CULTURE WITH QUALITIES AND BEHAVIORS OF BUSINESS LEADERS – THE FOUNDATION OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

MBA. Tran Thi Le Na

lenalongdhv@gmail.com

PhD. Luong Thu Ha

haluongthu@yahoo.com

National Economics University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract

Leaders are often envisioned as powerful and influential individuals in all fields from politics, society, and business. The leaders are always charismatic; hence, they can gather and inspire a large number of people. They can build powerful empires; assemble huge armies; build - operate - pass on sustainable businesses over the centuries... It is undoubtedly that sustainable leadership results are the desire achievements of all leaders.

This study was carried out with the aim to determine a theoretical model of the relationship between culture and leadership qualities – behavior. The authors believe this relationship is sustainable because culture is permanent. It is also the foundation for leaders to influence their employees to create a stable, engaged, and devoted workforce, thereby helping leaders attain sustainable leadership results.

Keywords: *leadership qualities, leadership behaviors, relationships, regional culture*

1. Introduction

The North Central region includes 6 provinces: Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue. According to Ngo Duc Thinh (2004), this cultural region can be divided into 3 sub-regions: Thanh Hoa, Nghe Tinh (including Nghe An and Ha Tinh), and Binh Tri Thien (including Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue) cultural sub-regions. During the analyzing process, the author believed that Thanh Hoa's cultural sub-region is intermediate and transitional between the Northern and North Central cultural regions. Similarly, the culture of Thua Thien Hue in the Binh Tri Thien sub-region also bears the transition of the North Central Coast culture and the South Central as well as Southern culture. Hence, the Nghe Tinh sub-region can be considered a typical representative of the culture of the North Central region. Moreover, further research regarding the culture of the Nghe Tinh cultural sub-region will contribute to clarifying that of the North Central. Therefore, in order to build a theoretical model between cultural factors, leadership qualities, and behaviors as well as sustainable leadership results, this paper's authors will focus on enterprises in the Nghe Tinh cultural sub-region.

2. Theoretical Background

According to C. Marx, the social side is the nature of the human being and the biological side of the socialized person. The process of formation and development of human society also shows that human personality is influenced by social relations, such as relations of production, community relations, and social groups. It is the interaction between individuals with the natural and social environment that their personality and qualities are formed and adjusted (Tuyen Tran Nguyen, 2005).

Figure 1: *The original model of the factors that shape individual qualities and behaviors*
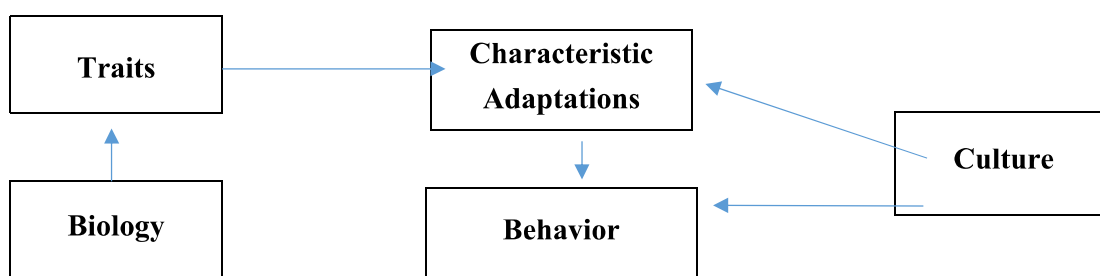
Sources: McCrae & Costa (1999), McCrae (2004)

Research by McCrae & Costa (1999) and McCrae (2004) showed that the qualities and behaviors of people are influenced by many factors, including external factors like culture (Figure 1). Thus, each person's personal qualities are influenced by natural and innate factors and by socio-cultural factors. From the original model, the study focuses on examining the impact of the culture of the North Central region of Viet Nam (a case study of Nghe Tinh culture) on the qualities of the people here, thereby affecting their behavior.

3. Results

3.1. The effect of regionally cultural concept on the quality and behavior of the North Central people

3.1.1. Quality of "Studiousness" – Behavior of "Inquisitiveness – Aspiration for growth"

Nghe Tinh has an extremely harsh and extreme climate with frequent droughts, storms, and floods. In other words, to make a living there by farming, breeding and fishing are very difficult, strenuous, and high-risk. Therefore, Nghe Tinh people have been struggled to survive, even in their daily life. Consequently, these hardships have created in them the character of endurance, providence, and especially their will to advance, to master their fate, and to act proactively with nature.

Furthermore, Nghe Tinh people accept to live in adversity so that their children and grandchildren can escape destitution, establish great fortune and break free from hardship. As a result, they have constantly transformed themselves to adapt and develop, and this is one of the reasons why Nghe Tinh's students can overcome all difficulties and distresses to forge their character, wisdom and advance the working positions based on their education.

The studious qualities and the inquisitive behavior, the aspiration for growth of Nghe Tinh people are shown in detail in Table 1.

Table 1: Quality of "Studiousness" – Behavior of "Inquisitiveness – Aspiration for growth" of Nghe Tinh people

No.	Source	Comment	Manifestation	Quality - Behavior
1	Duong Lich Bui (1993)	Kindly generous, Harmonious, Studious	Studious	Quality: **Studiousness**
2	Ngoc Khanh Vu (1997)	Have ideals in their souls	Have ideals	
3	Viet Giao Ninh (1996)	Nghe An has 38/ 293 doctoral candidates, accounting for nearly 1/10 of our country	Rank high in competition	
4	The Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Dai Nam	Thrifty, hardworking (at both study and work)	Studious	
5	Duc Thinh Ngo (2004)	Passionate, diligent in learning, learn to "change their life"	Passionate with learning, Learn to "change life"	Behavior: **Inquisitiveness – Aspiration for growth**
6	Phong Le (2015)	Studious	Studious	
7	Gia Khanh Dinh (1997)	Tireless learning and growing aspiration	Aspiration for growth	

Source: Compiled by the authors

3.1.2. Quality of "Overprotectiveness" – Behavior of "Factionalism, Localism"

Due to its nature as a far-away region, regularly being attempted to invade by foreigners, along with special natural and social conditions like a barren land, harsh climate, terrain with many rivers and passes, mountains cut into the sea, the Nghe people must rely on each other and unite to build a close community relationship so as to survive on a daily basis. To illustrate, Dinh Gia Khanh (1997) documented the personality of Nghe Tinh

people: "While having a strong sense of community and passionately loving the motherland are some of the positive traits of Vietnamese citizens in general, Nghe Tinh people are the most exact embodiment of these traits in specific".

Table 2: Quality of "Overprotectiveness" and Behavior of "Factionalism, Localism" of Nghe Tinh people

No.	Source	Comment	Manifestation	Quality - Behavior
1	Ngoc Them Tran (1999)	Protecting, shielding too much to the point of sectarian localism, family relations, relatives, compatriots, villages, communes, group interests	Over-protectiveness, Factionalism, Localism	Quality: **Over-protectiveness** Behavior: **Factionalism, Localism**
2	Si Dung Nguyen (2019)	Cohesion	Cohesion	
3	Dong Chi Nguyen (1995)	They are local to the point where "the Nghe people must be the best", so they usually trigger factionalism	Localism, Factionalism	
4	Bat Khuat Ho (2019)	Cohesion, for example, country-manship. It is solidarity, mutual assistance, and mutual help if it is at a moderate level, but if pushing it too far, it becomes factionalism and localism.	Localism	

Source: Compiled by the authors

It can be indicated that the communal activities in Nghe An, for many generations, have been very close and friendly. They are also tightly associated with festivals, as well as daily activities. And it is worth noting that the closeness and friendliness in such community activities is also a mechanism to control and encourage as well as emulate each other.

No matter where, in the South or the North, in the country or abroad, just hearing the voice of their local jargon will immediately catch the Nghe people's sympathy. In other words, they will make friends, side with each other and support each other openly and publicly. When living away from home, it is this type of cohesion that creates strength for Nghe Tinh people. Thanks to such interrelation, Nghe people are willing to help each other, facilitate all problems for each other to forge ahead and strive for success.

However, in Nghe Tinh, the care, protection, and cohesion have been pushed too far, leading to the idea of making sectarianism, localism, family relations, relatives, compatriots, villages, communes, group interests (Ngoc Them Tran, 1999). In addition, excessive

cohesion is shown in the way that when a Nghe Tinh person being disciplined, the whole Nghe Tinh community will stand up for that person, causing many difficulties for businesses and the local authority (Si Dung Nguyen, 2019). As a result, this is one reason why some southern provinces are afraid to recruit Nghe Tinh workers.

To conclude, the authors associate these qualities with the factional and local behavior of Nghe Tinh people, which are shown in Table 2.

3.1.3. Quality of "Thrifty - Comfort is better than pride" – Behavior of "Frugality, Simplicity"

Table 3: Quality of "Thrifty – Comfort is better than pride" and Behavior "Frugality, Simplicity"

No.	Source	Comment	Manifestation	Quality - Behavior
1	The Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Dai Nam	Thrifty, hardworking, laborious	Thrifty	Quality: **Thrifty, Comfort is better than pride** Behavior: **Frugality, Simplicity**
2	Gia Khanh Dinh (1997)	Saving in everyday life	Frugality	
3	Ngoc Khanh Vu (1977)	Austerity in daily life	Austerity	
4	Duc Thinh Ngo (2004)	Thrifty, poor but not mean	Providently	
5	Dinh Thanh Ha (2014)	Diligence, patience, simplicity, Many a little makes a mickle	Simplicity Frugality	
6	Thai Mai Dang (1960)	Saving at "wooden fish" level	Providently	

Source: Compiled by the authors

Living in difficulties, residents of Nghe Tinh understand the value of labor. Nature does not favor them, but they themselves are industrious, enthusiastic about working with a sense of respecting their labor, not wasting their wealth, thrift, and work diligently to create a better life. Therefore, they possess beautiful qualities such as hard-working, not afraid of asceticism, always persisting in accumulating small amounts to make a large amount, always thinking to overcome life's obstacles. Accordingly, when assessing the general characteristics of the Nghe people, scholar Thai Mai Dang (1960) said: "Courage to negligence, industrious to reckless, resolute to stiff and saving at "wooden fish" level". The authors summarize the relationship between the quality of "Thrifty - Comfort is better than pride" and the behavior of "Frugality, Simplicity" in Table 3.

3.1.4. Quality of "Integrity, Toughness, Courage" – Behavior of "Righteousness, Allegiance, Bravery"

Based on the topography, Duong Lich Bui (1993) commented on the people of Nghe Tinh: "The area has a flow from Quy Chau, majestic mountains, stagnant rivers, so people here are more heroic and braver", and "In Dong Thanh and Nam Duong districts, there are many martial artists, and their auras are also inclined to magnanimity and bravery".

Because of the harsh nature, the Nghe people's personality is straightforward; they speak out what they think and respect love. The elites of Nghe Tinh said that "Nghe Tinh people always put their qualities above all", so they are dignified, polite, and not demeaning. The residents are industrious, hard-working, loyal, and righteous (Duong Lich Bui, 1993).

In terms of code of conduct, Nghe Tinh people are often sincere, straightforward to the noble level, which Vu Ngoc Khanh (1997) called "tough in communication". Therefore, in relationships, they are not always easy to be understood and accepted by people from other regions. When first contacting Nghe Tinh people, people from other regions are not always comfortable, but after being in contact for a long time, it is easy to get close because Nghe Tinh people are generally very sincere and enthusiastic with friends.

Along with this, Nghe people also have the spirit of fighting for the right. They will not be afraid to act when they see what they do is right. What they think is right, even if it is difficult or they might lose, they still do it. From here, another personality trait is also formed, which is integrity. Nghe people regard that the person is worthy, then they support. If they are supporters, they will be completely loyal. This is also the reason why since ancient times, the closest bodyguards of kings and lords were often Nghe Tinh people (Si Dung Nguyen, 2019).

All in all, through the process of analyzing and compiling studies on Nghe Tinh culture - representing the culture of the North Central region, the authors determined the influence of cultural factors on human qualities and thereby shaping their behavior.

Table 4: Quality of "Integrity, Toughness, Courage" – Behavior of "Righteousness, Allegiance, Bravery"

No.	Source	Comment	Manifestation	Quality - Behaviors
1	Dong Chi Nguyen (1995)	Simple temperament, honest	Honest	
2	Gia Khanh Dinh (1997)	Aggressive, ingenious In gritty, there is stubbornness	Grit Honest Ingenious	

No.	Source	Comment	Manifestation	Quality - Behaviors
		In honesty, there is roughness In ingenuity, there is recklessness	Straightforward	Quality: "**Integrity, Toughness, Courage**" Behavior: "**Righteousness, Allegiance, Bravery**"
3	Phong Le (2015)	Take the lead Frankly, affirmatively Loyal Brave	Pave the way Brave Loyal	
4	Dinh Thanh Ha (2014)	Straightforward, outspoken, not afraid to fight the bad	Straightforward Stand for what is right	
5	Ngoc Khanh Vu (1997)	Simple temperament Tough	Tough	
6	Duong Lich Bui (1993)	Put qualities above all Be dignified, polite, not demeaning Commoner: industrious, hard-working Loyal, honorable	Kind Loyal Honorable	
7	Si Dung Nguyen (2019)	Loyal Straightforward (frank, outspoken) Fight for the rights	Loyal Frank	

Source: Compiled by the authors

3.2. The effect of the leadership quality – behavior on business leadership results

3.2.1. Leadership results and leadership performance measurement

Many researchers have approached and measured corporate leadership results in general under the influence of many factors. In which, the indicators for assessing leadership results are divided into two groups, financial and non-financial indicators. Financial

indicators are often used less often than non-financial indicators because leadership is quite challenging to quantify as it is directly related to people and usually lagged. On the other hand, plethoral studies have documented that leadership results are derived from non-financial indicators such as employees' perceptions of the leader's prestige and leadership results; the compliance of subordinates; work motivation and commitment to the organization; job satisfaction, and some other issues related to the working environment.

In this paper, the authors will focus on the results of employee leadership through employee satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization.

Job satisfaction: Employees are satisfied with their job when they feel satisfied with their current job, when they work passionately and enthusiastically, or when they feel that the job is exciting and seemingly never-ending, always opening up new opportunities (Thunn, 2009). Pierro et al. (2005) also indicated that satisfied employees always feel satisfied with their jobs.

Table 5: Criteria for measuring business leadership results

No.	The authors	Criteria for measuring leadership results
1	Piero, Cicero, Bonaiuto, Knippenberg & Kruglanski (2005)	Perception of leadership results Job satisfaction Personal self-assessment Desire to change job
2	Knippenberg & Hogg (2003)	Work results and motivation Readiness for innovation Obedience, compliance Leadership results and prestige

3	Koene, Vogelaar & Soeters (2002)	Leaders' reputation
		
		Operational results
		
		  + Net profit
		
		  + Controllable costs
		
		Enterprise environment
		
		  + Ability to organize activities
		
		  + Readiness for innovation
		
		  + Communication in enterprises

Source: Compiled by the authors

Commitment to the organization: According to Thunn (2009), good leadership results are when employees have the intention or peace of mind to stick with the group, department, organization, or enterprise until the end of their working time; they are excited, ready to share with their relatives and friends about where they are working. The employees also choose to commit when they feel that the business is a crucial part of their family, and they are willing to share difficulties and challenges with their organizations. Contrary to these criteria, Pierro et al. (2005) measure the employee's level of commitment to the organization through the desire to change jobs. The stronger this desire is, the lower is the level of commitment to the organization, and thus the leadership results are also limited.

3.2.2. The relationship between leadership qualities – behavior and employee satisfaction and commitment

A plethora of studies have supported the existence of a relationship between employee satisfaction, commitment, and leadership behavior (Halpin, 1954; Patchen, 1962; Nealy & Blood, 1968; Greene & Schriesheim, 1977; Katerberg & Horn, 1981; Wycoff & Skogan, 1994). However, within these studies is a debate about the nature of this relationship, whether positive or negative.

Nealy & Blood (1968); House & Filley (1971); Greene & Schriesheim (1977) also focused on studying the relationship between leadership behavior and employee satisfaction and commitment by giving a group of specific leadership behaviors – Consideration leadership behavior and Initiating structure leadership behavior. They concluded that the former behavior bears a positive impact on satisfaction, while the latter negatively affects job satisfaction and employee commitment. Nevertheless, a number of researchers found a negative correlation between the Consideration leadership behavior and job satisfaction as well as employee commitment (Halpin, 1954; Patchen, 1962; Hodge, 1976). Not confusing enough, other studies documented that both of these leadership behaviors have a positive influence on employee job satisfaction and employee commitment (Katerberg & Horne, 1981).

With a more comprehensive approach, Jon Aarum Andersen (2006) examined the relationship between the leader's personal qualities and the leader's superiority, the perception of leadership results, the leader's behavior, and the organization's effectiveness. In which, the research focused on four areas includes:

- The relationship between the leader's qualities and the leader's superiority and the perception of leadership results.

- The relationship between leadership qualities and leadership results (measured through employee satisfaction and employee commitment).

- The relationship between the leader's personal qualities and the leader's behavior.

- The relationship between leader's behavior and organizational leadership results (measured through employee satisfaction and employee commitment).

Figure 2: The relationship between personal qualities, behavior, and leadership result
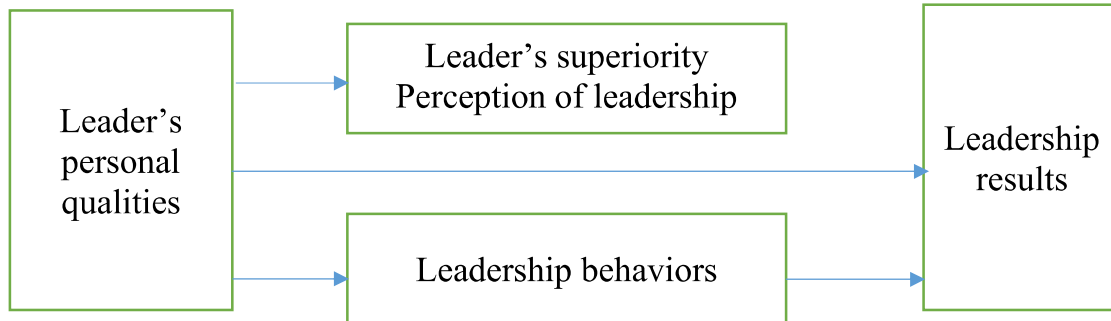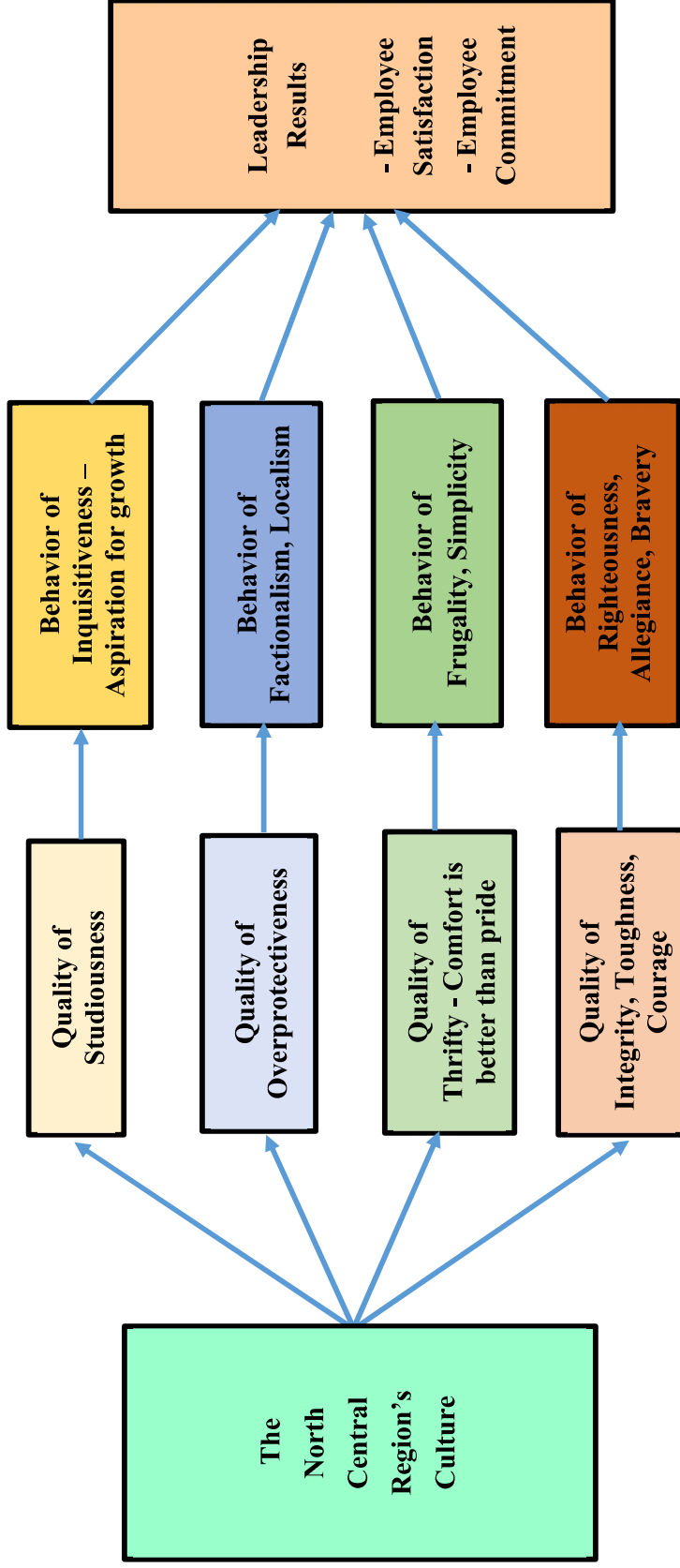

Source: Jon Aarum Andersen, 2006

4. Disscusion and Conclusion

Based on the research of McCrae and Costa (1999), McCrae (2004), Jon Aarum Andersen (2006), along with the study of documents, the authors have shown that the culture of the North Central region affects qualities, thereby shaping the behavior of people here. The authors qualitatively researched these behaviors to determine how leaders in the North Central region exhibit these behaviors in organizational management and administration activities.

In particular, through interviews with 06 experts, 04 researchers, and 05 leaders in the North Central region in 2020, the authors found that in the management and administration of organizations, leaders in the North Central region show inquisitive behaviors - the aspiration for growth through the following manifestations: always learning and looking for opportunities to learn, attaching importance to learning and the educated; encouraging organizational members to learn and collaborate in groups within the organization. In addition, there is a factional and local behavior with the following manifestations: prioritizing relatives and acquaintances who have village relationships; forming local cliques in the organization; protecting relatives and acquaintances. Furthermore, the North Central region leaders also display thrifty - simple, straightforward - loyal - courageous behaviors.

Therefore, the authors build a research model: the effect of cultural factors with qualities and behaviors on measuring leadership outcomes in enterprises in the North Central region, shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Proposed research model

The North Central Region's Culture

→ Quality of Studiousness → Behavior of Inquisitiveness – Aspiration for growth

→ Quality of Overprotectiveness → Behavior of Factionalism, Localism

→ Quality of Thrifty - Comfort is better than pride → Behavior of Frugality, Simplicity

→ Quality of Integrity, Toughness, Courage → Behavior of Righteousness, Allegiance, Bravery

Leadership Results
- Employee Satisfaction
- Employee Commitment

Based on the research of McCrae & Costa (1999), McCrae (2004), Jon Aarum Andersen (2006), along with the study of other documents, it can be confirmed that leadership qualities and behaviors do influence leadership outcomes. The research team also expects that among the 4 groups of leadership behaviors of leaders in the North Central region, the group of Behavior of Factionalism, Localism will have a negative impact, while the remaining 3 groups of behaviors will positively affect employee satisfaction and commitment.

However, within the framework of this article, it only proposes research models and hypotheses. In the coming time, the authors will continue to have quantitative studies with the expected number of samples selected according to the non-probability sampling with the technique of questionnaires (5-level Likert scale). The questionnaire would be sent to about 250-300 employees working in small and medium enterprises in the North Central region to assess the impact of leadership qualities and behaviors on leadership results, employee satisfaction, and commitment to the organization to create sustainable leadership outcomes. As a result, measures to increase the efficiency of management and administration of business leaders in the North Central region can be proposed to generate sustainable business development in a volatile business environment.

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