical organizations, a raising question is whether informal structure contributes or challenges this identity construction process of women. Informal structure can be known as social networks or social capital (Albrecht, 1983, Krackhardt and Hanson, 1993, White et al., 2016, Ibarra, 1993). In the scope of this paper, I focus on the concept of informal structure as informal personal networks. Accordingly, informal personal networks can be defined by each individual about which network is personal or organizational, and also about topics related to work, social, or both.

Both informal personal networks and leadership identity construction are about relationship development (Ibarra, 1993, DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Then, the main consideration is what's the relationship between informal personal networks and leadership identity construction; and, if informal personal networks is considered as a factor of informal structure, how informal personal networks will contribute to leadership identity construction process. The author of this model, DeRue and Ashford (2010), has researched in formal structures, and they've also called further research on the investigation of how informal structure contributes to women leadership identity construction. From this motivation, this paper potentially contributes three following discussions. First, there is a reciprocal interaction between informal personal networks and women leadership identity construction. Second, an emerging concept on leadership identity is raised to define which image can be attached to a person as a leader. Last, new conception on informal personal networks can be launched thanks to development of digital ages.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Women in Confucian culture and Gender issues in their career development

Many researches have contended that patriarchal values and gender stereotypes are sources of gender inequality that has existed in many years in almost societies. The word "patriarchy" means literally, "rule of the father" (Walby, 1990, Lerner, 1986). In societal analysis level, patriarchy illustrates a social system, in which men control and dominate the economy, occupy most of high positions of power and status. Besides, in that kind of system, women are denied to access the power, influence, and other resources for development such as religion, education, and media. Moreover, in family analysis levels, the control power is also hold by men, in which lineage is traced through males, inheritance is passed from father to sons, and family members are dependent on the male head of household. Main responsibilities of women are to breastfeed their children and get house works done.

This perception extremely used to dominate Confucian societies like Vietnam for a long time, which has remain its remnants in some aspects of modern society in not only Vietnam, but also other post-Confucian countries. Confucianism is a philosophy of human nature that considers proper human relationship as the foundation of society. Confucianism drove females with three main obligations, including "Three principles", "Three obediences", and "Four Virtues" (Li, 2000). First, "Three principles" regulated the relationship between King – Functionary, Father – Son, Husband – Wife. Initially, these relations were bilateral. But later, when Chinese

Feudalism developed strongly, those relation became one-way. In which, King – Father – Husband dominated Functionary – Son – Wife who needed to follow their instructions without any resistance. Second, "Three Obediences" required females to obey all arrangements by their parents (when teenaged), husbands (when married), and the eldest son (when their husbands died). Third, "Four Virtues" namely fidelity, fine appearance, appropriate speech and good skills in chores. In other words, main responsibilities of women are learning a proper manner, managing house chores, staying up late and getting up early to get domestic jobs done, serving husband and in-law family, teaching children, and pleasing husbands' visitors. Apart from three above perceptions, there were some other opinions, such as considering sons as own children, daughters as other's ones. Or, only one son could make meanings, ten daughters mean nothing. During Confucianism, females were mainly in charge of house works, males were responsible for exterior activities. Accordingly, females almost did not join any social activities, have no employment and depend on their husbands and in-law family. In addition, females were not allowed to inherit any properties from their family and had no names in their family trees (Huong, 2008). Obviously, those principles did not concern individual differences among females, they forced all females in the same format that constrained female development totally.

As a result of Confucian norms, women are perceived as less competent for positions of power and status than men, more emotional in relationship development, and more aligned to house works than men, which is so disadvantageous for leadership requirements. In addition, with a perception and norms rooted by Confucian values, women not only have to deal with barriers when being at top management positions as per to such glass metaphors as glass ceiling (Powell and Butterfield, 1994), glass cliff (Ryan and Haslam, 2005), tokenism (Zimmer, 1988)and the like, but also a myriad of challenges during the daily interaction process with their stakeholders to construct their leadership identities (Eagly et al., 2007, Carli and Eagly, 2016). This issue is partly conceptualized by the term "labyrinth" with various visible and invisible obstacles contended. However, the question of how to address those drawbacks for their career development still calls further researches

Leadership identity construction

Identity involves the meaning attached to the self (Callero, 2003, Stets and Burke, 2003). Hogg et al. (1995) contend that "identity is the pivotal concept linking social structure with individual action; thus the prediction of behavior requires an analysis of the relationship between self and social structure". Hence, any particular identity can be conceptualized in three levels of analysis: individual, relational, and collective. Regarding to leadership definition, beyond the concepts of leadership focusing on trait, behavioral, and situational approaches (Meindl, 1993, Yukl, 1998, Bass and Avolio, 1993), current researches more focus on the structure of interpersonal relationships: a social network theory of leadership (Brass and Krackhardt, 1999, Brass, 2001, Mehra et al., 2001, Mehra et al., 2003, Brass et al., 2004). Hesselbein and Goldsmith (2006) also more emphasized that one of the conditions for being a leader is to receive acceptance from his/her collaborators. By accepting that perspective, the current literature on leadership has more stressed on the relationship between leaders and their followers, rather than exclusively focusing on the qualities of leaders. In the same vein, Yukl and Becker (2006) illustrate that "leadership is commonly understood as the use of influence to encourage participation in achieving set goals". Besides, Antonakis et al. (2004) argue that the leadership process requires the leader's personality and behaviors

and the follower's perception of the leader, which involves in an interaction taking place in a specific context. This approach is named as "relational leadership" or considered as a relationship of influence.

Consequently, when identity can be evolved in three levels of analysis (Hogg et al., 1995), and leadership involves multiple individuals participated in a process of interpersonal interaction and mutual influence (Hollander, 1978), it is important to integrate three levels to have a comprehensive overview on the process of constructing a leadership identity. Therefore, according to DeRue and Ashford (2010), a leadership identity construction process comprises three elements: individual internalization, relational recognition, and collective endorsement. First, individual internalization is a stage where individual come to incorporate the identity of leader or follower as part of their self-concept (DeRue et al., 2009, Gecas, 1982). Second, relational identity processes suggest that the leadership identity will be confirmed by being relationally recognized through the adoption of reciprocal role identities as leader or follower. Last, collective endorsement is about being seen within the broader social environment as part of a particular social group (DeRue and Ashford, 2010).

In this model, the authors focus on the interaction process including claiming and granting activities, in which leaders/followers try to contend and be perceived as per to their desired identities. The process experience a positive facilitation in a formal structure, like hierarchical organizational structure, because a person in leadership position easily claim and is granted as a leader, which can similarly occur to followers. However, the differences on this process happening in informal structure has not been explored yet. Especially, when scholars desire to investigate main differences in women leadership identity construction process under the impacts of gender stereotypes and visible as well as invisible obstacles for women's leadership development. That's also the gap in the model of leadership identity construction proposed by DeRue and Ashford (2010), which will be discussed in this paper.

Informal personal networks

The term "networks" can be interpreted as "relationships between individuals, groups, or organizations, as well as between collectives of organizations" (Tichy, 1981, Granovetter, 1985). The relationships evolving between actors in the network can be categorized according to contents (for example: products or services, information, emotions), form (such as relationship's duration and closeness) and intensity (such as the frequency of communication). The form and intensity of the relationships establishes the network structure (Burt, 1978). Apart from the contribution of formalized networks, the literature illustrates the significance of informal networks in decision-making processes in organizations (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004), and in the workflow of information-processing (Walker, 1985). Fortunately, thanks to the changing business context, the boundary between formal and informal network is increasingly blurred (Tichy, 1981, Kotter, 1982). Networking is "the actual behavior of people developing, entering, maintaining, altering and leaving social networks" (Benschop, 2009) and more specifically, interaction between individuals with attempts to develop and maintain relationships with those potentially assist them in their work or career can be beneficial for their career progression (Broadbridge et al., 2006). Networking is also a mechanism for social exchange (Blau, 1964) where reciprocity and trust are built around informal relationships and social obligations to exchange favors. Brass et al. (2004) define networking as "a set of nodes and the set of ties representing some relationship, or lack of relationship, between the nodes", and suggest that internal network ties have a positive and significant impact on unit and organizational performance outcomes. Furthermore, successful networking has been justified to positively influence career outcomes such as

increased job opportunities, job performance, income, promotions and career satisfaction, providing access to information, gaining visibility, career advice, social support, business leads, resources, collaboration, strategy making, and professional support (Burt, 1982, Brass, 1985, Hays and Oxley, 1986, Brass et al., 2004, Gayle Baugh et al., 2005).

By and large, positive networks can improve social capital of managers and facilitate the transfer from their human capital to career advancement and success. With such an increasing importance, networks have steadily become a sufficient methods for leadership development, especially informal networks. Informal networks involve more discretionary patterns of interaction, where the content of relationships may be work related, social, or a combination of both. The importance of informal networks has been justified in many researches. In specific, informal networks facilitate the execution of task related organizational objectives and social/personal objectives of participants. Furthermore, the emergent network can create both instrumental and psychosocial support for network's participants in their leadership development (Ibarra, 1992, Ibarra, 1993, Ibarra and Hunter, 2007).

Unfortunately, similar to troubles of career development in formal organization, women also are hampered in informal networks. Some studies have argued that women are excluded from informal networks due to gendered career development and organizations. Moreover, they are limited to access to informal information which is considered as an important factors for organizations' decision making and information processing procedure. Some researches claimed that men don't like to communicate to women with aims of avoiding the image of sexual harassment or due to gender stereotypes in which men don't want to interact to women who are considered to be in lower levels of knowledge and development. By contrast, some researches showed that women exclude themselves from informal networks because they lack self-confidence and feel isolated. Whatever reasons are, it could be a reality that women have experienced a plenty of obstacles to access to informal networks.

After all, a raising question is why women cannot take use of informal networks, even though many researches argue its importance for leadership development. The main reason is either women cannot not take those opportunities or women try with inadequate approaches. Then, what's the direction for women leadership identity construction by using informal personal networks. This consideration will be explored in this research.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The research is based on 29 semi-structured interviews with female managers, located in the South and the North of Vietnam. The age range for respondents was 35 to 60 with a median age of 40. One women are from Advertising and Promoting industry, two for Consulting, three from Distribution, nine from Education, one from Financing and Banking, one from FMCG, one from Hospitality, four from Information and Technology, five from Manufacturing, one from Real Estate, and one from Social Enterprise.

Methods

Almost interviews were conducted in cafeteria, and only two in their private family. The length of time for all interviews from 60 minutes to 2 hours, and the average duration is one hour and 30 minutes. All women were ready to show their names and their experiences in my research. Interviews were tape-recorded to allow uninterrupted data gathering and to facilitate accurate information. A semi-structured interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions. The first part of interview with open-ended questions was to investigate their leadership

perception and experience, let them talk about their career advancement, leadership situation and how they manage in those circumstances. In addition, some questions were to investigate their most interested memories in leadership that would check their perception on leadership identity construction. The later part focused on the way they develop their networks and more emphasized informal personal networks. Questions in this part also let them expose their understanding on informal personal networks and its value to their career advancement. Probing questions were used during the interview to encourage participants to share their opinions more sufficiently and clarify their perception.

The data were subjected to thematic analysis, each set of questions being grouped under one of four themes – leadership, leadership identity construction, informal personal network, and informal personal networking. All transcribed material was coded to identify themes, patterns, and concepts related to women's leadership identity construction and how they used informal personal networks for the process. Open coding was used to explore various factors and avoid the limitation based on previous researches.

IV. FINDINGS

Leadership identity as value creation

As discussed in previous sections, any particular identity can be conceptualized in three levels of construal: individual, relational, and collective. Because leadership involves multiple individuals engaged in a process of interpersonal and mutual influence that is ultimately embedded within some collective, it is necessary to integrate across these three levels to fully capture the process of constructing a leadership identity (DeRue and Ashford, 2010).

For the first element - individual internalization, some of participants illustrated it as their self-awareness on what initially belongs to them. For the top of mind, many women talk about traditional characteristics of women leaders. P.07 contended that:

"*Appearance, hair styles, neat clothes* which are matching to whom we are going to approach. Your *behaviors* also are relevant to whom we are talking to. You need to show your *knowledge* on the topic your counterparts are discussing, as well as you need to show your own *relevant opinions* on that topic, which shows that you are *competen*t enough to talk to them. Your clothes also creates your *styles and aptitude* as well as your *characteristics*"

P.23 openly shared that:

"I really like women who are *high-competency* and so *beautiful*, especially they know how to take care of their body to *avoid aging*. It's like French women who know the importance of *elegancy* and they know how to be elegant, which is very different from the style of American women. The first foremost requirement for my employees is to be *beautiful and neat*"

She also took the examples of Miss World, she said that:

"Miss World needs to have a big contribution to their society in their previous life and they can enjoy their beautiful appearance in this life. That's why they can have a big influence in the community of beauty"

Apart from factors initially belonging to leaders, relational identity processes suggest that the leadership identity will be confirmed by being relationally recognized through the adoption of reciprocal role identities as leader.

Accordingly, participants illustrated the importance of social skills in order to confirm their leadership identity.

P.07 focused on the importance of communication skills:

"Communication skill is *the way to show your competencies in a sustainable manner*. You need to show your effective communication skills, what, when, and how to talk, you also change your tone during your conversation, which illustrate your power. *The way you communicate shows your knowledge, your IQ, EQ, and your adaptation*"

P.19 also concentrated on the significance of focus, empathy in the communication:

"It's very important when you *focused on your counterparts' stories,* you show *your sensitivity and elegancy* during the conversation, rather than you focused on your own self or being disturbed by mobile devices."

Last and not least, after all, collective endorsement which is about being seen within the broader social environment as part of a particular social group is also the step to expand leadership identities to followers' accepted perception.

P.20 shared that:

"Employees in CMC usually *call me "The Dean"* because I was the first person to successfully set up the Centre of Training and Learning for CMC employees. Before I took over this assignment, the Centre was officially decided for establishment, but no one built, run or concerned until I was appointed. *From the time Training Centre set up, employees have enjoyed many useful training courses, joined internationally standard training programs, and they are so happy.* So I think if you want to confirm your position, you need to create values and contributions for your community."

P.07 argued that:

"Up to now, I have entered the academic community and I want to build up relationships to let other people know that I'm a member of that community. Accordingly, I coordinate lecturers, scholars, researchers, CFVG's PhD. *I start to join international* research *conference, forum IAE University in France, not only with the name of Phuong, but also with the name of co-researcher to participate in some studies.* Hence, I can confirm my contribution and identity in that academic community with the position of an official researcher, not Phuong personally"

P.23 explained why she had a farming business:

"I initially am the person who care beauty, safety, and neat a lot, so I cannot bare any more when I see my family members as well as other people in my Vietnam eat dirty vegetables, fruits, meats. Coming from that motivation, I decided to set up a company to produce clean agricultural products for my community. And up to now, *PAN is only one company in farming value chain* production"

In sum, participants argued leadership identity is factors partly owned by themselves, and partly created by interaction with others. Especially, some participants consider their leadership identity only being created by bringing about values to others in their community.

Online network, which is considered as informal personal networks, is a room for leadership identity construction

The importance of online social networks was discussed during interviews in my research. Almost participants also confirmed its contribution to leadership identity construction process. In the past, in order to remain relationship, people need to keep in contacts, and have frequent visiting together. Currently, by contrast, online networks can be used to keep contacts, update each other's situations effectively. In addition, online networks can be places for them to build up their leadership identity and to show their values via posts or status.

P.13 shared that:

"For example of reading books, I cannot require my subordinates to read book daily, but I always post book covers and have a short review of books I've read to *my facebook*. Steadily, I can be k*nown as the person of reading* books. When some people meet me, they ask "how many books did you read in this month?", and somebody asked me in details of how to read book, books' keynotes, which means that I've gained leadership identity successfully. I think I am the model in reading book for some people in my company"

She also emphasized that:

"Up to now, for everything my department finished, such as hosting a Japanese delegation, organizing some events for FU's students and the like, *I myself, and I also asked my subordinates, posted on Facebook and internal media channels* in my university to let other people know what we were doing."

She also let me know that she was finding other useful channels like *Youtube, Linkedin to improve her identity*

P.03 said that:

"Normally, I post traveling information on *Facebook*, where I want to be recognized as happy, enjoyful, free person by pictures of places I went to. So, if others want to go there, they usually chat to me to ask for experience. By contrast, on *Linkedin*, I build up more formal images, I normally post information related to my business. And you know, *by Linkedin, an Australian company's representative contacted me to find investment opportunities in Vietnam*, and now he is my business partner, we are going to launch the project in this September.

P.10 shared her experienced that:

Recently, I've conducted many livestream videos on my *Facebook*. I make a livestream to share others how to improve their voice, steadily in every week, I can create a habit for audiences to join my livestream so that *if I don't, others call me to check reasons why I am off today*. I think it's very important to be honest, to say what you have, you desire to do for others, and justify the values you can bring for other people. You know, for example the channel of Mrs. Tan Vlog with her sayings "Super big giants" which has become marketing slogans for many service companies in Vietnam such as HCmart, SnB and the like. So, *using online networks need to bring about benefits for audiences, be congruent to what you have*; otherwise, people sooner or later can loose their trust on you.

In general, differently from traditional methods to remain relationship as well as to join formal structure like organizational hierarchy to construct leadership identity, women nowadays take use of online networks to enhance their leadership. Their leadership identity built in online networks sharpens their values which can be possibly brought to their counterparts. This interaction among online networks, leadership identity, and shown value exchange can be explained more via theory of social exchange (Blau, 1968, Emerson, 1976), value of reciprocity (Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000, Falk and Fischbacher, 2006, Molm et al., 2007), and of online social networks (Murray and Waller, 2007)

Leadership identity construction contributes to develop informal personal networks

P.20 showed that:

I've built up my identity as a person with consistency in work and personal life. So when I comment to any other people, they would think that I'm honest person in sharing personal issues as well as coaching works for them; and that I'm a frank person, I make comments to improve each other, rather than trying to prove I'm right in that conflict. Many of my ex employees still call me to ask for advice in caring babies, career orientation, and dealing with husbands.

She also shared some methods she did to create environment for the development of informal personal

networks:

In my opinions, I can not be as proficient in specific works as my subordinates (...). So, I need to create open working environment for sharing knowledge. I myself always to create chances for others to show their values. E.g: my new employee, a fresher, she may not have any values for my job consulting, but I'll ask her advice on lipstick color, hair colors. Her suggestions may not be applied much but steadily she would find that I'm open for sharing, not only in work but also in private life.

P.14 confidently talked about the relation between her identities and her informal personal networks:

I'm a disciplined person, I always apply regulations to deal with employee relations. I also *differentiate my works and my relations,* I have *good relationships* with you, but you made a mistake on counting teaching hours for a new lecturer who had not signed contracts before taking the class, *I still punished you* and required you to pay money by yourself. But *you don't hate me,* because you understand my behavioral styles in working and relationships.

Overall, in case of successfully facilitating their leadership identity construction, women can behave in some manners, which normally experience risks to disturb the relationships, but thanks to leadership identities constructed, they don't be scared of breaking informal personal networks. Instead, they can enhance the relationship because women and their counterparts more understand, more sympathize, and more easily accept their extraordinary behaviors. Hence, the process of leadership identity construction is to enhance informal personal networks in term of strength ties and expressiveness of relationships.

As mentioned above, informal personal networks help women have opportunities to bring about values for their counterparts, because in that case, two parties have a deep understanding, don't dare facing to unfair play. As a result, they come out without any fears toward each other. In turn, women can have good chances to receive others' values as a repayment in kind. Thus, informal personal networks with strong ties and expressive relationships can more improve women leadership identity.

V. DISCUSSION

The topic of gender and leadership has called many scholars but would never be a saturating topic, because gender issues can be impacted by contexts and cultures and can not be generalized for a world wide. It's also true for my research when I conducted my investigation in Vietnam, a (post) Confucian culture, there are still many values and norms of this culture affecting women behaviors in their leadership identity construction by using informal personal networks.

Almost female participants in my study talk about constructing their leadership identity, they stress the importance of values brought to their networks. They also emphasize that it's not enough if they have values, but these values should be valueable and beneficial for others. This perception can be results of Confucian values influencing women behaviors. For a long time in a Confucian culture, women were binded to a myriad of responsibilities with their fathers, husbands, and sons. Their main roles were to care their family's interior, which can help their husbands develop careers and do well with the role of bread making. Confucians argued that the family was a microcosm of the state, and just as the state was ruled by a male emperor with the mandate of Heaven, the father possessed a natural authority that legitimized the social superiority of men in any social context. The right place for women was in their home, where they were largely responsible for the upbringing and education of children. Confucian culture advocated the "Three Bonds," which asserts the ruler's authority over the minister, the

father over the son, and the husband over the wife. Moreover, women in these countries had been controlled in four virtues namely fidelity, fine appearance, appropriate speech and good skills in chores. Accordingly, women in Confucian cultures need to learn a proper manner, manage house chores, stay up late and get up early to finish domestic jobs in time, serve husband and in-law family, teach children, and please visitors. Hence, women in Confucian culture were trained with norms to take care of others and bring about benefits to others, rather than take care of themselves or concern their own career development. As a result, women in my research focus on leader identity as value creation to their counterparts in a community.

A forbidden activity for women in Confucian culture is to show off or be too close others, even men or women. Otherwise, women can be regarded as lacking respectability and decorousness, which is looked down on much in that kind of society. Moreover, women doing business or women entrepreneurs must expand their relationships and enlarge their brand name and identity; however, they face to many troubles by using traditional offline relationship development due to constraints in cultural norms. For example, if women were to wine and dine their prospective business partners, they would lose rather than gain "prestige". By and large, beyond impediments to build up informal relationship like white women in Western countries such as time allocation for family and work, for kin and non-kin, and the like, women in Eastern countries with a Confucian culture have to experience obstacles of losing reputation when violating conventional ideologies of Confucian culture such as four virtues specified for Confucian women's responsibilities.

Thanks to the development of digital ages, women can find another ways to build up their identity. Nowadays, people can easily connect together via social online networks. Social networking websites are virtual communities which allow people to connect and interact with each other on a particular subject or to just talk together online (Murray and Waller, 2007). Indeed, online social networks are special form of virtual community that provides an online social space for individuals to communicate and interact. Similar to new trends of using online social networks all over the world nowadays, women managers in my research take use of online networks as informal personal networks to construct their leadership identity. For interesting activities, they can have a post on their personal online networks to show their values and current situation, which are potentially exchanged values to their network members. Females in top management positions in my research also consider this channel as advantageous to sharpen their identities in the context of Confucian culture.

With main contributions to theory of leadership identity construction by investigating how informal structure facilitate the process, my research still has some limitation. First, my research conducted in Vietnam only, not any other countries impacted by Confucian culture. Although Vietnam is not the home country of Confucian philosophy, Vietnam was dominated in over 1.000 years by China, the source of Confucian culture. Thus, in the mindset of Vietnamese people, Vietnam has followed the perspective of Confucian, especially norms to make women to abide with interior responsibilities. However, it's not enough for an academic research with the generalization requirements. Second, owing to the context of a socialist country, corporates in private and state-owned sectors could experience differences of women leadership and relationship development. However, my research focused much on women working in private sectors; hence, the differences of state-owned organizations have not been reflected in this paper

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have discussed some issues related to gender and women leadership in a Confucian culture. I have reviewed arguments made by DeRue and Ashford (2010), who claimed that there is a relationship between formal structure and leadership identity construction, but did not investigate the interaction between informal structure and leadership identity construction with taking gender into account of this process. I have argued that there is not only a contribution of informal personal networks to women leadership identity construction, but also a reciprocal interaction between the two. In addition, online networks considered as informal personal networks have become efficient channels for women to show their exchangeable values, which is compatible with Confucian ethics for women. However, my paper also has some limitations, in which I cannot cover other countries impacted by Confucian values, as well as I did not stress differences between private and state-owned organizations. However, if my arguments above are sound, some avenues along with future research on these topic should be reconsidered.

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