Emergent Leadership Paradigms
For Corporate Sustainability:
A Proposed Model

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ABSTRACT

Leadership studies evolve as organisational contexts change. Under stable environments, the traditional leadership paradigms might have survived. With increases in complexity and dynamic business environment, the proliferation of traditional leadership paradigms (i.e. Classical and Transactional leadership) has been challenged. In the literature, organisations adopting emergent leadership paradigms (i.e. Visionary and Organic leadership) tend to be higher performing and capable of more effectively responding to environmental change than organisations adopting the traditional leadership paradigms. However, few published studies have specifically investigated the predicted relationship between Visionary and Organic leadership paradigms and corporate sustainability. More study of the role of mediating effects, particularly the roles played by in leadership-performance and corporate sustainability will be investigated. In this paper, the literature on leadership paradigms, organisational performance and corporate sustainability, and key mediating variables, particularly shared vision and values, self-leadership, an organisational team orientation and consensual decision-making, affecting their relationships is reviewed. Then a structural model is developed. Propositions and future direction are also discussed.

Keywords: Leadership Paradigms; Complex Organizations; Shared Leadership; Organisational Performance; Corporate Sustainability

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP PARADIGM AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

*I*n recent decades, Visionary leadership has been viewed as an emergent leadership paradigm and its popularity has grown among leadership scholars (e.g. Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Collins & Porras, 1994; Kotter, 1996; Nanus, 1992). Shifting from traditional leadership paradigms, the Visionary paradigm, also known as "charismatic," "transformational," or "inspirational" leadership, has incorporated an emotional dimension to the organisational literature (Bass, 1985, 1990; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977). According to Bass (1990), transformational leaders elevate the interests of their employees to accept purpose and mission of the group while motivating them to look beyond their own self-interest to reach the group's goal. In the literature, Visionary paradigm has transformed the needs, values, preferences and aspirations of everyone in organisations from self-interest to collective and shared interests through sharing of vision and values, collaborative decision-making and empowerment (Avery, 2004). Followers of Visionary leadership are empowered and work autonomously towards a shared vision; their commitment derives from the leaders' charisma and/or the shared vision (Jing & Avery, 2008). In the literature, Visionary leadership can enhance corporate sustainability and sustainable performance in organisations (e.g. Avery, 2004; Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010, 2011; Collins & Porras, 1994; Kantabutra, 2006).

Empirically, Visionary leadership is positively linked to follower motivations, organisational commitment and performance (Bass, 1985; Bycio, Hackett & Allen, 1995). A longitudinal study also reveals that Visionary CEO leaders are associated with higher financial performance under uncertainty conditions (Waldman, Ramirez, House & Puranam, 2001). Visionary leadership has been consistently reported to have a positive relationship with employee perceptions of leadership effectiveness, organisational effectiveness or employee satisfaction (Hater & Bass, 1988).

Visionary leadership is also linked with team performance (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007). Based on the literature, it is anticipated that organisations adopting Visionary leadership paradigm tend to be higher performing and capable of more effectively responding to environmental change than organisations adopting other traditional leadership paradigms. In the paper, organisations adopting Visionary leadership are hypothesised to have positive relationship with corporate sustainability performance.

ORGANIC LEADERSHIP PARADIGM AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

After the turn of the 21st century, emergent leadership concepts and theories are gearing toward Organic leadership, the emergence of which has been rapid. Based on a review of 353 articles in *The Leadership Quarterly*'s second decade of 2000-2009 (Gardner, Lowe, Moss, Mahoney & Cogliser, 2010), several leadership theories and concepts emerge to support the significant movement toward the new direction of leadership studies. Distributed leadership (Brown & Gioia, 2002; Chambers, Drydales & Hughes, 2010; Gronn, 2002; Mehra, Smith, Dixon & Robertons, 2006), shared leadership (Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce, Conger & Locke, 2008) ; team leadership (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas & Halpin, 2006; Day, Gronn & Salas, 2006; Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010; Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2001), collective leadership (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007; Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark & Mumford, 2009; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007), empowering leadership (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow, 2000; Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2010) and leaderful practice (Raelin, 2003, 2005) are emergent leadership concepts that underlie Avery's (2004) term of Organic leadership. In the literature, these terms are used interchangeably since their focuses are common, with some varying degrees. They share similar concepts and characteristics that move away from leader-centric, less command and control from the top, but rather focusing on shared or collective team works of multiple members of organisation to achieve common goals. While Visionary or transformational leadership is often associated with a particular leader, Organic leadership centers on a vision instilled in an organisation's culture (Avery, 2004; Raelin 2003). Organic organisations have no formal leaders and on held together by a shared vision, values and a supporting culture (Jing & Avery, 2008). The new trend in leadership has transpired to support mutual decision-making within the group where leaders may emerge rather than be appointed to positions of power (Avery, 2004). Visionary leadership relies on its members' self-leadership or self-management to solve problems with autonomy whilst allowing them to participate in mutual decision-making in the interests of the organisation (Jing & Avery, 2008). The leadership of teams or networks has become essential as organisations move toward sustainability throughout the 21st and beyond (Manz, Pearce & Sims, 2009). Researchers (e.g. Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010; Manz *et al.*, 2009) support the notion that organisations employing Organic leadership drive and underpin organisational growth and corporate sustainability.

Empirical research demonstrates that Organic leadership is related to organisational performance. According to Jing's (2009) findings, Organic leadership paradigm has a more significant positive association with organisational performance than the other paradigms, but it is close to Visionary's performance. Proponents of Organic leadership paradigm reveal that it is strongly associated with team and organisational effectiveness (e.g. Burke *et al.*, 2006; Ensley *et al.*, 2006; Friedrich *et al.*, 2009; Manz *et al.*, 2009; Mehra *et al.*, 2006; Morgeson *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, it is related to employee performance and satisfaction (Arnold *et al.*, 2000; Vecchio *et al.*, 2010), job performance (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) and organisational performance outcomes (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Ensley *et al.*, 2006; Morgeson *et al.*, 2010; Vecchio *et al.*, 2010). Researchers (e.g. Raelin 2003, 2005; Jing & Avery, 2008) also identify that the Organic leadership paradigm would have a more significant, positive association with organisational performance than the other paradigms. Advocated by the literature, organisations adopting Organic leadership tend to be higher performing and capable of more effectively responding to environmental change than organisations adopting other traditional leadership paradigms. In this paper, it is expected that adopting Organic leadership positively predicts enhanced corporate sustainability performance.

SHARED VISION AND VALUES

In the literature, shared vision and values is an important factor for corporate sustainability. It is also core to the Visionary and Organic leadership paradigm and a foundation element of the Honeybee practices. Literature advocates that shared vision and values permeate the entire culture and at multiple levels in Visionary-led and Organic-led organisations and that both shared, visions and shared values fasten organisations together (Avery,

2004, 2005; Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010; Pearce *et al.*, 2008). New generation of organisations built around alliances and networks require strategic visions shaped and shared by multiple parties (Pearce *et al.*, 2008). Vision extends beyond a hierarchical leader's vision to the context of the collective mental model of the group's desire of the future state (Avery, 2004). Besides shared vision, shared values are viewed as a solution to the problem of creating and managing complex organisations (Barnard, 1939). They are the 'soft rules' of an organisation that affect organisational behaviour (Schnebel, 2000). Shared values fortify an organisational culture (Bergsteiner & Avery, 2007) and affect work attitudes and performance through enhancing personal effectiveness, company loyalty, ethical behaviours, hardworking, caring and fostering teamwork (Sarros, Butchatsky, & Santora, 1996). Kantabutra and Avery (2005, 2006) accentuate that a powerful and shared vision provides a sense of organisation's direction whereas strong organisational values are essential since they impart the moral, ethical and normative compass to guide and inspire people on how to achieve vision (Bergsteiner & Avery, 2007). Shared vision and values are also the source of follower commitment (Avery, 2004). According to Avery & Bergsteiner's (2010) Honeybee practices for sustainable enterprises, shared vision and values enable a strong culture in the long run. Advocated by the literature, shared vision and values are imperative for corporate sustainability since they bond all organisational members together.

Empirically, researchers (e.g. Avery & Bersteiner, 2010; Bass, 1985; Baum, Locke & Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kantabutra & Avery, 2005, 2006) demonstrate that a shared vision and values between leader and follower is a key to high performance and that shared and collective vision results in improving team process and performance (Day *et al.*, 2006). Shared vision and values can lead to exceed customer expectations and satisfaction (Avery & Bersteiner, 2010). An effective, impactful good vision shared among emotionally committed followers can create a positive impact on organisational performance (Kantabutra, 2006). Empirical findings also predict that shared vision enhances both customer and staff satisfaction through emotionally committed followers (Kantabutra & Avery, 2005, 2006) and shared values are associated with enhanced organisational performance (Balthazard, Cooke, & Potter, 2006; Yaniv & Farkas, 2005). Unique values shared by organisational members may explain the superior and sustained performance (Hunt, Wood, Chonko, 1989) whilst aligning shared values between staff and organisational values can positively affect customer perceptions of the brand (Yaniv & Farkas, 2005). Advocated by the empirical support, shared vision and values are associated with enhanced corporate sustainability performance. Although the literature suggests that both shared, sustainable visions and shared values fasten the networked organisations of Visionary and Organic leadership together, existing research into the leadership-performance relationship is not well studied since it disregards key mediating variables that could link leadership style to performance. Jing and Avery (2008) suggest that future studies on leadership and performance relationship should adopt vision sharing and values as a mediator. In a previous research, Jing (2009) employed vision sharing as a mediator and found that adopting vision to Classical and Transactional leadership paradigms enhances organisational performance. To further extend our understanding, shared vision and values is proposed to be a mediating variable between the emergent leadership paradigms and corporate sustainability performance in the paper. Thus, shared vision and values is hypothesised to have a mediating effect on the relationship between Visionary and/or Organic leadership paradigm and corporate sustainability performance.

SELF-LEADERSHIP / SELF-MANAGEMENT

In recent decades, self-leadership or self-management has gained much popularity among leadership scholars (e.g. Avery, 2004, 2005; Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Manz 1983, 1990; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz *et al.*, 2009; Pearce & Conger, 2003) since it is viewed as being applicable in today's dynamic organisational environment and grows to be essential for modern organisations. Trends toward highly dispersed organisation, distributed teams and remote, global workers have made it difficult for a single leader to retain control and exercise legitimate power (Avery, 2004; Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). The decentralization of organisational power renders opportunities for organisational members to take greater responsibility for their own job tasks and work behaviors (Shipper & Manz, 1992). Organisations of the twentieth-first century may find an increasing need to depend on individual employee self-leadership or self-management (Manz, 1990; Raelin, 2005). Self-leading or self-managing organisations requires employees to be empowered and to align with an organisation's culture and values; the success of self-leading employees depends on empowerment in which members require very little external leadership in which leaders can help others to lead themselves by acting as teach or coach, not as director like the command-and-control leadership in the traditional paradigms (Avery, 2004). Employee empowerment has become

imperative in coping with current competitive demands in the new era; at the heart of empowerment lies employees' ability to lead themselves (Anderson & Prussia, 1997). According to Avery & Bergsteiner (2010), Honeybee leadership for sustainable enterprises prefers self-managing employees. These employees are empowered and enabled to assess problems, set goals, pursue those goals and reward or sanction themselves for their successes or shortcoming (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). With self-leadership or self-management, these empowered employees can usually perform several tasks without supervision (Howell, Bowen, Dorfman, Kerr & Podsakoff 1990). Supported by the literature, self-leading or self-managing employees are vital for organisational effectiveness and corporate resilience or sustainability.

In empirical research, self-leadership or self-management is linked with performance outcomes. Self-leadership in empowering organisations is considered pivotal to employee's commitment toward performance (Manz, 1990). Empirical researches show that self-leadership is also positively related to performance outcomes, team effectiveness and leads to organisational effectiveness (Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Manz & Neck, 2004; Politis, 2006; Prussia, Anderson & Manz, 1998). A recent research finds that self-leadership can result in positive organisational outcomes (Carson & King, 2005). Moreover, self-leadership in empowering organisation is considered pivotal to employee's commitment toward performance (Manz, 1983, 1990; Prussia *et al.*, 1998). Self-management in organisations can lead to corporate sustainability since it decreases the need for unnecessary supervisors, directly affects enhanced financial performance and long-term shareholder value, and indirectly affects enhanced brand and reputation and customer satisfaction (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). In the literature, self-leadership is also proposed to mediate the relationship between leadership (i.e. transformational) and organisational outcome (Andressen, Konradt & Neck 2012). However, its relationship with leadership-performance and corporate sustainability is still underdeveloped. Self-leadership is thus postulated to have a mediating effect on the link between Visionary and/or Organic leadership and corporate sustainability performance.

ORGANISATIONAL TEAM ORIENTATION

Complexities in business environment and rapid changes in the global market and knowledge era have increasingly led organisations to adopt a team orientation. The use of teams is ubiquitous in contemporary organisations (Gupta, Huang & Niranjan, 2010). Teamwork and collaboration in organisations are crucial for business success and competitive advantages (Power & Waddell, 2004). Teams yield greater flexibility and faster responses to changes than many individuals (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). They allow individuals to work together and integrate their diverse knowledge and skills to deal with strategic and operational challenges confronting their organisations (Gupta *et al.*, 2010). The change in management philosophy has led to a greater reliance on teams to accomplish works and take on managers' responsibilities to encourage self-management, and promote empowerment and autonomy within teams by shifting source of control from leader to team members (Walton & Hackman, 1986). Numerous researchers (e.g. Avery, 2004: Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010; Chambers *et al.*, 2010; Plowman *et al.*, 2007; Power & Waddell 2004) emphasise on the importance of team in organisations, particularly the growing use of self-managing or empowered work teams in response to competitive challenges. A key to sustainable enterprises relies on teamwork with competent staffs who share leadership responsibilities and collaboration (Avery, 2004). Team orientation can enhance business performance and bring many organisational benefits and resilience (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010, 2011)

Empirical research finds teamwork to be associated with many performance improvements, such as higher financial performance and enhanced productivity (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2006) assert that information exchange, collaboration, and joint-decision making in teams are related to positive organisational performance. Self-managing teams contributes to varied dimensions of performance effectiveness. They have been positively associated with increased quality, productivity, employee quality of work life and decreases in absenteeism and turnover and employee satisfaction (Cohen & Ledford, 1994). Empowered teams evidence in organisational effectiveness (Huang, Iun, Liu & Gong, 2010) and lead to positive organisational performance outcomes, e.g. increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Konczak, Stelly & Trusty 2000; Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Some research evidences that the emergent leadership styles in team-based environment is associated with performance (Friedrich *et al.*, 2009; Gupta *et al.*, 2010; Huang *et al.*, 2010). High performing Fortune 500 companies organizing work in teams also demonstrates that shared, distributed leadership has a profound impact on performance (Morgeson *et al.*, 2010). In general, the literature emphasises on the

importance of team orientation for modern organisations and corporate sustainability. However, integrative study on examinations of the relationship between leadership-performance and corporate sustainability is still scant. In this paper, team orientation is predicted to have a mediating effect on leadership-performance and corporate sustainability.

DEVOLVED AND CONSENSUAL DECISION-MAKING

Devolved and consensual decision-making is essential in leading sustainable enterprises. Today's organisations encourage multi-directional influence and participative decision from diverse organisational members. Several researchers (e.g. Avery, 2004, 2005; Carson *et al.*, 2007; Locke & Latham, 1990; Pearce *et al.*, 2008) support devolved and consensual decision-making in modern organisations where decision-making authority is devolved and shared across members. Consensus and mutual decision-making promotes voluntary and deeper commitment and greater understanding of organisational challenges or goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). In fast-changing, ambiguous and chaotic environment, there is no one right answer, but the entire group with diverse knowledge needs to share information among team members and participate in collective decision-making to effectively respond to dynamic changes in organisations (Avery, 2004, 2005). Research indicates that the leadership styles that involve human interaction and encourage participative decision-making processes (Politis, 2006). Under Visionary and Organic leadership paradigm where power tends to be dispersed throughout the organisations, devolved and consensual decision-making prevails as employees at all levels are enabled and empowered to exercise judgment on diverse issues and allow decision-making to be made by the employees (Avery, 2004). Honeybee leadership philosophy also encourages devolved and consensual decision-making to enhance the quality and collaborative acceptance of a decision for corporate resilience and sustainability (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). Consequently, decision-making is strongly associated with good financial and operational outcomes such as profits and rapid implementation (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010).

Empirically, devolved and consensual decision-making contributes to better business performance and provides competitive advantages for organisations. Collective decision-making, collaboration, extensive communication, and information-sharing among diverse expertise of team members are necessary to help make sense in various contexts to achieve organisational goals and benefit organisational performance (Chamber *et al.*, 2010; Friedrich *et al.*, 2009). Devolved and consensual decision-making in teams can improve productivity and make the members more proactive (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Moreover, employees' participation in decision-making contributes to performance effectiveness as well as promotes job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Scott-Ladd, Travaglione & Marshall, 2004). Espoused by the literature, organisations with the focus on strong participative, devolved decision-making and empowerment in different levels of organisation enable organisational resilience and sustainability (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010). Yet, its relationship between the emergent leadership paradigms and sustainability performance is not well understood. Therefore, devolved and consensual decision-making is hypothesised to have a mediating effect on leadership-performance and corporate sustainability in this paper.

CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE

Understanding the effects of leadership on performance is also essential to measure organisational success and corporate sustainability. In the literature, research signifies the importance of a study on strategic role of leadership and examination on how to utilise leadership paradigms and employ leadership behavior to improve organisational performance (e.g. Avery, 2004, 2005; Burke *et al*, 2006; Jing & Avery, 2008). In addition to extensive empirical studies on the traditional leadership paradigms, future studies need to advance the study of leadership-performance relationship (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000; Yukl, 1999) and broaden this examination to include other leadership paradigms, such as Visionary and Organic leadership (Jing & Avery, 2008). The understanding of leadership-performance and corporate sustainability remains underdeveloped.

Many scholars regard leadership as the key for organisational sustainability (Doppelt, 2003). Effective leadership is vital for improving management development and sustained competitive advantage for organisational performance (Avolio, 1999; Rowe, 2001). It is one of the key driving forces for improving a firm's performance (Zhu, Chew, & Spangler, 2005). Several studies show that leadership can be linked to organisational performance

(e.g. Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Vecchio *et al.*, 2010) and performance outcomes in various ways, such as innovation and organisational adaptability (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange, 2002; Raelin, 2005), job satisfaction and job performance (Arnold *et al.*, 2000; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999), and team performance (Bass, Jung, Avolio & Berson, 2003; Carson *et al.*, 2007; Ensley *et al.*, 2006). Previous research indicates that leadership paradigms would have effects on customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction and financial performance since positive changes in employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction can lead to positive changes in organisational performance (Jing & Avery, 2008). Jing's (2009) empirical research evidences that the Visionary and Organic leadership are positively associated with organisational performance when compared with the classical and transactional leadership. Although the literature suggests that relationships between leadership and organisational performance exist, relationships between Visionary and Organic leadership in particular and sustainability performance have not yet well studied.

Researchers (e.g. Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010, 2011; Jing, 2009; Jing & Avery, 2008; Kantabutra, 2006) have searched for key performance measures of corporate sustainability. Jing and Avery (2008) indicate that scholars need to examine multiple performance measures both financial measurements and non-financial measurements. To measure impact on business performance and sustainability, Kantabutra (2006) proposes three key measures, including employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and financial outcomes. Jing (2009) further embrace multiple performance measures, i.e. financial performance, customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction, staff turnover and manager turnover, to enhance the validity of the outcomes. Avery and Bergsteiner (2010, p. 181) highlight that "To be sustainable also requires enhancing customer satisfaction, brand and reputation and long-term stakeholder value." In their recent study, Avery and Bergsteiner (2010) propose that sustainable leadership can lead to five sustainability performance outcomes: (1) brand and reputation, (2) customer satisfaction, (3) financial performance, (4) long-term shareholder value and propose that (5) long-term stakeholder value is the ultimate goal of a sustainable enterprise. Even though scholars try to measure both financial and non-financial dimensions of organisational performance, researchers (e.g. Carmeli & Tishler, 2004) still find it difficult to measure organisational effects on large sets of organisational performance measures. Most studies have examined each performance measure separately and failed to capture the simultaneity embedded in the multidimensionality of performance (Carmeli & Tishler, 2004). Consistent with the literature (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2010; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Carmeli & Tisher, 2004), organisational performance outcomes can be assessed to the performance of competitors. Accordingly, a similar approach has been adopted in this paper by measuring sustainability performance outcomes relatively to competitors' performance. Thus, Avery and Bergsteiner (2010)'s corporate sustainability performance is adapted for this paper.

## STRUCTURAL MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS

Based on the literature, a structural model is proposed to express the relationship between the emergent leadership paradigms (i.e. Visionary and Organic leadership) and corporate sustainability performance, mediated by strong, shared vision and value, self-leadership, organisational team orientation and devolved and consensual decision-making as depicted in Figure 1.

Propositions

Derived from the literature, propositions (P) are developed as follows.

P1:   Visionary leadership directly predicts enhanced corporate sustainability performance.
P2:   Organic leadership directly predicts enhanced corporate sustainability performance.
P3:   The relationship between Visionary leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by strong, shared vision and values.
P4:   The relationship between Visionary leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by self-leadership or self-management.
P5:   The relationship between Visionary leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by team orientation.
P6:   The relationship between Visionary leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by devolved and consensual decision-making.

P7:   The relationship between Organic leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by strong, shared vision and values.

P8:   The relationship between Organic leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by self-leadership or self-management.

P9:   The relationship between Organic leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by team orientation.

P10:   The relationship between Organic leadership and corporate sustainability performance is mediated by devolved and consensual decision-making.
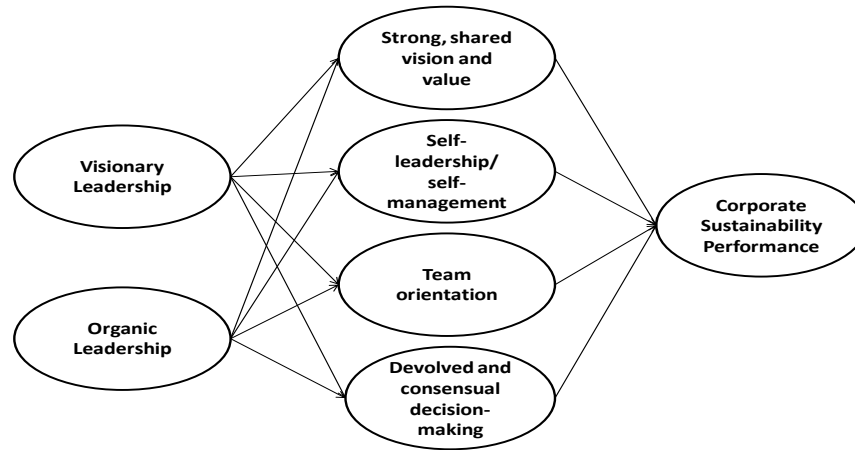
Figure 1: A Proposed Model

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research is needed to investigate these propositions and further develop hypotheses for testing. One critical area to test is whether the emergent leadership characteristics (i.e. Visionary and Organic leadership) predict enhanced corporate sustainability performance via the mediating effect of strong, shared vision and value, self-leadership, organisational team orientation and devolved and consensual decision-making. Findings from future studies will improve our understanding of the relationship between the emergent leadership-performance and corporate sustainability performance.

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