

# 10

## San-Lue as Exploration Leadership Quality of Middle-level Manager in Minor Enterprises in China

San-Lue การวิจัยลักษณะคุณภาพผู้บริหารระดับกลางของบริษัทขนาดกลางและเล็กในประเทศจีน

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## Abstract

Middle-level managers have a very important influence in the organization. The leadership quality of middle-level managers could play a connecting role in the organization. As one of the classical military work of China, San-Lue has a clear description of the leadership quality of generals. In this paper, the researcher explores the description of the quality of generals in San-Lue and combine of the leadership quality proposed in western management science. This paper expected that the description of general leadership quality in San-Lue is tallied the quality of middle-level leaders in minor enterprises in China. A comprehensive study of the San-lue and Henry's theory of leadership quality, it fits for the Middle-level manager in Guangzhou minor enterprises.

**Keywords :** Leadership Quality; Middle-level managers; San-Lue.

## บทคัดย่อ

ผู้บริหารระดับกลางมีความสำคัญต่อองค์กรเป็นอย่างมากโดยลักษณะความเป็นผู้นำมีบทบาทในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้บริหารระดับสูงและพนักงานทั่วไป “San-Lue” จัดเป็นหนึ่งในผลงานทางทหารที่เก่าแก่ของประเทศจีน โดยด้านนี้มีการอธิบายเกี่ยวกับคุณภาพความเป็นผู้นำทั่วไปของหัวหน้าเอาไว้อย่างชัดเจน วิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้มีการวิจัยคุณภาพความเป็นผู้นำของผู้บริหารระดับกลางของธุรกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดเล็กในประเทศจีน โดยงานวิจัยเล่มนี้มีการศึกษาจากเนื้อหาคุณสมบัติความเป็นผู้นำทั่วไปในหนังสือ “San-lue” ร่วมกับทฤษฎีการจัดการแบบตะวันตกวิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้คาดหวังว่าเนื้อหาคุณสมบัติความเป็นผู้นำในหนังสือ “ San-lue “ และทฤษฎีคุณภาพความเป็นผู้นำของเฮนรี่สามารถวิเคราะห์คุณภาพความเป็นผู้นำระดับกลาง ของ SMEs ในมณฑลกวางโจวประเทศจีน

**คำสำคัญ :** คุณภาพความเป็นผู้นำ; การจัดการระดับกลาง; San-Lue

## Introduction

Academic research on leadership has a long history. From the first half of the 20th century, the research mainly focuses on the description of managers' personal characteristics (Larsson, 1999). A number of researchers have quantified the leadership style and behavior of managers and formed various leadership theories. Some social behavior learns believe that leadership quality can affect the leadership efficiency of managers in an organization (Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). As an internal manager of an organization, the manager has important contents such as planning, organization, coordination and control for the internal members of the organization. Leadership quality represents the quality conditions and internal factors that managers often play a role in the leadership work on the basis of inborn physiology and psychology and through acquired learning and exercise. It is an important factor affecting the leadership of managers.

As an internal manager of an organization, the manager has significant contents such as planning, organization, coordination and control for the internal members of the organization. Managers are the ones who directly participate in a hand where others work and are responsible for their contributions to the organization through their status and knowledge. In the process of organizational work, managers usually need to have certain qualities in order to achieve or maintain their position as managers. Different managers produce unique leadership abilities within the organization because of their leadership qualities. Different leadership influences some members of the organization who are related to managers, thus affecting their work and efficiency (Geller, 2000). How to realize the effective allocation of human resources within the organization and the sustainable development of human resources is the research contents needed by every human resources practitioners. Middle-level managers have a very important position and position in the organization, and they play a connecting role in the organization.

The middle-level managers are the middle-level managers who are subordinate to and responsible for the top managers and are enclosed in the management (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). People engage in a dialogue with each other. Working with different people will gain different life experience and work experience. In organizational behavior, the group can influence the behavior of the individual, and the individual can also affect the group within the organization. Middle-level managers can directly contact the grass-roots employees, their level middle-level managers, as well as the principal managers. Consequently, it is critical to explore and study the leadership quality of middle-level management.

Management is a theoretical discipline that needs continuous practice. The history of management development is a history of human management practice activities constantly taking stock experience and learning lessons. From the historical point of view, the summary,



analysis and application of human resources, the combination of the theoretical achievements of the ancestors and the practice of modern society can better inheritance and give play to the wisdom of the predecessors. The reflection of the combination of management theory and practice in people's mind is a guiding role in the management work. Management theory also comes into being and evolves with the emergence and development of human society and management activities. Hawthorne experiment put forward the theory of interpersonal relationship. In this society there is a relationship of interaction and interaction between people. Different leaders have their own unique leadership quality, which affects their own leadership style and affects the internal organization. The leadership qualities that the generals should have in the San-lue can help them better manage the army and help them succeed in battle. San-lue is a military work of the Han Dynasty in ancient China. It combines the thoughts of hundreds of Chinese scholars and focuses on the political strategy to elucidate the principle of governing the country and using military forces. As a military work in prehistoric China, San-lue has a clear description of the quality of generals. The researchers assume that the leadership quality of generals proposed in the San-lue is in line with the quality required by the middle-level managers of small and medium-sized enterprises in Guangzhou, China in today's society, and combine with some relevant theories of Western management to explore, in order to obtain the leadership quality model required by the middle-level management of small and medium-sized enterprises in today's society.

#### Research question :

- 1) Does the leadership quality of generals mentioned in San-lue conform to the leadership quality of middle and middle managers of small and medium-sized enterprises in contemporary society?
- 2) Does the combination of the leadership quality of generals and the leadership quality model proposed by Henry, a western scholar, conform to the leadership quality of moderate and middle-level managers in small and medium-sized enterprises in modern society?
- 3) In today's society, what is the leadership quality model of middle-level managers in Guangzhou SMEs?

#### Literature Review

##### Leadership Quality

The position of leaders in the organization is very important. They play a key role in the organization. Within the organization, leaders act as overall planning, coordination and control (Zhou etc, 2003). There are detailed and reasonable plans, well-designed organizational structure and effective control system in the organization. At the same time, the members

of the organization also have the need to be understood and motivated, and the need to assist in the goals of the organization as much as they can (Ferreira & Otley, 2009). The role of leadership is tantamount to combine and coordinate these two aspects. Organizational goals and the personal goals of subordinates cannot be exactly the same. In organizations, there are only a few people who really unify their personal goals and organizational goals. For most people, it is necessary to induce leaders to make necessary contributions to organizational goals. The work of subordinates is often to meet the needs of individuals. Although these needs are not necessarily consistent with the goals of the organization, they can coordinate with the interests and goals of the organization (Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2016). Effective leadership behavior should encourage subordinates to meet their respective needs, and at the same time help to achieve the goals of the organization, that is, to use the goals pursued by individuals to achieve the goals of the organization. The leadership behavior should not only make the organization members meet the material needs moderately, but also make them to meet the spiritual need.

Leadership is a fundamental and strategic category in the leadership system. It is the personal cohesion and charisma of a leader to a specific individual or organization under certain conditions by virtue of the comprehensive role of his personal quality. It is an important driving force to maintain the excellent growth and sustainable development in an organization. In addition to their abilities, leaders should also have good charisma. In the 1960s, behavioral scientist Ghiselli pointed out that the personality factors of leaders are related to the efficiency of leadership.

Leaders with strong self-confidence and courage have a higher probability of success (Trahair, 1971). According to behavioral scientist Baumol, entrepreneurs are business leaders who master the art of leadership and are highly efficient. A successful leader should have a strong ability of organization and decision-making, so as to organize the chaotic things in the work well, and be in a position to weigh and make choices in a short time. Leaders should also have a strong sense of responsibility. Be strict with themselves and dare to take responsibility (Archibald, & Baumol, 1960). As a leader, self-confidence is a major psychological advantage to overcome difficulties in work, eliminate interference, grasp the current situation, open up the situation, make decisive decisions and establish the prestige of leadership. A wealthy business leader has strong confidence. This kind of self-confidence includes: self-confidence in their ability to solve problems; self-confidence in career development, etc. The desire for success is the source of creation and wealth. It can stimulate the subconscious, release infinite enthusiasm, energy and wisdom, and then help it to obtain great wealth and career achievements (Stogdill, 1948).



W-henry, an American behavioral scientist, put forward 12 qualities that a successful leader should possess on the basis of investigation and research in 1949. First of all, Henry believes that leaders need to have a strong achievement need. Leaders regard work achievement as the greatest pleasure, put money reward and position promotion above, so they are prepared to complete arduous tasks; secondly, leaders need to have a positive working state and dare to undertake challenging work. Third, leaders have to have a positive attitude towards their superiors. They have a great relationship with their superiors and constantly improve their abilities and skills through contact with them. Fourth, leaders have strong organizational ability. They can manage the internal affairs in an organized way and predict the development trend of things from the acquired information. Fifth, with strong decision-making ability, leaders can analyze, weigh and make decisions on various plans in a short time. Sixth, they have solid self-confidence. In their work, leaders are so full of confidence in them and have unswerving faith in their goals, and will not be interfered by the outside world. Seventh, leaders need to have agile thinking, which is the perspective, way and method of looking at things. It plays a key role in people's words and deeds. Unique thinking often produces unexpected behaviors and results. Leaders need to be agile in considering to deal with the problems in their work and work. Eighth, leaders can avoid failure as much as possible in their work, and can constantly accept new tasks, set new goals, and make continuous progress within the organization. Ninth, leaders should be practical in the organization, pay attention to the reality and not care about the uncertain future. Tenth, in organizational management, leaders should not alienate their subordinates while establishing a good relationship with their superiors, and also establish good human-computer relationship with their subordinates. Eleventh, leaders have no emotional concern for their parents, and they usually live together with different parents to avoid the influence of family factors on their working conditions. Twelfth, leaders need to be loyal to the organization and fulfill their duties (Henry,1949).

### San-lue

San-lue, originally known as Huangshi-gong San-lue. It is a famous military work in ancient China. This book is different from other military books in that it focuses on expounding the principle of governing the country and using military forces from the perspective of political strategy. It is a soldierly book that combines some thoughts of various schools of thought and focuses on strategy. At present, this book has been one of the books that must be read by generals all over the world. San-lue is also known as Huangshi-gong San-lue. Its true author has no way of textual research. In history, it is said that it was written by Huangshi-Gong. Huangshi-gong is the son of weizhe, an important official of Qinshihuang. He lived in

seclusion in the north of Huangshan Mountain in the northwest of Pizhou because of the tyranny of Qinshihuang. People did not know his real name, so they called him Huangshigong. Later, Huangshi-gong passed on the three strategies to Zhang Liang, a counselor in the early Han Dynasty. The whole book of San-lue has 3800 characters, which is divided into three volumes : Shang-lue, zhong-lue and xia-lue (Wang Huifen, 2000). San-lue is written by ancient sages, among which there are a lot of words about the way of talent management and the standard of talent selection. Many of them can even be directly used in modern talent management, and their application value still has a high reference significance for today's managers (Li Wenming, 2015).

### Research design

According to the research questions, the researchers assume that the description of general quality in the San-lue is suitable for the leadership quality of middle-level management. The process of this study is as follows :

First of all, because there are many versions of san-lue, different scholars have different annotations to san-lue. Therefore, researchers choose seven books of Wujing published by Zhonghua Book Company, which is annotated by Pian Yu-qian (2007) : Huang Shi-gong, Liu-Tao, and Li Wei Gongwen, Taizong of the Tang Dynasty, as literature materials.

Secondly, using the method of literature analysis to analyze the "San-Lue" and extract the quality of the generals.

Thirdly, according to the questions extracted in the San-Lue and leadership quality proposed by Henry, a western scholar, a questionnaire was developed and relevant surveys were conducted.

Fourth, the researchers selected six small and medium-sized enterprises in Guangzhou. According to James Morgan sampling analysis, they randomly selected 35 senior managers, 74 middle-level managers and 138 grass-roots employees, a total of 247 people for the questionnaire survey.

Fifthly, the researcher uses the exploratory factor analysis method to analyze the data of leadership quality of middle-level leaders and draw conclusions.

### Scope of Research

The researcher combine both San-lue's general leadership quality and western scholar Henry's theory to summarize the leadership quality were :

W-Henry : 1) Achievement needs to be strong 2) Work hard 3) Broad acceptance 4) strong decision-making ability 5) strong organizational ability 6) Strong self-confidence 7) agile thinking 8) Try to avoid failure 9) Be practical 10) Close to subordinates 11) There is no emotional concern for parents 12) Loyalty to the organization.



San-Lue : 1) Honest 2) calm 3) quiet 4) serious 5) able to accept advice 6) judge right and wrong 6) accommodate talents 7) collect opinions 8) Loyalty

According to the combination of San-Lue and W-Henry's theory, the researchers designed 19 questions (Loyalty is common to both) to explore the leadership quality of middle-level managers.

## Result

### Exploratory Factor Analysis of the San-lue

According to the three strategies, generals should be honest, quiet, fair, and serious, be able to accept advice, be clear about right and wrong, accommodate talents, gather opinions and be loyal. The results of data analysis are as follows :..

**Table 1** KMO and Bartlett's Test of Leadership quality of San-lue

KMO and Bartlett's test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.759
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	815.141
	df	28
	Sig.	.000

Table 1 KMO value is higher than 0.7, KMO = 0.759, and Bartlett's test of popularity value is lower than 0.05, the data collected by the researchers are suitable for factor analysis.

**Table 2** Leadership Qualities of San-lue

Component	Total Variance Explained					
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	% of Variance	Extraction	Component
1	3.966	49.575	49.575	49.575	.386	.622
2	.917	11.466	61.041		.594	.771
3	.794	9.920	70.961		.339	.582
4	.740	9.256	80.217		.336	.579
5	.568	7.105	87.322		.503	.709
6	.466	5.821	93.142		.527	.726
7	.396	4.949	98.091		.611	.782
8	.153	1.909	100.000		.669	.818

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 explores the leadership qualities described in the three strategies. According to the data, the middle-level managers need to have the quality of absorbing opinions ( $r=0.669$ ). The middle-level managers need to have the quality of accommodating talents ( $r=0.611$ ). The middle-level managers need to have the quality of being calm ( $r=0.594$ ). The middle-level managers need to have the quality of being clear about right and wrong ( $r=0.527$ ). The middle-level managers need to have the quality of being able to accept advice ( $r=0.503$ ).

**Exploratory Factor Analysis of Henry’s twelve leadership qualities**

**Table 3** KMO and Bartlett’s Test of Henry’s 12 leadership quality

KMO and Bartlett’s test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.804
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	955.397
	df	55
	Sig.	.000

Table 3 shows KMO = 0.804, KMO value is greater than 0.07 and Bartlett’s test of popularity value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the data collected by the researchers are suitable for factor analysis.

**Table 4** Exploratory Factor Analysis of Henry’s twelve Leadership Qualities

Total Variance Explained								
Component	Total	Initial	Cumulative Extraction Sums of		Extraction	Component		
		Eigenvalues	%	Squared Loadings		1	2	3
	% of Variance		% of Variance					
9	4.136	37.596	37.596	37.596	.484	.566		
10	1.675	15.224	52.821	15.224	.586	.422		
11	1.065	9.682	62.503	9.682	.721		.848	
12	.979	8.897	71.400		.640	.709		
13	.712	6.470	77.870		.719	.843		
14	.575	5.228	83.097		.708	.810		
15	.471	4.285	87.382		.592	.755		
16	.426	3.871	91.253		.690		.790	
17	.377	3.428	94.681		.691		.814	
18	.330	2.998	97.678		.280			.491
19	.255	2.322	100.000		.764			.869

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis.



Table 4 shows that exploratory factor analysis of Henry's twelve leadership qualities. Middle managers need to have the quality of strong decision-making ability ( $r= 0.719$ ). Middle managers need to have strong self-confidence ( $r = 0.708$ ). Middle managers need to have strong organizational ability ( $r = 0.640$ ). Middle managers need to have agile thinking ( $r = 0.592$ ). Middle managers need to have the quality of working hard ( $r = 0.586$ ).

## Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

### Summary and Discussion

1) The middle managers need to have the quality of strong decision-making ability ( $r=0.719$ ). Decisiveness is a necessary ability for all employees in an organization. According to the Jean Britdan effect, managers lack decision-making ability, which will lead to management inefficiency and confusion.

2) Middle managers need to have strong self-confidence ( $r=0.708$ ). Self confidence refers to a person's affirmation of his work, ability and other aspects, believing that he can do a good job. Self confidence is very important for everyone. Self confidence is not only the secret of people's spiritual growth, but also an important source of people's operational work (Kipnis & Lane, 1962).

3) The middle-level managers need to have the quality of broad acceptance ( $r=0.669$ ). Managers can listen to other people's opinions and suggestions modestly and widely, so that they can quickly obtain information and analyze and obtain effective information from the information center (Armstrong, 2011).

4) Middle managers need to have strong organizational ability ( $r=0.640$ ). Managers not only rely on their own abilities within the organization, they can also mobilize the role of the organization. Good organizational skills can help managers better unit members within the organization, and bitter fight for organizational goals (Bogdewic, Baxley, & Jamison, 1997).

5) Middle managers need to have the quality of accommodating talents ( $r=0.611$ ). Human resources are the most important strategic resources for an organization, and trust and respect are the leverage for managers to activate their enthusiasm and creativity. The behavior of internal managers to accommodate talents can better enhance the cohesion within the organization and contribute to the development of the organization (Li Jianfang, 2009).

6) Middle level managers need to be quiet ( $r=0.594$ ). Calm leader is a kind of leader who chooses the responsibility, low-key and behind the scenes way to solve all kinds of intractable or not intractable problems. Quiet leadership has the virtues of restraint, humility and persistence (Koehn, 2012).

7) Middle managers need to have agile thinking ( $r=0.592$ ). The thinking quality of managers is an important part of modern leadership methods and art. As the inner ability of human beings, thinking ability is the core of all abilities. Managers with agile thinking can help them to better complete the internal work of the organization (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1993)

8) Middle managers need to have the quality of working hard ( $r=0.586$ ). Managers, as managers within the organization, can influence members within the organization. A manager with a quality of active hard work can motivate employees within the organization to work hard to achieve organizational goals (Voon, etc, 2011).

9) Middle level managers need to have the quality of judging right and wrong ( $r=0.527$ ). It is a great accomplishment of leaders to make clear right and wrong. Managers must be cautious about rewards and punishments. Defining right and wrong can help managers better control members within the organization, so that members within the organization are not treated unfairly, thereby making the organization more transparent and ensuring the reasonable and effective operation of the organization's internal systems (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

10) Middle managers need to have the quality of being able to accept advice ( $r=0.503$ ). A qualified manager can accept the problems pointed out by others, and analyze and summarize in a timely manner. Whether or not it is adopted in the end, the reason can be summarized. Do it to persuade others with reason, not to suppress people with power (Garvin & Roberto, 2001).

According to the above contents, it can be seen that the leadership quality of Chinese middle-level managers in Guangzhou includes : the middle-managers need to have 1) strong decision-making ability 2) self-confidence 3) broad acceptance 4) strong organizational ability 5) accommodating talents 6) quiet 7) agile thinking 8) working hard 9) judging right and wrong 10) able to accept advice 10 kinds of deference leadership qualities.

### Limitations

1) The researchers only surveyed 247 employees from six companies in Guangzhou, but did not survey and analyze companies in other cities in China or even in other countries in the world.

2) Researchers only use exploratory factor analysis to explore the employees in Guangzhou, and other statistical methods can be used in this study.

### Recommendations

1) San-lue this book contains not only the management knowledge of leadership quality, but also the strategic management, talent management and other management knowledge of leadership, which has a good guidance and help for the research of management. It is worthy of further study by the researcher.



2) This study can also be applied to companies in other countries in the world to explore the differences in leadership quality in cross-cultural communication.

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